Simple Planner Pages

You don't just use these pages to keep track of lists or events; you use them to make decisions about your priorities, and get an accurate sense of how much time each one is going to take.

This happens almost unconsciously as you fill out the sections, so you don't have to put a lot of thought into time management. The form should only take a few minutes. Use a fresh sheet at the beginning of each day.

1. **Enter the date.** I know this sounds basic, but writing in the day and date by hand can help to orient you in time.

2. Next, **use the notes box to jot down miscellaneous tasks** that you're trying to remember or find a time slot for. The list can include a mixture of work projects, errands, and fun.

3. **Name a priority for the day.** Take a minute to think about what you'd like to focus on. You get to choose: it can be something practical like "Get rid of 50 old emails," or something more abstract, like "Listen more" or "Try to relax." Naming a focus, even a small one, makes it easier to prioritize your to-do list, and at the end of the day, it'll be easier to identify what you did to support your goal, instead of beating yourself up about what you *didn't* do.

4. **In the schedule, first fill in any obligations that already have a set time**, like meals and meetings. <u>*Draw a box* around the entire block of time,</u> so you have a visual indicator that the time is reserved. Blocking out time is helpful in assessing how much unassigned time you have available for other things. It also serves a "meditative" function: once you've dedicated a block of time to an activity, it's easier to let go of other activities in the past and the future, and just focus on the thing you're doing.

5. Scan the notes box for your top 3 items, and then scan your schedule for available time slots. **For each task, make an educated guess about how long it will take, and then block out that much time for it.** Don't forget to leave yourself some gaps for breaks and unexpected interruptions or delays. <u>If you tend to get distracted by emails, chores, or video games, put in a block of time for that too.</u>

6. Make your tasks visually distinct with colored pencils, highlighters, etc. I like to use blue for set obligations, red for important projects, and yellow for personal time.

7. **At the end of the day, try to focus on what you *did* do, not on what you *didn't* do.** This isn't just to make you feel better; neurologically, the more you reinforce what works for you, the more automatic your successful strategies will become over time.

   If it turns out that a lot of your tasks never got done, take a moment to decide why. Were you avoiding them? Did some entries take longer than your estimate? Were some of your main activities missing from the list? Knowing this can help you adjust your plan the next time around.

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Date

Wednesday
AUG.
22

Notes

- x • Laundry
- ✓• Writing
- x • Return library book
- ✓• Call Mom
- ✓• Banjo practice
- ✓• Walk the dog

Time	Activity
8:00	
9:00	walk dog
10:00	WRITING
11:00	Meeting
12:00	LUNCH
1:00	
2:00	
3:00	Dentist appt.
4:00	Lecture
5:00	
6:00	break
7:00	Call Mom — DINNER
8:00	banjo practice
Night	

Priority: Write Intro Paragraph!

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