



Learn How To Prioritize

The Basics

Learn how to prioritize for fun and profit!

I don't know about you, but prioritization is challenging for me. I've struggled with deciding what the most important task is at any given time for years.

My prioritization struggles are rooted in my desire to do all the things. I have a large set of diverse interests that are all vying for my time, along with a family and a house that all need attention. I do my best to prioritize my family above all other endeavors. Beyond my family's concerns, I have hundreds of tasks in Trello kanban boards that have been deprioritized.

I wouldn't say I'm horrible at prioritization, but I can always improve this skill.

Primary Use Cases

- Reduce your stress
- Increase your focus
- Supercharge your productivity
- Boost your sanity

Know When To Fold 'Em

As Kenny Rodgers said, know when to fold 'em. Cutting off time investment in activities that do not fuel our goals helps keep us focused on more important efforts. It takes strength to assess your environment, refocus your energies, and absorb changes in your life. When your daily activities do not provide a return on the investment, it's time to make a change.

Press The Pause Button

When faced with a situation where you must decide how you'll spend your time, try pausing, taking a breath, then responding. Taking your time to respond will help you make the smart decision.

Put Yourself In A Timeout

Prioritization is more difficult if you've been running for months on end. Taking a couple of days off to recharge will put your priorities into better focus. Regular meditation, exercise, and some low effort days will clear your mind and renew your soul. Sorting the to-do list will be much easier and more productive.

Letting your priorities get out of hand can cause you to become someone who lashes out at friends, family, and colleagues due to an overwhelming sense of failure. Putting yourself in a timeout will help you collect your feelings and avoid hurting your loved ones.

Shatter Your Bias

Our confirmation bias blinds us and gives us a false sense of security. If we can prove ourselves wrong, we learn how we are right. Performing this self-test will help ensure you are on the right path and validate that your priorities align with reality.

Do your prioritized tasks align with your goals?

I'll Do It

A to-do list can help you prioritize your work. It can also add to your anxiety if you have too many areas of focus.

Consider creating a won't do list alongside your to-do list. It will assist you in keeping your to-do list clean.

Consider creating an ideas list. If there are things you want to do someday, send your to-do items to your ideas list. It will get the to-do item out of your brain, and you won't feel like you're missing out. Moving old to-do items to your ideas list will help focus your day.

In the book, the 7 habits of highly effective people, Steven Covey defines quadrants you can place to-do items in to define priority. Using these quadrants will help you decide if what you're working on is worth the effort.



Being pro active will allow you to spend your time in the important quadrant, and avoid dropping everything for urgent and important tasks.

Focal Points

Focus is an elusive state of being in the information age. Deciding what to do next is challenging when we don't know where we are going. While learning how to prioritize, you will undoubtedly hear that focus is key.

It's easier to get things done when you know exactly what you want to do. Defining very few focus areas will help you narrow down your to-do list. If you're focusing on improving your health, prioritize to-do items that support that focus.

Rituals, The Good Kind

Habits that help you achieve your goals and align with your focal points are a cheat code for your prioritization efforts. The outcome of the time you spend is defined by the habits you have formed.

If you have a negative habit of using social networking too much in the evenings, it will thwart your health improvement efforts. Displacing your bad habits with good habits and forming daily rituals you enjoy is a highly effective way to simplify your prioritization efforts.

If you already know what you will do for the day, you no longer need to decide what to do next because you can let the habit take over. Your map has been drawn, and your purpose is clear.

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Mandatory Fun

Having fun while you work will improve the likelihood of completing work. All the prioritization in the world won't motivate you to tackle the items on your to-do list. Making a game out of your efforts will often allow you to break out of the monotony associated with a mundane task.

My favorite way to add fun to my daily activities is to work to make them as efficient as possible. It sounds counter to fun, but it motivates me to find creative ways to merge tasks to make them less painful. Catching up on audiobooks while exercising or meditating while sitting in the massage chair maximizes your time spent. Some will say that multitasking diminishes your returns, but having fun is more important than efficiency if you wouldn't otherwise make the efforts.

Because I'm Happy

What makes you happy? The single most important way to prioritize your life is to know what makes you happy. Hopefully, your family makes you happy; if it does, then it's easy to prioritize your efforts around their happiness.

Do you love writing, swimming, driving, dancing? Doing what you love will give you a rush of excitement. It will make moving that to-do item to the top of the list a no-brainer.

After all, is there anything more important than being happy and spreading your happiness to the people you love?

Learn How To Prioritize - Beyond the Basics

Related Content

- The “Everything is Important” paradox: 9 practical methods for how to prioritize your work (and time)
- How to Prioritize Tasks in the Workplace
- Timeboxing: Elon Musk’s Time Management Method
- How to Prioritize Tasks Effectively: GET THINGS DONE [□](#)
- How to Prioritize Your Work When Your Manager Doesn’t
- Personal Development for Smart People by Steve Pavlina



Salary Negotiation for Programmers

Salary negotiation for programmers isn’t much different than any other job.

I ran into this question on Quora, so I started answering it there, this is an extension of that post specifically for programmers.

If an interviewer asks me what I am expecting as my salary, what should I

answer?

Quora

Ask for what you feel you need and fits a reasonable market rate for your prospective position.

Ask yourself these questions.

A little introspection goes a long way. Research is essential to understand what you are worth.

These websites will help you understand what your services are worth.

Dice

Dice.com has been around since 1990 and is the granddaddy of job search websites. It also has a nifty salary calculator.



Glassdoor

Glassdoor provides insight into the salary your peers are getting paid.

Use this information to set your price.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the defacto site for professionals. If you're not on LinkedIn, I recommend joining immediately. It will help boost your salary by giving you new opportunities and connections. It has a salary calculator along with the other websites.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Salary tool interface. At the top, it displays the user's name 'Elizabeth Smith' and the job title 'Software Engineer' with the location 'Greater New York City Area'. The main section shows the median base salary as \$105,000/yr (range \$70K - \$145K) and the median total compensation as \$108,000/yr (range \$71K - \$165K). A histogram below shows the distribution of base salaries for 963 responses, with a vertical line indicating the median at 108K. To the right, there are sections for 'Respondents from companies including' (listing Facebook, Google, IBM, and Honda), 'Similar titles' (listing various software engineering roles with their median salaries), and 'Similar regions for this role' (listing other cities like San Francisco and Boston). At the bottom, there is a table for 'Additional Compensation' showing median amounts and ranges for annual and sign-on bonuses.

Compensation type	Median amount	Range (min - max)
Annual bonus 36% of respondents reported this	\$10,000/yr	\$2K - \$25K
Sign-on bonus 9% of respondents reported this	\$7,500	\$3K - \$27K

Set Your Price

Once you have your price, set your price a little higher, but use your best judgment. Ideally, you'll employ your soft skills and have a gut feeling for what your prospective employer will be willing to pay. If you're changing roles and are looking to move up, accepting a lower price isn't the worst idea.

Hold Your Cards

If you can avoid telling a prospective employer what your desired salary is, then do it. Knowing the salary a company is willing to pay gives you leverage, and it helps you save time if the salary is too low for you. Your current salary is your business; keep it that way.

Be Honest

Be honest with yourself and set your price with confidence. If you feel like you're not worth the salary you've defined, ask yourself why. Dig deep and seek to understand where you feel deficient. It's not easy to keep the imposter monster at bay. If we're honest with ourselves, we're all faking it until we make it.

For Programmers

Programmers are fortunate that their profession is in high demand. Know your skills, boost your skills, keep learning as much as you can. Be a sponge, commit to continuous improvement, and learn what you want.

I spent a large part of my career taking any job that came along. I've learned that knowing what I want makes me a stronger candidate.

Don't forget your soft skills or technical skills! Find the right balance of being a great human being and a great software development professional.

Further Reading

- **Soft Skills: The software developer's life manual**
- **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**
- **The Pragmatic Programmer: 20th Anniversary Edition, 2nd Edition: Your Journey to Mastery**