

The 15-Minute List

TIME MANAGEMENT



What is it and why do I care?

We all have them; those little things that you need or want to do, but that you promptly forget about when you actually have a few minutes to do them. They also tend to pop into our brains at the most inopportune times, distracting us and using up valuable space in our short-term memory.

The 15-minute list is a simple way to prevent those to-do items from constantly nagging us and to actually get them done when we have a few minutes.

How does it work?

Get a small, thin notebook; something you can easily carry in the pocket of your scrubs or in your backpack. (If you prefer, you can also keep this electronically – your phone would be best since you likely have that with you regularly.) Anytime one of those “I need to...” thoughts pops into your head, jot it down on your list and then get back to what you were originally doing.

The next time you end up with some unexpected free time...stuck in a long line for coffee, class gets out early, your friend is running late to meet you for lunch, you wrapped up your studying early...pull out the list. Based on the time you have available, select one or two items and get them done. Don't forget to get a little hit of dopamine by crossing them off or adding a checkmark to mark your accomplishment!

Take it up a notch.

Make categories

Some of the items on your list are likely to be time specific (must be done between 8am to 4pm, like scheduling a doctor's appointment) or location specific (can only be done at home, like doing the dishes). You can make sub-sections or use a specific notation to call out those items on your list.

Add additional timeframes

If you find this method useful, you can start adding additional timeframes. Maybe you'd like to add a 30-minute and a 1-hour section. Just like every other time management tool, it works best if it works for you.

Video Resources

https://youtu.be/MR7e1kPp_ys (tips from a medical student, including her version of this list called “Free Time Cards”)