

The Task Priority Matrix

INTRODUCTION

🕒 Time: N/A

📊 Difficulty: Moderate



ABOUT SETTING PRIORITIES

When it comes to staying focused and getting things done, one of the most important skills is prioritization. This means knowing which tasks are the most important and need to be done first. It can be difficult to stay focused when you have a lot of things to do, but it's important to remember that having too many priorities is the same as not having any.

There are a few things you can do to set priorities well. A classic solution is creating a "Priority Matrix" or "Eisenhower Priority Matrix". In order to do that, you'll need to 1) make a master list of all important tasks, 2) assign each task to a section or 'quadrant' of the matrix, 3) prioritize tasks within each quadrant, starting with the first one, 4) stop or delay 'time-wasting' or low-priority tasks, and 5) regularly review and adjust the task list as tasks are accomplished or new priorities emerge.



THE GOAL OF THE EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to help you get a better sense of what is urgent and what is not by dividing your tasks into different categories. By the end of this exercise, you'll have a visual representation of the things that need to be done urgently, things that you can delay or delegate, and things you can eliminate altogether.



TIPS TO CREATING A PRIORITY MATRIX

1. **The goal is not to create a matrix of "ALL THE THINGS" you need to do. The end goal is to get things done.**
2. **Create the priority matrix for a certain period of time (week, month, quarter, etc.)**
3. **You can not add new "High Priority" items once you've finished the initial matrix. This will help you stay focused on your initial tasks. You can add "Urgent" items.**



HOW TO KNOW WHAT TO PRIORITIZE

"What is urgent is rarely important, and what is important is rarely urgent". Of course, what is urgent and what is important is often very subjective. That's why you can use the list of questions below to help you determine what is what.

1. **Is "X" a higher priority compared to "Y"?**
2. **What will happen if I get "X" done? What will change?**
3. **What will happen if I don't get "X" done? What are the downsides?**
4. **Will "X" help me achieve my long term goals?**
5. **What would happen if I decide to never to "X"?**
6. **What task will have the highest impact if I finish it (or if I do not)?**



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HOW DOES IT WORK?

🕒 Time: N/A

📊 Difficulty: Moderate



01. CREATE A LIST OF TASKS

The first step is to create a list of things you want or need to do in a certain time frame (use the worksheet on the next page) - be it one week, month or a quarter. In this first part, you can write down all of the things that come to mind. In fact, writing everything down is even encouraged as it helps you get rid of some of the mental load of having to remember everything.



02. ARRANGE TASKS FOR IMPORTANCE & URGENCY

Now that you have a list of tasks to do, you'll need to arrange them for how large of an impact they will have (importance) and by when you need to finish them (urgency). This will help you get clarity on what you should focus on sooner rather than later and what tasks can wait.

When you're determining an importance of a task, try to think of what the long term impact of finishing it has. Or what will happen to your long term goals if you do not prioritize it?

When determining urgency, give each task a specific date (or a range of dates) it needs to be finished by. This ranking will help you determine what you should focus on.

Also, remember that ranking your tasks is a very subjective exercise. There are no right or wrong answers. Their final rank on your list depend on your values and what you are trying to accomplish.



03. FILL IN THE PRIORITY MATRIX

Now, that you've ranked all of your tasks, you can fill out the priority matrix (next pages) where you'll assign each task a slot in the matrix to determine how much of your attention each of them is worth. The ones that have the highest impact (importance) and are urgent should be a priority, while those that are not that urgent nor important can be postponed (or delegated/deleted altogether).



04. START TAKING ACTION

When you've finished your Priority Matrix, it's time to take action! After all, without taking action the list & matrix you just created is useless. Focus on your most important tasks and try to avoid adding any new ones to your list while you're working through a priority matrix you've already created.

Also remember that you should try to avoid multitasking. Focus uninterrupted blocks of time for working on your priority items and don't let "Urgent" items distract you from finishing them.



THE FOUR QUADRANTS

1. Quadrant 1 [Do] - 'Urgent and Important': Tasks in this quadrant demand immediate attention and are crucial to reaching your goals. They are often associated with deadlines and require immediate action.
 - Example: Deadlines, client meetings, reports, appointments, acts of daily living such as meals
2. Quadrant 2 [Decide] - 'Important but Not Urgent': Tasks in this quadrant are significant for your long-term goals, but do not have pressing deadlines. They represent opportunities for growth and strategic planning.
 - Example: Long-term planning, skill development, scheduling future appointments
3. Quadrant 3 [Delegate]- 'Urgent but Not Important': Tasks in this quadrant may appear urgent but do not contribute significantly to your goals. They are often distractions and should be minimized or set aside for later.
 - Example: Responding to non-urgent emails, administrative paperwork without a deadline, household chores, grocery shopping
4. Quadrant 4 [Delete] - 'Not Urgent and Not Important': Tasks in this quadrant are time-wasters and have no real value. Eliminating or delegating them is essential to free up time for more meaningful activities.
 - Example: Social media scrolling, irrelevant meetings, excessive television or movie watching



Fill out the priority matrix:

MORE IMPORTANT >	10										
	09										
	08										
	07										
	06										
< LESS IMPORTANT	05										
	04										
	03										
	02										
	01										
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	
	< LESS URGENT					MORE URGENT >					