

Essential Organizing

Free your space. Free your mind.

Do your lists have lists?

the task of managing all those tasks...

Welcome to another edition of Essential Organizing's *Overcoming the Overwhelm*, where we bring great tips and tricks to help you be more productive and organized in your daily work operations.

Task management can be a huge struggle with staying stress-free and focused throughout the workday. As with all aspects of how we approach organizing, it's all about what is going to work for you. Below are a few options for how to track all of the millions of things you need to accomplish.

Categories

Break the lists into categories by what their action is. For this technique, you could have a full sheet of paper, divided into four parts, or however many categories are needed, and title each quadrant with your general categories of tasks. These might look like, *Calls to Make, To Review, Personal, Projects, To Buy, Research*, and so forth. Obviously what categories you should use are entirely up to you. This method can help you budget your time better by examining the number of tasks within a single category. An additional tip with this is to make sure you combine similar activities together. So make all of your phone calls back to back, do your data entry at the same time, etc.

A and B Priorities

For this list technique, you simply divide your task list in half, and write in tasks based on their priority level. This might look like drawing a line down the center of your legal pad and writing at the top of each section, A and B, or labeling your Outlook task list with an A or a B at the beginning of each task. What goes in the A list are all of those tasks that are of greatest importance or need to be accomplished before anything else. Those items that would fall into the B category are of a lower priority, but still of importance and still require attention. The point of this list technique is simplicity, though some people may need to divide the list up into a third section, for C priorities. As you complete those A items, you can focus on tackling the B priorities next. Challenge yourself to stay focused on those A tasks for 60-70% of your working day, depending on what types of tasks you have. Having that A and B right in front of you can often serve as an accountability partner when you find yourself spending unnecessary time on email or chatting with a coworker, which is probably not on your list at all.

Lists with Lists

To make this work, you list out all of your to dos for a particular task. For example, *plan Christmas party* is a task on your list. Undemeath it, you may list out, *pick a date, find invitations, call caterer, get carpets cleaned*, and so forth. Often times we avoid those larger tasks because there are so many parts to completing it, that we'd rather skip over it and move on to a task we know we can finish immediately. By seeing the large task broken into smaller pieces, we are more likely to start planning and getting things done ahead of time, rather than waiting until the last minute to do everything all at once.

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