

How to Do That “To-Do” That You Do

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To-do lists are often the most critical component to planning. They keep meeting planners on track by serving as a constant reminder of what needs to be done and when it needs to be completed. Whether they're on paper or on the screen of a phone, to-do lists, quite simply, keep you organized.

Jeff Davidson, who holds the registered trademark as “[The Work-Life Balance Expert](#),” has created two lists to help planners compile better to-do lists. Davidson wants people to have better balance and improve the plans for their lives. What better way to worry less and plan smarter than to master the best planning device of all: the to-do list?

What To Do for Your To-Do List

1. **Think ahead.** Draw up tomorrow's to-do list at the end of the day. Free from interruption, the end of the day gives you the best opportunity to look forward to what needs to be prioritized.

- 2. *Stick with the plan.*** Try not to add anything to the list. Adding items often prevents you from checking off to-do items that need to be completed. If you need to add anything for today's list, do so judiciously.
- 3. *Cross it off.*** Reducing the number of items remaining on the list is a positive re-enforcer that will help you continue your productive ways.
- 4. *Acknowledge other completions.*** While you should stick to the plan, if things fall onto your plate that need to be finished that day, add them to your list, then cross them off when they are completed. Seeing how much you accomplished in a day can be very gratifying.
- 5. *Reevaluate, refine and tidy up.*** Stick to the plan, but that doesn't mean you can't change on the fly. Review and reevaluate priorities at least once during the day. Did some items resolve themselves? Are some items better handled at another time because they do not merit immediate attention? After reviewing everything you did and did not complete, refine the to-do list. It's a great way to prepare for tomorrow. Once the day is done, it's time to clean up what's left. If there are any dangling issues, draw up a new game-plan for the next day.

What Not To Do with Your To-Do List

- 1. *Don't Procrastinate on the Big Stuff.*** It's easy to go for quantity over quality when checking off to-do list items. It's natural to want to tackle the easy stuff first, but know that ultimately you are piling up everything difficult for the end of the day, and not giving yourself enough time to do those last few "big" items. It's best to put priorities on each item and tackle them by level of importance/immediacy rather than ease of completion.
- 2. *Don't Be Afraid to Rethink.*** This goes hand-in-hand with reevaluating your to-do list once a day. Sometimes that calls for rethinking strategies to complete everything possible.
- 3. *Don't Be Slowed when Shifting Gears.*** Some items are going to be computer-intensive, others will be socially intensive and a good portion will have you running around town. Whenever a new task calls for you to change gears, try to tackle the new task head-on. Ultimately, if you dive in headfirst, you'll catch up (or slow down) to the necessary pace.
- 4. *Don't Ignore Your Energy Level.*** With that said, sometimes you're just not going to have the energy level to match the task. This is why it's so important to space out intensive tasks, since you can tackle the big projects when your energy is high and take on smaller, simpler tasks when you start to wane. But don't push yourself too hard. If you can't catch that second wind, there's always tomorrow...

Always remember, your ultimate goal with making to-do lists is to become a more efficient and productive planner. For more information on Jeff Davidson's life planning methods, visit breathingspace.com.