

Prioritization Matrix

Urgent

Not Urgent

Important



Not Important



Urgent -- What this means

Urgent tasks cause us to react. We stop what we are doing to deal with these tasks instead

Important -- What this means

Important tasks lead us to our overall mission or goals. These key actions often require planning, organization and initiative

Urgent and Important

Tasks that fall into this quadrant include deadlines, urgent meetings, pressing problems, crises and fire-fighting.

This can be anything from an overdue project or report to customer complaints, a severe bottleneck or broken business process right through to a burst pipe or a health issue like a toothache that hasn't been dealt with.

Spending a lot of time in this zone can cause severe stress and burnout.

Urgent and Important

These actions move us toward our big goals and projects. They could include planning, relationship and team-building, issue prevention and risk assessment, and even health and recreational activities that help us maintain balance in our lives like a dentist appointment or booking a plumber.

Spending time in this quadrant makes us feel calm and in control.

Urgent and Not Important

These are things that interrupt or take us away from our important tasks. This could be anything from co-workers stopping by for a chat, checking your email, or answering the phone to other people's interruptions and unimportant meetings.

Not Urgent and Not Important

This is time spent on distractions. They can range from excessive or irrelevant email or phone calls from friends, social media usage to any activity we use that wastes time and avoids necessary work.

It's important to note that some distractions can leave us feeling energized—in measured doses. So we're not saying people have to be focused all the time, just that to make best use of time we need to be aware of when, where and how often—and for how long—we distract ourselves.