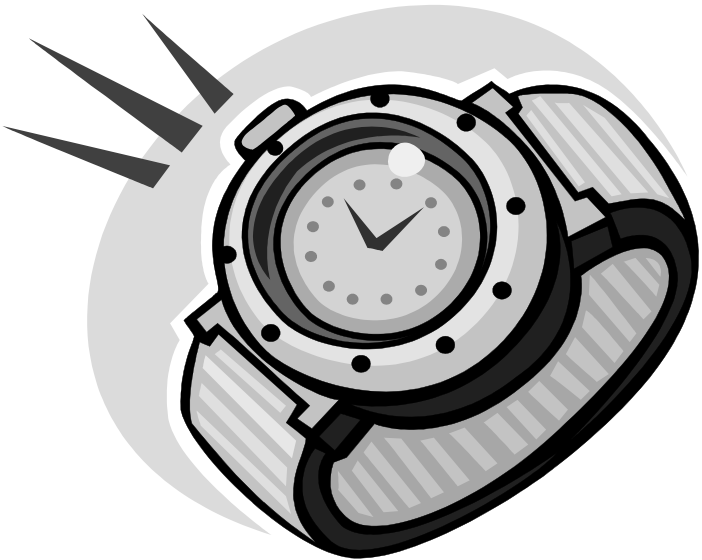


You can find dozens of books and programs that describe the skills of time management, for example, setting objectives, making lists, dividing tasks into A, B, and C priorities, setting aside time for certain types of activities, and so on. But all of those activities miss the central ingredient. We are not actually discussing the management of time. We actually are learning to manage ourselves.

Time doesn't play any favorites. Every one of us has the same twenty-four hour day to work with. The difference, then, is how we manage ourselves during the twenty-four hour day. Those of us who manage well, seem to accomplish more and seem better



satisfied with our lives. Those of us who are pulled here and there with no evident organization, seem to accomplish less and seem less satisfied with our lives.

Kids are no different. They, too, have the same hours available equal to those available to their peers. Just like adults, some kids seem to get a lot done; some seem to accomplish very little. Yet both groups are active during the same number of

hours. Since the clock ticks off the same 1,440 daily minutes for everyone, we have to ask ourselves how we can organize our lives to accomplish what we want. That's the way to gain a sense of satisfaction with our use of our hours.

### What do we want? Where are we going?

This is a difficult question for children. The younger they are the less likely they are to have a clear sense of where they are going. So one of the jobs of a parent is help them set some beneficial goals. For example,

- Getting better grades
- Finishing family chores
- Improving health or an athletic skill
- Learning about XYZ
- Developing needed character traits

Self-management needs to start with something that your children can visualize as a worthy goal. Talk to them about their interests and help them focus on an outcome that they would see as desirable. As much as possible, involve your children in selecting and in picturing themselves in that favorable outcome. "You say that you want to be a first string baseball player. Can you see yourself on the field? How does it feel to get a hit? Do you see yourself being congratulated after scoring a run? And so on."

The first step, therefore, is to set a target, to make an outcome important. Don't overburden your children with all the things they should be doing. Use one self-selected outcome as the model around which you can develop a pattern for future objectives. Gradually, together, you will build the kind of self-management that we sometimes call time-management.

<b>inside this issue...</b>	Time Management for Kids .....	1
	Creative Calendars .....	3
	Planner .....	4
	Worksheet .....	5
	Activity Log .....	6

## How do we get there?

Everything we want requires time and attention in order to achieve it. We can't get better grades, for instance, simply by wishing for an excellent report card. We must pay attention in class, finish practice activities, clarify our understanding, and prepare ourselves daily for the next day's work. In other words, we have to discipline ourselves regularly to accomplish the tasks that lead to our goal of getting better grades.

Usually it helps children to understand this process by asking them to write their goal and to list the activities that they see leading to its achievement. Here is a sample form that you might use to help your children in this process. As much as possible, involve them in creating their own view of "what" they are after.

**What I want:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Here are things I need to do:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

This is just a start, but post those notes on a door or refrigerator or bulletin board as a reminder of the choices your children are making. Just by listing the activities that go into achieving the goal sets the stage for the next question.

## How do I manage big tasks?

Do you remember Napoleon's motto? "Divide and Conquer." This works for big jobs or those assignments that seem impossible.

Ten-year-old Charlie was given the assignment to write a biography of one of his grandparents. He blanched at the idea because he had only seen book-length biographies. After some checking, he learned that he was to write a short biography of five or six pages. His grandfather loved to run and even at age 71 he was still entering 10K races. So Charlie decided to build his story around the theme, "My Granddad, the Runner."

With help from his parents, Charlie made the task manageable by dividing his writing task into five parts, each one to be about one page in length. The parts were:

### My Granddad, the Runner

1. The kid who ran everywhere (M)
2. The high school track team (T)
3. College running and bicycling (W)
4. A middle age racer (TH)
5. The old promoter of foot races (F)



When the task was divided into manageable parts, Charlie decided that he would write each part on a separate day. That way he could spend up to an hour each day of the week and have the entire biography finished by Friday. What at first seemed like an overwhelming assignment, now didn't look so awful. More beneficially, Charlie was learning how to divide and conquer tasks and put them on a workable schedule.

Of course, Charlie would interview his Granddad to get the details. He would have to do the interviews when his Granddad was available – another scheduling task for the young learner.

## When will I do these activities?

Please note that the question directs your children to make decisions about the time it takes to carry out the activities related to their goal. You can guide them, of course, but you want them to feel that they are learning to manage themselves, and that requires using time to reach their destination.

Thus it is not your schedule that they must follow. The two of you are working to find ways to reach this desirable outcome. They are learning that they can organize themselves to get the job done. That's significant growth.

Each time your children make a reasonable decision, praise them for their growth: Say, "That makes good sense." "You are learning more about yourself every day."

## Regular hours for regular tasks

Just as your children get up at the same time each morning to go to school and go to bed at the same time each night, they will benefit from having a consistent time for working on regular chores. Set a daily time when they can play and a daily time when they do their school work, and a regular time for other chores.

These regular work times depend on the schedule of the family, obviously. Perhaps study time would work best the hour before the evening meal, a time when everyone is busy working on something. Or perhaps the hour after the evening meal would work best for your family. As long as your children know that they have time set aside for the regular activities in their lives, they begin to learn that this routine helps them accomplish more. We understand, of course, that a certain amount of flexibility is needed in the life of a busy family. But the daily routine communicates a valuable life lesson.

## Creative calendars

Now is the time to lay a calendar, a student planner, or a worksheet on the table so your children can pencil in their times and dates for carrying out the activities that they have identified as necessary to achieving their goals.

Let them be the children they are. Be comforted by their progress and don't expect them to have an adult perception of how to build a time-task chart. By going through this process month by month you will see great improvement in their ability to manage the important aspects of their young lives, and that means they will also learn to use time more effectively.

### Time/Task Promise

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

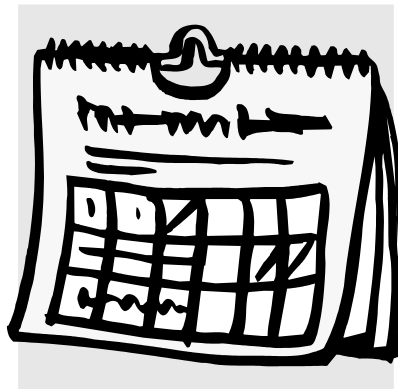
**Tasks:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assigned Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

*I agree to work to get these jobs done in the time I said I would.*  
**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Don't use these worksheets as threats to your children. Use them as posted reminders of the decisions they have made and as reference points for occasional discussions. The Family Learning Association has calendars and student planners that also promote character development traits. Call 1-800-759-4723 for information and samples.

(For more details on motivating children and teaching them self-mastery, See the Parent Talk Bulletin on *Doing One's Best*, Vol. VI, Issue 5.)



## Brag time and encouragement

When your children complete a task, they should feel free to reward themselves by announcing that they did it. "I wrote the first page of Granddad's biography. Want to hear it?"

You may want to encourage them to further their writing before they stop short to show off their work. "Way to go, Charlie! Of course I want to hear it. Keep up the good work. When you finish *part two* tomorrow, please read it to me. I like to see what you are completing."

How can children brag about their accomplishments?

- Read samples to an appreciative listener
- Post finished products on bulletin board
- Send copy via e-mail to friend or relative
- Check task off a list
- Create a "Finished" box and drop a note in the box
- Just brag to yourself: "I did it. I knew I could do it."

## Remember the principles

1. Time management is actually personal management. That's a work in progress.
2. Look where you are going. What do you want to achieve?
3. Divide and conquer the larger tasks - a slogan that goes back to Philip of Macedon. Help children prioritize as appropriate for their stage of development.
4. Schedule yourself. Use a planner. Kids love them.
5. Brag on yourself when you finish a task.
6. Parents guide, encourage, listen, praise.

Besides observing the principles, parents can help by turning off some of the noise in the house, helping children to focus and to write their priorities, and to praise them as they check off their accomplishments. There is joy for both of you in those accomplishments.

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## Parent Talk

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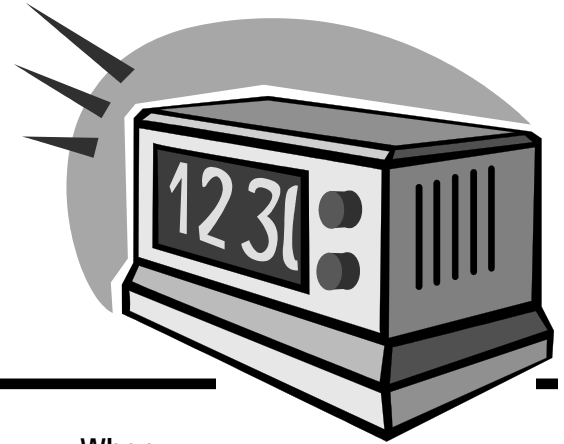


## Worksheet

### Personal Direction and the Use of Time

**Directions:** Fill out this worksheet to help you think about your use of time and your priorities. There are three major questions to answer:

- 1) What important directions do I want to take in my family life, in my student life, for my health, for developing skills, for strengthening my character?
- 2) In a typical week how much time should I devote to each of these areas?
- 3) What's my best times for working on these areas?



Important Directions	How Much Time	When
For my family, I will		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
In my student life, I will		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
For my health, I will		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
For developing skills, I will		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
To strengthen my character, I will		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

With this information in front of you, you can block off times in your planner or agenda book. You will be amazed at how much you will change by answering those three questions and working on them week after week.

Don't look for perfection in the early weeks. This worksheet directs your thinking. Review it with an adult each month and chat about ways that you can move forward.

## Activity Log

Everyone feels busy. We all feel that we have no time. Wouldn't it be interesting to see just how you use your time each day? For one week, mark off 15 minute intervals and keep a simple log of what you are doing every 15 minutes. I'll bet you will be totally surprised at what you learn about your use of time.

This time log doesn't push you to become more busy. Once you see how you spend your time, you may discover several ways that you can substitute unimportant activities for those that are important to the direction that you want to go.

At the end of each day, mark those times when you might have served yourself more by working on your important directions.



<p><b>Sample Daily Log</b></p> <p>Day of the Week: _____</p>
--

7:00am	_____
7:15am	_____
7:30am	_____
7:45am	_____
8:00am	_____
8:15am	_____
8:30am	_____
8:45am	_____
9:00am	_____
9:15am	_____
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8:15pm	_____
8:30pm	_____
8:45pm	_____
9:00pm	_____
9:15pm	_____
9:30pm	_____
9:45pm	_____

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*Help Your Child Develop Academic and Creative Skills*  
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### The Active Learner:

*Help Your Child Learn by Doing*  
by Susan Moke, Michael Shermis  
Discover how to help your children become motivated, self-directed learners who are actively engaged in discovering the world around them. This book includes active reading and writing, study skills, speaking and listening, active television watching, and much more! 111pp; \$12.95; PN-106-1609



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*Help Your Child Succeed in School*  
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### Books with Audio Tapes



The three book & audio tape sets below offer practical guidance for parents and fun stories for children, Kindergarten through 4th grade. These books contain two parts: Part I offers easy-to-read advice on helping children succeed in school, including family activities and books for further reading. Part II contains three read-along stories delightfully illustrated by Dave Coverly (author of the cartoon Speed Bump) so you can start sharing reading experiences right away. The audio cassettes make this book easy for parents and children at any literacy level to use and enjoy.

### Encouraging Good Homework Habits

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This book and tape looks at how you can help your children with their homework. It includes instructions, illustrations, activities, and a question and answer section. There are also three stories that you can read aloud with your child or listen along with on audio tape.

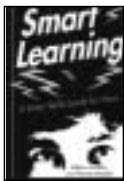
Softcover and Cassette, 71pp., 5.5"x 8.5"; PN-500-1123 .....\$12.00

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This book and tape focuses on "parents as models" and how parents can act as models for children. There are several practical ideas and activities to help guide the parent.

Softcover and Cassette, 86pp., 5.5"x 8.5"; PN-500-1114 .....\$12.00



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- Sample calendars, planner and worksheet

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