Prioritizing Tasks

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☰ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn more about the importance of prioritizing your tasks in a way that leads you to achieve your desired results. You will better understand how taking these steps can lead to increased productivity. You will also consider how strong technology skills can help you along the way.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Start with Goals
2. Ways to Prioritize
   a. Difficulty
   b. Ugent, Important, or Neither
3. Ranking Tasks

1. Start with Goals

You may find there are days or weeks when you simply cannot get everything done. Some tasks might be things that could wait while others may be critical. You may need to make some difficult decisions about what gets done and what gets set aside for another time. In order to do this, you need to understand your goals. You will need to ask yourself whether a certain action takes you one step closer to completing a goal or not. This can then help you plan and prioritize in a way that will make you the most productive and results driven .

> **In Context**
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> Emergency rooms all over the world prioritize the order patients should receive medical care to ensure that the most critical patients receive immediate treatment. Prioritizing is the practice of determining which tasks or projects should receive attention first and which can wait. This same practice can be used in the business world to increase your productivity and reach your career goals.

⚙ Technology: Skill Reflect

Think about what you have learned about digital tools like calendars that make planning more efficient and effective so you know what tasks you need to accomplish and when. These tools can keep track of your tasks, but they cannot prioritize them for you. Only you know what is most important on that list.

2. Ways to Prioritize

You can choose to prioritize your tasks in a variety of ways. You may like one method more than another. You may find you need to determine the best method on a case-by-case basis. Understanding your options is the key to making the best choice.

2a. Difficulty

One common method for prioritizing is to do so based on the difficulty of the task. This will depend on the person so you also need to be honest with yourself about what is tough for you and what is easier. For example, you may not be a strong writer, but your brother is. A research paper may not be difficult for him, but it would be for you.
You have two options when it comes to prioritizing based on difficulty. The chart below lays out the benefits and drawbacks of each approach.

Approach	Pros	Cons
Easiest Tasks First	- Increase confidence - Gain momentum - Cross items off your list	Too much time spent on these tasks can lead to running out of time for more complex tasks
Most Difficult Tasks First	- More time to spend on tasks that take more effort - Can relax when tough work is out of the way	- Can be overwhelmed - May run out of time for smaller tasks or forget about them

Some people prefer to be able to jump in, get started, and make immediate progress. Others may prefer getting the most challenging, time-consuming items out of the way first. It is a personal preference, but you need to understand both approaches so you can select the best one for you. You want to choose the one that will lead you to obtain your desired results in the most efficient way.

2b. Urgent, Important, or Neither

Another method of prioritizing is to consider if a task is urgent, important, or neither. A well-known time management company (Franklin Covey) established this system and many people use it both at work and in their personal lives.

- **Urgent Tasks**: These items need your attention right away
- **Important Tasks**: These items have a significant impact on your life

- **Neither**: These items do not require immediate attention, nor do they have a significant impact on your life

At first glance, you may think that all urgent tasks need to be a priority, but that is not always the case. The same can be said for important tasks. They may need to be on the top of your list, but maybe not. You need to consider each element to help you prioritize in a way that will give you the best chance to reach your goal. Only when you rank tasks like this, can you be sure you are tackling things in the most productive way possible.

For instance, urgent tasks include a coworker coming to your desk asking for help with a favor or a text message with a time-sensitive question. Important tasks include creating a budget and self-care, such as exercising or reading. There are tasks that are important and urgent, such as doctor appointments and most meetings. There are also tasks that are neither important nor urgent, such as checking social media.

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10 SKILLS ▸ 📊 **Results Driven: Apply Your Skill**

When work, school, and home requirements start piling up, how do you choose what to prioritize first? For example, what if you have a mid-term assignment in your course coming up, and your young child wants their Science Fair entry to win at school next week. How do you proceed? How do you ensure you achieve the desired results in both cases?

Add video (Week 7 Strayer Course)

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Urgent Tasks
Tasks that need your attention right away.

Important Tasks
Tasks that have a significant impact on your life.

3. Ranking Tasks

If you choose to use the Franklin Covey method, you will need to consider each task and whether it is urgent or important. With this information, you can then rank items in a way that helps you develop a plan for success. Review the chart below to better understand how these elements work together.

Task Elements	Prioritizing	Examples
Both Urgent and Important	These tasks have a set deadline that is approaching and they will impact your life in a significant way. These items are priority number one.	A paper due for English class or a medical emergency.
Important but not Urgent	These tasks do not have a set deadline but they do impact your life. These tasks should not be first on your list, but they should be high on your list since they have an	Time spent on hobbies or doing long-term goal setting.

	impact on your life.	
Feels Urgent, but it not actually Important	These tasks keep you busy but you are not actually accomplishing anything in working toward your goals. These are not high-priority items.	Responding to emails/texts immediately or checking to see how many likes your last Instagram post received.
Non-Urgent and Non-Important	These are tasks often done to waste time or procrastinate. These do not have any real priority.	Surfing the internet or flipping through a gossip magazine.

⭐ **BIG IDEA**

Once you have your tasks prioritized and ranked, you can then look to use your digital tools like a calendar or notepad to track the work and revise plans as needed.

📋 **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you considered the importance of prioritizing your work. You learned more about the importance of **starting with your goals**. You explored different **ways to prioritize** your tasks (by **difficulty** or the Covey method of **urgent, important, or neither**). You reflected on how **ranking tasks** effectively can make you more productive and strengthen your results driven skill. Strong technology skills can help you track the work you have as a priority and adapt your plan as circumstances change.

Enjoy the next lesson!

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Important Tasks
Tasks that have a significant impact on your life.

Urgent Tasks
Tasks that need your attention right away.