



TIME MANAGEMENT

Organizational Skills Domain

There is a famous quote by Benjamin Franklin that states, “If you want something done, ask a busy person.”

Chances are you volunteer with 4-H not because you have the time, but because you greatly care about youth and your community. Many 4-H volunteers are very busy people with little free time. Balancing the responsibilities of work, personal life, and volunteering while keeping time for rest and play can be a challenge.

In its resource, *Making Time for Your Community*, Kansas State University offers that applying time management strategies can help you:

- Maintain balance between the many areas in your life that demand your time and energy.
- Identify which items to prioritize.
- Enjoy time to rest and recreate without feeling guilty.
- Feel accomplished and reduce stress.
- Ward off procrastination and not waste time³.

Three skills have been identified that separate time management success from failure. They are awareness, arrangement, and adaptation. These three skill areas can help you achieve effective time management¹. Here are some ideas to increase your time management skill set.

Awareness - Think realistically about your time by understanding it is a limited resource.

- Find your peak performance time.
- Treat your time like it's money - make a budget.
- Record how long you've spent on tasks with very clear deadlines, rather than how much time you have left.
- After finishing a project, evaluate how long you thought it would take and how long it took.
- Think about how the tasks you are doing right now will help or hurt you in the future.
- When you think you might be spending too much time on an activity, step back and evaluate its importance.

Arrangement – Design and organize your goals, plans, schedules, and tasks to effectively use time.

- Prioritize activities and obligations.
- Know the difference between urgency and importance.
- Use a calendar app and schedule things immediately.
- Schedule uninterrupted time to dedicate to your most important projects.
- Be sure to allow enough time per task.



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- When struggling to attain a goal that seems to be too challenging, set a less difficult version of the goal.

Adaptation - Monitor your use of time while performing activities, including adjusting to interruptions or changing priorities.

- Tie your time management behaviors to habits you already exhibit.
- Use short bursts of effort.
- When using reminders, they should have detailed explanations or descriptions.
- Think about best-case/worst-case scenarios as you plan to prepare for unexpected challenges.
- Create do-not-disturb time slots and block social media sites during critical work time.

Establish a Time Management Plan

A time management plan can tie together the three skill areas above to help you achieve your goals. Here are three types of plans offered by Kansas State University³:

List of projects

The simplest time plan is a list of large and small projects. These can be done as you have time and feel like doing them. When you have a lot of free time, this list may be all that you need to manage time effectively.

Series of projects

The series of projects is like the list of projects, but it involves putting the activities into an order of priority. Start with your list of

large and small projects, and decide which activities must be done first, second, third, etc. For example, balancing your checkbook may be more important now than writing up the minutes of the last board meeting. You will, however, accomplish both tasks before spending time on trivial matters.

Detailed schedule

A detailed schedule includes both an order of projects and estimates of the time necessary for each project. This type of scheduling has special value to people whose obligations leave them with little free time. It is also important to those who are just beginning to manage time.

You will need to look at your entire day or week and decide how important the various activities are, and how much time you will spend on them. If you know exactly what you are doing, why you are doing it, and approximately how long each task will take, you will work more effectively. While planning takes time at first, it saves time later.

Time Management and Self Care

Do not shortchange the need for time to do activities that bring you joy, relaxation, comfort, or rejuvenation. Your physical and emotional health benefits from scheduled personal time. This time is a personal investment in future productivity and can minimize burnout and procrastination². When we do not take the time to rest it only shortchanges our effectiveness the next day.⁴



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Using Tech to Help Your “To-Do’s”

In addition to the skills and practices named above, there are several time management tech tools and applications that 4-H volunteers can use to manage their time in planning youth programs. Many of these tools can also help you work and communicate with others involved in the planning. Here are some examples:

Google Calendar - This free online calendar tool can help you keep track of important dates, deadlines, and meetings. You can set reminders and share your calendar with other members.

Trello - This project management tool can help you organize tasks and keep track of progress. Tasks can be organized by creating boards, lists, and cards to visualize

work and collaborate with others. This is a great tool if you are planning a larger, more complex undertaking over time, like a fundraiser or big group project.

Evernote - This note-taking tool can help volunteers capture ideas, take notes, and store information. They can also use it to create to-do lists and set reminders.

Forest - This is a mobile app that helps users stay focused and avoid distractions. You can use it to set a timer for a task and earn rewards by staying focused for a certain amount of time.

By using these time management tools and applications, 4-H volunteers can better manage their time and be more efficient in planning club activities and youth programs.



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Resources:

- ¹Dierdorff, Erich C. (2020). *Time Management Is About More Than Life Hacks*. Harvard Business Review, Boston, MA.
- ²Campbell, K.N. and Ellis, S. J. (1998). *The (Help!) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management*. Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.
- ³Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. (2001). *Making Time for Your Community*. <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/EP104.pdf>
- ⁴Skinner, R. D. *22 Leadership Principles*. (1997). Horizon Publishers, Bountiful, UT.

The original resource 4-H Positive Youth Development: Empowerment of Others (VRKC: Volunteer Research, Knowledge, & Competency Taxonomy) was developed by Karla Knoepfli and Rachelle Vetter.

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