

# Three Ways to Think About Prioritization

## A. Urgency vs. Importance (Steven Covey)

Consider the importance (or “weight”) of the items on your list, and the urgency “when is it due?”

	Urgent	Not-Urgent
Important	<b>Quadrant 1:</b> Examples: Things due today or tomorrow, dealing with emergencies or crises	<b>Quadrant 2:</b> Examples: Long-term projects, planning ahead, studying in advance, getting started early.
Not Important	<b>Quadrant 3:</b> Examples: Interruptions, distractions, fun events that come up, social invitations.	<b>Quadrant 4:</b> Examples: Time wasters, busy work, procrastination activities, aimless internet browsing.

Steven Covey recommends we spend most of our time in Quadrants 1 & 2 and as little time as possible in Quadrant 4.

## B. The ABC Method (Alan Lakein)

The ABC Method was originally developed by Alan Lakein and consists of assigning a priority status of “A,” “B,” or “C” to each of the items of your to-do list or task list.

“A” Status Items – “Must Do”	High priority, very important, critical items, with close deadlines or high level of importance to them.
“B” Status Items – “Should Do”	Medium priority, quite important over time, not as critical as “A” items, but still important to spend time doing.
“C” Status Items – “Nice to Do”	Low priority at this time, low consequences if left undone at this moment.

## C. Other Considerations . . . (adapted from David Allen)

- **What can I do where I am?** (*Think about location. What can you do where you are now? Sometimes we have unexpected pockets of time. How can you use them to your advantage?*)
- **How much time do I have and when do I have to do something else?** (*Be realistic about what can be done. Your to-do list might shift based on how much time you have available*)
- **How much energy & focus do I have?** (*What can you realistically take on right now?*)
- **What has the highest payoff for me if I do it?** (*Yet another way to think about importance, weight, or priorities*)

Sources:

- Allen, D. *Getting Things Done Website & Newsletter*: <http://www.davidco.com/newsletters/archive/0512.html>
- Covey, S.R. (1987). “Principles of Personal Management,” *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. NY: Fireside.
- Haynes, M.E.(2009) *Time Management: Get an extra day a week*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Axzo Press.