

## Prioritizing Tasks

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Many adults with ADHD struggle with prioritizing their goals, which makes skills such as time management and organization even more difficult. To *prioritize* means to determine the order for dealing with tasks according to their relative importance. Learning how to effectively prioritize tasks can help individuals with ADHD increase their daily productivity, as well as their success in achieving their long-term goals. Continue reading to learn more about assessing the priority of various tasks in your life in order to identify those that are most important to accomplishing your goals.

The ways in which you prioritize tasks can be based on your personal preference; however, prioritizing tasks should be systematic and based on a hierarchical ranking. For example, one easy approach to prioritizing tasks could be to simply label each task as high, medium, or low priority. Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, developed another more sophisticated approach to prioritizing tasks known as the Covey Time Management Matrix. This matrix, which is shown below, uses a four-quadrant system to categorize tasks based on urgency and importance. Within this framework, *urgency* refers to the extent to which tasks require immediate action, while *importance* refers to the significance of the task. The specific quadrants are labeled as follows:

- Quadrant 1: Urgent and important
- Quadrant 2: Not urgent but important
- Quadrant 3: Urgent but not important
- Quadrant 4: Not urgent and not important

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant I</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisis</li><li>• Pressing problems</li><li>• Deadline driven projects</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant II</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relationship building</li><li>• Finding new opportunities</li><li>• Long-term planning</li><li>• Preventive activities</li><li>• Personal growth</li><li>• Recreation</li></ul>
Not Important	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant III</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interruptions</li><li>• Emails, calls, meetings</li><li>• Popular activities</li><li>• Proximate, pressing matters</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant IV</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trivia, busy work</li><li>• Time wasters</li><li>• Some calls and emails</li><li>• Pleasant activities</li></ul>

If you find that you struggle with prioritizing your goals, try using the Covey Time Management Matrix to more effectively gauge the urgency and importance of the tasks you want to complete. A good way to do this would be to organize the tasks identified on your comprehensive and daily to-do lists using this matrix. Ideally, the majority of your time should be spent in Quadrant II, as putting off these activities typically leads to more Quadrant I tasks, creating additional stress and worry in your life. Across the matrix, the average goal would be to spend approximately 20% of your time in Quadrant I, 64% in Quadrant II, 15% in Quadrant III, and 1% or less in Quadrant IV.