

Tips for Writing To-Do Lists by Jeff Davidson

1. Compose a list that is easy to read and to follow.
2. Make entries that are vital or necessary--and achievable--however challenging they might be.
3. Include the short-term portions (today's work) of long-term tasks.
4. Add small tasks and events, such as small breaks and lunch.

5. Keep the list at hand or easily accessible.
6. Move on if an item consumes too much time, and return to it later.
7. Tackle bigger challenges earlier in the day.
8. Identify when you plan to have completed at least X number of things on your list, and be accountable.

9. Check off tasks when you are finished.
10. Write down vital tasks you completed that weren't on the list, just to cross them off.
11. Add or subtract judiciously from your list throughout the day, as unforeseen situations merit.
12. Alternate large and small tasks for the natural energy this engenders.

13. Take strategic pauses to maintain momentum as the day unfolds.
14. Strive for total completion, but regardless, acknowledge yourself for what you did finish.
15. Roll over remaining vital tasks to the next day.
16. Arrive refreshed and ready.

To-Do Lists: Common Mistakes

1. Composing the list mentally instead of graphically.
2. Composing an overly long or involved list. Today's work today.
3. Not taking ownership of the tasks.
4. Devising a list that is too short and too easy to complete.
5. Spending too much time on one task.

6. Allowing low-impact items to impede overall progress.
7. Mis-allocating time spent on tasks.
8. Tackling the bigger challenges later in the day.
9. Feeling compelled to proceed in order.
10. Finishing the entire list outweighs your path to completion.

11. Allowing distractions.
12. Being thrown off by unforeseen obligations, which always seem to arise.
13. Not taking strategic breaks.
14. Feeling too satisfied with partial performance.