

How To Do Your Own Time Makeover

By Laura Vanderkam

While everyone's life looks different, here's an 8-step process that can help most people spend more time on the things that matter, and less on the things that don't.

1. Log your time. The first step to using your time better is knowing how you're spending it now. For a few days, or ideally a week, write down what you're doing, as often as you remember. Think of yourself as a lawyer billing your time to different projects: work (in its various forms), sleep, travel, chores, family time, TV, etc. Here is the link if you don't already have it:

<http://lauravanderkam.com/books/168-hours/manage-your-time/>

2. Do the math. After you've got the raw data, tally up some of the categories. How does this feel to you? What do you over- or underinvest in? What do you like most about your schedule? What would you like to change?

3. Get real. Recognize that time is a blank slate. The next 168 hours will be filled with something, but what they are filled with is largely up to you. Rather than say "I don't have time," say "It's not a priority." Think about every hour of your week as a choice. Granted, there may be horrible consequences to making different choices, but there may not be, too.

4. Dream big. Ask yourself what you'd like to do with your time. Start making your own List of 100 Dreams with personal goals, travel goals, professional goals, and so forth. What would you like to spend more time doing? What would you like to fill your time with? You can make one master list of dreams, or make a separate list for your family -- things you'd like to do or experience together. Come back to this list often, and keep it somewhere you can refer to it frequently.

5. Give goals a timeline. Write a prospective performance review -- that is, the job review you'd like to give yourself at the end of next year. What professional items from your List of 100 Dreams would you like to accomplish by then? Carve out some time to write this hypothetical statement of your achievements, be they finishing the draft of a novel, getting an Etsy store up and running, landing two new 7-figure clients for your company, or staging a small museum's first fundraising gala.

You can give big personal goals a timeline as well. Try writing next year's "family holiday letter" -- that missive people inflict on their friends and family each Christmas with the highlights of the past 12 months. What do you wish you could say in that letter? Block an hour or so into your schedule to figure out what items you'd like to pull from the personal side of your List of 100 Dreams and make

happen this year. Examples might include running your first 10K, joining a community chorus as a family, or traveling to Maine for a week during the summer and eating lobster twice a day.

6. Break it down. Once you've got your prospective job review, and your future family holiday letter, start breaking these goals down into doable steps. If you don't know your first step, then "research" is the first step. Running your first 10K might involve signing up for a race 6 months from now, then committing to a schedule of 3-4 runs per week until then, slowly building up your mileage. Other steps might involve buying a good pair of running shoes, checking out a book from the library on training programs, and joining a gym or finding good running routes in your area.

7. Plan to plan. Create a weekly planning/reviewing time. During this time, look at your calendar and block in steps toward your goals. Where can those three runs happen? When are you going to go to the library and check out *Starting an Etsy Business for Dummies*?

8. Hold yourself accountable. Big dreams are great, but if you don't create space in your life for making progress toward them, then they're fantasies, not goals. Build an accountability system -- a friend, a group, an app -- that will make failure uncomfortable. If you've got a run scheduled for Tuesday morning, and on Tuesday morning it's 25 degrees out and your warm bed seems pretty enticing, what is going to motivate you to get your shoes on and go? Answer that question, and your time makeover will go great.

I can't wait to hear about your experience. Please share with me some of your discoveries, surprises and changes. You can email me at lvanderkam@yahoo.com, follow my [blog](#) or join the conversation on our "[168 Hours](#)" Facebook page.

Thanks again for your interest and support.

Laura