

# Cheating Time – Getting More Than 60 Minutes Out of An Hour

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(excerpt from her book Three Steps to Time Management)

Do you need to squeeze more time out of your day? Don't we all! I've come up with a few suggestions to help you do just that – so you can have more time to do what you want to do.

## Doubling your time

Have something with you to do for that unexpected delay, while waiting for an appointment, during a child's practice or lesson - reading, writing cards, or your to-do list. If you want to use it as a refill time for yourself, bring along that book you can't wait to finish.

Listen to the news while getting ready in the morning.

Make phone calls while doing mindless tasks: walking, riding in a car/public transportation, filing, decluttering your desk or another surface or room, laundry, cleaning, ironing, unloading the dishwasher, etc. Consider getting a headset to free your hands.

Do mindless jobs when you can be interrupted.

Record or Tivo TV shows and fast forward through commercials. Use TV time to read mail, exercise, iron, clean, make shopping lists, pay bills, cut coupons, wrap presents, etc.

## Projects/Peak Performance

Do projects that require concentration during times when you won't be interrupted at a place where there are few distractions.

Break down your projects into chunks and then to specific tasks. Estimate the time it will take to do each task. Add up the time it will take to complete your project so you will know how much time to devote to the project each day.

Set a deadline for the completion of your project. Working backwards, schedule the specific tasks, allowing some extra wiggle room for unexpected delays. Plan to finish your project a couple of days ahead of schedule to reduce your stress level.

Know when your peak energy times are and do your tough jobs then.

Do big projects during big chunks of time and small ones during small amounts of time.

Set aside times when you do not want to be interrupted and times when you are available for questions, conversation, phone calls, etc. Inform others of these times. Record this information on your voice mail. Give polite, but firm reminders when you are interrupted during your no-interruption times.

## Appointments

Know the objective of each appointment and complete any required work beforehand.

Determine beginning times and ending times for each appointment.

Plan appointments one after another, if possible.

Call or email to confirm appointments the day before.

Start appointments on time. Be on time to appointments elsewhere. Carry with you something to do if you are kept waiting.

Turn off your cell phone and prevent other interruptions during your appointment. It shows respect for the other person's time and for the importance of the meeting.

Set an alarm on your PDA, phone, or watch to signal the ending time of the appointment.

## Meetings

Know the objective of the meeting and complete any work required beforehand. If you chair a meeting, and there is no business, cancel it rather than waste people's time.

Determine starting and ending times for the meeting.

Send out or request a written agenda to give time for contemplation before the meeting. List or request the amount of time to be spent on each agenda item in order to keep the meeting moving.

Do not allow one person to waste the time of those at the meeting. If need be, limit the time each person can speak.

Consider conference calls, even if your members are local, saving travel time and expense.

## Increasing efficiency

Say no to things that do not contribute to your objectives. If that's hard for you to do, ask for some time to think about it, compare it with your priorities, and then say no.

Find ways to simplify your life, schedule, etc.

Delegate whenever possible. Train your delegees well! And plan a time to follow up.

Write down things you need to do, to remember, to buy, etc., rather than waste time later trying to remember them.

Avoid people who are time-wasters, unless you feel “called” to that relationship.

Determine if an emergency or interruption is urgent and important or just urgent before you change your scheduled activities. Just because it may be an emergency for someone else, doesn’t necessarily mean it must become an emergency for you!

Don’t check your email first thing in the morning; rather, do your highest priority.

Prepare the night before in order to get out the door in the morning.

## Paperwork

Set up and maintain a simple, effective filing system. This saves time because you know exactly where to find items you need.

Whenever possible, deal with mail when you receive it – RSVP, file it, toss it, pay it, etc. Have one place where you keep your bills to be paid in the order in which they need to be paid. Pay your bills on time to avoid late fees or reconnection costs or have the inconvenience of paying the bill in person, or worst-case: having your utilities cut off.

Get checks that make duplicates. You’ll have a record of each one without searching for receipts, even if you forget to write the check amount in the register.

Have one place you keep items that need attention (school papers that need to be signed, invitations, etc.) so you won’t waste time searching for them or forget them.

## Shopping/Errands/Driving

Travel during non-peak traffic hours whenever possible. If flexible hours are offered at work, and it works for you, you can save hours by driving at non-rush-hour times.

Share driving responsibilities with other parents for team practices/games, youth group, and other activities. Or pay a teammate or friend to give your child a ride.

Pre-plan errands – combine errands and appointments in the same area to reduce drive time or repeated trips. Add on errands before or after times when you are out anyway.

Listen to a book on tape while driving, or do mundane tasks while stopped at lights.

While shopping, if you find something you know you will need in the future, buy it, rather than having to track it down later.

Buy birthday gifts and cards in quantity. Think through birthdays for the next month or two and buy for all of them at the same time, rather than making a special trip for each occasion. Stock up on wrapping supplies at the same time. Keep a supply of items that can be used for unexpected gifts

Shop online. If you spend a certain amount, shipping is often free. Just make sure you allow enough time for delivery, especially at Christmas.

Keep your car in good working order, saving yourself emergencies, missed appointments and wasted time.