

To-Do List Strategies

To-do lists can help you make sure you're completing everything you need to get done in a day, week, and/or semester. They help keep tasks from falling through the cracks. Done right, a to-do list can not only give you a list of things that need to be done, but can also help you strategize how to complete those task!

Where to Make your To-Do List (an incomplete list)

Write it out:

- A planner
- A notebook
- A monthly or weekly calendar
- Sticky notes

There's an app for that:

- One Note (Microsoft Suite)
- Google Tasks
- Wunderlist
- Memo apps

Prioritization Methods

Now that you have your to-do lists written out, how do you determine what to do first? Below are two systems for prioritizing tasks that can help you determine what has to be done during your study session and/or day.

ABCs (developed by Alan Laiken)

"A" Status Items — "Must Do"	High priority, very important, critical items, with close deadlines or high level importance to them.
"B" Status Items — "Should Do"	Medium priority, quite important over time, not as critical as "A" items, but still important to spend time doing.
"C" Status Items — "Nice to Do"	Low priority at this time, low consequences if left undone at this moment.

Importance versus Urgency (developed by Steven Covey)

Another way to approach your to-do list is by ranking items in terms of urgency and importance.

Urgent Tasks: Tasks that have a deadline or time limit that occurs in the very near future.

Important Tasks: Tasks that have high value and will help you reach your goals, such as passing classes, getting an internship, study abroad, getting a job after graduation, etc.

Some tasks are **both urgent and important** and should be prioritized. If you have a paper due tomorrow, it should get higher priority on your to-do list than the study abroad application that is due in two weeks. Both are important, only one is urgent.

Tasks that are **important** get priority over tasks that are **urgent**. For example, studying for an exam versus running to the ice cream special at Howling Cow that starts in 5 minutes. Effective time management (see "Time Management" worksheet) can give you some wiggle room so you can take advantage of occasional unimportant but urgent tasks and events in your life.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Final paper due tomorrow	Final paper due in 2 months
Not Important	Ice cream special at Howling Cow in 5 minutes	Checking social media

Bonus Tip: Reflect on whether is it easier for you to "warm up" with smaller tasks and then move on to bigger tasks. Or do you need to start with the big tasks and save smaller tasks for when motivation levels are lower?

Adapted from Oregon State University Academic Success Center's "Three Ways to Think About Prioritization"