

*Wow*

## THE URGENT-IMPORTANT MATRIX

“What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important.”

--Dwight D. Eisenhower, former US President

<p><b>M A N A G E</b> Emergencies &amp; Pressing Problems</p> <p><b>Q1</b></p> <p>URGENT / IMPORTANT</p>	<p><b>F O C U S</b> Long-Term Goals &amp; Values</p> <p><b>Q2</b></p> <p>NOT URGENT / IMPORTANT</p>
<p><b>A V O I D</b> Busywork &amp; Interruptions</p> <p><b>Q3</b></p> <p>URGENT / NOT IMPORTANT</p>	<p><b>L I M I T</b> Trivial &amp; Time Wasters</p> <p><b>Q4</b></p> <p>NOT URGENT / NOT IMPORTANT</p>

**Purpose:** The key to successful time management is to spend your time on tasks that are important in addition to the ones that are urgent. This Urgent-Important Matrix tool is designed to help you objectively judge where you currently spend your time and where you can make changes to make time for important goals in addition to urgent ones.

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

- Instructions:** 1. Print out this entire worksheet (studies show that retention will be higher when handwritten!).  
2. Carefully read the following background information to understand The Urgent-Important Matrix.

### Quadrant 1: Urgent/Important

This quadrant is for the highest priority tasks - they need to get done NOW. They're tasks that require our immediate attention and also work towards fulfilling our long-term goals and missions in life.

#### Examples

- Baby is crying
- Urgent request from boss
- Water-heater breaks down
- Deadline-driven projects

#### Most Common Challenges

- They're urgent! You feel you have to get them done first and foremost.

#### Tips

- There are 2 types of urgent / important activities: ones you could not have foreseen and others you left until the last minute. Eliminate last-minute activities by planning ahead, being proactive, and **avoiding procrastination**.
- Leave time in your schedule to handle unexpected issues and important activities.
- Too many unplanned demands from others? Acknowledge the task and respond with a commitment to complete it a later date.

# Quadrant 2: Not Urgent/Important

This quadrant is for the activities that don't have a pressing deadline, but nonetheless help you achieve your important personal and work goals as well as help you fulfill your overall life mission. ***This is where you want to spend the most time because these are the activities that provide us lasting happiness, fulfillment, and success.***

## Examples

- Journaling
- Exercising
- Routine car and home maintenance
- Creating a budget and savings plan

## Most Common Challenges

- People tend to focus on whatever is most pressing and not on items without a deadline.
- If you don't know your core values and goals, you won't know what to spend your time on to reach those goals.

## Tips

- The tasks in this quadrant are probably the most neglected ones 😞 but are the most crucial for success.
- To overcome focusing only on pressing deadline, you must be mindful and consciously decide to work on your goals. Plan time for these activities so the tasks from quadrant 1 and 3 don't take over.
- If you're unsure of your core values or life mission, try out our Core Values exercises.

# Quadrant 3: Urgent/Not Important

This quadrant is where you are busy but not productive. Q3 tasks are activities that require our attention now (urgent), but don't help us achieve our goals or fulfill our mission (not important). ***These tasks are often mistaken as being important when they're most often busywork.***

## Examples

- Phone calls / Emails / Text messages
- Household chores / Paying bills
- Co-worker comes by your desk for a favor
- Friend asks for your help with a task

## Most Common Challenges

- Q3 tasks often involve helping *others* meet *their own* goals and fulfill *their own* priorities and they're usually not important to *you*.
- Q3 tasks often give a sense of satisfaction as you check items off your to-do list. You *feel* like you're getting a lot accomplished.

## Tips

- **Those who spend their time on Q3 tasks often want to please others at the expense of their own happiness.**
- Avoid these tasks as they come to you if at all possible. It may be appropriate to say "no", reschedule or delegate items.
- Provide specific availability time slots when people know they can speak with you or when you set aside time to meet their requests.

# Quadrant 4: Not Urgent/Not Important

This quadrant is where we go to escape after spending too much time in Q1 and Q3 – most often at the expense of doing fulfilling Q2 activities! These activities are often a distraction and should reasonably be minimized. **Leisure activities don't need to be completely removed from your schedule, but be mindful of how much time you spend here.**

## Examples

- Mindlessly surfing the web
- Scrolling through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Watching TV
- Analysis paralysis

## Most Common Challenges

- Q4 activities are often “default” time spenders as opposed to well-planned activities that add value to our lives.
- We often use Q4 activities as a crutch for de-stressing, when we're indecisive, when we have a free minute.

## Tips

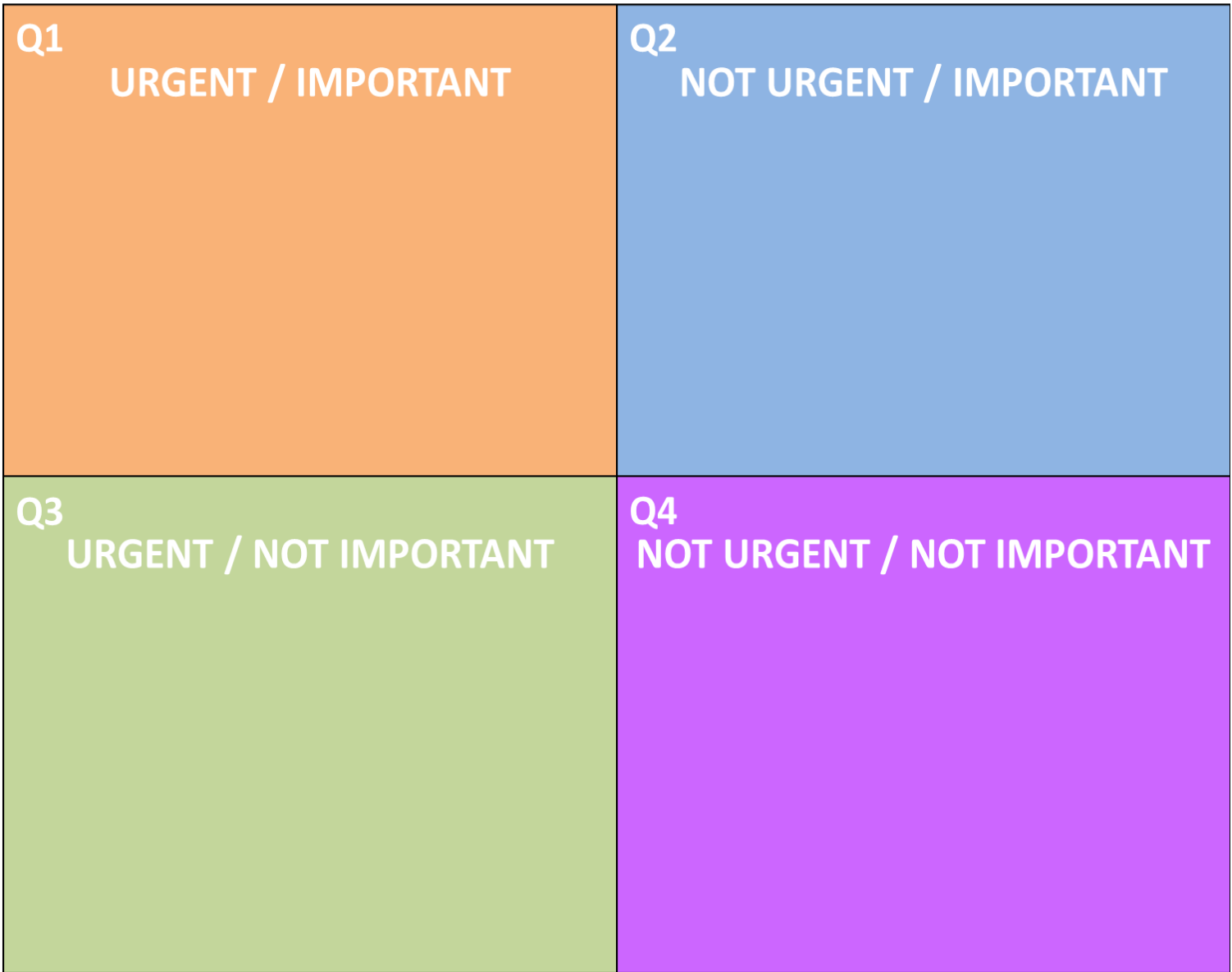
- Create a clear schedule and to-do list for your day so you don't find yourself defaulting to Q4 whenever you have free time.
- Q4 activities provide us some much-needed relaxation and joy; instead of aiming to completely rid yourself of these, try setting a limit on the amount of time you spend on them.

3. Make a list of up to 15 current tasks in your life. Assess each task: Is this task *urgent* (does it require immediate attention)? Is this task *important* (will it contribute to your long-term values, missions and goals)?

Task	Urgent		Important	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
3. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
4. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
5. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
6. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
7. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
8. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
9. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
10. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No

Task	Urgent		Important	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
11. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
12. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
13. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
14. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No
15. _____	Yes	No	Yes	No

4. Based on your above task list, place the name of each task in its corresponding quadrant of important / urgent. *✱✱*



5. Assess what % of your tasks *you are currently completing* in each Quadrant (totaling 100%):

Q1: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q3: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q2: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q4: \_\_\_\_\_ %

6. Assess what % of your tasks *you would like to be completing* in each Quadrant (totaling 100%): *Note: Remember that Quadrant 2 is ideally where you want to spend the most time because these are the activities that provide you with lasting happiness, fulfillment, and success.*

Q1: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q3: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q2: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Q4: \_\_\_\_\_ %

7a. What is/are the tasks that *you're currently spending too much time on*?

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b. What actions do you want to take to change that?

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8a. What is/are the most important task(s) that you're *not currently spending enough time on*?

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b. What actions do you want to take to change that?

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9. What are other reflections and takeaways you've gotten from looking at your time management in this context?

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### Final Thoughts

You will feel a huge shift once you have mastered using this matrix to filter your to-do list. As you spend more and more time working on your *Not Urgent / Important* tasks, you'll begin to feel a deep sense of fulfillment in your life that you didn't previously have. You will see and feel the difference as you're making real progress towards the things that are most important to you. You'll also have a new sense of calm and control as you prevent crises and problems that would have previously arisen in the *Urgent / Important* quadrant and as you learn to prioritize away from others' requests in the *Urgent / Not Important* tasks. And then, with this newfound sense of fulfillment, you can really enjoy those *Not Urgent / Not Important* indulgences without any guilt! 😊

Many people use this method daily to sort their to-do list but you may find weekly or on an as-needed basis works best for you.