



Tool: Time Blocking

Divide your diary, and get more done

What is it?

Time blocking is a time management technique where you intentionally schedule your time across a day, one block at a time. It challenges you to distinguish different kinds of work, and deliberately focus on getting them done within a fixed period of time.

When is it useful?

Time blocking can support prioritisation and boost productivity personally, and is also a very useful way for managers to support team members in identifying the kinds of work they're prioritising, and when in the day it's being scheduled. Using colour to distinguish different kinds of tasks can be very useful here.

Time Block Tips



- ✓ Experiment with time blocking across a week and don't worry if plans need to change. Review and adjust your time blocks as you need to.
- ✓ Consider what kinds of tasks suit different times of the day. Is some deep work best scheduled first thing?
- ✓ Allocate brain break and buffer time between tasks.
- ✓ Talk team members through your time blocks —creating transparency and inviting mutual testing and learning.
- ✓ Experiment with colour in your calendar to distinguish different kinds of tasks.

“Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.”

Cyril Parkinson. AKA Parkinson's Law

Here's how a time blocked day might look in your diary, with some useful colour coding.

-  Deep, solo work
-  Team work
-  Breaks

Email catch up

8am — 9.30am

Team meeting

9.30—10.45am

Brain break

Client research

11 —12.30

Lunch

12.30 —1.30

Client workshop

1.30 — 5pm



Tool: The Eisenhower Matrix

Map out your priorities, and help others do the same

What is it?

Imagined by former US president, Dwight Eisenhower, the Eisenhower Matrix offers us a way to keep our priorities in perspective.

The matrix neatly challenges us to quantify any potential use of our time on two axis —Urgency and Importance.

When can it work best?

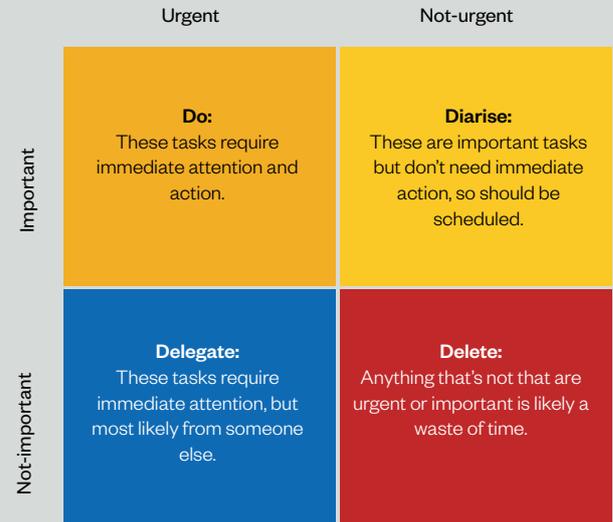
You might want to introduce the Eisenhower Matrix to support:

Prioritisation: Using this as a visual to aid a conversation with a team on where tasks sit can help them to consider what they should be prioritising.

Quantifying time: Seeing how many things they have in the urgent/important and important/not urgent can help to decide where to schedule work for the future and where to focus time immediately.

“I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.”

— Dwight D. Eisenhower



Using it as a team tool

1. Draw a 2x2 matrix with 'Urgent' on one axis and 'Important' on the other, creating four quadrants. You can scribble this easily by hand, or use a simple table in Word.
2. Ask your team member to add their tasks to the relevant boxes based on their importance and urgency, then plan completion of tasks based on the box you have positioned them in – for example, 'do first', 'schedule', 'delegate' or 'eliminate'.
3. Use the output as a basis for discussion about how your team member uses their time.

For example, you might ask:

- Looking at your current to-do list, how much of what's on it feels important, but not urgent?
- Are there recurrent people who add to your 'Important and Urgent' quadrant? What feedback might be helpful to share with them?
- How would it feel to diarise more things that are Important but not Urgent?
- How could you bring some colour into your calendar, in order to keep those Important but not Urgent tasks more visible to yourself?



Tool: Can > If statements

Defend your time, and protect your relationships

What is it?

A Can > If statement helps to create clear conditions where certain actions or outcomes are contingent on specific conditions being met.

It can be used to support your team to manage expectations, or push-back on requests for their time. It does not refuse the request, but provides specificity for how they could possibly action it.

When can it work best?

You may want to introduce Can > If statements to support:

— Pushing back: Providing a structured statement can help those struggling to saying no.

— Managing others: This statement could help those you line manage to manage the expectations of those they line manage.

— Managing up: It can sometimes feel more challenging to manage expectations of senior colleagues because of the power dynamics at play. This tool provides a clear structure for this.

Three examples...

“I can help pull that together, if it’s something we can put in the diary for next week?”

“I can definitely offer some feedback on the presentation, if you can let me know what would be most helpful to have some feedback on.”

“I can action that, if we can first discuss my concerns about the impact on the wider timings.”



Can you picture someone that makes regular requests of you?

Make a note of them now, and get experimental at the earliest opportunity.

I can.....

If....