



Three areas where time savings can be made

This is Joy. And when it comes to time management, she's very time focused. She's organised and keeps to her tight schedule.

This is Nigel. He has a more relaxed view of time.

If you asked Joy what she thought of Nigel, she'd most likely say he was disorganised, and as a result wasted a lot of his time.

That's probably a bit unfair. You see, Nigel has learnt to work with his, and he would admit it, slightly chaotic style, but he says he likes things the way they are.

Most of us fall somewhere between Joy and Nigel, we get by, but would love to have more time either to do the things we want, or so that we feel less stressed.

In a moment, we'll look at three areas where time savings can be made, but first here are some of Nigel's habits that slow him down.

Nigel's not very organised and clutter seems to follow him around. He spends a lot of time looking for things, or trying to remember where they are. It's a bit like an old computer or a slow internet connection – even the simplest of tasks seems to take forever.

Secondly, he's never seems to finish one thing before he's started the next so he spends a lot of his time keeping his plates spinning, rather than getting things done.

Lastly, he never stops to think about whether what he's doing really is the best use of his time. He battles on and gets things done, but sometimes you can't help wondering whether it actually needed doing in the first place.

Let's turn things around and see how time could be saved in these three ways: developing habits to reduce clutter and be more organised, staying focused on tasks and making the best use of the time we have

So, do you think Joy puts up with a lot of clutter? Of course not. And a good example of this is how she manages her incoming emails.

She has all the notifications turned off and doesn't respond to them as soon as they appear. Instead she sets aside a time to do her emails and categorises them into 'quick responses', 'do later', and then either files or deletes the ones she's read.



Nigel tends to respond as soon as a notification pops up on his screen, and he has an inbox full of old messages.

Email is often cited as the number one timewaster at work, but most people also have accounts they use at home, so if you're looking for a way to develop habits to reduce clutter and be more organised, email could be a good place to start.

But there are lots of different types of clutter and all sorts of ways of reducing it, so the key here is in developing habits, that work for you.

Another way to save time is by staying focused and doing one thing at a time. But what about multi-tasking?

Well, there's a difference between things like chatting to a friend on the phone while looking something up on the internet and updating our social media status and, for example holding a conversation, making a phone call and trying to write a letter all at the same time.

These tasks require your attention so you have to switch between them, in other words you're multi task switching.

When we can separate tasks and focus on one thing we save time by not having to refocus our attention when switching, as we're not being distracted, we make fewer mistakes and don't have to spend time making corrections or redoing things, and we tend to feel less stressed.

The next area we'll look at is how we make use of the time we have.

Many people find that during a certain period of the day they're more alert, more focused and get more work done.

This is sometimes called prime time or the Einstein window. It can be at any time during the day, but it's generally a two to four-hour period and often early in the morning. Joy 'protects' this time as much as she can. She makes the most of it, as she knows she can get more done in less time.

Nigel treats all his time as if it were the same which is a bit like driving around in one gear. He often finds himself using his prime time, to do fairly menial tasks, and then wonders why he struggles when he has more demanding work to do and he's not at his best.

So doing demanding work during our prime time often means we can get more done in less time.



Another thing we can do is to consider whether we're spending our time wisely.

Time's a bit like money and we spend both, but whereas we might budget our money so that we have enough for the things we want, we're not always so good at budgeting our time.

Perhaps we need to stop, or cut down on things which aren't a good use of time, and also to identify the things that eat up or steal our time - the so called time bandits. They rarely look like bandits though, they look more like cuddly toys. And one way of identifying them is by using a matrix like this one to see where we're spending our time effectively and where we're not.

This can help too if you want to organise tasks into prime time ones and ones you can do any time.

Just as with diet and health, there's a whole industry based around time saving and efficiency, and many of the ideas can help, unfortunately though there are no simple answers. But developing your own ways to: reduce clutter and be more organised and, taking steps to keep focused on tasks as well as budgeting your time so that you use it effectively, can all help to free up the time you need, to do the things you want.