

Gain an Hour a Day

The advice of time-management experts to the test

What would you do if you had an hour all to yourself tonight? Read a book? Soak in the tub?

I'd shave my legs. With a full-time job, three kids, a dog, a cat, two rabbits, and a puppy who thinks our house is a giant privy, by the time I get to my legs, I need to use the Weed Wacker.

As it turns out, a lot of people are run ragged these days. Americans are working 20 percent more hours — and have 32 percent less free time — than their parents did. Says Jeff Davidson, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Your Time*, "Not surprisingly, surveys show that what 66 percent of them crave is time just for themselves."

That's what I craved: One task-free, guilt-free hour at the end of each day. So I talked to four noted time-management experts, and gave myself five days to put their time-saving suggestions into effect.

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Americans spend up to six hours every month just paying their bills — and they receive an additional 2,700 pieces of unsolicited mail each year. "It takes time to deal with all that paper, plus people never use eighty percent of what they decide to keep," says [Barbara Hemphill](#), past president of the National Association of Professional Organizers. "Your best defense is to choose one comfortable spot where you'll always do paperwork, and make sure it's stocked with stamps; envelopes; pens; In, Out, and File It trays; and a big wastebasket."

Then subject each piece of paper to the wastebasket test: "Ask yourself, *What's the worst thing that could happen if I don't keep this?*" Hemphill suggests. "If you're willing to live with the result, toss it."