

The Busy Writer's Book of Checklists

Checklist 10 – Organize Your Time

Aspects of Time Management	
Done	<i>Before you can start using your time more productively, you need to be aware of how you use time. This checklist starts with that, and then goes into other aspects of organizing time.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Know how you use time: draw up a chart in half-hour increments, starting when you get up and finishing with your normal bedtime. Fill in hours already taken (your job, household duties, social/family commitments etc.), and then fill in what's left as you do it. Keep this record for 2 days. Then start culling.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you don't want/need to be on certain committees or a member of social groups, do what you need to (phone/write/visit in person) to opt out.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are carrying too much of the household chores, create a new roster or outsource some of the work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you watch certain TV shows just because others like them, block off that time and use it to write/plot/edit instead. Or else keep a notebook by you and use the time to jot down plot/character ideas based on the show.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eliminate anything that you either don't enjoy or don't need to do.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look at all areas of your life: family, health and fitness, recreation and relaxation, self-development, finances, employment, writing. Rank your goals in order of importance. Now look at the time you are allocating to achieving each of these goals, versus the time you NEED to allocate. Juggle the allocation until the most important goal gets the most time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create timelines to achieve your goals. Remember you don't have to achieve everything at once. Some goals can be worked on in 3-6 months' time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you have decided on the amount of time you want to allocate to your various goals, plan your day the night before. (Especially what you want to achieve with your writing.) Don't overload your 'to do' list. Set yourself up for success, not failure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balance your to-do list to maximize success. Put fast and easy tasks at the top of the list. Next schedule the 'big' tasks - those that need concentration or a large chunk of time. (Place your not-so-favorite tasks here, while you're still fresh. If they threaten to run over time, decide whether it's more productive to finish them now or continue the next day.) Finish off your list with smaller, more easily achievable tasks, or ones that can get away from you (e.g. social networking, email.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	In a notebook, draw up a list of small tasks you can work easily wherever you are. (Make these things you can finish in a short time - anything from 5 to 30 minutes. E.g. think of a name for a character, write an opening hook, write 10 lines of dialogue, and create a setting. Keep the notebook and pen in your handbag.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish a system of prioritizing/dealing with tasks as they arise. The easiest is the 4-D method: Dump it, Delegate it, Delay it, Do it. (The trap for the procrastinator is the 3rd 'D': 'Delay it'. Keep that particular list SMALL.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn how to say "NO" gracefully (but in a way that leaves no room for negotiation). Your time is precious.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Aspects of Time Management: