

# Simple Organization Plan

## *Prioritization Grid & Application*

*Compiled, Edited and Revised by*

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For some people, organization is second nature. Their ability to schedule, prioritize and get things done seems inborn. If you could have looked closely at the fingerprint and footprint card next to them in the hospital nursery cradle, you would have recognized it as a task list with a fingerprint instead of a check mark next to each item:

- ✓ Be born
- ✓ Cry
- ✓ Get goop in my eyes
- ✓ Attempt Nursing
- ✓ Get in the Warmer
- ✓ Get a Bath
- ✓ Look Adorable

For others, it doesn't even compute naturally. Those people-oriented creative types like myself struggle to enter the world of the task-oriented list checkers. Because of this, we arrived later to the organizational party (and every other event) until we found a method that worked for us.

What I have compiled and edited in this simple organizational plan is a collection of organizational nuggets that I have picked up through the years from various sources. From seminars like "How to Manage Multiple Projects and Meet Deadlines" by Fred Pryor to Franklin-Covey training to books and articles, I have found principles that have stuck with me long after the titles have been forgotten.

I originally started compiling it as a favor for someone who asked for organizational ideas. When I drew out the grid on some scratch paper, it made as much sense to them as it did to me—it clicked. Thus, they wanted to know if I could put it down on paper so they could retain and begin implementing it. This is the fruit of that conversation and my very humble attempt to help others like myself who struggle to keep our basic fun-loving, people-oriented nature focused on the task at hand.

One of the keys for me is recognizing and accepting how I am wired. I am never going to be an organizational guru by nature, but I can apply these principles (and others) to make me more productive. However, I still need my people time and mental resets. So I have included Merlin Mann's article on his ingenious (10+2)\*5 method to help get you started. I am hoping something here clicks with you as well.

— Jeffrey B. Burkhardt, PhD

# Simple Task Organization

## Grid & Application

	URGENT	NON-URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p><b>These are the “Must-Do’s”</b></p> <p>Tasks in this box bear on your success and have a close deadline, such as preparing for tomorrow’s meeting. They should always be handled first on today’s task list.</p> <p><b>We will label them</b></p> <p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>These are the “Need-To’s”</b></p> <p>Tasks in this box bear on your success but do not have a close deadline, such as planning for the conference presentation in two months. Because of their lack of urgency, these often get placed on the back burner. However, this box is where we are most productive. Thus, we will give them second priority on our daily task list.</p> <p><b>We will label them</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p>
NON-IMPORTANT	<p><b>These are the “Hear-Me’s”</b></p> <p>Things in this box do not bear on your success but demand an immediate response. They scream for your attention, such as the Facebook message, the non-business related text, and the phone ringing. This is our least productive box, yet it is where most people spend much of their time. These items will either be controlled or be controlling. While things in this box will not need to be added to our task list individually, we can control them more efficiently by scheduling and grouping them. For example, let non-essential phone calls go to voice mail all morning, but add a scheduled task to respond to all morning voice mail messages between 11:30 and noon. You can even add this to your VM greeting. Thus, we limit time spent responding to the “Hear-Me’s” and avoid getting pulled off task.</p> <p><b>We will label them</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>These are the “Want-These”</b></p> <p>Tasks in this box have no real productive value and no deadline. Everybody wants these—times that have no demands and no deadlines. They are like mini-vacations. These can often be our escapes, such as playing Spider Solitaire, watching YouTube videos or just taking a social tour around the office. They should largely be avoided during scheduled work times, though some may use them as mental reset buttons between tasks. If this is the case, they should be scheduled or task-listed and, most importantly, <u>limited</u> in time and frequency.</p> <p><b>We will label them</b></p> <p><b>D</b></p>

## Daily Schedule & Prioritized Task List

DAY OF WEEK		DATE	
6:00 AM		1:00 PM	
7:00 AM		2:00 PM	
8:00 AM		3:00 PM	
9:00 AM		4:00 PM	
10:00 AM		5:00 PM	
11:00 AM		6:00 PM	
12:00 PM		7:00 PM	
NOTES			

✓*	Priority	Task	Due Date	Status*
	A	<i>Sample: Finish preparing report for tomorrow's meeting</i>	<i>2/10/17</i>	<i>In Process</i>

\* ✓ = Completed • NP=In Process • DEL=Delegated (Ex.: DEL: John = Delegated to John) • FWD=Forward to later date (Ex.: FWD: 2/13)

## From 43folders.com—Procrastination hack: '(10+2)\*5' | by Merlin Mann

Following on the idea of the procrastination dash and Jeff's progressive dash, I've been experimenting with a squirrely new system to pound through my procrastinated-to-do list. Brace yourself, because it is a bit more byzantine than is Merlin 2005's newly stripped-down habit. It's called  $(10+2)*5$ , and today it will save [you].

### Who it's for:

- procrastinators
- the easily distracted
- compulsive web-surfers
- people with a long list of very short tasks (a/k/a "mosquitos")
- people having trouble chipping away at very large tasks

### What you'll need:

- a timer—must be easy to reset—electronic kitchen timer is particularly good (pref. with multiple alarm memories), or
- an app like Minuteur (get the newest version—several cool new features)
- a reduced subset of your to-do list (tasks that can be worked on—not necessarily completed—in blocks of 10 minutes or less)
- an hour of your time (less is potentially okay, but it's non-canonical)
- your sorry, procrastinating [self]

### How it works:

It's called " $(10+2)*5$ " and here's why:

10 - Work for ten minutes with single-minded focus on moving toward completion on a single task. Ten minutes, and that's all you're allowed to do is work, work, work. No cheating, because (DING!) you actually get a break when you're done...

2 - After ten minutes of sweaty, dedicated work you get a 2-minute break to do whatever you want—drink coffee, read, call your bookie, whatever. When the two minutes are up, it's back to work on the next task on your list. This is important.

\*5 - You're going to iterate this four more times for a total of one hour's working/breaking.

### Important squirrely rules

You do not need to finish your task or your project in ten minutes; you just need to move it forward.

If you finish a satisfying amount of work in fewer than ten minutes, STOP, and go right to your 2-minute break, then start another 10-minute dash.

Do NOT skip breaks! You are not allowed. Breaks cannot be missed. Period. Go surf the web. Now. Seriously. GO!

### What will happen:

You'll blaze through an hour's worth of work/not work and will find yourself looking forward to both the breaking and working parts of the cycle. (Dang, how's that for a change?)

### The MacGuffin:

Okay, you caught me. That's the hack: you can and eventually will skip breaks.

In his (extremely wonderful) *The Now Habit*, Neil Fiore suggests a similar habit of "unscheduling," where you only make obligations to the things that you enjoy and that are not the source of procrastination. John Perry suggests "Structured Procrastination," where you only give high priority to "unimportant" tasks. Of course, this is taken to a hilarious extreme with Joshua Newman's plan for scheduling just a few minutes of work per hour, and then focusing on the "more important" tasks like DVD re-arranging.

In all these cases—each of which will surely seem ludicrous to the "Why don't you just go do your [doggone] work?" crowd—the trick is to snap your mind out of the inert state that's allowing procrastination to take over. You're breaking down whatever resistance has made you not do what your brain knows needs to be done.

### Your hacks for your problems:

" $(10+2)*5$ " can be adapted in any number of ways (change any of the three numerals to your liking), but remember: these goofy hacks only work because you're a pathetic [person] like me whose mind can be tricked into work as easily as it can be lulled into torpor. Set your rules, follow your rules, and keep moving forward. Snap that procrastination by slipping your work through the back door.

Now go take a break. You've earned, you hard-working hacker, you.