

50 TIPS FOR WRITING A BETTER TO DO LIST

1. Color code. Some methods:

- By category
- By estimated time to complete the task
- Must do, should do and if I have time
- Person responsible for the task
- Due dates e.g. due in the next fortnight, due this week, due in the coming days, due today

2. Choose a top 3 most important tasks – the tasks you will be satisfied if they're the only tasks that get completed that day - these are the tasks you must do first

3. Use the 'eat that frog' method – do the task you want to do the least *first* to get it out of the way and set yourself up for a productive rest of the day

4. Allocate an estimated time for each task – beside the task (or color code with highlighter, a colored dot beside the task etc.) write how long you think it'll take to complete the task – remember to add more time than you think (general rule of thumb is to double it)

5. Use highlighters to flag important things e.g. bills due, school assignment due dates, reminders

6. Track your progress – I use:

- A single line when the task is started
- A half shaded box when the task is in progress
- A full shaded box means that task was completed

7. Tick or cross off tasks once completed – so you know how much you've done (and what tasks you've done i.e. which categories) and see how much is left to do. This helps you decide which tasks to focus on if you have a lot of tasks and not a lot of time left

8. Use “ - When writing the same thing for multiple tasks (e.g. write blog post 1, write blog post 2), use “ underneath the first time you write 'blog post' the “ = same as above so it saves time writing

9. Use shorthand and abbreviations e.g. MP instead of meal plan

10. Use symbols e.g. ! for urgent

11. Write your most important things first – you're more likely to start your to do list at the top so write these down first

12. Categorised lists – rather than one massive brain dump, keep tasks separate on categorised lists. E.g. Cleaning tasks, books to read, grocery list, wish list

13. **Use a separate page for each type of list** – this keeps your notebook neat and avoids your lists becoming messy when you try and cram too much on the page, or don't allow enough space between lists
14. If you have short lists that are only a couple of lines, use something to **divide up the page** such as washi tape, draw a wavy line between the list etc.
15. Use an **index** to keep track of your lists
16. And **tabs** to organize your notebook (you could even just use sticky notes)
17. **Use transparent sticky notes** - Place transparent sticky notes over the top of your tasks to see what to focus on first (your top 3) – use a different color sticky note for each category if you have a lot of tasks.
18. **Mark your pages** - In the top corner of the page, place a colored dot sticker or scribble in pen to keep track of different categories or your lists, see what page you're up to in your notebook and make it much easier to find the list you're looking for
19. **Avoid over-scheduling** - leave a bit of buffer time between tasks and track how much you actually finish at the end of the day so you don't schedule too much
20. **Use lined paper** to keep your lists neat and legible
21. If you want to keep your list neat, **use erasable pens or highlighters** e.g. Frixion, Smiggle or Typo
22. **Don't be afraid to make mistakes** – you can always use whiteout
23. **Factor in one-off tasks & your personal life** – you want to maintain a balance of personal and work tasks. When scheduling tasks take into account any one off events that will reduce the amount of time you have to complete your tasks e.g. a birthday party
24. **Allow for tasks to take longer than you think they will** - don't over-estimate how much you need to get done
25. **Use sticky notes for recurring tasks** to save having to re-write them out all the time
26. **Use sticky notes for 'maybe' tasks** – sticky notes are also ideal for things subject to change
27. **Use sticky note for flagging important tasks and due dates**
28. **Use a habit tracker** – it saves space in your planner and means you don't have to keep re-writing tasks. Download a free habit tracker here >>> <http://bit.ly/2q6pTCM>
29. Regularly **review your to do list** to make sure you're staying on track
30. **Carefully consider each item on your list** - don't schedule a lot of tasks you don't like doing all at once – break them up and schedule them throughout your week

31. **Break bigger tasks down into smaller tasks** – a good rule of thumb is to keep tasks to no more than 1 hour to avoid over-whelm
32. **Batch / do like tasks together**
33. **Use self-inking checklist stamps** to avoid manually draw a checkbox each time. My favorite are MAMBI stamps. My sister stocks them in her planner supplies shop! <http://etsy.me/2v2dn7e>
34. **Use the right pens** - that don't smudge / dry quickly so you can write your tasks faster (ballpoint pens)
35. **Assign a due date (real or imaginary) for every task**
36. **Don't forget about the little things** that you don't want to do but have to do regularly such as grocery shopping
37. **Distinguish titles** - use uppercase letters for list titles to make them stand out (a different color or a marker pen also work well)
38. **Reevaluate items you've put off / keep writing out each week** – do you actually need to do them or can you drop them?
39. **Keep track of seasonal tasks separate** (on their own list) e.g. clean air-con filters
40. **Carefully choose your tasks – make sure they relate to your goals** – before you add anything to your to do list – ask yourself how the task will help you achieve your goals.
41. **Write your to do list the night before** you need to complete it (or the day before the week starts)
42. **Keep a master list** with a separate page *for each topic* (e.g. one page for cleaning tasks, another with a list of books you want to read etc.) and take items from those lists to schedule to each day
43. **Write out your to do list rather than using an app** – studies show that when you write things down you're more likely to remember them. It's also easier to keep track of your thoughts when they're written down right in front of you
44. **Keep a quick tasks list** to refer to if you have a few minutes spare (tip: write this on a sticky note so you can move it from week to week)
45. **Monthly brain dump** - Write a master brain dump list at the start of each month, then add these to your weeks to make sure you achieve your goals. Every task on your to do list should be tied back to your goals
46. **Utilise white space** - If you have long tasks, leave white space between lines of your notebook to make it easier to read / less jumbled and cluttered
47. **Don't write more tasks just to fill a page** – there's nothing wrong with some white space!

48. Keep a NOT to do list of all those you shouldn't do such as bad habits you need to break, and things that can be delegated or automated

49. Be specific about what the task that needs to get done is. E.g. instead of just 'record tutorials for course' I put 'record tutorials for module 3'

50. Keep your to do lists all in the one place – don't keep lists on a scrap piece of paper, on your phone, in your planner, on sticky notes etc. – record them in one place

For more planning tips, see these posts from my blog:

1. [Answers to 50 Frequently Asked Planner Questions](#)
2. [Ultimate list of the best planner pen brands and how to choose colors for color coding](#)
3. [Planner Organization: How to color-code your planner \(so you'll actually use it effectively\)](#)
4. [Using a planner key and symbols to code your planner \(efficient planning methods\)](#)
5. [6 Useful ways to efficiently plan your week using highlighters](#)
6. [How I plan my week: my 6 step process](#)
7. [130+ functional ideas to use blank notes pages of your planner or an empty notebook](#)
8. [Ultimate planner page size guide \(with printable reference cheat sheet\)](#)
9. [5 Planner supplies you should never skimp on](#)
10. [Guide to Discbound Planners & Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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