Prioritized To-Do List

Overview:

A to-do list of everything you need to accomplish in a day is perhaps the most important tool in really taking control of your time. How do you make and prioritize the tasks on such a list? Each evening or early morning you should make a "to-do" list showing everything you have to do during the coming day. The list alone is not enough, however. Unless you set priorities, you are likely to first do all the items that are easiest and require the least effort, wearing yourself out and never getting to the really vital, and perhaps unpleasant, tasks on the list. You'll finish all those small tasks, but you won't make progress on the big, important ones, like starting a term paper. The key to overcoming human nature and completing those "biggies" is to break them down into many small tasks, each requiring only a short block of time. Then add the small tasks to your daily to-do lists and watch yourself make real progress.

Developing Your To-Do List:

- List everything you'd like to accomplish today, even though it might be unrealistic.
- Set priorities among the items on the list by designating each as "A," "B," or "C" priority.
  - A's are the top-priority items that must be done
  - B's are next in importance and should be done if possible
  - C's are low priorities that should be done only if there is time left after A's & B's are completed.
- Be sure to list the amount of time you think you'll need to accomplish the task. This will help you plan when you can complete it.

Don't make the mistake of marking every item as an A; make decisions about the relative importance of each item.

- The final step is setting priorities within the A, B and C groups. Which of the very important A-tasks is the most important or most urgent one? That is item A-1. Which task is next in urgency? That is A-2. Number each item next to the letter indicating its priority (A-1, A-2, B-1, B-2, B-3, C-1, etc).
- This tells you exactly where to begin working to get the most profit from the next 24 hours. You may wish to re-write your list in the order of urgency (A-1 to C-4, for instance), but it's not really necessary.
- The items should be done in order of priority: A-1, A-2, A-3, B-1, B-2, C-1, etc. Any uncompleted items should be carried forward to the next day's to-do list.
- An item's priority will change from day to day. Picking up a suit at the cleaner may be a C on Monday, but by Friday it may become an A if you need to wear it Friday night.
- Try writing your to-do lists on index cards, on the form provided below, or in your calendar/planner. Keep your list with you all day and cross items off as you complete them.
- You can also try an online to-do list organization tools including:
  - Monday, Trello, Todoist, Google Reminders, or Outlook Tasks

REMEMBER: It takes 2-3 weeks for a new technique to become a habit but only 7 days to break it. Stay with this long enough for it to become a habit, and you will likely find that it helps you to be far more productive with far less stress.

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Remember: find tools, (with instructions and examples), tips, and tricks at smu.edu/ASD

TO DO LIST

Priority A / B / C	Task	Time Needed	Done
A	*Complete UNIV reading drill*	*20 min*	✔
C	*Buy and send Mom's birthday card*	*20 min*	
B	*Connect with group for PYSC group project*	*1 hour*	
B	*Schedule flight home for break*	*1 hour*	✔
A	*Complete research for WRTR paper*	*2 hours*	✔
B	*Complete outline for WRTR paper*	*1 hour*	
C	*Create grocery list for weekend*	*15 min*	
A	*Complete reading for tomorrow's BIOL class*	*45 min*	✔

Remember to move any incomplete tasks to your next To Do List!

A = Urgent	**B = Important**	**C = Will Be urgent later**
first priority- complete earliest	second priority	last priority for now

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TO DO LIST

DATE: _____

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