UP Skills for Work

Time Management

ABC LifeLiteracyCanada

Welcome to *UP Skills for Work!*

The program helps you build your skills for learning, work, and life, which include:

- Motivation
- Attitude
- Accountability
- Presentation
- Collaboration
- Time Management
- Adaptability
- Stress Management
- Reading
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Digital
- Problem Solving
- Confidence
- Communication
- Creativity and Innovation

These skills are used in nearly every job and in daily life. They also allow us to learn new skills and to adapt to changes. Improving your skills can help you to build a good life for yourself.

You can also take these courses on ABCskillshub.ca

This workshop

Employers value workers who can manage their time well. Employees with good time management get more done, meet deadlines, and handle busy times better.

In this workshop, we will look at some skills that help with time management. We'll also talk about common time-wasting habits we fall into, and how to overcome them.

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Canada

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What is time management?

Does it seem like there is just too much to do in a day? Dealing with work, family and personal needs can be a challenge. Sometimes it feels like we work hard all day without any results.

Time management skills help us to get more done with less stress. Good time managers get the most important tasks finished, even if there isn't time to do everything. They organize, **prioritize** and plan their tasks. They also avoid wasting time.

Employers know that people with good time management are more **productive** and will help their business.

At home, time management can help you make time for your own priorities—like going to the gym, taking a course, or having fun with your kids.

Time management is making decisions about how you spend your time.

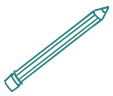
Prioritizing is figuring out which tasks are the most important and making sure they get done first.

Being productive is getting a lot done in the time available.

Getting started

Put a check mark in the box beside the statement that sounds most like you.

- ☐ I usually prioritize my time and manage it well.
- ☐ I get my main tasks done, but I often feel rushed. Sometimes there is just too much to do.
- ☐ I don't always choose the right priorities. I would like to manage my time better.
- ☐ I have some special challenges that make time management difficult for me.



- ☐ None of the above. Here's my situation:

"Lack of time" is one of the most common stresses of modern life. Nearly everyone feels like they have too much to do!

And nearly everyone can benefit from sharpening their time management skills.

Let's talk about it

Is managing your time well important in your job? Important to you at home? In what ways?

What does good time management look like at work? Write your ideas below.

What does poor time management look like at work? Write your ideas below.

List some examples of good and poor time management at home in the table below.

Time management at home

Good time management	Poor time management

Setting priorities

What we have time for depends on the priorities we set.

Read the story below:

The Jar of Life

A philosophy teacher stood before his class. He picked up a large, empty jar. He then filled it with rocks.

“Is the jar full?” he asked his students. “Yes,” everyone answered.

The teacher took a box of small pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar and the pebbles settled between the rocks.

He asked once more: “Is the jar full?”

“Yes,” said his students.

The teacher next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. The sand filled up all the space left.

“Now is the jar full?” he asked. Everyone agreed that now it was really full.

The teacher pulled a pot of tea from under the table and poured it into the jar, filling the empty space between the sand.

Everyone laughed.

“This jar represents your life,” the teacher said. “The rocks are the most important things, like your family, your health, your passions. If everything else was lost, but you had these, your life would still be full. The pebbles are other things that matter, like your job, your home, and your community. The sand is everything else, the small stuff.”

“If you put the sand into the jar first,” he said, “there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the things that don’t matter, you will never have room for the things that are most important to you.”

"Take care of the rocks first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One of the students asked, "What about the tea?"

The teacher said: "I am glad you asked. The tea shows that no matter how full your life seems, there is always time for a cup of tea with a friend."

Let's talk about it

- What are some "rocks" in your life?
- What are some common time-wasters?
- Why is it so easy to let the "small stuff" fill up our time?
- Is there anything you do now to make sure your important priorities are taken care of?
- Now, let's think about all the questions you just answered in terms of your workplace. What are the rocks? What are the pebbles? What is the sand?

Don't forget down time!

When life gets busy, we often give up our time to relax or have fun. But some down time is important. It helps us recover from stress and stay healthy.

Setting priorities at work

When you have a large list of tasks, it's not always clear what the priorities are. Asking yourself the following questions can help:

- Will completing this task have an **impact** on the company, co-workers or **customers**? (If so, it's probably **important**.)
- Will there be a **bad consequence** if the task is not completed? (If so, it's **important**.)
- Does the task need to be completed by a **certain time**, and is the deadline soon? (If so, the task is **urgent**).
- Tasks that are both **important** and **urgent** will usually be your top **priority**.

Practising what we've learned

Stefan is a furnace technician at a small heating company. One day in January, his boss is sick and doesn't come to work. There are too many scheduled customer service calls for Stefan to handle alone. How can Stefan decide which calls to make?

Prioritize Stefan's tasks from 1-5 in the table below and discuss your reasons in the group.

Stefan's tasks

Task	Priority
Inspect and clean furnace.	
Repair or replace broken furnace.	
Give a work estimate for furnace upgrade.	
Repair gas fireplace.	
Extend heating ductwork to new addition.	

Procrastinating

When we are facing a big or unpleasant job, it is very tempting to put it off. We all do it, there are so many ways to procrastinate! We might:

- Do a bunch of small, unimportant (but easier) jobs first.
- Go for coffee and chat with coworkers.
- Check social media.

The problem is that a big job becomes *more* difficult if we don't start until we are almost out of time.

To procrastinate means to avoid or delay doing a task.

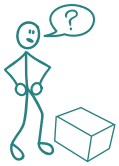
Let's talk about it

- What jobs, at home or at work, do you tend to avoid? Why is it hard to get started on these jobs?
- What are your favourite ways to put off working on a task?
- What are some strategies you use to get back on track?
- How do you feel after you finally complete a big job?

Meet Victor

Victor's boss gives him a number of tasks to do before leaving for a day-long meeting. Victor decides to start with his usual morning tasks and get those out of the way first. Then he takes a break. Joe, his friend at work, needs some help with a heavy job so Victor spends half an hour helping out.

It is nearly lunchtime when Victor starts on his new tasks. But by now he has forgotten one of them, and he is not sure how to do another. When his boss returns late in the day, Victor has only finished one of the tasks he's been asked to complete.



Meet Mara

Mara is already pretty busy when her manager says, "We have two new orders to pack today and I need the supply cupboard cleaned out and organized. Mara, will you take care of that?"

Mara writes down the new jobs. She looks over the order forms and sees that one item has to have special shipping. She says, "I've never used this shipping method before. Is there someone who can show me how?" Before going back to her task, Mara contacts that person and sets a time later that morning to go over the shipping process together.

Let's talk about it

- What do you think of what Victor did?
- What do you think of what Mara did?

Tips to stay on track

When you are avoiding an important task, try one or more of these strategies:

- **Just start**. Even if you don't know how to do the whole task, taking the first step will get things going.
- **Ask for advice**. If there are steps you aren't clear on, who can help you understand the job better?
- **Break it into smaller steps**. A big job can seem overwhelming. But if it's broken down into a few smaller tasks, you can take them on one at a time.
- **Give yourself a deadline for each step**. Many people work better when they have a deadline. And planning a due date for each part of the job keeps the work progressing steadily.
- **Get rid of distractions**. Put your phone away. Clear your work space so there is only the task at hand to deal with.
- **Reward yourself**. When you've completed a goal—either the whole job or one of its steps—that's the time to take a break and do something you enjoy.

Let's talk about it

- What do you think of these suggestions?
- What tips would you add?

Planning your time

Meet Priya

Mornings are always rushed in Priya's family. It is difficult to get her three children fed and ready for school, and then get to work on time. Something always seems to go wrong! A form needs to be filled out for school, or someone's mitts are missing.

Priya's supervisor finally speaks to her. "You have been late too often," he said.

"I'm sorry," says Priya. "I missed my bus and..."

"No more excuses," says the supervisor. "I need you to get here on time."

Let's talk about it

- Brainstorm some ideas to help Priya get to work on time. How can she organize her time and tasks so that mornings are not so rushed? Write your ideas below.

Planning your day

When there is a lot to do in a day, planning it out ahead of time can really help. Try this exercise:

- Write down everything you want and need to do on your next day off work. Put a star beside those that are highest priority (important or urgent).
- Use the form below to plan when you will do each thing, and how long it will take. Start with those that are high-priority. Is there room in the day to meet all your goals? If not, what will you choose to postpone? Or could someone in your family help out?
- Check off each task as it's completed.

Plan for a day

Time	Activity	Done
8 am		
9 am		
10 am		
11 am		
12 noon		
1 pm		
2 pm		
3 pm		
4 pm		
5 pm		
6 pm		
7 pm		
8 pm		
9 pm		

Time management setbacks

Time management can be a big challenge for some people, for many different reasons:

- A person may have more important demands on their time than most people. For example, some people have two jobs, or family members who need a lot of extra care. They may have very little down time and don't get enough rest.
- Some people have a very long way to travel to work and back. Travel uses up a big block of time each day.
- Everyone's brain and body work differently, and that can affect the amount of time we need to complete different tasks. We can't always see the extra challenges others may have.

If you really struggle with time management, the first step is to figure out why, and what would help:

- If you are looking after a family member who is unwell or who needs extra support, you might be able to access a home support program to give you some time off. Ask your doctor or caseworker.
- If you have difficulty staying organized and focused, you might get coaching at a community counseling agency or through your workplace or school.
- If you are juggling a busy family life and work or school, you might be able to team up with a friend to share babysitting and other jobs.

Strategies for good time management

There are many strategies and habits that can improve our time management ability. Review the strategies below. Check those that you already use well and any that you want to try.

Ten strategies for good time management

Strategy	I do this well	I want to try this
1. **Keep a to-do list**. Write down your tasks, and keep the list updated through the day.		
2. **Set priorities.** Review your list at the start of the day and identify the important and urgent tasks.		
3. **Schedule tasks.** Plan a time to work on your priority tasks. Give yourself deadlines for completion.		
4. **Get organized.** An organized workspace, like a desk, helps you focus on the actual work rather than looking for missing items, like a document you need. Breaking a big job into steps is another way to organize your work.		
5. **Minimize time wasters.** When you are trying to focus, avoid distractions and interruptions like social media sites, and listen to music that helps you focus.		
6. **Stop procrastinating.** Putting off a task does not make it any easier, and can cause a lot of stress when we run out of time.		
7. **Do one thing at a time.** Life today is full of multi-tasking, but we work better when we focus just on the task at hand.		
8. **Take breaks.** Short breaks help us deal with stress, renew energy, and refocus. Use them as a reward after you've worked hard or made good progress.		
9. **Look after yourself.** Good time management takes concentration. To be at your best, get enough rest, healthy food, and exercise.		
10. **Be flexible.** Life doesn't always follow our plan! Sometimes priorities change. Sometimes we have more time than we expected.		

Congratulations!

You've completed the *UP Skills for Work* **Time Management** workbook. You've taken a step in building skills for learning, work, and life.

What did you learn about your time management skills? What would you like to improve?

For the last activity, we hope you will make a **pledge** to continue building your time management skills.

A **pledge** is a serious promise to yourself or to others.

The pledge can be personal, or you can share it with others.

My pledge

I pledge to work on my time management skills by:

Sometimes a pledge needs an **action plan**: a list of steps you'll take to make your pledge happen.

My action plan

What do I need to do first?

Who will support me?

How will I overcome setbacks and obstacles?