



Time Tactics of Very Successful People

by B. Eugene Griessman
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Take-Aways

- Understand and appreciate that your time is precious and has value.
- Establish priorities and determine which of them should become top priorities.
- Staying organized, pacing yourself, planning ahead, anticipating and heading off problems and balancing all aspects of your life are time-saving techniques.
- Know how to make efficient and effective use of technology.
- Know how to be an effective and appropriate “squeaky wheel.”
- Know how to handle others who are squeaky wheels.
- Practice shortcuts while reading and writing.
- Consistently establish and maintain long- and short-term goals to save time, focus effective and produce more.
- Keep your workplace neat and your files in order, so you don’t waste time searching for misplaced items.
- Learn to say no.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall
8

Applicability
9

Innovation
7

Style
8

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Review

Time Tactics of Very Successful People

If B. Eugene Griessman wanted a good subtitle for this book of time-saving tactics, he could use, “Time waits for no one.” He offers many common-sense pointers on how to avoid wasting your time — and how to keep others from wasting it, too. It’s eye-opening to realize and calculate the value and importance of every hour, even your leisure time. People in all walks of life — students, stay-at-home parents, business leaders, teachers, self-employed workers — can glean ideas for using time effectively from this book. If you are a procrastinator, this book will encourage you to “do it now.” While some of the suggestions here may seem too simplistic to those who already employ some time-management tactics, *getAbstract.com* recommends this book for inveterate — if inadvertent — time-wasters. You know who you are.

“The way you think about time and think about yourself will affect everything that happens to you the rest of your life.”

“The difference between being successful and not being successful depends on how you use your daily ration of twenty-four hours.”

Abstract

Get a Handle on your Time

There is no such thing as “free time.” Leisure time exists, of course, but not free time. You may golf, swim, or take a walk, but whatever you pursue, your time has cost and value. Because your time has value, don’t let others waste it with long meetings, never-ending phone conversations, or trivial, time-wasting tasks.

Mentally double whatever money you make for each hour you work to determine the value of your time. How you evaluate not just the cost, but the importance your time — and your worth as a person — affects everything you do. Once you realize that your time is important, you will spend it more wisely. The point is not to be crudely materialistic about your time, but to realize that it is precious. If you have difficulty managing your time, keep a log of how you spend your time for a few days. See what you accomplish. You may gain a new awareness of how you waste time, which will help you find ways to use it more effectively.

Get Organized

Establish your priorities. List all the tasks you must accomplish. Create two lists — a short-term list for those things that you can do quickly, and a long-term list for more time-consuming, top-priority tasks. Select the three most important tasks on each list. Complete those tasks first.

Write down your goals, your aspirations, and your dreams — both long-term and short-term — clearly, concisely, and specifically. You might find it helpful to write them on small note cards so you can carry them with you. They can help focus you on completing your tasks and goals. Unclear, indistinct goals hamper success.

Create a daily, workable to-do list. Write down the next day’s to-do list before you go to bed each night. Make your to-do list comprehensive and fit it onto one sheet. Don’t just scribble notes on small scraps of paper that can get lost. Check your list on a regular basis, to keep from forgetting things or from being late to meetings. You will become more dependable and reliable. Limit the items on your list to those that are the most important. For example, list the six most important things you need to do the next day.

“The strategy is this: Study successful individuals and model what they do.”

“We may have leisure time, but no one has such a thing as free time. You may be lying beside a pool or attending a play, but that’s not free time. All time has value.”

“Time, because it is invisible and intangible, doesn’t get enough respect.”

Assign a time for completion of each task or appointment. If you are a manager, you can provide to-do lists for your staff or workers. Maintain these lists on a central bulletin board or erasable white board.

Increase your Efficiency

Neatness is a powerful time tactic. Have an assigned place for your files, desk items and assorted work tools. When you have finished using an item, return it to its proper place. You must place it somewhere, so it might as well be where it belongs! The next time you need it, it will be easy to find.

Make your workplace work for you. Spend money on the files, tools, and equipment you need to work efficiently and effectively. Store your supplies so you can reach them effectively, with the fewest steps and least effort. Don’t store things on top of your desk — file all your papers. Schedule time to catch up on reorganizing and reworking your files.

Learn to rely on checklists (not to be confused with to-do lists). Checklists — sometimes called “quick sheets” — list the steps you must take to complete a task efficiently. For example: Make a checklist of everything you need in your suitcase when you take a trip. Keep the checklist in your suitcase and leave it there for each time you travel. Or, make a checklist with step-by-step instructions on operating the office photocopier. This can save a lot of time when someone who does not regularly uses the copier needs it.

Learn to Listen / Learn to Focus

Listening is one of the most important factors in effective communication. Good listeners are most likely to do a job correctly, notice opportunities that others miss, help friends, and win admiration. Some secrets to good listening include:

- Know that listening is an active, not passive, process. Be alert to what is being said. Tune in. Be focused.
- Don’t be too talkative. You can’t talk and listen at the same time.
- Even if you are an expert, don’t make yourself look overly important. Give other people an opportunity to talk.
- Show genuine interest in other people. Ask them how they feel or think about particular topics and situations.
- Concentrate on what is being said. Shut out distractions and pay attention.
- Don’t jump to hasty conclusions. Be sure you have heard all the information.
- Don’t keep thinking about what you want to say next. Listen to what the speaker is saying and don’t interrupt.
- Encourage others to tell you more. Give good feedback on what has been said to you.
- Listen to a speaker’s ideas, not just to the words.
- Concentrate on the speaker’s key facts. Learn to block out the trivial.
- Let the speaker know you are listening. Maintain good eye contact, nod, or make short responses.
- “Back burner” your own worries. Concentrate on what is being said to you instead of your own personal concerns.
- Even if the speaker’s mannerisms irritate you, put your feelings aside and listen.

“Despite the negative connotations of ‘tidy’ and ‘neat,’ arranging things in an orderly manner can be a powerful time tactic.”

“Because so much effort is devoted to reading in our information-rich world, it’s important to know how to read certain kinds of material quickly and efficiently, and some material not at all.”

“Ask yourself, ‘Is there an easier way to do this?’ Looking for the easy way out can be the smartest thing you can do. Don’t confuse busyness with efficiency.”

- Be alert for nonverbal clues. Develop skills for reading body language. Pay attention to what “isn’t being said,” and to questions that are not fully answered.
- Give feedback about what you have heard, and get feedback from what you have said. You could say something like: “Just to make certain I understand what you said...” or “This is how I interpret what you’ve told me...”

Avoid Procrastination

Don’t spend so much time getting ready to start a project that you have no time left to do it. Get it done now. Don’t start a project, put it away, and then start it again, wondering, “Now, where was I?” Some projects cannot be finished in one sitting, but many can. Be sure you have the will to finish what you start. Deal with unpleasant situations first. Immediately addressing tasks that are uncomfortable or unpleasant can sometimes make them more bearable. And once they are done, you are free to do something you relish. Missing deadlines may cause you to lose business, or pay a fine. Don’t procrastinate!

Avoid Time-Wasting Activities and Projects

If you become involved in an activity that is not worth doing, you may think that you have accomplished something simply because you have spent time on it. Instead, be sure that your efforts show good results.

Things that are not worth doing use up time and steal energy from things that are worthwhile. Sometimes, even worthless chores take on lives of their own. For example, people occasionally will continue doing something a certain way simply because they have done it that way for a long time — even if the effectiveness or the need has been lost. Sometimes things not worth doing have babies. People form committees, and then subcommittees, all to discuss how to do the thing that is not worth doing. Do not involve yourself in this tangled web of wasted time.

Take Time-Saving Action

Be decisive. Practice making sound, practical decisions. This process takes thought and effort, but you can master it. Understand your objectives, look at your alternatives, consider your risks, and then make your decision:

- If you find yourself planning a meeting simply to convey information, don’t meet. Relay information via e-mails or office mail instead.
- If you are calling a meeting to solve problems, get a head start by sending out advance information on the topic to be discussed, so people can start thinking of solutions. Ask participants to arrive prepared.
- Begin meetings on time. Stay on track and follow an agenda. When you have completed the agenda and discussed everything necessary, quit!
- Don’t adopt every responsibility, situation and problem that others try to pass on to you. Select only those matters you can efficiently handle. Make certain other people mind their responsibilities. Don’t take on what is not yours.
- Learn to say “no.”

The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease

Don’t let people waste your valuable time by giving you poor or inefficient service. To be an effective “squeaky wheel:”

- Deal with reputable companies and organizations. Efficient people eliminate com-

“You may not be able to control the situation, but you can always control your reaction.”
[Austin McGonigle]

“On procrastination: ‘The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now.’” [Chinese proverb]

plaining time. If a problem does occur, they know how to fix it, and they throw in something extra to keep the customer satisfied.

- Be sure that you have sufficient information to back up your complaint. Have all the facts first. Speak with respect and gentleness. If you are noisy and rude, you will make enemies of potential friends.
- Complain to someone who can fix the problem. Ask for someone in authority and have a quiet conversation.
- Begin your complaint with a compliment. For example, if you have a complaint in a restaurant, tell the manager that you came to that restaurant because of its excellent reputation. Have a positive starting point.
- Control your emotions. If you lose your temper, you have lost the contest. Even if you are embarrassed, have lost time and money, or are very annoyed, stay in control of what you say and how you say it.
- Limit your complaint to matters at hand. Don’t complain about minor things.
- Remember complaints can be good. An effective, well-handled complaint can help a company or organization improve, save time and become more focused.

Therefore, you also want to know how to deal effectively with squeaky wheels who complain to you or about your product or service:

- Treat complaints as opportunities to improve your organization.
- Analyze and evaluate the complaint to determine what part of it is useful.
- Evaluate the complainer. Was he or she overwrought, loud and emotional? Or was the complainer logical and sensible?
- Create some psychological distance between yourself and the complainer. This takes great effort and practice, but it is worth it if the complaint is harsh and personal.
- Make sure you understand the complaint. Ask the complainer, “Would you mind if I wrote this down?” This shows that you are listening and that you care.
- Determine what you can do to correct the problem. Then, do it.
- Deal with the problem cheerfully, not grudgingly.

About The Author

B. Eugene Griessman, Ph.D., is a noted author, speaker, professor, media personality, and corporation consultant. He is author and producer of the one-man play, *Lincoln Live*. Griessman has taught at many universities including the College of William and Mary, Auburn University, Georgia Tech, and the University of Islamabad in Pakistan. He has written six books, including the award-winning, *The Achievement Factors*.

Buzz-Words

Checklists and quick sheets / **Efficiency** / **Goals** / **Priorities** / **Squeaky wheels** / **Time tactics** / **Time-wasting activities**