



# Time management with Guild →

A guidebook to manage your time as you go  
through your learning program



# Why does time management matter?

Time management is a skill. Some do it well; others not so much. As you go through your learning program, the better you can manage your time, the better your overall experience will be.

Effective time management gives you structure and enables you to make the best use of your busy day to make enough room for the things that matter most to you. A good place to start as you think about how you'll manage your time is to identify "the big rocks" in your life. "Big rocks" are the things you identify as your priorities, and they'll influence your decisions about how you spend your time.

Take a moment to read this story to understand the concept of "big rocks."

## The story behind the big rocks time management strategy

An instructor placed an empty jar on the table in the front of their classroom. They filled the jar with big rocks and asked their students if it was full. The students replied, "Yes." Next, they pulled out a bag of pebbles, poured them on top of the big rocks, shook the jar so the pebbles would fall through and fill in the empty spaces around the rocks, and asked again if the jar was full. The students again responded, "Yes!" They then dumped a bag of sand into the jar, which filled in the gaps, and asked again. The students — now laughing — replied in the same way. Finally, they produced a bottle of water and poured it into the jar on top of the rocks, pebbles, and sand. The students decided that the jar was finally full.

The instructor explained that the jar is a visual representation of everything in your life. The big rocks represent the things that are most important to you. The pebbles are things that matter and give your life meaning, but that you could live without. The sand depicts the filler things in your life. They don't mean much to your whole journey, but they still need to be attended to. The water portrays the things with the least amount of meaning — and that you could definitely live without.

The purpose of the exercise was to help the students realize that if they fill their jars with water or sand first, there's no room left for the big rocks. In other words, if you spend most of your time on less significant matters, you won't have time remaining for the things that matter most to you.



### Exercise:

Take a moment to think about what your "big rocks," your "pebbles," and your "sand" might be and write them down. Try to keep "big rocks" to no more than 3-5 items. Make your lists here:

Big rocks	Pebbles	Sand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li></ul>
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Noticing your time

# How are you spending your time now?

We've all experienced time "getting away from us," where we seem to lose track of the hours in our day. It can be nice not to be focused on the clock, but it's important to start noticing where your time is spent when you're busy and want to increase productivity. The more aware you become of how you're spending your time, the more opportunities you have to make adjustments, like swapping out one activity for another.



### Exercise:

To practice noticing how you're spending your time, try keeping a short diary of notes as an average weekday goes by. At the end of the day, you'll have a good idea of where you're spending your time. You may notice there are things you'd like to change about how you're spending your time. At the very least, you'll build awareness for how you're using your precious resource of time.



### Average day of the week

6:00 AM	
8:00 AM	
10:00 AM	
12:00 PM	
2:00 PM	
4:00 PM	
6:00 PM	
8:00 PM	
10:00 PM	
12:00 AM	
2:00 AM	
4:00 AM	

**Blocking your time**

# How can you be more efficient with your time?

One technique you can try to stay on track with things you want to accomplish is called “time blocking.” Time blocking is creating blocks of time for each task you need to complete in a day. The key is to give yourself a limited amount of time in each block and then focus only on the task within the block. No multi-tasking or distractions, just locked in on one thing. This is helpful whether you have a consistent work schedule or one that changes week to week. Either way, you get into the habit of looking ahead and planning for your time.

For example, if you need to complete an assignment for school that’s due the next day, you might break your after-dinner time into blocks. Or maybe you have a 15-minute block to clean the dishes while your partner gets the kids to bed and then an hour-long block to focus on the assignment.



## **Exercise:**

Try breaking out your day into blocks by non-negotiables (absolutely cannot change) and negotiables (there’s room for flexibility).

## Non-negotiable time blocks

(**example:** work schedule or doctor appointment)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Negotiable time blocks

(**example:** household chores or errands)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# Do you have any spare pockets of time?

Discovering secret pockets of time in your busy schedule can be a game-changer for learners juggling family responsibilities and work commitments. While big blocks of time can be necessary for completing an assignment, don't underestimate what you can learn in a very short amount of time.

These hidden moments — waiting in line, the commute to work, or during lunch breaks — add up to substantial amounts of time when used wisely. By identifying and leveraging these pockets of time, you can incorporate consistent, daily learning without disrupting your schedule.

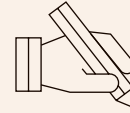
## Ideas for maximizing these pockets of time:

- Reviewing flashcards
- Reading an article related to your program
- Watching educational videos related to your program
- Plan or review goals for your program
- Listening to educational podcasts



### Exercise:

Use the space below to brainstorm on where you might have some hidden pockets of time you could make the most of:



A large empty rectangular box for brainstorming ideas.

# How might you reframe your view of time management?

Adding a learning program to your life is a time management challenge — there's no way around it. It can be helpful to remind yourself that:

- A. This isn't forever. You're in this learning program for a "season" of your life.
- B. You applied for a reason. Let that goal motivate you to push yourself in new ways.

With this in mind, you may find it helpful to frame time management in the context of "sprints and recoveries." Just like an intense physical workout, you might have short bursts of intense learning ("sprints"), where you're working really hard to complete a course or a challenging semester. Then comes "recovery" — a period of time for mental rest before the next "sprint."

This sprint-and-recovery cycle not only enhances productivity and focus during learning and work sessions, but also promotes a healthier, more balanced approach to managing time. If this framing for time management sounds appealing to you, give it a try.



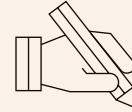
## Tip:

Save your answers to the exercises above and come back to this guidebook whenever you need a refresher on time management work you've done for yourself.

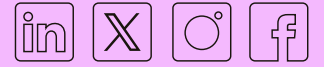


## Exercise:

Take a moment to reflect on what you've learned about time management and use the space below to write down any thoughts you may have about time management styles or frameworks you'd like to try out over the next few weeks or months:



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# Guild