



THE 4 DS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

DO • DELAY • DELEGATE • DROP

There's only so much time in a day, and if you want to understand where all of yours is going, you might find [The 4 Ds of Time Management](#) helpful. The 4 Ds is a strategy for looking at what we have on our list of things we want or need to do, and deciding whether or not that task or project is the best use of our time. The idea is to make a decision about what to act on now (either by doing it yourself or delegating to someone else), what to act on in the future, and what to drop from your to-do list altogether.

Here's one simple way to do this exercise

1. Draw a table with four columns and head them up, Do, Delay, Delegate, Drop.
2. Make a to-do list of all the things you want or need to get done.
3. Go through your list line-by-line and ask yourself the following questions:
 - Is this something I want or have to do myself, and does it need to be done in the immediate future? If yes, put it in the **Do** column.
 - Is this something that I want or have to do myself, but nothing/nobody will suffer if I delay doing it for now? If yes, put it in the **Delay** column.
 - Is this something that I don't want or have to do myself, that can (or should) realistically be done by someone else? If yes, put it in the **Delegate** column.
 - Is this something I neither want or have to do, and nothing/nobody will suffer if it's not done at all? If yes, put it in the **Drop** column.

If you find that most things end up in your Do column, take another look and be really honest with yourself about where each of the items fits best.

4. When this part of the list is complete, firstly, enjoy putting a line through the items in your Drop column!
5. Then check out your Delegate column – take care of reassigning those items as soon as you can (straight away, is ideal).
6. And now you can get stuck into your (hopefully much-reduced) Do list.

If this process works for you, add it to your Do list as well! Make it part of your routine, as the items on your list are likely to be changing on an ongoing basis - checking your list often will make sure this exercise doesn't turn into a big job. Cross off the things you've taken care of and add any new items (and make sure you put those new items into the appropriate column right from the start – don't add them all to your Do list!).

You'll also want to take a regular look at your Delay list and reconsider what's in there. Apply the questions above to see if the priority of any of those items has changed. And, if appropriate, check in with the people you delegated items to every so often, to see how they're getting along.