Organizational Skills

E N S U R I N G  Y O U R  S U C C E S S  
I N  T H E  C L A S S R O O M

- Hands-on learning through real-world activities.
- Clear, concise, and consistent instructions.
- Time-tested instructional design.
- Comprehensive teaching tools.

T O P I C S  I N C L U D E : 

- Getting organized
- Managing incoming information
- Sending information
- Time management

- Interpersonal communications
- Effective delegation
- Team communication and planning

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Introduction

After reading this introduction, you will know how to:

A Use Course Technology ILT manuals in general.

B Use prerequisites, a target student description, course objectives, and a skills inventory to properly set your expectations for the course.
Topic A: About the manual

Course Technology ILT philosophy

Course Technology ILT manuals facilitate your learning by providing structured interaction with the subject. While we provide text to explain difficult concepts, the activities are the focus of our courses. By paying close attention as your instructor leads you through these activities, you will learn the concepts effectively.

We believe strongly in the instructor-led classroom. During class, focus on your instructor. Our manuals are designed and written to facilitate your interaction with your instructor, and not to call attention to manuals themselves.

We believe in the basic approach of setting expectations, delivering instruction, and providing summary and review afterwards. For this reason, lessons begin with objectives and end with summaries. We also provide overall course objectives and a course summary to provide both an introduction to and closure on the entire course.

Manual components

The manuals contain these major components:

- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Units
- Course summary
- Index

Each element is described below.

Table of contents

The table of contents acts as a learning roadmap.

Introduction

The introduction contains information about our training philosophy and our manual components, features, and conventions. It contains descriptions of the target student, objectives, and setup for the course.

Units

Units are the largest structural component of the course content. A unit begins with a title page that lists objectives for each major subdivision, or topic, within the unit. Within each topic, conceptual and explanatory information alternates with activities. Units conclude with a summary comprising one paragraph for each topic, and an independent practice activity that gives you an opportunity to practice the skills you’ve learned.

The conceptual information takes the form of text paragraphs, exhibits, lists, and tables. The activities are structured in two columns, one telling you what to do, the other providing explanations, descriptions, and graphics.
Course summary

This section provides a text summary of the entire course. It is useful for providing closure at the end of the course. The course summary also indicates the next course in this series, if there is one, and lists additional resources you might find useful as you continue to learn about the subject.

Index

The index enables you to quickly find information about a particular topic or concept of the course.

Manual conventions

We’ve tried to keep the number of elements and the types of formatting to a minimum in the manuals. This aids in clarity and makes the manuals more classically elegant looking. But there are some conventions and icons you should know about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italic text</td>
<td>In conceptual text, indicates a new term or feature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold text</td>
<td>In unit summaries, indicates a key term or concept. In an independent practice activity, indicates an explicit item that you select, choose, or type.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities

The activities are the most important parts of our manuals. They are usually divided into two columns, with questions or concepts on the left and answers and explanations on the right. Here’s a sample:

**A-1: Steps for brainstorming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sequence the steps for brainstorming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin generating ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Select the purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize for the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions and clarify ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review the rules.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Topic B: Setting your expectations

Properly setting your expectations is essential to your success. This topic will help you do that by providing:

- A description of the target student at whom the course is aimed
- A list of the objectives for the course
- A skills assessment for the course

Course prerequisites

There are no specific prerequisites for this course.

Target student

The typical students of this course will be managers, supervisors, team leaders, or developers who need to learn how to manage information effectively and how to use the available time efficiently.

Course objectives

These overall course objectives will give you an idea about what to expect from the course. It is also possible that they will help you see that this course is not the right one for you. If you think you either lack the prerequisite knowledge or already know most of the subject matter to be covered, you should let your instructor know that you think you are misplaced in the class.

After completing this course, you will know how to:

- Prevent information overload, and manage information by using the INFO process.
- Manage written, oral, and electronic information, and use memory more effectively.
- Manage outgoing information, and identify when it’s best to use written, oral, or electronic information.
- Identify characteristics and myths related to time, and manage time-related problems.
- Get organized, plan and prioritize, and identify the causes of and remedies for procrastination.
- Handle visitors, handle office interruptions, and delegate effectively.
- Manage team time, communicate and plan within a team, and use team time effectively.
Skills inventory

Use the following form to gauge your skill level entering the class. For each skill listed, rate your familiarity from 1 to 5, with five being the most familiar. This is not a test. Rather, it is intended to provide you with an idea of where you’re starting from at the beginning of class. If you’re wholly unfamiliar with all the skills, you might not be ready for the class. If you think you already understand all of the skills, you might need to move on to the next course in the series. In either case, you should let your instructor know as soon as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventing information overload</td>
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<td>Managing information by using the INFO process</td>
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<td>Managing written information</td>
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<td>Managing oral information</td>
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<td>Managing electronic information</td>
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<td>Using memory effectively</td>
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<td>Managing outgoing information</td>
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<td>Using written, oral, and electronic information</td>
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<td>Understanding the characteristics and myths related to time</td>
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<td>Managing time-related problems</td>
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<td>Getting organized</td>
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<td>Planning and prioritizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying the causes of and remedies for procrastination</td>
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<td>Handling visitors</td>
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<td>Handling office interruptions</td>
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<td>Delegating actively</td>
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<td>Managing team time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating and planning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using team time effectively</td>
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**Topic C: Reviewing the course**

This section explains what you’ll need to do in order to be able to review this course after class.

**Setup instructions for reviewing the course**

If you would like to review the PowerPoint presentations for this course, you can download them as follows:

2. Enter the course title or search by part to locate this course.
3. Click the course title to display a list of available downloads.
   **Note:** Data Files are located under the Instructor Edition of the course.
4. Click the link(s) for downloading the Student Data files.
5. Create a folder named Student Data on the desktop of your computer.
6. Double-click the downloaded zip file(s) and drag the contents into the Student Data folder.
Unit 1
Information management

Unit time: 70 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A  Identify causes of information overload.

B  Manage information by using the INFO process.
Topic A: Managing information

Explanation

Effective information management saves you and your organization valuable time and improves productivity. You can work more efficiently if you can easily find what you need, instead of wasting time searching for misplaced information.

By managing information effectively, you also convey a professional and competent image to your clients. If you can’t find important documents in a reasonable amount of time, you can irritate clients, who may take their business elsewhere.

Your main goal when managing information is to increase wanted information and decrease unwanted information. Ask yourself what steps you can take to ensure that the information you need is reaching you in an efficient manner. You should also determine how to reduce the flow of unwanted information.

Information overload

Information overload occurs when you are overwhelmed by excess information and do not have the skills needed to manage it. Information overload can result from a variety of situations, including stacks of paper on your desk or a long list of unread e-mail messages.

The symptoms of information overload include feelings of anxiety and frustration. These emotions are usually directed at the information you receive, those who send it to you, and your own inability to handle it effectively.

Causes

Many factors contribute to information overload:

- **Longer hours**—People today are working longer hours. Twelve-hour workdays are becoming as common as eight-hour workdays. Many people use their weekends to catch up on unfinished work. Additional time spent working often produces additional opportunities to send and receive information, which can further increase your workload.

- **Technology**—Advances in technology have helped employees send and receive information in a variety of new ways, including e-mail messages, faxes, and such telephone features as call forwarding and voice-mail messages. These new forms of communication have increased the amount of information you need to manage on a daily basis.

- **The “more is better” myth**—Most people view information as power. It’s widely believed that the more information you have, the more likely you’ll be to succeed at your job. In reality, excess information often impedes, rather than facilitates, your ability to perform successfully.
A-1: Exploring information overload

Exercises

1. Which of the following is a factor that contributes to information overload?
   A. Longer hours
   B. Information speed
   C. Memory limits
   D. Complicated information

2. What is your main goal when managing information?
   A. Increase wanted information
   B. Increase accurate information
   C. Decrease the amount of information
   D. Decrease the level of information

3. Your instructor will divide the class into three groups: A, B, and C. In each group, discuss the following statements:
   - Group A: Longer work hours contribute to information overload.
   - Group B: Advances in technology contribute to information overload.
   - Group C: The myth “more is better” contributes to information overload.
Topic B: The INFO process

Explanation
Managing information can be a daunting task. You need to follow a process that will help you take control of the flow of incoming and outgoing information.

The *INFO process* is a method you can use to manage the information you receive on a daily basis. It helps you address and prevent information overload.

The INFO process consists of four steps:
1. Identify your priorities.
2. Note information sources.
3. Focus your information.
4. Organize your information.

By using the INFO process, you'll be able to identify any discrepancies between the information you receive and the information you need, in a systematic and organized manner. After identifying these differences, you'll be able to ensure that the information you receive is organized properly and supports the priorities of your job.

Identify priorities
You must identify your priorities to perform the important functions of your job optimally. Identifying your priorities will give you a starting point and will provide you with an overall goal for managing information.

To identify your priorities, you must address two items:

- **Identify what’s important to your job.** Make a list of the tasks that are most important in your job. Identifying your job priorities will help you determine the information you need on a daily, weekly, monthly, and even annual basis.

- **Identify what’s important to you.** Identify your personal objectives. For instance, list any new skills you would like to acquire, such as using a new software program. By managing information, you’ll be able to effectively fulfill your job responsibilities and find time to expand your professional skills.

Review priorities
Reviewing your priorities with your supervisor will help you determine your most important job functions. You might waste time and effort if you manage information based on priorities that have not been approved by your supervisor.

If your supervisors do not approve your priorities, you’ll need to discuss this issue with them further. You might not be aware of all the tasks that fall within your job responsibilities, or you might be completing tasks that should be assigned to another employee. Don’t spend a lot of time on information management until you and your supervisor reach an agreement on your priorities.
## B-1: Prioritizing tasks

### Exercises

1. You are the assistant manager in the HR division at Icon International. You have been assigned the job of recruiting new employees.

   Jot down the steps you would take to help you manage the information required to complete this job. Discuss your results.

2. It is important that your supervisor approves your priorities. True or false?
**Note your information sources**

After you determine your job priorities, analyze the information you receive on a daily basis. Although many people are annoyed by the overwhelming amount of information they are forced to manage, they usually do not take the time to examine the sources of their information.

To manage information effectively, you must know its sources. This will help you identify trends in the information you receive and determine whether it is essential, helpful, or useless. You’ll also be able to change how you receive information.

**The information chart**

One way to keep track of information sources is to record each piece of information in a categorized chart. This information chart should be simple, easy to read, and inclusive enough to provide sufficient details about each piece of information.

Choose an average workweek, and use your chart to record the information you receive during that week. If possible, try to add another week. By monitoring your information over a two-week period, you’ll be able to identify trends in the information you receive.

When noting your information sources, record every piece of information you receive, no matter how insignificant it might seem. You are completing your information chart for only one or two weeks, so take the time required to be thorough. This will help ensure that your analysis is effective.

**Five critical components**

There are five critical components in each piece of information. Record these components in your information chart, as shown in Exhibit 1-1. Identifying these components will help to create a thorough analysis of the information you receive. The five components are:

- Sender
- Time sent
- Channel of communication
- Topic of information
- Importance of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue in Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet at ICP Comm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky Corporation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 1-1: A sample information chart
Sender
Record the sender of any information you receive. Try to be as specific as possible. Instead of noting “Accounting,” for example, include the sender’s name, such as “Sue in Accounting.” You’ll need to let these senders know whether you need the information and whether you’d like to receive it in the future.

Time sent
Some information that you receive arrives at regular times during the day, while some arrives throughout the day. For example, your mail is likely to be delivered at a regular time each day, but you might receive telephone calls or memos at random throughout the day. By noting the time at which you receive information, you’ll be able to identify trends.

Channel of communication
Note the channel used to send information. Every piece of information you receive will fall into one of these three categories: written, oral, or electronic. Specifically, these channels will be represented as memos, face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, and e-mail messages, among other forms of communication.

By recording the channels in your chart, you can identify which forms of communication are used for the majority of information you receive. You can also determine how effective these channels are.

Topic of information
Record the topic of every piece of information you receive. You might be tempted to note only information that has business-related topics, such as a memo about a new-product brainstorming meeting, or an e-mail outlining the dates of a conference you need to attend. However, you need to record information that concerns non-business topics as well. For example, you need to record any frivolous information you receive, such as rumors about a co-worker or the details of a peer’s recent cruise to the Bahamas. Recording the topics of all incoming information will help you determine if you’re spending your time addressing information that relates to your job priorities.

Ranking the importance of information
Determine a method for ranking the importance of each piece of information you receive. The method could be a scale from 1 to 5, a grade from A to F, or an arbitrary symbol system you create.

Ranking the importance of your information will help you discover how often you address urgent matters that need immediate attention, or identify issues that need your long-term attention over a period of days or months. This ranking will also help you see how much information you receive about matters that are not important to your job priorities.
B-2: Identifying information sources

Questions and answers

1. You should try to record all the information you receive in your information chart during a full day to get an accurate assessment. True or false?

2. It is important that you do not record insignificant pieces of information in your information chart. True or false?

3. Match the five components of the information chart (Who, When, Channel, Topic, Importance) with the items below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>10:10 am</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sue in Employee Development</td>
<td>Group training on new software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods of focusing information

To focus your information, you need to ensure that the information you receive pertains to your job priorities. Given the dynamic nature of information, you probably won’t be able to avoid all useless information. Even so, there are actions you can take to improve the quality of information you receive.

Your information chart will help you determine whether the information you receive on a regular basis relates to your job priorities. You can use this analysis to identify regular senders of useless information, and manage all your communication channels more effectively.

There are four ways in which you can focus your information on a daily basis:

- Contact people who send unwanted information.
- Schedule time to screen your communication channels.
- Control your face-to-face conversations.
- Arrange to have high-priority information sent to you.

Contact people who send unwanted information

By looking at your information chart, you should be able to identify anyone who repeatedly sends you information not relevant to your job priorities.

There might be a person who regularly sends you “spam” messages. Spam is unsolicited e-mail that is sent to people who may or may not want to receive it. For example, you might have a co-worker who sends memo updates about a project in which you are not involved.

Whatever the situation, an effective way to decrease the amount of useless information you receive is to go directly to the source. Let the person know that you don’t want to receive the information. This positive approach will demonstrate your consideration for the other person’s time and effort and will be more likely to produce the results you want.

Schedule time to screen your communication channels

As you chart your information, you’ll notice that you receive certain types of information at specified times in your workday. Perhaps you receive your mail every morning at 10 o’clock, take telephone calls from clients throughout the afternoon, and get daily progress-report e-mails from your team members at the end of the day.

Given your specific situation, you need to determine a method to screen these communication channels when it’s most appropriate. Determine when you receive the bulk of information, and screen that channel at those times.

For example, if you receive most of your e-mail messages in the morning, check your e-mail system often during the morning hours. If you tend to get faxes late in the day, plan to check the fax machine for documents at that time. Do not check your communication channels each time a new piece of information arrives, or you’ll have to deal with constant interruptions. Instead, set aside blocks of time to check various channels, based on the trends revealed by your information chart.
Control your face-to-face conversations

After reviewing the information chart, you might realize that you have spent too much time in face-to-face conversations or on telephone calls on unrelated topics. This is a common problem. These channels of communication make it easy to get off the subject and discuss irrelevant issues.

Make an effort to control your conversations. Socializing with co-workers is acceptable and is expected for building a team atmosphere. However, spending too much time discussing irrelevant topics does not help you achieve your job priorities.

Arrange to have high-priority information sent to you

Your information chart can also reveal information that you tend to miss. You should receive the information you need to support your job priorities. If you’re not getting it, you need to arrange to have this information sent to you. Find out who has the information you need, and make arrangements to have it sent to you as often as needed.

For example, perhaps the marketing department has updated demographic data that you need to complete a series of weekly reports. Find out who compiles that information, and arrange the most convenient way for that person to send the information to you.

This list is not necessarily complete. You might discover additional methods that will help you focus your information in your area of work.
B-3: Focusing information

Questions and answers

1. You should screen your communication channels every time a new piece of information comes in. True or false?

2. In the following scenario, Tracy, Assistant Controller, is in a phone conversation with Elliot, Information Services Manager.

   Elliott: (phone ringing) Hi, this is Elliott speaking.

   Tracy: Hi Elliott. This is Tracy in Accounting.

   Elliott: Hello Tracy. What’s up?

   Tracy: Oh, not much. I was just calling to let you know that I don't need a copy of the expansion project updates anymore. I’m off that project now, and I’m working on a different account.

   Elliott: Oh, I didn’t realize that. I’ll take you off the list right away.

   Tracy: That would be great. I don’t want you to have to make an extra copy that I don’t need.

   Elliott: Well, I appreciate your letting me know.

Which of the following methods of focusing information was implemented here?

A. Contact people who send unnecessary information
B. Schedule time to screen your communication channels
C. Control your face-to-face conversations
D. Arrange to have high-priority information sent to you
Organizational Skills

Organize information

**Explanation**  
Upon receiving information, you can ignore it or choose one of these three recommended alternatives:

- **Toss it**
- **File it**
- **Act on it**

**Toss it**

The first decision you should make is whether to keep or delete the information. If the information is meaningless and does not relate to one of your job priorities, throw it away. Many people are reluctant to throw away any information, but failing to do so can create a mountain of irrelevant material to sift through.

There are three main reasons that people are reluctant to throw away information:

- **Habit**—Many people simply get into the habit of sifting through information to see what is there without actually discarding the unwanted material.
- **Lack of focus**—If people are not focused on the information that’s important, they hesitate to throw away any information. This situation demonstrates the importance of understanding your tasks.
- **Fear**—People are often afraid they won’t have the appropriate information should someone ask for it.

Although determining what to throw away can be difficult, there are several guidelines you can follow to make this process easier. Throw away information when:

- The project has been abandoned or finished.
- The information is no longer current or reliable.
- The material is old and has since been revised.
- The regulations and standards are frequently changing.
- The sources are no longer valuable or of interest to you.

Certain tools can help you decide whether to keep or discard documents. One such tool is the retention schedule. *Retention schedules* can help you decide when to dispose of documents. You should contact an employee in your organization’s records department to determine if a retention schedule has been customized for your industry.

These examples represent items in a typical retention schedule:

- Annual financial statements: Retain indefinitely.
- Monthly financial statements used for internal purposes: Retain for three years.
- Corporate documents such as bylaws, deeds, and licenses: Retain indefinitely.
- Canceled, voided, and processed checks: Retain for seven years.
- Personnel and payroll records: Retain for four years.

If you decide to keep the information, your next step will be to either file it or act on it.
File it

If you decide to keep the information, your next step might be to file the material. If so, you’ll need to determine where the information belongs, and file it accordingly.

It’s important to keep your filing system as simple as possible. The fewer places you have your information filed, the easier it will be to find specific items. Guidelines for filing information include:

- **File your information by content, not by format.** For example, if you have a newspaper article and a book discussing the same content, keep the information together. If you receive a document through e-mail that relates to the same project, print a copy to include in your file.

- **File and date information regularly.** You can either file documents as soon as you receive them, or keep a “To File” tray on your desk and file the information at regular intervals.

- **Staple papers together before filing.** Avoid using paper clips, because they can catch on papers and obstruct file labels.

- **Place the most recent information in the front of the file.** Arranging information chronologically will make it easier to find material because you know the oldest papers are at the back.

- **Arrange files alphabetically.** You’ll be able to find them easily when they are needed.

- **Sort regularly to keep your files as organized and up-to-date as possible.** When you make or pull a file, take a few minutes to sift through the contents and discard the material that is no longer relevant.

At times, even filing information might not be effective. Filing systems break down when related information is filed under different names. For example, information about an automobile can be placed under the file names “Auto,” “Car,” or even the type of car. To avoid this problem, make sure that the file title is as descriptive as possible, and avoid making duplicate files.
Act on it

To identify the appropriate course of action, you first need to determine the importance and nature of the information. The most pressing issues often need immediate action, whereas some information might need to be forwarded to other people for proper action.

After you determine that you need to act on the information you’ve received, put the material into a category. This will help you organize the information and plan your tasks. The following is a list of categories commonly used for separating information:

- **Call**—In addition to putting the information into your “Call” file, you should indicate on your calendar the day you need to make the call.

- **Calls waiting**—If you are unable to reach the party you call, leave a message and put the material in your “Calls Waiting” file. When you simply return a call, make a note of the time and date. If you don’t get a response within an appropriate amount of time, discard the note.

- **Computer work**—You might need to enter some information into your computer. It’s more time-effective to make several entries at once or to delegate the task to someone else. After you enter the material into your computer, either throw out the associated papers, or file them in the appropriate location.

- **Discuss**—You might not be able to act on a matter until you have discussed it with someone else. The “Discuss” category should contain subcategories, including individual names filed alphabetically or by job title.

- **Pending**—This category is used for information that you’ll need at a later date. Examples of pending files might include a system of 31 files (one for each day of the month) or 12 files (one for each month of the year).

- **Write**—Sometimes your next action will involve writing business letters, memos, and thank-you notes. You might find it helpful to save a sample letter on your computer as a model for the next letter you compose.

- **Read**—The majority of your information will probably fall into this category. If you set aside a magazine or other publication to read, write important articles’ page numbers and subject matter on the front cover so you can find the articles quickly.
## B-4: Organizing information

**Questions and answers**

1. What are retention schedules?

2. People are often reluctant to throw information away when they are not sure if they’ll need it in the future. True or false?
Unit summary: Information management

**Topic A**
In this unit, you learned that *information overload* occurs when you are overwhelmed by too much information. You also learned how to *prevent* information overload.

**Topic B**
Then you learned that *identifying priorities* gives you a starting point. You learned that by *noting information sources*, you can identify trends in the information you receive and determine whether it is essential, helpful, or useless. You also learned how to *focus* and *organize information* in order to prevent useless information from making its way to you.

**Review questions**

1. How do organizations benefit from effective information management?

2. What causes information overload?

3. It’s important that your supervisor approve your priorities. Is this statement true or false?

4. What is the INFO process?

5. How does an information chart help in focusing information?
Unit 2
Managing incoming information

Unit time: 70 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A Manage written information.

B Manage oral information.

C Manage electronic information.

D Use your memory effectively.
**Topic A: Managing written information**

**Explanation**

Written information can take many forms. The following list includes the most common forms of written information that might cross your desk on any given workday.

- Memos
- Reports
- Faxes
- Letters from outside parties
- Industry journals and magazines
- Article clippings

**Efficient reading**

You should read information with varying degrees of thoroughness based on the level of understanding you need to gain. If you need a basic understanding of the subject, skimming chapter headings, introductions, and summaries might be sufficient.

For a moderate level of understanding, read introductions and summaries of various chapters in detail, and speed-read the content, noting key words and concepts. At this level, you should also pay attention to diagrams and graphs.

Study the material in depth if you need a thorough understanding of the subject. You might want to skim the material first to get a basic overview, and then go back and read in detail. This will improve your comprehension because you’ll already have a handle on the material.

**Reading technical reports**

Technical information can be complex and often assumes a high level of initial knowledge. Before reading the material, assess the audience for which it was written. Determine if you’ll have difficulty understanding the material. If it’s too complex to understand, seek help from someone more familiar with the subject matter.

If you’re reading large amounts of information, photocopy any glossaries and use them as a reference. It might also be helpful to jot down important concepts and refer to them when necessary.
Fixations and skip-backs

When you read, your eyes usually fix on one block of words and then move on to the next block. In essence, you are not reading words; you’re reading blocks of words. This increases your reading speed. The period of time during which the eye rests on one block is called fixation.

Your eyes might not always move from one block of words to the next. Sometimes, you move back to a preceding block of words if you are unsure about something. These disruptions, called skip-backs, decrease your reading speed.

Improving reading speed

You can improve your reading skills by learning how to reduce fixation time and skip-backs. Some studies suggest that the minimum length of time you need for fixation is a quarter of a second. By minimizing the time you take to scan or fixate on a block of words, you’ll become adept at gaining information from a brief fixation.

Research has shown that you can improve reading speed by scanning words with your finger or a pen. This technique improves the flow of your reading. This point can be illustrated by drawing a circle on a piece of paper. When you look around the circumference of the circle, your eyes are probably moving in fixations, or in a series of lines, rather than in a circular motion. If you run your finger over the outside of the circle, your eyes will smoothly follow the tip of your finger.
**A-1: Understanding careful reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When you read, your eyes usually fix on one block of words and then move on to the next block. The period of time during which the eye rests on one block of words is called _________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When you need to gain a thorough level of understanding, you should scan information. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You have been asked to review a report on a new server software package. The material is technically complex. You need to write a summary report for your manager, but the task is a bit over your head. A co-worker, Tracy, is more experienced with this kind of technical information. Discuss how you would handle this situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Which of the following reduces your reading speed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Fixation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Skip-backs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Scanning the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Studying the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Complete the following sentences:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The period of time during which the eye rests on one block of words is called _________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptions in the forward flow of reading are known as _________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________ ________ assumes a high level of knowledge.</td>
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</table>
Topic B: Managing oral information

Explanation

Oral information can take many forms: face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, business meetings, and presentations. Even though information is invisible or intangible, each of these forms of information requires management.

It is crucial that you take notes while receiving oral information. Taking notes eliminates the need to rely upon your memory to retrieve information.

Most people have their own style of note taking. You can adapt the following examples of note-taking methods to nearly any situation:

- **Standard outline form.** This is a popular method for taking notes. Roman numerals are commonly used to identify the main points, and capital letters are used to label sub-points.

- **Precis or paragraph writing.** This style involves writing a brief summary of the main points. A disadvantage of this method is that it might be difficult to keep up with the pace of information being presented.

- **Concept maps.** This is a more free-form way of taking notes.

Concept maps

Concept maps are a method of note taking. (They can also be used for brainstorming.) In a concept map, the main idea is placed at the center of the page, and supporting information branches out from the center. Concept maps are popular in academic settings. A concept map can help you collect and sort information. It’s often necessary to take notes at staff meetings, conventions, and presentations. In these situations, you can use concept maps to jot down main ideas and supporting details, and customize the maps later to fit your needs.

Drawing concept maps

When drawing a concept map, follow these steps:

1. Write the subject title in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it.
2. Draw a line coming out from the circle in any direction, and write the first main heading below or above the line. These lines are commonly called branches.
3. For sub-headings, draw a line coming out from the main heading line.
4. For individual details, draw lines out from the corresponding item’s line.

Customize each concept map to suit your own preferences, and develop the branches in any way you want. When drawing concept maps, follow these guidelines:

- **Use single words or simple phrases.** Too many words clutter your map and take a long time to write.

- **Print neatly.** Although you might be in a hurry when you construct your concept map, try to print your words as neatly as possible.

- **Use different colors for different ideas.** This technique will help you separate ideas and visualize the concept map.

- **Incorporate symbols and images on your map.** If a symbol or phrase is significant, it might help you remember the information.

- **Use arrows to show cause and effect among ideas.** You can also use various shapes and circles to connect information.
Advantages

There are several advantages to using concept maps. They make the main idea easy to identify. The relative importance of each supporting idea is apparent because more-important ideas are closer to the center of the page.

By using concept maps, you can sort, collect, and manage information. These maps generally require less paper than other note-taking methods. This reduces the amount of material you have to sort through.

B-1: Taking notes

Exercises

1. Create a concept map based on the text read aloud in class.

2. Concept maps are a traditional method of note taking. True or false?
3 In the following scenario, Marcus D’Angelo, Creative Director, is having a discussion with the Product Managers, Stephen O’Brien and Nancy Hurst.

Nancy: Okay, so it sounds like the third and fourth of October are going to be the best days to hold the seminar.

Marcus: I really think that’s the only time this quarter that’s likely to be convenient for all the departments.

Stephen: (concerned) Wait a second, I just thought of something. Isn’t the trade show in Denver on the third? I thought I remembered hearing Chris mention that in yesterday’s meeting.

Nancy: (worried) Oh, you may be right. I can’t remember if that’s the date of the show.

Marcus: (looking in his day planner) Wait a second. I took notes during that meeting. Let’s see...No, the trade show is the twenty-third, not the third.

Nancy: (relieved) That’s good. I would hate to try to find a better time for the workshop.

How was Marcus able to confirm the date of the trade show?
Topic C: Managing electronic information

Explanation

Another source of information is electronic media, which includes e-mails and faxes. It is equally important to manage the electronic information you receive.

Organizing computer files

When you organize computer files, find a system that works for you, keeping the following guidelines in mind:

- Create a folder for each area of your work. Within each folder, create a subfolder for each project or client.
- Consider creating a new folder when a current folder contains more than one logical grouping of files.
- Use the search feature to locate files or documents.
- Clean out your files regularly. Delete duplicate and unnecessary files, and transfer inactive files to floppy disks or other removable media. Your computer will operate more efficiently with less data.

Backing up files

You might want to back up your files daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on the importance of the material. You should keep at least one copy of the most important information in a safe location or off the premises in case the original copies are stolen, destroyed, or lost.

Managing e-mail

There are three things you can do to manage e-mail messages more effectively:

- **Feel no obligation to reply.** Although many people feel obligated to respond to every e-mail message they receive, it’s not necessary. Doing so contributes to surplus information that your co-workers will have to manage.
- **Avoid interrupting yourself.** Stopping your work every time your computer announces the arrival of a new message is not productive. You should either turn off the audio alert or ignore incoming messages until you have a block of time during which you can check your messages.
- **Delete the message.** If an e-mail message is irrelevant to you, delete it. If you are on someone’s “CC” list and you receive copies of messages that are of no use to you, ask the sender to remove your name from the list.
C-1: Managing e-mail

Exercises

1 Watch the movie. In this movie, Anthony, an employee of Icon International, approaches his colleague Megan.

Why is Megan unable to get the e-mail message about the meeting?

2 You should try to respond to every e-mail message you receive, even if it’s brief. True or false?

3 How can you organize your computer files?
Topic D: Managing your memory

Explanation

Human memory is our most basic mode of information storage. It’s important to understand how human memory functions.

Human memory

Research has revealed three distinct stages of memory: sensory, short-term, and long-term memory.

Sensory memory works by absorbing each individual stimulus that you encounter. Incoming information is then stored for only a fraction of a second before being transferred to the next stage.

From sensory memory, information is passed on to short-term memory, which acts as a temporary storehouse. It holds data for approximately 10 to 20 seconds. After this information has been assessed, it is either forgotten or passed on to long-term memory.

Long-term memory acts as a permanent storehouse for information. Information enters the long-term memory through rehearsal. This can involve simple recitation or deeper processing that focuses on the meaning of the information and links it to existing information.

Properties

You can remember information that is characterized by at least one of the following properties:

- **Recency**—Information that we learned recently is more easily recalled than information that was presented to us several months ago. For example, it’s usually easier to recall the details of a staff meeting held this morning than one held two weeks ago.

- **Vividness**—People tend to remember striking impressions or vivid information more easily than they remember ordinary material. For example, you might have vivid memories of such events as a graduation, the birth of your child, or the first sale you made.

- **Frequency**—It’s usually easy to remember information that we are frequently exposed to. For example, you might be able to recall the name and telephone number of your best client without hesitation, but the name of the new employee in your department might be difficult to remember for a while.
Remembering information

There are two things you can do to improve your information recall:

- **Make an association.** Your memory works by making associations, or links, between information. To improve your memory, try to create associations between two or more pieces of information. For example, suppose the first name of the new shipping manager at your company is Jack. To remember his name, you might make an association with the name “Jack” and the phrase “Jack in the Box.” Since Jack is the shipping manager, he works with boxes of products, which relates to the “Jack in the Box” association.

- **Personalize information.** If possible, link the information you want to remember with something important to you. For example, examine your existing knowledge of the subject and determine how this new information can add to what you already know. If the information cannot be tied back to previous knowledge, consider linking the material to something you won’t likely forget.

Acronyms

An acronym is a word in which each letter represents another word. With acronyms, you need to remember only one word to trigger your memory. For example, the acronym “SMART” will help you remember the five characteristics of well-developed goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based. A possible disadvantage of this method is that it can be difficult to assemble letters into a meaningful word.

Mnemonics

Mnemonics is a method by which an image or story is used to help you remember information. Make your mnemonic device as vivid as possible to increase your ability to recall information. When you develop your mnemonics, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Choose positive, pleasant images. The brain often blocks out unpleasant images.
- Use vivid, colorful images. These images are easier to remember than drab ones.
- Exaggerate the size of important parts of the image.
- Use humor. Funny images tend to be easy to remember.

Reviewing information

Typically, learning works best when done in a time span of 20 to 50 minutes. A shorter period does not give the mind enough time to appreciate the flow and organization of the material, and a longer period results in a gradual decline in attention and retention.

If a meeting or lecture that you’re attending requires two hours, try to arrange for brief breaks during this time. Small breaks will guarantee higher degrees of recall.

Another way to improve your recall is to review information for ten minutes after a one-hour learning period. Try to make this regular review a habit.
D-1: Understanding human memory

Exercises

1 In the following scenario, Tracy is meeting with Stephen at his desk. They are seated across the desk from one another, each of them busy looking over some papers.

   Tracy: (making notes on her papers) Okay, I’ll make sure there are 25 copies of the budget breakdown at the meeting.

   Stephen: Hey, do you think we need to include the new VP of Marketing in this meeting? I can never remember his name.

   Tracy: Oh, do you mean Ronald Spear?

   Stephen: Yes, that’s right. How do you remember that? He just started last week.

   Tracy: I had a friend in college whose name was Randy Spear, so it’s easy for me to remember.

Which of the following properties of memory is being used here?

A  Recency
B  Vividness
C  Frequency

2 _________ is a method by which an image or story is used to help you remember information.

3 In this game, the instructor will read a list of acronyms. Expand each acronym to its full name. For right answers, you will be given one point, and for wrong answers, there won’t be any points. The team with the most points will be declared the winner.
Unit summary: Managing incoming information

**Topic A**
In this unit, you learned ways to **manage written information**. You learned about different reading techniques, plus tips for reading technical information. You also learned how to improve your reading skills by reducing **fixation time** and **skip-backs**.

**Topic B**
Next, you learned how to **manage oral information**. You learned the importance of taking **notes**, and you learned how to use **concept maps**.

**Topic C**
Then, you learned how to **manage electronic information**. You learned guidelines for managing computer files and for managing e-mail effectively.

**Topic D**
Finally, you learned about **human memory**. You learned about the different properties of human memory, such as **recency**, **vividness**, and **frequency**. You also learned how to use **acronyms** and **mnemonics** to recall information more easily.

**Review questions**

1. List some different types of written information that require management.

2. What are concept maps?

3. You can improve your speed-reading skill by increasing fixation time and skip-backs. True or false?

4. Which of the following stages of memory works by absorbing each individual stimulus that you encounter?
   A. Sensory
   B. Short term
   C. Long term

5. List the three properties of memory.

6. What are acronyms?
Organizational Skills
Unit 3
Managing outgoing information

Unit time: 70 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A  Manage outgoing information.

B  Send written, oral, and electronic information effectively.
Topic A: Fundamentals

Explanation
Managing your outgoing information requires you to monitor the information you send to others. If you manage this information effectively, every person in your work environment will benefit.

Guidelines for sending information
These three guidelines will help you send information effectively:

- Know your purpose.
- Know the recipient.
- Use the appropriate communication channels.

Know your purpose
Before you send any information, ask yourself if the information will help the recipient achieve company goals or if it’s even relevant to the organization.

Know the recipient
To avoid wasting time and effort, make sure the information you’re sending is going to the correct person or group of people. You also need to ensure that the recipient of your information will benefit from it. People sometimes send information without first considering if the recipient really needs it. Considering the recipients’ needs will help reduce the amount of information that your co-workers must address.

If the recipient does need the information, personalize it according to their individual needs. For example, if the person is direct in nature, he or she will likely prefer to get straight to the point. Others will prefer a more social tone.

Use the appropriate communication channels
The impact of the information you send depends on the communication channel you choose. Make sure the recipient can access the information channel you have chosen, whether it’s e-mail, faxes, or another form of communication.

For instance, there is no point in sending a fax if you’re not sure if your contact has access to a fax machine. If you need to send written information, ask your contact what format she prefers.

Choose your information channels carefully, depending on the complexity and confidentiality of the information. For example, it would be more appropriate to send highly detailed, official information through a written report than to convey it through a casual face-to-face conversation.
Do it!

**A-1: Sending information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Managing your outgoing information reduces the amount of information other people in your workplace have to address. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 List some guidelines that can help you send information effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Watch the movie, and then discuss the approach taken by Susan and Hillman to send the project file to Kim.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Topic B: Modes of sending information

Explanation

You can monitor your outgoing information to ensure that it’s sent in the manner that best serves its purpose. Doing this will also reduce your contribution to the information overload that exists in virtually every business environment.

Written information

Sending written information is appropriate in many situations. When you need to send the same information to several people, e-mail is often the best option because you don’t have to repeat your efforts.

Information that’s difficult to understand is often best sent in a written format. The recipient can review the information as needed. This format is especially useful if the information is detailed.

If you need to send a large amount of information, such as an annual report, a written channel is your best choice. Relaying this information orally would be too time-consuming, and electronic means might be too unstable or simply not feasible. Sending a 50-page report by fax is likely to be more wasteful than sending it by express mail.

To send written information as effectively as possible, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Get the recipient’s attention.
- Make the information easy to read.
- Use the appropriate style.
- Proofread your document for errors.

Get the recipient’s attention

To ensure that the recipient reads your message, you need to grab his attention within the first few seconds. Get to the point of your message as quickly as possible. The recipient will not appreciate having to read several sentences or paragraphs just to determine if the information is relevant.

If you’re sending a lengthy report, include an overview, such as an executive summary, to tell the recipient why the information is relevant. By using informative titles or headings in your documents, you can communicate the topic of your document and alert the recipient to its importance and relevance.

Make the information easy to read

Jumbled and disorganized documents are unappealing and difficult to read. To prevent your information from being disregarded, format your documents in an organized manner:

- Use margins at the top, bottom, and sides of your document to give it a neat appearance.
- Use headings to emphasize document segments and the flow of information.
- Use boldface type to add emphasis to headings.
- Allow for generous spacing throughout your document.
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short so that the information is reader-friendly.
Use the appropriate style

The recipient will interpret written information based on your style of communication. You can use a formal or an informal style, depending on the nature of the information or the preference of your recipient.

A formal style is appropriate for documents addressed to larger audiences, for long reports, or for official documents. An informal style is typically used in documents such as memos, letter reports, or brief e-mail messages addressed to an individual or a small group. Keep in mind that you should use an informal style only with people you know personally.

The appropriate style will help your recipient understand and accept your message. For example, the recipient might interpret an annual report written in an informal manner as unprofessional. On the other hand, a formal memo that outlines the dates for upcoming meetings to a small group of co-workers might seem pretentious or overdone.

Proofread your document for errors

Ensure that your document is free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors that can damage your professional image. The recipient might question the credibility of your information if it’s rife with errors.

Although your word processor’s spelling- and grammar-checking functions can be helpful in identifying errors, do not depend on them alone. These automated functions may overlook several errors. If possible, ask a co-worker or even a supervisor to proofread your formal documents.
**B-1: Sending written information**

**Exercises**

1. List some guidelines for sending written information effectively.

2. Sending information in a written format is helpful when you have a large amount of information. True or false?

3. Which of the following channels is suitable for sending a large amount of information, such as an annual report?
   - A Written
   - B Verbal
   - C Electronic

4. Read the document Letter.doc. Identify and discuss any problems you find in it.

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**Oral information**

**Explanation**

Sending information through an oral channel is most appropriate when one or more of the following is true:

- **The information is emotional or personal in nature.** Face-to-face conversations are the best channel to use because feedback from the recipient can be addressed immediately.

- **The information needs to be sent to one person.** An oral channel sometimes provides the quickest form of communication. There is no need to repeat this information to other people.

- **The information is simplistic in nature.** Simple messages are usually not worth the time it takes to write them out.

- **The information is urgent and needs to be communicated quickly.** For example, an impromptu team meeting will be held to address the merger of two competitors.

- **A group of people is required to address an issue.** A meeting or conference call allows those involved to discuss the issue and come up with ideas to address it.
Face-to-face conversations

These four guidelines will improve your ability to send information through face-to-face communications:

- **Know what you want to communicate.** To save time, know in advance what information you want to communicate. You’ll be able to get to the point of your conversation and avoid discussing unrelated topics.

- **Choose the right setting.** The effectiveness of face-to-face communication relies heavily upon the setting you choose. Determine if the information you need to address is personal or emotional. If so, it’s extremely important that you choose a private location to communicate the information.

- **Don’t spread rumors.** Gossiping is wasted time that could be spent on productive tasks.

- **Document the conversation if necessary.** Follow up important face-to-face communications with a written document. This documentation will serve as a reminder, which will be especially important in disciplinary matters. Documentation serves as a written record of an employee’s performance problems and is imperative if dismissal is required.

Telephone conversations

The following are general guidelines for telephone conversations:

- **Have the necessary materials ready.** Before placing a telephone call, make sure you have found all written material related to the topic. If you’re prepared, you won’t waste time searching for material while your contact waits.

- **Get to the point.** A reasonable amount of “small talk” is expected and accepted in business phone calls, but the majority of social conversation should be delayed until after you have finished discussing business issues. Focus on the point of the call to ensure that the business matter at hand is properly addressed.

- **Know when to use voice mail.** Use voice mail when you need to forward information that does not require an immediate response. This message does not interrupt the recipient, who can access it at a convenient time.

Meetings

The following are general guidelines for conducting meetings:

- **Plan an agenda.** Before the meeting, distribute an agenda that outlines the topics for discussion. This gives attendees time to prepare.

- **Bring necessary materials.** Make sure that you bring any necessary reports, analyses, articles, or materials for discussion during the meeting.

- **Focus on the purpose of the meeting.** During a meeting, you need to keep the discussion focused on the intended purpose. Follow the agenda to avoid wasting time on irrelevant issues. If the discussion turns to unrelated topics, try to guide the conversation back on course, and if necessary, remind participants about the purpose of the meeting.
**B-2: Sending oral information**

### Exercises

1. In the following scenario, Kathy, the project manager, is sitting in a conference room, and Marnie, the team leader, approaches her.

   Kathy: Marnie, please come in and have a seat.

   Marnie: Thanks, Kathy.

   Kathy: I thought it might be more comfortable to meet here in the conference room instead of my office. The distractions there can be bothersome.

   Marnie: I know what you mean; my phone never seems to stop ringing.

   Kathy: OK, let’s get to the point. I want to discuss our ongoing project. I hear that George, who is on your team, is not sticking to the deadlines on a regular basis. Isn’t he up to the task?

   Marnie: That’s not correct. He has met all the deadlines that we had set except for one.

   Kathy: Then I think I heard wrong. What happened?

   Marnie: *(Handing out a sheet of paper)* These are the minutes that I had taken during the meeting with George. He had some doubts about a concept. I asked him to put the project on hold until I got confirmation from the client. The delay in response from the client resulted in missing the deadline.

Now, analyze this scenario in terms of the guidelines for face-to-face conversation.

2. Face-to-face conversations about a disciplinary matter should be documented. True or false?

3. List the guidelines for conducting meetings.
Electronic information

The two most common methods of sending electronic information in your workplace are e-mail messages and faxes. Voice messaging can also fall into this category. Electronic messaging has become so prevalent in the workplace that it has also become the greatest source of information overload.

When to use e-mail

Use e-mail to communicate in these circumstances:

- **Recipients can respond at their convenience.** People check their e-mail messages at different times throughout the day. Information that requires immediate attention should probably not be sent via e-mail. On the other hand, if the information is not time-sensitive, e-mail messages are often the best solution.

- **Information needs to be sent to different time zones.** E-mail messages allow you to contact people in different time zones without having to deal with odd hours or expensive long-distance rates.

- **Information needs to be sent to several people.** With e-mail, you don’t have to spend time printing copies of documents for each contact. You can distribute your information to several people more quickly with e-mail than with any other method.

When to send faxes

Sending information through a fax machine is ideal when you want the recipient to have a printed copy of the information, when the information is brief, and when the information must be delivered quickly.

If the information you send is lengthy, you need to consider the time it will take to fax it, and consider whether your contact will be inconvenienced by the wait time. Determine if express mail service would be more appropriate.

Sending e-mail

The following are general guidelines that can help you send information through e-mail effectively:

- **Write a subject line.** Make sure it clearly indicates the topic of your e-mail message. The recipient will know immediately what it’s about and whether it needs to be addressed immediately. If the recipient uses an e-mail message filing system, he can file your message quickly by reading the subject line.

- **Focus on one topic.** It’s easier for the recipient to respond to your message if it addresses only one topic.

- **Limit the message length to one page.** People tend to prefer reading concise e-mail messages. If people need to use a scroll bar to read all the information, they are more likely to put off reading it until they have more time to do so, or they might not bother reading it at all.
Organizational Skills

Sending faxes

These actions can improve your ability to use faxes effectively:

- **Send a cover sheet that describes the documents.** A cover sheet will serve the same purpose as the subject line of an e-mail message by indicating the topic of the fax. The recipient will know how many pages to expect and can identify missing pages, if any.

- **Make sure documents have good print quality.** Documents can be distorted when they are transmitted by fax. Ensure that the print is clear and large enough. Even if the document is slightly distorted, the recipient should be able to read the information.

**Do it!**

B-3: Sending electronic information

Questions and answers

1. In the following scenario, Ms. Frasier approaches Steve at the copier machine. She has a paper and a briefcase in her hand. She appears to be in a rush. Steve is sorting papers and looks up.

   Ms. Frasier: *(Concerned)* Steve, I need to get these numbers to Mr. Hirsch, ASAP. I’m on my way to a meeting across town, so could you get this to him for me? *(Hands Steve the paper)*

   Steve: *(Politely)* I’m sorry, Ms. Frasier, he’s out of the office, but you can reach him on his cell phone.

   Ms. Frasier: *(Concerned)* No, he really needs to have a hard copy of these projections.

   Steve: Well, he’s on his way to the Main Street branch. I could fax them there, and call him to tell him to pick them up when he arrives. Would that help?

   Ms. Frasier: *(Relieved)* That would be great—thank you! Tell him I’ll call him later today to get his feedback and discuss some of the details.

   Is e-mail another option for Steve to send the information?

2. E-mail messages are a good method for sending information to different time zones. True or false?
3 In which of the following situations is e-mail suitable?
   A When information is emotional or personal
   B When information is urgent and needs to be communicated quickly
   C When information needs to be sent to different time zones
   D When you need to send a large amount of information, such as a report

4 List some actions that will improve your ability to send a fax effectively.
Unit summary: Managing outgoing information

**Topic A**
In this unit, you learned guidelines for *sending information*. You learned how important it is to identify the *purpose of the information*, the *recipient*, and the best *communication channel* when sending information.

**Topic B**
Next, you learned about typical situations that are appropriate for sending *written information*. You also learned that the written channel is appropriate for sending large amount of data, such as an annual report. Then, you learned about instances when sending information through the *oral* channel is often best. You also learned about typical circumstances in which sending *electronic information* is the best choice.

**Review questions**

1. List some guidelines for sending information.

2. When is it best to send information in written form?

3. What are some important things to keep in mind while having face-to-face conversations?

4. When is it best to send information through e-mail?

5. Before sending information, you must know your purpose, your level of involvement with the information, and what communication channels are available. True or false?
Unit 4

Time management

Unit time: 50 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A  Identify characteristics and myths related to time.

B  Manage time-related problems.
Topic A: Time management

Explanation
A little self-discipline will help you manage your time more effectively. Skilled time managers can accomplish more than unskilled time managers on a given work day. Time management is the process of organizing the activities in your life by priority. The ability to organize your tasks within an allotted time will increase your overall productivity, quality, and quantity of work.

Characteristics of time
Time has three basic qualities:
- Time is equal for everyone.
- Time expires.
- Time is priceless.

Time is equal for everyone
Time is the only truly democratic resource because no one has any more or less than anyone else. Every person has an equal amount of time to use however he or she chooses.

Time expires
Time is a perishable resource. It’s impossible to keep, save, slow, or use at a later date. Each of us must take advantage of every moment, because time lost cannot be regained.

Time is priceless
Most people do not use time to their advantage. You can get ahead if you learn how to manage your time well.

Myths related to time management
Common misconceptions about time management include:
- I can do it all.
- I should put in more hours.
- I should hurry.
- I was born organized.

I can do it all
People often believe that if they work harder, they can accomplish everything. No one is capable of doing everything. Becoming organized will help you to achieve most of what you want to accomplish. Trying to accomplish everything, however, just sets you up for failure. By realizing that you cannot do it all, you can permit some time for other activities.
I should put in more hours

Sometimes, long hours are necessary to complete a pressing task. Nevertheless, it’s usually counterproductive to spend an excessive amount of time working. Stress and exhaustion become significant problems that can prevent you from completing tasks successfully. Exceedingly long workweeks result in an imbalance between personal and work-related activities.

I should hurry

People believe that they can save time by performing tasks as quickly as possible. By hurrying, though, people can become frenzied and leave no time for reflection. Completing the job too quickly can compromise quality, and result in additional time spent correcting errors.

I was born organized

Some people appear naturally organized when compared to others. This is not because they were born that way. People learn time management skills by observing others. Anyone can improve their organizational skills and become more effective on the job.

Do it!

A-1: Understanding time management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Discuss or debate the following statement:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Working longer hours is necessary to finish pressing tasks.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Watch the movie, and then answer the following questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think Wendy forgot about the documents needed by Stanley?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you had any such experience in your office? If so, share it with the class.

3 People often learn time management skills by observing others. True or false?
Topic B: Time management problems

Explanation
Efficient people focus on producing results, and generate a high ratio of output in the least amount of time possible. Nonetheless, some people frequently waste time trying to do too many things. Effective people are efficient because they prioritize their tasks and eliminate insignificant activities.

To work effectively, you must complete tasks efficiently. Determine which activities to overlook so that you can prioritize your tasks and use your time optimally.

Some universal time management problems
To gain control of your time resources, you must recognize some common problems related to time management:

- Unclear expectations
- Vague objectives
- Lack of communication
- Ineffective delegation
- Insufficient planning
- Extreme stress

Unclear expectations
It’s often assumed that everyone in an organization has the same vision of what needs to be achieved. Some people have a different vision that leads them to strive for different goals.

A lack of understanding between the employer and employee about what is expected can create confusion. It’s important to outline objectives clearly so that people can manage their time proactively.

Vague objectives
Time management suffers when people fail to understand organizational and individual objectives. You need to know what to concentrate on, or you won’t be able to manage your time effectively. You need to understand how your performance affects the organization as a whole.

Lack of communication
A misunderstood message will rarely result in the correct action being taken. Miscommunication creates confusion and makes it difficult to develop mutual understanding. This leads to misused and mismanaged time because people can’t determine where to focus their energy.

Learn to recognize communication barriers and to minimize their effects on your time management. Ensuring that the other individual understands your message will open communication channels.
**Ineffective delegation**

The tendency to “do it yourself” instead of delegating tasks to others creates time management problems. Delegation requires you to relinquish control, and that can be difficult if you have a high sense of personal responsibility.

Although the planning needed to delegate tasks consumes time at the outset, it saves time in the end. Delegation frees up your time, which you can spend on tasks that are more important. Delegation can also give your employees a chance to develop additional skills.

**Insufficient planning**

Planning is an important step before using any resource, including time. You must determine which activities need attention and how much time to allot to each.

You might spend a significant amount of energy if you don’t establish a plan. This is likely to result in “management by crisis.” Failure to plan on a regular basis will cause you to fall behind, overload your schedule, and make it hard to catch up.

**Extreme stress**

Stress is an internal reaction to life’s challenges. People feel stressed in a variety of situations. Anxiety impairs productivity and slows progress. Extreme stress becomes a distraction, making it difficult to focus and to distinguish between significant and insignificant activities.

Managing stress successfully produces positive results. It can motivate you and help make your goals attainable.
B-1: Identifying time management problems

**Exercises**

1. In the following scenario, Anthony, an employee, is sitting across from his manager, Ms. Adams, at her desk.

   Anthony: *(frustrated)* Ms. Adams, I’m confused about what you want me to do on this new project.

   Ms. Adams: Why? You know the goal is to introduce a new service to our corporate market, right?

   Anthony: Yes, but I’m not sure I understand what my responsibilities are with this project. I feel like I’ve been wasting my time trying to figure out what you want me to do.

   Ms. Adams: I see. Then let’s take some time to talk about what I expect from you.

   Why do you think Anthony is confused regarding his role in the project?

2. All you need to do to become more efficient is prioritize your tasks. True or false?

3. Watch the movie, and then answer the following questions.

   Discuss the consequences of miscommunication.

   Did you have any such experience? If so, share it with the class.
Time management solutions

These are some tips that will help you save time:

- Monitor the environment.
- Make meetings count.
- Simplify tasks.
- Create uninterrupted time.
- Delegate.
- Establish objectives.
- Avoid procrastination.

Monitor the environment

Each situation you encounter will have different environmental factors. To manage your time successfully, you must understand how different situations will affect your ability to manage your time. Being aware of situational factors will help you plan ahead and avoid wasting time.

Make meetings count

People spend a lot of time in meetings. It’s important to make good use of that time by discussing the relevant issues, making decisions, and taking action. It’s crucial to stay focused on the task at hand and not waste time discussing irrelevant issues.

Simplify tasks

The number of tasks you must accomplish in one day can seem overwhelming. To handle several tasks, you should organize your daily activities to make the most of your time. Some beneficial time-saving techniques include grouping similar tasks together, organizing your appointments, and making all your telephone calls at once. Eliminating unnecessary tasks also saves time. Make sure there is a reason for completing routine activities. If an activity does not produce benefits, remove it from your task list.

Create uninterrupted time

Sometimes it’s necessary to create uninterrupted time to complete a project. Moving to a new location, such as the library or a different office, can provide some uninterrupted time. Avoid working near distractions. You should also refrain from addressing temporary external demands until you have finished your tasks.

Delegate

Delegate tasks to your employees to avoid wasting time addressing tasks that others can handle. Delegation also motivates and develops the skills of employees, and this in turn increases their productivity.

Establish objectives

Determining long-term and short-term objectives permits you to concentrate on activities that have the greatest priority. Establish your priorities to create these objectives, and focus your energy on essential areas. After establishing your objectives, develop a plan to fulfill them.
Avoid procrastination

Begin working on your tasks immediately. The longer you delay starting a project, the harder it is to avoid further procrastination. After you begin a task, avoid distractions. It’s hard to get back on track after your attention has been diverted.

Time management plans

Developing a time management plan is essential for organizing your activities and determining your priorities. These six steps will help you control your time more effectively:

1. Analyze your activities.
2. List job functions.
3. Develop a balance sheet.
4. Allot time to tasks.
5. Identify problems.

Analyze your activities

You must first determine how you are currently spending your time. Conduct a time audit of all areas of your life, including work, social, and family activities. The information you gain from the audit will help you understand how your time is spent and will put your activities in perspective.

List job functions

Compile a list of your job responsibilities to determine if you’re doing the appropriate tasks according to your job description. Then, concentrate on translating your essential responsibilities into objectives. Focusing on objectives will motivate you to establish specific plans for meeting your job responsibilities.

Develop a balance sheet

After you have determined how you spend your time, you can analyze your time audit by developing a balance sheet. Group your key responsibilities under broad headings, and measure the actual time you spend completing your duties versus the time allocated for those activities. The results might reveal whether it’s possible to complete your tasks in the specified time frames.

Allot time to tasks

Estimate how much time you need to devote to each task. Although allocating time can be difficult, you can use your experience to prioritize tasks in the available time. If you have not done a specific task before, consult with someone who has, or make an estimate according to a similar activity. A year-long time audit can be helpful when you’re allocating time because you can use the audit to look at the big picture.

Identify problems

If your balance sheet shows a large difference between the allocated time and the actual time spent on completing tasks, determine the reason behind this variance. Some major causes of time discrepancies include inadequate staffing, poor delegating, and lack of planning.
Solve problems

After you identify the problem, you need to develop a course of action to address it. Focusing on the root of the problem is generally the best way to solve it. After you determine how to solve the problem, you’ll be able to manage your time more effectively.

Do it!

**B-2: Identifying time management solutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List some steps that can help you to manage your time more effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Taking care of temporary demands immediately is the best way to manage your time. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the following scenario, Robert approaches Anthony, who is sitting in the break room eating lunch. Robert looks frazzled as he sits down next to Anthony.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  Robert: *(stressed out)* Anthony, you always seem to have spare time to relax, and I barely have time to eat lunch. What’s your secret?

  Anthony: One day I realized I had no idea where all my time went, so I took a hard look at how I was spending it. Once I figured out what I was doing with my time, it was easy to rearrange things so I could be more organized and focused.

  Robert: Maybe I should try that.

  List the activities you typically perform in a day, along with the time taken for each activity. If possible, try to rearrange your activities so that you get more free time.
Unit summary: Time management

**Topic A**
In this unit, you learned about the three qualities of time. You learned that time is equal for everyone, time expires, and time is priceless. Next, you explored some common myths related to time management.

**Topic B**
Finally, you learned about some typical problems with time management. You also learned some useful time-saving tips. You learned that developing a time management plan is essential for organizing your activities and determining your priorities.

**Review questions**

1. Spending more time working each day will allow you to accomplish more. True or false?

2. What are some common time management myths?

3. Completing a task on your own saves the time it would take to explain it to someone else. True or false?

4. What is the difference between an efficient person and an effective person?

5. What are the advantages of delegating your tasks?
Unit 5
Organizing time

Unit time: 70 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A Get organized.

B Plan and prioritize.

C Identify the causes of and remedies for procrastination.
Topic A: Getting organized

Explanation
Organization is vital to successful task completion. People waste a lot of time every day because of disorganization. If you get organized, you can identify priorities, focus on your most important tasks, and manage your responsibilities more successfully.

Personal organization
The following suggestions can help you become more organized:

- Manage paper.
- Arrange your notes.
- Develop a reading file.
- Clean your desk.
- Reorganize at the end of each day.

Manage paper
Reading, filing, sorting, and writing on paper can take up over 50% of your day. As paperwork accumulates, people think that the easiest way to deal with it is to make random piles. Papers that are lumped together in this manner are difficult to keep track of, however, and easy to lose. To avoid this, you should reduce and control your paper flow. Paper needs to be filed, passed on, or recycled immediately. If a document is not urgent, file it in a labeled file folder until you need it. Every piece of paper in your workspace should have its proper place.

Arrange your notes
To avoid having to remember trivial tasks, many people jot down reminders randomly throughout the day. Over a period of time, these notes accumulate and can be easily forgotten. One way to deal with notes is to create a comprehensive list. Add new tasks and cross off completed ones. You might also consider obtaining a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) to manage your notes and task lists.

Develop a reading file
Reading materials also tend to pile up. Set up a reading file to help you to skim periodicals for articles of interest when you receive them. If you find articles you want to read, either rip them out, or tag the pages you want to read and file them for later.

Clean your desk
To get organized, you should keep your desk space neat and orderly. Determine where each item belongs so you can find what you need quickly and effortlessly. Remove clutter and any item that occupies excess space. Taking time to straighten your desk on a daily basis will help you stay organized.

Reorganize at the end of each day
Try to block out time at the end of each day to reorganize. Use this time to take care of any papers that have accumulated on your desk during the day. Go through your voice mail and e-mail messages and respond appropriately. Because your goal is to complete important tasks, you can also use this time to create your task list for the next day.
Master task list

A master task or “to-do” list will help you keep track of what you need to accomplish. Writing all your activities down in one place helps you monitor your unfinished work. When you write tasks down on paper, you are more likely to complete them. Being organized decreases your stress level, so you’ll be more likely to complete tasks correctly.

A task list is a good follow-up system to prevent tasks from slipping through the cracks. Writing things down systematically will keep you organized and help you maintain control of your workload.

Remember the following suggestions as you build and maintain your task list:

- Write everything down.
- Mark off completed tasks.
- Be open to change.
- Monitor your list.
- Review, do not rewrite.

Write everything down

A master task list should record all your daily tasks. When you list your tasks, be realistic in your expectations. If you overload your list with tasks, you may find yourself trying to catch up too often.

Mark off completed tasks

When you complete a task on your master task list, cross off the item. This will provide a sense of satisfaction and keep you motivated to tackle the rest of the list.

Be open to change

Rearrange tasks on your list if it increases your productivity. A flexible list will make it easier for you to adjust your focus when necessary. Don’t tie yourself to the items on your list. Be open to sudden inspirations and opportunities.

Monitor your list

Checking your master task list periodically will keep you on track. Scan the items on your list occasionally to make sure you’re working on the appropriate tasks. Referring to your list will also direct you toward the task that you need to work on next.

Review, do not rewrite

You might not be able to complete everything on your list every day. You might want to review your list each evening so you can plan the next day. However, it would be a waste of time and effort to rewrite your list daily. Rewrite only when the list becomes messy or cluttered.
Organizing tasks

Organizing your tasks will help you manage your time successfully. The following procedures can help you organize your tasks:

- Use the 80/20 rule.
- Use your downtime.
- Group your tasks.
- Schedule tasks well.
- Say no.

Use the 80/20 rule

This rule, also known as the Pareto Principle, is named after an Italian economist and sociologist. This principle suggests that 80% of the benefits you produce for your organization will come from 20% of your time and effort.

When organizing tasks, concentrate on the few activities that offer the greatest potential for outstanding results. Determining the items that have the greatest impact on your success will keep you from wasting time on less productive tasks.

Use your downtime

It’s rare to go through a day without experiencing some downtime. Try to use this time productively. Carry out small tasks, or work on your organizational tasks when you are waiting for your next engagement.

Group your tasks

When possible, group similar tasks together to complete them at one time. This will save time because you’ll have all the necessary materials handy. Creating time blocks to complete tasks will also help you organize your activities and prevent interruptions.

Schedule tasks well

Determine the most productive periods of the day to help you organize your tasks. Work on the most difficult activities when you are at your best mentally and physically. Scheduling uninterrupted time when you are alert and focused will help you accomplish more.

You should also divide time appropriately among the tasks on your list. Examine your calendar frequently, and give tasks a timeline for completion.

Say no

The inability to say no can often lead to an unmanageable workload. People might request your time on a daily basis, so you must be assertive if you need to say no. If you have too many tasks to complete at one time, you’ll have a hard time staying organized.
Analyzing your work habits

Work habits are developed early in life, but that doesn’t mean you can’t change them. Periodically analyze the benefits of changing your work habits.

In today’s highly competitive business world, you must continually work to improve your work habits. Good work habits will make you more effective and increase your value as an employee.

Minimizing wasted time at work

To be productive, you must learn to develop time management skills.

Use these suggestions to help manage your time:

- Before you begin your day, prepare yourself mentally by visualizing success.
- Define what you want to accomplish during the day.
- As jobs are usually flexible, you should begin the task where you are most comfortable.
- Don’t let your mood affect the results.
- Ignore your concerns about others’ judgments when you are working.
- If you have to stop working on a task, find a good stopping point so you don’t lose momentum.
**A-1: Understanding organization**

**Exercises**

1. Organizing your papers into related piles is the best way to deal with them as they accumulate. True or false?

2. ________ states that 80% of the benefits you produce for your organization will come from 20% of your time and effort.

3. Watch the movie. Why do you think Megan was unable to find the list of office supplies that she had jotted down the previous day? What are the advantages of keeping a single list?

4. Icon International is a multinational company that has hundreds of employees working in two shifts.

   Management observed that the employees couldn’t finish their work within stipulated working hours. A causal analysis revealed that many employees wasted time because they didn’t focus on their most important tasks.

   Now, discuss how creating a task list would help these people meet their deadlines.
**Topic B: Planning and prioritizing**

*Explanation*

People frequently complain about having too much work and not enough time. Planning provides focus and helps you control your workday to gain the most from the time you have.

A plan helps you to proactively identify tasks that require immediate attention and tasks you can address later. You’ll be more productive because you are continually aware of the job you should be working on as well as the best time to work on it.

Planning involves taking control of your day so you can complete the greatest amount of work possible in the least amount of time. There are three steps you should take to develop a useful plan:

1. Identify what you need to accomplish.
2. Organize tasks in a logical manner.

**Plan appointments**

Appointments often take up a significant part of the workday, so it’s important to schedule them effectively. The following guidelines can help you plan your appointments:

- Avoid scheduling early appointments.
- Allocate extra time.
- Group your appointments.

**Avoid scheduling early appointments**

Identify your most productive time of day, and avoid scheduling appointments during that time. The early hours of the day are typically the most productive. There are usually fewer interruptions during morning hours, so you’re able to concentrate well and accomplish more. Use this time for important tasks rather than for scheduled appointments.

**Allocate extra time**

Many meetings take longer than expected, so avoid scheduling meetings back to back. If one meeting runs over the time limit, it will push back the starting time of your other meetings that day. To give yourself some breathing room, allot 15 to 30 extra minutes for each meeting.

**Group your appointments**

Scheduling appointments at different times throughout the day can waste a lot of time. It requires you to stop working on your current task, get to and from the appointment, and then retrace your thoughts when you return to your task. To avoid this problem, try to group your appointments together during one part of the day.
Distinguish between important and urgent issues

Differentiating between important and urgent issues will help you focus your time in the right areas. Important issues are those that guide your daily activities and relate to your personal ethics and values. Urgent issues are those that demand immediate attention.

If you focus on important issues before attending to urgent issues, you’ll spend less time “putting out fires.” Try to make a conscious decision not to overreact to urgent matters, and instead concentrate first on important issues that will help you achieve your goals.

Exercises

1. List some steps that can help you plan appointments effectively.

2. In this scenario, Wendy rushes into Ms. Adams’ office.

   Wendy: (stressed) Ms. Adams, my computer just crashed and I lost the project plan I’ve been working on all week.

   Ms. Adams: (assertively) Sorry, Wendy. I can’t help you right now. I’m in the middle of developing a market projection that has to be finished today.

   Wendy: (panicked) But I don’t know what to do!

   Ms. Adams: (calmly) You’ll either have to get someone from Information Services to help you, or wait until I finish my project.

   Do you think Ms. Adams did the right thing by being firm with Wendy?

3. Watch the movie. Then, discuss the importance of planning tasks.
4 In the following scenario, Mr. Morris approaches Robert at his desk.

   Mr. Morris: Robert, we need to schedule an appointment for your performance appraisal.

   Robert: *(flipping through a planner)* How long do those usually take?

   Mr. Morris: They tend to run about thirty minutes, but I always schedule forty-five minutes just to be safe.

   Robert: Okay, what time is convenient for you?

   Mr. Morris: How does Monday at 3:00 sound?

   Robert: *(penciling the appointment in his planner)* That’s fine with me!

Discuss the advantages of allocating extra time for meetings.
Topic C: Procrastination

**Explanation**

Procrastination is the habit of delaying an action or task. Procrastination cuts into your work time, interrupts your productivity, and delays progress. All of these problems will compound time management problems.

**Causes and remedies**

The following factors contribute to procrastination:

- Fear of confrontation
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of failure
- Incorrect prioritization
- Perceived difficulty
- Disorganization

There are several things you can do to reduce your tendency to procrastinate:

- Commit to the activity.
- Set deadlines.
- Give the activity priority.
- Gain proper knowledge.
- Be flexible.

**Commit to the activity**

If you don’t commit yourself to completing a task, you won’t be driven to work on it. Identify your motivation for performing an action, and then decide if you should put forth the required effort. If you can clearly see that the benefits are worthwhile, you’ll be less likely to procrastinate.

**Set deadlines**

If you find yourself putting off the completion of a task, set a deadline. Determine a specific timeline and commit to it. This will motivate you to complete a task. You can also create rewards for meeting your own deadlines.

**Give the activity priority**

Don’t procrastinate on unpleasant tasks. Instead, make the task one of your priorities. If you can’t determine why it should be a priority, approach the job in a different way. Look at the task in terms of the benefits you’ll receive upon completion.
Gain proper knowledge

Sometimes people procrastinate because they are unsure of their ability to succeed, or they don’t have the knowledge or experience to complete a task. In such cases, make an effort to gather the information you need, or seek help from someone with experience in the subject.

Be flexible

If you are inflexible and expect perfection, you’ll probably be more prone to procrastination. At times, you must be willing to lower your standards slightly to get a job done. The desire for perfection leads to procrastination and disappointment because it makes your objectives impossible to obtain.

C-1: Understanding procrastination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and answers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What is procrastination? What are its consequences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 List some factors that contribute to procrastination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 What are some steps you can take to reduce your tendency to procrastinate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Determining a specific timeline and committing to it will usually motivate you to complete a task. True or false?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit summary: Organizing time

**Topic A**
In this unit, you learned strategies to help you get organized. You learned that organization is vital to completing tasks successfully. You also learned some benefits of using a master task list. Then, you learned that organizing your tasks enhances your ability to manage time successfully.

**Topic B**
Next, you learned about the importance of planning and prioritizing. You learned that planning involves taking control of your day so you can complete the maximum amount of work in the least possible amount of time. You also learned about the difference between important and urgent issues.

**Topic C**
Finally, you learned about procrastination. You learned that procrastination is the habit of delaying an action, and you learned common causes of and possible remedies for procrastination.

**Review questions**

1. You should use downtime to relax and take your mind off your day. True or false?

2. What is a master task list? What are the advantages of using it?

3. Reacting immediately to urgent issues can negatively impact your time management. True or false?

4. You are the Sales Manager of Icon International. You are having a meeting with Cynthia Brooks, the Finance Manager. She is assertive and responsible. She is very conscious of the value of her time and the importance of planning. During the meeting, your e-mail alert beeps. Which of the following responses is the best way to handle the situation?
   A. “Let me just check to see who is calling.”
   B. “I’m sorry about that interruption. I’ll check that e-mail later.”
   C. “Do you mind if I check my e-mail?”
   D. “Hold on a minute while I check my e-mail.”
Unit 6
Coordinating time with others

Unit time: 45 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A Handle visitors.

B Handle office interruptions.

C Delegate actively.
**Topic A: Interpersonal communication**

**Explanation**
When you don’t communicate clearly with others, you lose time trying to clarify your information. It’s crucial to develop and fine-tune your communication skills. Good communication skills will help you spend more time working on important tasks.

**Handling visitors**
Visitors can interrupt your day and make it hard to manage your time effectively. The following steps can help you avoid this problem:

- Direct the conversation.
- Close your door.
- Make the visit yourself.
- Stand up.
- Limit your time.
- Isolate yourself.

**Direct the conversation**
Take control of the conversation when someone visits you. This permits you to end the conversation when you need to move on to another task. Use active listening skills to determine what the person wishes to discuss. Guide the discussion by asking questions. Ask closed-ended questions that require little elaboration.

**Close your door**
Allowing people to arrive randomly and unannounced at your office will almost always result in wasted time. You can prevent these interruptions by keeping your office door closed.

**Make the visit yourself**
If you need to communicate with someone, make the visit yourself. This makes it easier for you to manage the discussion and the time you spend on it. If your time is limited, you can leave immediately after conveying your message.

**Stand up**
If someone enters your office unannounced when you don’t have time for a conversation, stand up and move toward the person. Doing this can prevent the individual from coming any further into your office. This action communicates that you don’t have time to engage in a lengthy conversation.
Limit your time
To handle spontaneous visitors, set a time limit on visits. After greeting your visitor, clearly indicate that you can spare only a specific amount of time for the visit. When that time is over, politely remind the visitor that your time is limited and you have other things to attend to.

Isolate yourself
If your office has a continuous flow of visitors, isolate yourself to complete your tasks. Although closing your office door will work sometimes, you might have to temporarily relocate to avoid constant interruptions.

Overcoming objections
If an objection is serious enough to warrant immediate attention, try to:

- Clarify statements.
- Answer with a question.
- Prevent confrontation.

Clarify statements
To address an objection effectively, ask the person to clearly state the reasons for the objection. The best way to obtain detailed information is to ask open-ended questions that require elaboration.

Answer with a question
If someone objects to something you say, respond by asking a question. Questions can help you learn more about what the person is thinking. You’ll be able to determine what the individual really wants, not just what you think the individual wants. You can then identify the best course of action to deal with the objection.

Prevent confrontation
Don’t argue with someone who is voicing an objection. If a conflict develops, you’ll have a difficult time asserting your point of view. Confrontations waste time. Engaging in further discussion is an effective way to prevent arguments because it encourages the other person to share his point of view.
**A-1: Understanding interpersonal communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 List some steps you can take to avoid interruptions from visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 If your office has a continuous flow of visitors, you might need to isolate yourself to concentrate on completing tasks. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The HR manager at Icon International is busy going through applications posted by applicants. He has to create a list of candidates for interviews. The assistant manager approaches him for certain clarifications regarding an HR policy. Note the steps the HR manager should take to handle the unexpected visitor effectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Topic B: Office interruptions**

*Explanation*
You might be interrupted at work by a phone call, voice mail, or e-mail. These interruptions can break your focus and result in wasted time. There are several things you can do to help prevent work interruptions.

**Handling telephone interruptions**
Frequent telephone interruptions can waste valuable time during the day. The following techniques can help you deal with incoming calls:

- Avoid answering your own calls.
- Group your calls together.
- Determine the best time to respond.
- Set a time limit.
- Don’t socialize.

**Avoid answering your own calls**
If you stop working every time the telephone rings, you’re probably not managing your time well. Answering the telephone interrupts your concentration, making it more difficult to finish the task at hand.

One way to handle this problem is to have someone screen your calls. If you don’t have an office assistant, let your voice mail answer your calls so you can return them when it suits your schedule.

**Group your calls together**
If you avoid phone interruptions, you’ll probably have several messages to return. Set aside a block of time to return those calls. By grouping them together, you’ll prevent wasting time with several interruptions throughout the day.

**Determine the best time to respond**
After you have grouped your calls, determine the best time of day to return them. To keep calls brief, make them before lunch and before closing time. People are usually on their way out of the office at these times, so they might be more inclined to keep the conversation brief.

**Set a time limit**
Before you begin a conversation, determine how much time you want to spend talking. Some people talk at length, so try to stay in control of the conversation. Be aware of the time that has passed during the conversation. If the call has exceeded the time limit you set, end the call firmly but politely.

**Don’t socialize**
It’s often easy to move from a business topic to a social one. Although a certain amount of small talk is reasonable, permitting your conversations to ramble will waste time.

Monitor the time you spend on socializing during a business call. Make a list of the things to cover during the conversation. After discussing the topics on your list, find an appropriate point to end the conversation.
Handling voice mail

Voice mail can help you save time, but it can also waste time if overused. The following are ways you can handle an overload of voice-mail messages:

- Speed up messages.
- Limit the length of messages.
- Decrease the number of messages that can be stored.
- Handle your messages.

Speed up messages

Many voice-mail systems have a feature that helps you increase the playback speed of your messages. If a caller tends to ramble, you can speed through the message to get to its purpose faster.

Limit the length of messages

Limiting the length of a message is an option for many voice-mail systems. If your callers tend to leave long messages, reduce the amount of time they can talk. Generally, 60 to 100 seconds is an adequate amount of time for callers to convey their information.

Decrease the number of messages that can be stored

It can be frustrating to hear that you have a large number of new voice-mail messages. To avoid this, limit the number of messages your voice mail will store. If the message is important, the caller will find another way to communicate the information to you.

Handle your messages

Address all your voice-mail messages, and erase them after listening to them. When you listen to your messages, take notes about what needs to be done, or take action as soon as you receive the message. Don’t store your messages for several days, or they will accumulate and become overwhelming. If a message does not pertain to you, forward it to the correct person.

Handling e-mail

E-mail can help you share information with colleagues down the hall or with business contacts halfway around the world with the same amount of ease. The following guidelines can help you use e-mail more efficiently:

- Make sure there is a reason to send the message.
- Organize the message so that the most important information is provided first.
- Use the subject line to give a concise description of the information in the message.
- Be clear and concise.

E-mail has made it easy to transmit information. However, too many e-mail messages can waste time. Take the following steps to deal with e-mail effectively:

- Set aside a block of time to respond.
- Don’t feel obligated to respond.
- Try not to interrupt yourself.
- Delete unimportant messages.
Set aside a block of time to respond
Many people treat all e-mail messages as if they are urgent. Responding immediately to e-mail messages interrupts your work and wastes time. Set aside a block of time each day to read and respond to e-mail messages.

Don’t feel obligated to respond
Many people feel obligated to respond to every message they receive. Determine whether a response is required of you. If you decide that it is, you can sometimes communicate an answer in a few words.

Try not to interrupt yourself
Although it’s important to check your e-mail on a regular basis, it’s not productive to interrupt yourself every time your computer announces the arrival of new messages. Either turn off the audio alert, or ignore it until you have a block of time to check your messages.

Delete unimportant messages
If you glance over an e-mail message and find that it doesn’t apply to you, delete it. If you’re on someone’s “CC” list and you’re getting copies of messages that are of no use to you, ask the sender to remove your name from the list.

B-1: Handling office interruptions

Questions and answers

1  Answering your own calls is helpful because it saves you the time of returning calls later. True or false?

2  Making phone calls right before lunch and closing time can help you keep telephone conversations brief. True or false?

3  If someone is unable to leave a voice-mail message, he or she will not bother trying to reach you by some other means. True or false?
Organizational Skills

Topic C: Effective delegation

Explanation

Many people spend a large part of their day performing tasks that they could delegate to someone else. Effective delegation can lead to the following desired results:

- The delegator will have a lighter workload.
- The delegator will have more time to devote to other critical activities.
- The delegatee will feel empowered.
- The delegatee will develop a sense of increased competence.

Delegation can improve time management. A person with limited time can assign a project to someone who has adequate time to address the task. Managers frequently encounter the problem of too many tasks and not enough time to complete them. Successful managers delegate frequently.

Guidelines

The following are some basic guidelines you can use to delegate successfully:

- Think about it.
- Clarify responsibilities.
- Select the best person.
- Share authority.
- Determine your involvement.
- Motivate others.
- Promote accountability.

Think about it

Don’t rush to delegate. Think the process through ahead of time. Determine exactly what you’re delegating, and then organize and clarify the task in your mind. Write out important details of the activity to provide clear objectives to the person who will carry out the task.

Clarify responsibilities

When delegating a task, provide well-defined objectives that identify what you expect the person to accomplish. On the other hand, don’t waste time explaining how to complete the task. It’s also important to communicate the urgency of the task so the delegatee can determine how to fit it into the schedule.

Select the best person

You’ll save time if you delegate tasks to those who have the appropriate skills. Try not to overload one person because an overworked person will become stressed and unproductive.

Share authority

When delegating tasks, grant the person authority. The more responsibility the delegatee takes on, the more authority will be required to complete the tasks successfully. People who are given tasks but no authority often become frustrated quickly. As an individual’s talent and skill increases, grant more authority.
Determine your involvement

It’s difficult to determine your level of involvement in an employee’s effort. You should leave all aspects of task completion to the employee. If the task is progressing as you expected, stay out of it. Step in only when assistance is absolutely necessary.

Motivate others

It’s important to express your confidence in the people to whom you delegate. Complimentary remarks about their abilities will make them more eager to perform the task. A motivated employee is more productive and uses time more effectively.

Promote accountability

When you delegate, communicate your expectations in a positive manner from the beginning. Relaying expectations will increase a delegatee’s sense of accountability. When they are accountable for their actions, people you delegate to are more motivated to complete the delegated tasks successfully.

Factors affecting the delegation process

Effective delegation helps people manage their time well. As a result, managers must recognize the barriers to effective delegation:

- The manager feels more effective.
- The manager believes he can work faster.
- The manager does not want to give up the task.
- The manager is insecure.
- The manager wants control.
- The manager thinks the activity is disagreeable.

The manager feels more effective

Often, managers don’t delegate if they think they can do the job better themselves. They find it difficult to hand off responsibility for a task to someone less experienced than they are. Many managers would rather perform a duty themselves because they know the quality of work they will produce.

The manager believes he can work faster

Many managers don’t delegate because they believe they can complete a task faster than an employee with less experience can. By refusing to delegate, however, managers waste time. Training someone appropriately will ultimately give managers more time.

The manager does not want to give up the task

Some managers are more prone to taking action rather than managing actions. However, no one can do everything, and attempting to will generally result in failure. Learning to delegate tasks permits managers to focus on and complete their most important tasks.

The manager is insecure

Sometimes, apprehension and insecurity compel managers to do everything themselves. They worry that developing their subordinates’ skills will threaten their job security. As a result, managers sometimes don’t train their employees to take on delegated tasks.
The manager wants control

The delegation process is impaired when managers constantly check to ensure that things are being done correctly. It’s important for employees to assume responsibility for their tasks. If managers don’t allow this, they’ll waste time trying to maintain control. The main objective of delegation is to permit employees to take care of some tasks so that managers can concentrate on other activities.

The manager thinks the activity is disagreeable

Managers might not want to delegate unpleasant activities. However, burdening another employee with undesirable activities is an unavoidable part of the delegating process. Failure to delegate such tasks will not improve time management skills.

**C-1: Delegating work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 When delegating, you should always explain how a task should be carried out to avoid confusion. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 List some guidelines you can follow to delegate successfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Watch the movie. Why doesn’t Mr. Morris want Wendy to work on the quarterly goals?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit summary: Coordinating time with others

**Topic A**  
In this unit, you learned how to **handle visitors**. You learned some steps you can take to prevent wasting time with visitors. You also learned how to **overcome objections**.

**Topic B**  
Next, you learned about different **office interruptions**, such as **telephone calls**, **e-mail**, and **voice mail**. You learned techniques that can help you deal with incoming calls and voice-mail messages. You also learned how to prevent wasting time on e-mail messages.

**Topic C**  
Finally, you learned how to **delegate effectively**. You learned that delegating tasks can improve your time management and empower employees. You also learned some basic guidelines to help you delegate successfully.

**Review questions**

1. When working in your office, standing up and moving forward communicates to your visitors that you don’t have much time to talk. True or false?

2. Which of the following results can be achieved through effective delegation?  
   A. The delegatee will have a lighter workload  
   B. The delegator will develop a sense of increased competence  
   C. The delegator will have more time to devote to other critical activities

3. Which of the following is not an office interruption?  
   A. Voice mail  
   B. E-mail  
   C. Telephone calls  
   D. Postal mail

4. Which of the following actions is appropriate when someone enters your office unannounced and you don’t have time for a conversation?  
   A. Stand up and move toward the person.  
   B. Ignore the person.  
   C. Ask the person to sit, and explain to him politely that you don’t have enough time to have a discussion.
Organizational Skills
Unit 7
Team time management

Unit time: 45 minutes

Complete this unit, and you’ll know how to:

A Identify benefits of managing team time.
B Communicate and plan team time.
C Use team time effectively.
**Topic A: Managing team time**

*Explanation*

Team time management is an extension of personal time management. When people become part of a team, they must focus on coordinating their time with the schedules of others. Effective coordination helps teams accomplish their work in the least amount of time.

Before we delve into team time management, it’s important to recognize the differences between groups and teams. *Groups* are collections of people who take orders, work independently, and typically have little decision-making power. *Teams*, on the other hand, gain more commitment, involvement, and cooperation from their members through effective communication and trust.

**Benefits of team time management**

Teams must manage their time well so they can successfully complete their tasks. When several people work together, it’s often difficult to coordinate all the activities. As a result, people must know how to fit their time into the overall picture and ensure that they do not hinder the work of other team members.

When analyzing team time management, team members must understand that merely satisfactory performance is not acceptable. To beat the competition, organizations must make the most of their time. It’s important for teams to recognize this and use their time effectively.

Time becomes an even more valuable resource when people are held accountable for other members of the team. The responsibility they feel toward the team compels members to use time to their best advantage. Effective management helps a team understand how its time is spent and keeps team members on track.

**Role of the manager**

As more organizations adopt a team format, managers need to organize team time effectively. Some methods managers can use include:

- Assist employees.
- Coach employees.
- Facilitate employee productivity.
- Empower employees.

**Assist employees**

Formal authority is usually not effective in managing a team’s time. A manager should make sure that team members are satisfied and determine how their jobs can be made easier. Satisfied employees are more productive and tend to use their time wisely.

**Coach employees**

Traditionally, managers have controlled and directed the actions of employees. Today, most successful managers view workers as self-sufficient individuals and provide them with coaching only when necessary.

Provide guidance and support to encourage team members to develop their creativity and initiative. A supportive environment also increases employee job satisfaction.
Facilitate employee productivity

A manager’s primary duty is to facilitate employee productivity and not force it by developing and enforcing rules. Successful managers are available to assist team members in completing their tasks.

Facilitate employee performance only when the employee gets more done with direct managerial help. Conversely, don’t over-facilitate when the employee can get more work done without managerial assistance.

Empower employees

Delegate authority to your employees to motivate and empower them. The development of trust in autonomous employees leads to higher productivity. Empowered employees have more control over their own activities, and can therefore manage their time more effectively.

A-1: Understanding team time management

Exercises

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>are collections of people who take orders, work independently, and have little decision-making power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It’s easier to manage a team’s time when team members are satisfied. True or false?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Watch the movie. Mr. Morris is the manager, and Anthony is an employee. In approving Anthony’s suggestion, what is Mr. Morris’s focus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Serve the employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B Coach the employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Facilitate the employees’ productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D Empower the employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Topic B: Team communication and planning**

**Explanation**
Successful communication encourages team members to exchange views frequently. Conflict and confusion are less likely to occur if team members share information.

A well-developed plan makes it easier to complete tasks. A plan helps the team determine what needs to be accomplished, how to accomplish it, and how much time will be required. Without a plan, it’s easy to lose sight of objectives and waste valuable energy and time.

**Team communication**
To successfully manage team time, people must communicate clearly with each other. Communication within a team should include the open exchange of ideas or information from one person to another, regardless of the position of the team member within the organization. The free exchange of thoughts will promote trust and understanding among team members.

**Providing feedback**
A critical part of the communication process is the feedback one receives after sending a message. Feedback tells a communicator if his or her message has been received successfully.

Members gain more information when team communication is a two-way process. An open exchange of information improves understanding and facilitates time management within the team.

**Listening**
Listening is an important part of the communication process. By giving undivided attention to speakers and actively responding to messages, team members can glean more information. Effective listening increases members’ understanding of team goals and responsibilities, which in turn prevents confusion and wasted time.

**Team planning**
To simplify the planning process, a team should follow these steps:

1. Identify what the project is about and why it’s significant.
2. Determine what needs to be accomplished.
3. Arrange activities in a logical sequence after compiling a comprehensive list.
4. Develop a timetable for project completion.
5. Determine the resources and equipment that will be required.
6. Outline responsibilities for each job.
7. Decide which team member is most qualified for each activity.

This process will enable the team to simplify the project plan and save time by eliminating or combining activities.
Benefits of team participation in the planning process

Involving team members in the planning process can be beneficial in many ways. Bringing together various people from planning through completion allows you to shorten the planning process because more people are working together to achieve a common goal.

With a team, you can generate a broader range of ideas, making planning easier. Team planning also increases commitment to the plan and minimizes the possibility of communication problems. Team planning also makes it easier to spot potential problems and to modify the plan before the situation is beyond correction. Team members gain a greater sense of accomplishment by completing a project they helped plan.

Coordinate the activities of team members

Balancing individual activities with group activities can be challenging. The following actions help coordinate a team:

- **Keep the team informed.** To coordinate their activities, team members must be kept informed of changes that take place. If people are unaware of changes, they won’t know how to adjust their personal activities accordingly.

- **Meet regularly.** Teams should set up regular meetings to exchange information. Meetings enable team members to coordinate their activities, ensure that everyone is on schedule, and ensure that everyone understands how their activities relate to the overall objective.

- **Avoid over-commitment.** The number of activities that people work on should be reasonable. It’s difficult to coordinate the activities of an over-committed team member with the activities of other members. Maintaining a balance of responsibilities is necessary, or team members will begin to feel overworked. Expecting unrealistic results can also cause team members to experience undue stress.

- **Beware of changing priorities.** Priorities should be flexible to accommodate a changing environment. They also need to be clearly defined from the outset so that team members have a clear understanding of their objectives. This understanding helps team members stay on track and balance their activities with those of the group.

- **Continue to monitor.** Continually monitor the activities of team members so you can track the progress of each person and make adjustments when necessary. Monitoring also helps team members foresee and prevent potential problems.

### Do it!

**B-1: Planning a project**

**Exercises**

1. Debate the following statement:
   
   “It’s important to involve team members in project planning.”

2. Identifying potential problems in a project is more difficult when you involve team members in the planning process. True or false?
Organizational Skills

Topic C: Effective use of team time

Explanation
Team members frequently misunderstand the source of their time management problems because they don’t analyze how they use their time. An analysis of how team members spend their time will benefit the whole team.

Team time summary
A team time summary is a valuable tool that teams can use to determine how time is spent and how to effectively allocate that time to important tasks. When team members manage their time well, the team as a whole improves its time management. Developing a team time summary includes the following steps:

1. Get a basic understanding of the project.
2. Complete individual task lists.
3. Combine all task lists.
4. Complete individual time lists.
5. Develop a task-time matrix.
6. Distribute copies.
7. Consider talents of the team members.

Get a basic understanding of the project
All team members should know what the team is trying to achieve. Establish objectives at the outset of the project. When team members don’t have a clear focus, they are more likely to waste time on trivial tasks.

Complete individual task lists
All team members should list the tasks they are responsible for. To develop a truly comprehensive list, each team member should include all the tasks done over the course of several days.

Combine all task lists
Team members should merge their individual task lists into a master task list, which shows the specific tasks that each team member is responsible for. Copies of this list should be distributed to all team members. After compiling a master task list, the team must analyze the distribution of work. Members should examine the necessity of each task and eliminate activities that do not add value to team objectives.

Complete individual time lists
You can use a master task list to develop a time log. Team members should record each task that they perform throughout the day, at 30-minute intervals. Team members can use this log to summarize their activities at the end of the week and determine how they have used their time.
Develop a task-time matrix

Team members should combine their individual task and time lists into a master task-time matrix at the end of each week. Integrating individual lists is a beneficial way to analyze team time use. A matrix displays the time devoted to each task as well as the total time used by each team member. You can use spreadsheet software to create a task-time matrix.

Distribute copies

All team members should receive a copy of the matrix so that the team can discuss ways to improve workflow and to save time. Analyzing time usage will help team members identify areas that need improvement.

Consider talents of the team members

The proper use of personnel maximizes the strengths of team members and draws the best from each person. It’s gratifying for team members to use their talents to serve the needs of the team. Coordinating individual skills with specific tasks also improves productivity.

Meeting time

The following guidelines can help you use your time in meetings effectively:

- Determine the purpose of the meeting.
- Distribute an agenda.
- Specify the time and place.
- Indicate required materials.
- Keep minutes.
- Address problems during meetings.

Determine the purpose of the meeting

Before you schedule a meeting, make sure you really need to meet. It might be just as beneficial to address an issue through less formal channels, such as a memo or telephone call. If you need to hold a meeting, first determine the purpose and goals you have for the meeting.

Distribute an agenda

An agenda is a list of items to be discussed during a meeting. Agendas should include discussion topics and the actions required to achieve the stated tasks.

Consider distributing the agenda a few days in advance to announce the purpose of the meeting. Attendees can then come prepared. When the meeting convenes, follow the agenda as closely as possible to keep participants focused on relevant issues and to reduce discussions on unrelated items.

Specify the time and place

If you call a meeting, determine specific time parameters to keep people focused and to promote a professional atmosphere. Announce a specific meeting place to avoid confusion and tardiness.
Indicate required materials

When you send a meeting invitation, inform the invitees of any materials they should bring. When everyone comes prepared, less meeting time is wasted.

Keep minutes

It’s critical to keep a record of the meeting dialogue. Minutes are important because they eliminate confusion if a team member does not remember what transpired at the meeting. Designate a team member to take minutes of all discussion, decisions, and assigned duties. Distribute the minutes a day or two after the meeting to all team members. This will help keep everyone focused on their tasks. This also reminds team members of the time frame in which they must complete their tasks.

Address problems during meetings

To manage time effectively during meetings, you might need to address these typical issues:

- **Talking too much**—At the outset of the meeting, encourage everyone to contribute to the discussion. If one person appears to dominate the discussion, ask to hear more from the person after the meeting or during a break. Another option is to direct specific questions to each participant. If neither of these approaches works, firmly and politely ask the dominating individual to give others an opportunity to speak.

- **Talking too little**—Some people feel uneasy participating in discussions. Make sure your meetings are held in a comfortable atmosphere. Encouraging quiet people to participate will allow you to ask direct questions and request that everyone in the meeting voice their opinion.

- **Not focusing**—Some people can get distracted with side discussions. Explain that this slows the progress of the meeting and makes it difficult to hear comments from other members. If the problem persists, request a break and directly confront those involved.

- **Interruptions**—When a meeting is disrupted, analyze the interruption quickly. Although you might need to stop the meeting briefly to deal with justifiable interruptions, you should address them as quickly as possible. Disregard interruptions that don’t justify immediate attention.
C-1: Using team time effectively

Exercises

1. What is a team time summary?

2. ___________ is a list of items that need to be discussed at a meeting.

3. Watch the movie. Then, discuss the following statement:

   “You should encourage quiet people to participate in a meeting.”
Unit summary: Team time management

Topic A
In this unit, you learned some of the benefits of team time management. You learned that teams must manage their time well if they want to complete their tasks successfully. You also learned about the manager’s role in managing a team’s time.

Topic B
Next, you learned about team communication and team planning. You learned that successful communication encourages team members to exchange their views frequently. You also learned about the importance of having a solid strategy at the outset.

Topic C
Finally, you learned about team time summaries, a valuable tool that team members can use to determine how they use their time and how to allocate that time to important tasks. You also learned how to use meeting time effectively.

Review questions
1. Distributing an agenda prior to a meeting is an effective time management technique. True or false?

2. All interruptions during a meeting should be dismissed. True or false?

3. Never use informal communication to take the place of a meeting. True or false?

4. What guidelines do you need to follow to spend your meeting time effectively?
This summary contains information to help you bring the course to a successful conclusion. Using this information, you will be able to:

A Use the summary text to reinforce what you’ve learned in class.

B Determine the next courses in this series (if any), as well as any other resources that might help you continue to learn about organizational skills.
Topic A: Course summary

Use the following summary text to reinforce what you’ve learned in class.

Organizational Skills

Unit 1
In this unit, you learned about information overload and how to prevent it. Then, you learned how to identify priorities. You learned how to note information sources so you can identify trends in the information you receive and determine whether it’s essential, helpful, or useless. You also learned how to focus and organize information to help prevent useless information from making its way to you.

Unit 2
In this unit, you learned how to manage written information. You learned about different types of reading based on the level of understanding you need to gain. You learned how to improve your reading skills by reducing fixation time and skip-backs. Next, you learned how to manage oral information by taking notes and by using concept maps. Then, you learned how to manage electronic information effectively. Finally, you learned about the properties of human memory, such as recency, vividness, and frequency. You also learned how to use acronyms and mnemonics to remember information more effectively.

Unit 3
In this unit, you learned guidelines for sending information. You explored situations that are appropriate for sending written information, and situations that are best suited for the oral channel. Finally, you learned about different ways to send electronic information, and about common circumstances that are best handled by e-mail and fax.

Unit 4
In this unit, you learned about the three qualities of time and the myths related to time management. You learned about common time management problems and several time-saving tips. Finally, you learned that developing a time management plan is essential for organizing activities and determining priorities.

Unit 5
In this unit, you learned how to get organized. You learned that organization is the key to successful task completion. You also learned about the benefits of using a master task list, the importance of planning and prioritizing, and the difference between important and urgent issues. Finally, you learned about common causes of procrastination and ways you can avoid it.
Unit 6
In this unit, you learned how to **handle visitors**. You learned about several methods you can use to **prevent wasting time** with unexpected visitors. Next, you learned how to **overcome objections**, and how to manage and avoid various **office interruptions**, such as **telephone calls**, **e-mail**, and **voice mail**. You learned techniques to help you deal with incoming calls and excessive voice-mail messages. Finally, you learned how to **delegate actively** to improve your time management skills.

Unit 7
In this unit, you learned about **team time management**. You learned that teams must manage their time well if they want to complete their tasks successfully. You also learned about the **role of a manager** in handling a team’s time issues. Next, you learned about **team communication** and **team planning**. Finally, you learned how to use a **team time summary** to help determine how a team uses its time and how to allocate that time to important tasks. You also learned how to effectively use **meeting time**.
Topic B: Continued learning after class

It is impossible to learn any subject in a single day. To get the most out of this class, you should start using the organizational skills you’ve learned as soon as possible. Course Technology also offers resources for continued learning.

Next courses in this series

This is the only course in this series.

Other resources

Course Technology’s sister company, NETg, offers a full line of online and computer-based courses on organization and a variety of other subjects. For more information, visit www.netg.com. This course maps to the following two NETg courses:

- *Organizational Skills: Managing Information*
  Course number: 43001

- *Organizational Skills: Time Management*
  Course number: 43004
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