What Is Time Management in Project Management

Time management is the management of the time spent, and progress made, on project tasks and activities. Excellent time management in project management requires the planning, scheduling, monitoring and controlling of all project activities. Time management is one of the [six major functions](https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/time-management-project-functions-schedules-5723) of project management, according to the Project Management Institute. When some people refer to project time management, they’re also referring to the tools and techniques used for managing time.

Why is time management important in project management?

A project, by definition, has an official end date. In order to meet this date, every project needs a schedule. And every project manager needs to manage their own time and the team’s time to ensure that the schedule is met. Imagine you decide to renovate the bathroom in your house. You figure you’ll do it in your spare time, so you don’t give yourself an end date or create a project schedule. You also don’t do anything to make sure you regularly have time to work on the renovation. What happens? If you’re like most people, the answer is that years go by and your ‘project’ never gets finished.

Likely it is faced with constant delays, and you may run into the following issues:

* You felt too busy to work on it, so pushed it to the back of your to-do list
* You didn’t ordering the new tiles in time, and had to wait around for them to come in.
* You weren’t able to find a plumber and couldn’t install the sink or toilet after they were delivered.
* You found out too late that inspections need to be booked months in advance.
* And so on.

That’s why time management is so critical. Without it, projects won’t get done on time, and may not get done at all.

The seven main processes in project time management

1. Plan schedule management. Many resources don’t mention this process when discussing time management. But, before you can complete the other steps, you need to plan how you will manage your schedule.  
   Some questions you should answer are:
2. What software or tool will you use?
3. Who will be responsible for using the software?
4. How often will the schedule be reviewed?
5. What controls will be put in place to ensure everyone stays on schedule?
6. Define activities. Once you have your time management plan, you can start identifying and defining all of your project activities. Often a [work breakdown structure (WBS)](https://www.wrike.com/project-management-guide/faq/what-is-work-breakdown-structure-in-project-management/) is used to help define activities and tasks within a project. Major milestones should also be determined.
7. Sequence activities. Now that you know all of the tasks that must be completed, you can start sequencing them in the proper order with a network diagram.
8. Estimate resources. In project management, the term ‘resources’ often refers to people. However, you also need to identify which tools, materials, systems, budget and other resources you will need for each task to be completed.
9. Estimate durations. Once you know which tasks must be completed and what you need to accomplish them, it’s time to estimate how long it will take to complete each activity. Some project managers use [PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique)](https://www.wrike.com/project-management-guide/faq/what-is-pert-in-project-management/) to come up with their durations, especially if there’s a lot of unknown factors at play.
10. Develop the project schedule. This can be done by inputting your activities, durations, start and end dates, sequencing, and relationships into a [scheduling software](https://www.wrike.com/gantt-chart/).
11. Control the schedule. Once your schedule is created, it needs to be monitored and controlled. Progress needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis so you can compare your actual work completed against the plan. This allows you to see if there are areas you’re falling behind schedule. One method for doing this is completing progress reviews with the team and holding frequent status report meetings. Another is using earned value to do variance analysis.