

Three Ways to Think About Prioritization

A. Urgency vs. Importance (Steven Covey)

Consider the importance (or “weight”) of the items on your list, and the urgency “when is it due?”

	Urgent	Not-Urgent
Important	Quadrant 1: Examples: Things due today or tomorrow, dealing with emergencies or crises	Quadrant 2: Examples: Long-term projects, planning ahead, studying in advance, getting started early.
Not Important	Quadrant 3: Examples: Interruptions, distractions, fun events that come up, social invitations.	Quadrant 4: Examples: Time wasters, busy work, procrastination activities, aimless internet browsing.

Steven Covey recommends we spend most of our time in Quadrants 1 & 2 and as little time as possible in Quadrant 4.

B. The ABC Method (Alan Lakein)

The ABC Method was originally developed by Alan Lakein and consists of assigning a priority status of “A,” “B,” or “C” to each of the items of your to-do list or task list.

“A” Status Items – “Must Do”	High priority, very important, critical items, with close deadlines or high level of importance to them.
“B” Status Items – “Should Do”	Medium priority, quite important over time, not as critical as “A” items, but still important to spend time doing.
“C” Status Items – “Nice to Do”	Low priority at this time, low consequences if left undone at this moment.

C. Other Considerations . . . (adapted from David Allen)

- **What can I do where I am?** (*Think about location. What can you do where you are now? Sometimes we have unexpected pockets of time. How can you use them to your advantage?*)
- **How much time do I have and when do I have to do something else?** (*Be realistic about what can be done. Your to-do list might shift based on how much time you have available*)
- **How much energy & focus do I have?** (*What can you realistically take on right now?*)
- **What has the highest payoff for me if I do it?** (*Yet another way to think about importance, weight, or priorities*)

Sources:

- Allen, D. *Getting Things Done Website & Newsletter*: <http://www.davidco.com/newsletters/archive/0512.html>
- Covey, S.R. (1987). “Principles of Personal Management,” *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. NY: Fireside.
- Haynes, M.E.(2009) *Time Management: Get an extra day a week*, 4th Ed. Axzo Press.