

# Time Management

Brownbag, Linguistics Department, UCSD

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## Strategies Discussed

- Make a done list (rather than a to-do list). What have you gotten done today? Especially the things that weren't on your to-do list.
- Daily writing habits: Ideally write 30 minutes a day
  - This will work differently if you're still taking courses, but try to carve out time regularly (during your most productive time of the day) to write.
  - Don't spend your days only focusing on the things that are most urgent. By then you will have neglected your writing far too long.
- Break down tasks into smaller chunks (down to 2 minutes) - those chunks won't be as overwhelming and will be able to be slotted in throughout the day wherever you have time.
- Generally: write at your most productive time of the day
- Use programs like SelfControl to block websites that are distracting you
- Treat the PhD like a job. This might mean different things to different people. It could mean only working 9-5, it could mean working a set number of hours per week. It could mean that if you work overtime one day, you should make it up with some time off.
- Self-imposed deadlines
  - Tell your advisor
  - Tell a friend/classmate
  - Self-impose external deadlines: schedule conference abstract application deadlines, make it a final project for a class.
- Pomodoro method
  - Could be useful to help get started/stay focused for 20-30 minutes
  - Could be useful for working for 1-2 hours at a time and remembering to take breaks regularly
- Make reading more active to prevent distractions
  - Highlight, take notes
  - Make sure you're in the right space - where do you read best
  - Reading on computer, on a tablet, printed out - what works best?
- Building habits is the best way to make the most out of your time and get the most done

## Other things discussed

- Recognize that everything thinks they're doing less work than everyone else (we're all working hard!)
- We're good at telling ourselves that we don't know as much as everyone else - that our knowledge and expertise doesn't count (it does!)
- Imposter syndrome doesn't go away
- Not everything works for you
  - e.g. is it better for you to start with the hardest thing or is it easier to ease into work with an easy/mindless task?
  - setting self-imposed deadlines might motivate some people, but might induce more stress in others
- Goal- vs. process-oriented tasks. Notice which ones work best for you.
- Specialize. Think about what you want to be known for. You can't be an expert in everything.

## Cat's bonus tips that we didn't have time to talk about

- 5-year plan: I have a 5-year plan that I made before I started the program. I update it with conference application deadlines, what big deadlines I have (e.g. comps paper), any big phases in my research (e.g. summer fieldwork). I have it taped up over my desk so I can always see the big picture.
- I put everything in Google Calendar. When I answer emails, I immediately put important dates/events in the calendar. If I'm working and I remember I need to do something, I set a reminder as an event in my calendar so I get a notification about it at the relevant time. If I have a deadline, I put an event the morning of to make sure I've done it, I've submitted it, and give myself a safety net in case I forgot about it.
- I use different calendars within google calendar. I have added different calendars for personal, admin, general PhD things, classes, etc. They're all color-coded.
- I make a weekly to-do list with all my readings (and when they need to be read by), homework deadlines, etc. I cross them off with a red pen and it's very satisfying.