

How to schedule your time more effectively

Table of Contents

Why is scheduling important?.....	1
How to create a schedule	2
Scheduling tips.....	3
How to estimate time needed to complete tasks	5

Why is scheduling important?

A well-executed schedule serves as a blueprint for a successful day. It provides a clear plan for accomplishing your goals.

By distributing your time more intentionally, scheduling allows you to protect necessary time for your priorities, preventing you from falling behind.

A schedule also helps you keep organised. It allows you to manage various commitments such as meetings, appointments, and engagements.

Sticking to a schedule also aids in avoiding distractions. Having a predefined plan for the day helps you stay focused on essential activities.

Planning also allows you to anticipate and address potential issues before they arise. By assessing the day or week's tasks in advance, you can identify if you might have overcommitted or if your workload is too high. You can then take corrective actions against this.

How to create a schedule

Pick your method

Are you going to create a physical schedule using pen and paper, or are you going to use digital software?

What length of time will your schedule cover? Are you planning for a week? A month?



List your tasks in order of priority

Firstly, list all of the tasks that you can think of that you need to complete in this time period.

Then, reorder them by priority, with your most important tasks first.



Estimate the amount of time needed per task

Estimate how much time you will need to complete each task.
How long has it taken if you've worked on a similar task before?



Schedule your top priorities

Schedule your top priority tasks.

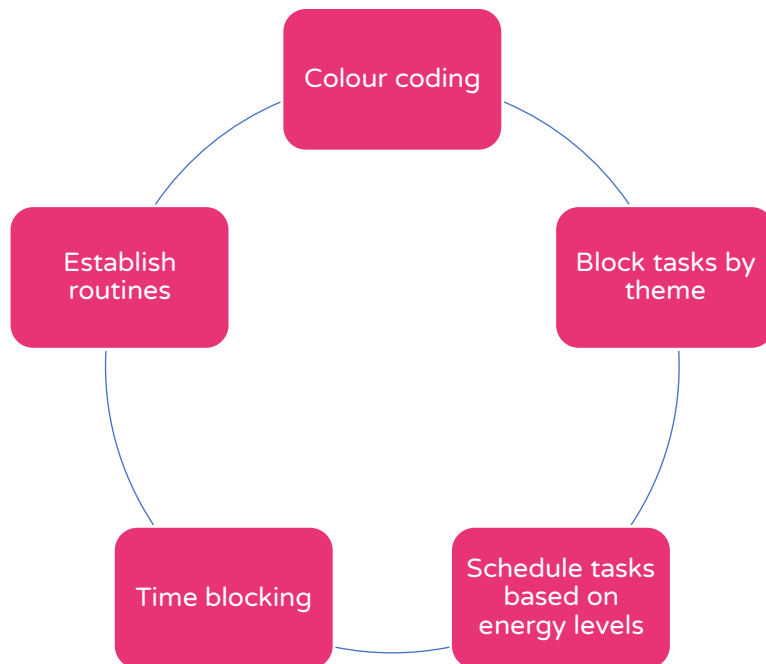
Get them out of the way at the beginning of the day/week, so you don't get distracted by other tasks as time goes on.



Schedule the rest

If you have time left over, you can now schedule your lower priority tasks.
If anything doesn't need to be done, either remove the task, or reschedule it to the following week.

Scheduling tips



Colour coding

- Assign different colours for different activities.
- For example, meetings in red, admin in green, project 1 tasks in blue, project 2 tasks in orange.
- This will make it visually easier for you to see what you are doing.

Block tasks/days by theme

- Assign each day of the week to a specific theme.
- For example, Mondays could be reserved for product development, Tuesday for client relations, Wednesday for admin work, and so on.
- This will help you remain focused on that specific group of tasks.

Schedule tasks based on energy levels

- Do you work best first thing in the morning, or do you tend to get a burst of energy after lunch?
- Schedule your most important or energy intensive tasks for the time of day where you tend to have the most energy.
- This will maximise your productivity.

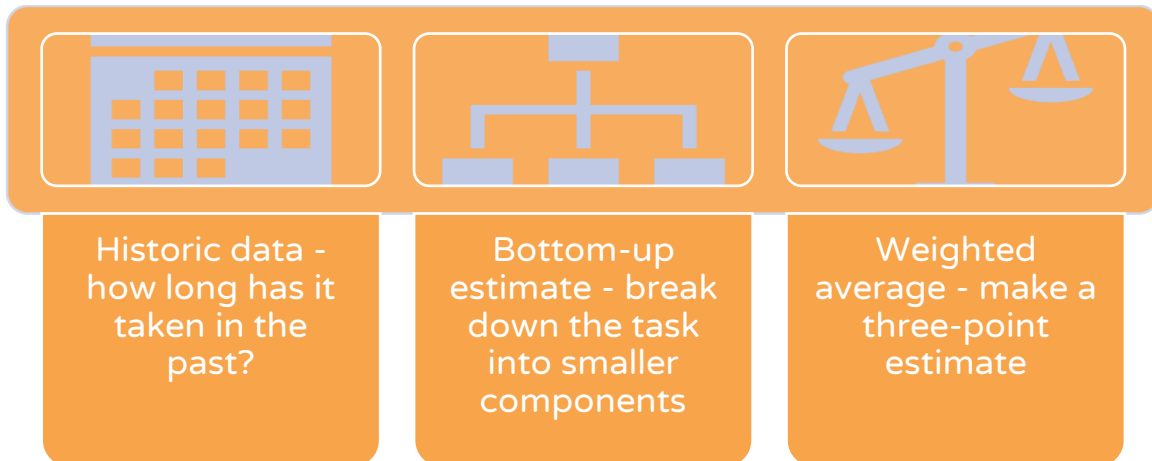
Time blocking

- Block out chunks of time for certain activities.
- For example, schedule all of your meetings in one three-hour block.
- This way, you're not breaking up your day with meetings, so your attention doesn't keep switching.

Establish routines

- Once you have figured out what works for you, establish a routine for yourself.
- For example, replying to all of your emails in the first 30 minutes of the day, or going for a 15-minute walk after your meeting block is complete.
- By establishing a routine, recurring tasks will become habits and require less planning overall.

How to estimate time needed to complete tasks



Historic data

- The most straightforward method to estimate your time is to base it on historic data.
- How much time has a similar task taken you in the past?
- Examples: previous time taken to read a report, complete a sales order, research a new client etc.

Bottom-up estimate

- Break down one larger task into smaller steps.
- Estimate how much time it would take to complete each of these steps.
- Add up all of these estimates to get a total time estimate.

Weighted average

- Make three estimates:
 - An optimistic estimate of how long the task will take. (O)
 - A realistic estimate of how long it'll take. (M)
 - A pessimistic estimate – so, what is the longest amount of time it could take? (P)
- You then plug those numbers into the following formula: $O + 4(M) + P / 6$
- This will give you an estimate of the overall number of hours to complete a task.