Sort Your To-Do List by What Matters Most

THE BIG IDEA

Urgent is not the same as important. When everything shouts, you end up reacting all day. Sort every task into one of four boxes and your list gets short fast.

Part 1: The four boxes

Ask two questions: is it urgent, and is it important?

01 **Do first: urgent and important.**
It must be done now, has real consequences, and affects your goals. A hard deadline or a crisis. You already know what these are.

02 **Schedule: important, not urgent.**
Planning, networking, maintenance, a project review. Put it on the calendar so it gets done right after the fires.

03 **Hand off: urgent, not important.**
It has to happen now, but it doesn't need your skills. Give it to someone on your team.

04 **Delete: neither.**
Whatever is left over is just getting in the way of your goals. Cross it off.

Part 2: How to run it

Four habits that keep the list under control.

01 **Delete first, then prioritize.**
Scratch off what doesn't belong before you rank anything. Clearing the clutter makes the rest of the sorting faster.

02 **Color-code as you go.**
Green for do first, yellow for schedule, blue for hand off, red for delete. The colors map straight to the four boxes.

03 **Cap each box at 10 items.**
A crowded grid is an overwhelming grid. Keep only the real action items.

04 **Keep work and personal separate.**
They run on different timelines and need different thinking. Use two grids.

> “The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.”
>
> Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, quoting a university president

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Write out everything on your plate and cross off what doesn't need to be there.
- ☐ Sort what's left into the four boxes. Put one important, not-urgent task on the calendar.
- ☐ Pick one urgent task that isn't yours and hand it to someone.

Ask daily: Is this urgent, important, or both?

Source: Asana, *The Eisenhower Matrix*, “How to Prioritize Your To-Do List”. Idea from Dwight Eisenhower, formalized by Stephen Covey