

I Need to Get Organized!

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CHAPTER FOUR

On the job

Organizing your time so you get to work when you're supposed to is almost as important as how well you work once you're there—and that is super important.

I try to get there on time, but something always seems to come up.

Organizing time is a lot like organizing your room. You first need to break the job down into smaller parts.

Think about time as if it came in boxes. You have at least three time boxes for your job. As a smart worker, you need to organize the time in each box.

- One box holds all the time you spend getting ready for work.
- Another box holds the time you take going to your job.
- A third box holds the time you work at the job.

But I only get paid for that time I'm at work. Getting ready for and going to work aren't part of my job.

Let's see why all three are part of your job time.

- *Getting ready for work.* Your boss expects you to be dressed in correct clothes, with all the tools or safety gear you need. That's why you have to organize the time you use getting ready for your job.

- *Going to your job.* Your boss expects you to be on time. That's why you have to plan your time for getting to work.
- *Working on the job.* Your boss expects you to work well while you are there. That's why you have to plan your time spent at the job.



How can I organize the time it takes me to get ready to go to work?

Start by laying out your clothes and gear the night before. Also make your lunch, if you take one.

I like to relax and watch TV at night.

Remember Fast Fix-it #1? Get your gear together and make lunch during TV commercials. Or set aside a few minutes before your shows come on. Again, do what works for you, *but do it before going to bed.*

Have one special place in the house where you keep what you want to grab on your way out the door. A hook

or shelf just for those things is a good idea. If you keep everything in one place, you won't have to look all over the house for that hat you need. Remember, the time you save from looking for stuff is time you can spend doing what *you* want—like having a second cup of coffee in the morning.

Sometimes I go to work with friends who have a car. But a lot of days I'm not ready, so I see your point.

That's the idea. How do you get to work on days you don't go with your friends?

I take the bus, but I hope to get my own car soon.

When you do get a car, you have to plan for other time problems. You will have to check oil, gas, and tires regularly. If you use the same service station all the time, they will know you and know that you spend money with them. Then they'll be more likely to help when you have car trouble.

It sounds as if I'll spend even more time getting ready to go to work if I have a car.

If you don't have a time plan, that's just what can happen.

Well, once I'm ready I don't see much else I need to plan for.

Maybe, maybe not. What is the most time it can take you to get to work? (We're not talking about special times, like super bad weather, that upset everyone's life.)

If I get the early bus or ride with my friends, it takes about thirty minutes. But it can take up to forty-five. Mostly, it's somewhere in between.

How much time do you usually allow for getting to work?

About thirty minutes. Wait...I see what you're saying. I need to plan for the longer time, don't I?

You bet. If you plan on thirty minutes, you are going to be late many times. If you plan on forty-five minutes, you'll be at work on time (or early!) every day unless something awful happens.

Now we need one more fact to organize your travel time. How long does it take you to shower, dress, and eat in the morning?

I guess about thirty minutes, maybe more on mornings I'm slow to get going.

All right, so figure forty-five minutes, since you sound as if you're slow lots of days. Add this getting-ready time to the going-to-work time (forty-five minutes). That gives you the time you need to set your alarm in the morning. If you are due at work at 7:00, you must get up at 5:30.

<p style="text-align: center;">Fast Fix-it #10</p>
<p>If you usually turn off your alarm and go back to sleep, try setting your alarm for a loud ring. Put the clock across the room under a metal can or bucket. By the time you get up to turn it off, you will be up. So will everyone else in the house! But it works.</p>

What if everything goes right and I get to work twenty minutes ahead of time?

If that happens day after day, adjust your time plan. Sleep fifteen minutes later. If it happens only now and then, carry a paperback book to read or a tape player to listen to. Don't forget the earphones. Not everyone is happy to hear music in the mornings.



You also said I should plan my time on the job. My boss does that for me.

Your boss plans most of your time, but there is still time *you* have to plan. When you get to work, check in where you are supposed to be *right away*. Don't spend those first minutes talking to friends. Punch the time clock or speak to the manager. You can lose part of a paycheck if you aren't careful. You need to be sure your full time is counted.

If you have any choices, plan your day. Suppose you have to make one hundred widgets a day and you work faster in the morning. Plan to do sixty widgets in the morning and forty in the afternoon when you don't work so fast.

Be careful about coffee breaks and lunch time, too. Bosses notice who takes too long at coffee breaks or lunch. Plan to keep track of the time—and get back on the job when your time is up.

When it's time to go home, don't be the worker who always leaves early. Bosses notice who doesn't stay long enough.

Last, check out the right way. If you don't, you may not get full credit for hours worked.

OK, I can use those ideas. But what can I do about a boss who is always bugging me to clean up my work area before I leave?

Bosses expect you to take care of your work area. If you dig ditches, you have to be careful where you throw the dirt. If you wait tables, the person on the next shift doesn't want to fill the empty sugar bowls and salt and pepper shakers you left.

There are good reasons for taking care of your work space. If work items are put back where they belong, no one will have to hunt for them. If you are out sick the next day, the boss won't be mad at you because your replacement couldn't find the things needed to do your job.

One thing that really makes a boss mad is a person who doesn't put things where they belong. Tools and equipment are expensive. Each time you lose, misplace, or break something, your company loses money.

But sometimes I have to work overtime just to get my workstation put back in order before I leave.

Keep track of your working time and try to stop in time to put things back where they belong at the end of your day.

**My boss is so organized that he seems like a super NEAT!
Working for a person like that is hard!**

If you work for a super neat boss, try to be neat the *same way* the boss is neat. Your job may depend on it.



Not everyone is neat in every way, so look for what seems to matter most to the boss. If you don't know what the boss likes, ask. Does she want all tools wiped off at end of the day? Does he want every file drawer shut and locked?

You may have to work extra hard to do it the way your boss likes, but try your best. If you don't understand how to do it, ask the boss for help. Let the boss know you want to do it the "right" way.

Don't forget what we said about NEATs and NOWs. Your boss can't help being a NEAT and won't change, so don't grumble about it. Your boss doesn't want to hear it.

If you're a NOW and you work with a NEAT co-worker, try to meet him halfway. Talk it over and make a deal. You might offer to do some part of the NEAT's job while he cleans up for both of you.

What if I work with a sloppy co-worker who messes everything up? Once I get organized, I don't want to be blamed for someone else's mess.

If you work with a super NOW co-worker, do the same as with the NEAT person. Talk to that person and try to work out a deal. Maybe the co-worker will do part of *your* job if you clean both work spaces at the end of the day. You might also offer to let your co-worker read this book—and learn how to get organized.

If she won't clean up, talk to the boss. Don't put the other person down. Tell the boss you're doing your part in keeping your work space clean. Then the boss will likely see what's going on.

Someone else I work with isn't sloppy, but he does borrow my things. Saying no is tough.

Sometimes you have to lend things, but try not to provide tools or clothes for someone else. Tell him to get his own. If someone does borrow something from you, make a note on a slip of paper. Write the name of the item,



who borrowed it, and when. Put the paper in your wallet or other safe place to remind you. Be sure to toss the note away when the borrowed item comes back.

Maybe seeing me write it down will keep him from borrowing. He even takes things I bring from home!

Mark anything you take to work with your name so it won't "walk away." Sew a blue X or some other letter in your jacket. Or sew a name tag in your uniform. Write your name with a fabric pen on the labels of appropriate clothing.

Fast Fix-it #11

Mark tools and gear with colored nail polish. Old bottles of weird colors are often cheap at a variety store or yard sales.

On the other hand, *you* shouldn't get known for borrowing. Borrowing or lending tools at work has started many fights—with words or with fists.

If you really have to borrow:

- Always ask politely before borrowing.
- Borrow only in an emergency.
- Take the tool or piece of equipment back right away.
- Be sure the item is in the same shape when you return it as when you took it.
- Be sure the person knows that you have brought the item back. Say thanks.

Fast Fix-it #12

If you have an extra tool or piece of equipment, keep it handy just for lending. But ask for it back as if it were new, so you can lend it another day.

I guess that takes care of all the organizing I need to do for my job. Right?

Not quite. You also need to organize the space between your ears! If you don't organize your thinking, you won't do a good job. You could even lose your life—or at least change it a lot.

What do you mean?

Accidents do happen on the job. Often they don't have to. Know all the safety rules and follow them. If you should wear safety glasses, wear them. For example, don't saw even that one little piece without putting the glasses on. You could lose an eye.

Don't turn on equipment that you don't know how to use. Read instructions. If they are too hard for you to understand, ask someone to explain them.

Fast Fix-it #13

Suppose you're having trouble reading something at work. If you have a copy machine in your office, make a copy of the document you're trying to read. (Ask first to use the copier.) If you can't copy it or if it's a long manual, ask to take it home with you. Then ask someone at home or at your school to help you read it.

I'd sound like a dope asking someone to help with something like that.

You will be a *real* dope if you don't read something right, and then break a machine or hurt yourself or someone else. There are worse things than asking for help. We all need help in some areas. You may not be able to read as well as some, but you probably cut a straighter line, clean a machine faster, or solve a problem before someone else. Don't let a few mixed-up *abc's* tell you if you are a good worker or not.

OK, I hear you. I want to do a good job. I need every penny I can make!

Then let's talk about organizing your money. NEATs often have trouble taking care of money. NOWs have *big* problems with it.

Activities

If you have a job, use that information to help you answer the next two questions. If you don't have a job, use your school hours.

- How long does it take you to get ready for work (school)?
_____ hr., _____ min.
- What is the longest time it takes you to get to work (school)?
_____ hr., _____ min.
- What is the total time you need?

Amount of time to get ready for work	+	Amount of time to get to work	=	Total amount of time you need
___ hr., ___ min.		___ hr., ___ min.		___ hr., ___ min.

- Now we'll figure out the exact time you need to set on your alarm so that you can get up and ready for work. Let's say that you need to be at work at 8:30 A.M. You need 2 hrs., 15 min. to get ready and travel to your job. What time do you need to get up (or begin to get ready to go)?

EXAMPLE:

Time you want to get to work	-	Total time you need	=	Time you must begin to get ready
____: ____		____: ____		____: ____

You find you cannot get there on time and must leave for work 20 minutes earlier. How long is the total time you now need? _____ hr., _____ min.

What is the new time you must begin to get ready to leave?

Time you want to get to work	-	Total time you need	=	Time you must begin to get ready
____:____		____:____		____:____

Pretend your job changes. Give yourself a new time you must be at work. Even though you get paid more, the trip to work will take ten minutes longer. Figure out the time changes you must make in your life.

Time you want to get to work	-	Total time you need	=	Time you must begin to get ready
____:____		____:____		____:____

5. Name two other ways you could get to work if you couldn't go your usual way:

1. _____
2. _____

6. What is one thing that slows you down when you are trying to get ready to go to work? _____

What can you do about it? _____

7. List two things you have borrowed that you ought to return.

1. _____
2. _____

8. Write down the date you will return them: ____ / ____ / ____ for number 1 and ____ / ____ / ____ for number 2.

9. What is something you can say that sounds pleasant, but firm, when other people want to borrow your tools or other equipment? _____
