Create a Successful Schedule in 5 Steps

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Schedules are one of the most talked about yet underutilized tools for boosting productivity. That's not all a good scheduling framework is capable of though; it can also serve as a mechanism for alleviating large amounts of anxiety.

This happens by virtue of the fact that a good schedule can not only dictate when you're doing what, but it can also assist in the process of categorizing and prioritizing existing and new commitments, so that everything doesn't get tangled together in one overwhelming, seemingly insurmountable, mass of things that need to get done.

The key to successful scheduling is to ensure that while it sits on a permanent foundation consisting of your main priorities (e.g. "family," "fitness," "career progression," etc.), it's ultimately a completely flexible framework that you can adapt as frequently as required.

If this sounds too good to be true, let me assure you that it's not! In fact, here is how you can create a successful schedule in 5 steps:

Step 1: What drives you?

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Spend some time identifying the key areas of focus in your life i.e. what drives you. These are distinct, separate aspects of your life with distinct, separate work streams.

Step 2: Categorization

In view of your areas of focus, categorize the various aspects of each into the following three categories:

- *Mandatory*: The things that absolutely must be done, no matter what
- *High Priority:* Things that might not be mandatory, but are important to you
- *Optional*: Things you would like to do, if possible

Step 3: Plot Your Constant Commitments

Looking at your standard week, plug in the “mandatory” commitments, setting the frequency and timing of each. This will be **the first building block** of your schedule and will be **more or less constant** from week to week.

Step 4: Schedule Weekly Commitments

Based on the remaining time once your "mandatory" commitments are on your calendar, decide the frequency of your “high priority” items.

These should be scheduled **ahead of each week**, and **can vary weekly** based on what you would like to focus on, or where more of your attention needs to go in a given week. You might find that in certain weeks, you might be placing more weight on some of your key areas of focus as opposed to others, but that’s fine since this is fluid, and you can adjust as needed in subsequent weeks

Step 5: Daily Scheduling

Based on the remaining time on your calendar, you can then find places **on a daily basis** to fit in your “optional” items.

Your schedule will already consist of your "mandatory" and "high priority" commitments, so with the remaining time, you will have the ability to choose which optional items you would like to include each day, based on what you're feeling, what appeals to you, or what seems more important

With those 5 steps, you will have created a scheduling framework that is comprehensive enough to be incredibly effective, but also dynamic and flexible enough that it allows plenty of room for you to make choices on a weekly, or even daily, basis and shift your energy accordingly.

At the end of the day, while structure is powerful and necessary, what makes it really effective is

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its ability to adapt to the natural fluctuations of our lives and priorities, for while we certainly can't do everything at the same time, we *can* definitely do everything eventually if we get smart and deliberate about where and how we are investing our time and energy.

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