

Time Management - Covey's Urgent vs. Important Matrix

The Urgent vs. Important Matrix is an excellent way to prioritize your time, while still making sure that you accomplish all that you need to accomplish. The matrix forces you to assess the importance, or current relevance, and urgency, or timely nature, of everyday tasks. Then it helps you to sort each item into an approachable, manageable order in which to complete each one. The Matrix is divided into four quadrants:

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Q1: Important & Urgent	Q2: Important but not Urgent
NOT IMPORTANT	Q3: Not Important but Urgent	Q4: Neither Important nor Urgent

Urgent and Important. Oftentimes, these include tasks with impending deadlines. Such tasks are often, crisis and emergencies, projects and assignments, or last minute tasks. Work presentations are good examples: they must be completed and by a certain time. These should be prioritized and immediately addressed.

Important but not Urgent. Typically, these include long-term planning, and account for tasks such as organization, preparing and developmental tasks. Exercise and health improvement is often a good example: it is an important task, but for the most part, is not particularly urgent.

Not Important but Urgent. These can be described as “pressured distractions”, where they are not important but have a clear deadline or need to be completed. These typically include tasks such as meetings in which nothing of particular importance is discussed, but they have a designated time slot, and you must attend them.

Neither Important nor Urgent. Oftentimes, these are activities that include extensive T.V. watching or procrastinatory Internet usage. Typically, these are events that can be avoided. However, taking necessary breaks is not part of this!

There are two ways of applying this matrix to daily life:

The To-Do List

To apply the matrix to your current to-do list, simply assign each task to a specific quadrant. Once sorted, projects can be moved to different quadrants as needed. It might also be helpful to assign a pre-designated amount of time to each task, which might prevent you from spending an unnecessary amount of time on any single task.

The One-Week Schedule

Create a matrix for a daily or weekly outlook. Again, it might be helpful to include estimated amount of time needed to complete each task to ensure that you do not spend too much time on any single task



Try filling in the matrix below.

Urgent vs. Important Matrix

Time Period (Day/Month/etc): _____

Urgent and Important	Important but not Urgent
Not Important but Urgent	Neither Important nor Urgent