



# Setting priorities

It can be difficult to juggle many different tasks throughout the course of a day, and it can seem like there's not enough time to get everything done. Here's a three-step approach to getting the most out of your time.

## Make a list of everything you want to accomplish today

- Complete scholarship application
- Respond to Facebook wall posts
- Do laundry
- Finish Calc homework
- Read chapter six for history class
- Clean apartment
- Go out for dinner with friends

## Categorize each item according to its urgency and importance

Urgency is about how time-sensitive the task is. Importance has to do with a task's value to you.

	urgent	not urgent
important	<p>These tasks get our attention—but if most of your day is spent here, it can be stressful!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a crisis or pressing problem, e.g. overflowing toilet</li><li>• impending deadline, e.g. test tomorrow</li></ul>	<p>At the end of the day, time spent here is the most gratifying. These tasks become urgent if you procrastinate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• planning &amp; preparation, e.g. researching a paper due in three weeks</li><li>• true recreation or relaxation, e.g. dinner with friends</li></ul>
not important	<p>These tasks are time-sensitive, but don't matter that much to you. If you find you're not getting enough done, you may be spending too much time here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• most interruptions, e.g. phone calls</li><li>• several popular activities, e.g. responding to an IM</li></ul>	<p>Spend as little time on these tasks as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reading junk mail</li><li>• time fillers, e.g. channel surfing</li></ul>

## Prioritize tasks to get the most out of your time

Are you spending the bulk of your time on activities that are urgent, but not important? These can be time black holes—periods of time that just seem to disappear, without much to show for them. See if you can shift your priorities

to activities that are more urgent, but important. These tasks don't seem as pressing, but they represent the things that you really care about. At the end of the day, you'll feel your time was well-spent.

**THREE-STEP PROCESS TO PRIORITIZE TASKS IN YOUR DAY**  
**First, make a list of everything you want to accomplish in the day**

**Categorize each item according to its urgency and importance**

	urgent	not urgent
important		
not important		

**Prioritize tasks to get the most out of your time**  
Now that you’ve identified which tasks are a priority for you today, map them to a specific time and place in your schedule or planner.