



**At a Glance:** Plan projects and tasks, including time, workload, and resources. Develop and prioritize strategic and tactical goals. Persevere and deal with competing pressures.

## Understanding Project & Time Management

A project is a distinct, temporary endeavor undertaken to attain planned goals.<sup>1</sup> Project management is the application of methods, knowledge, skills, and tools to achieve the project goals, within a predetermined time frame and set budgets.<sup>2</sup> Project management includes managing resources (personnel, budgets), tasks, and risks. Time management is the process of consciously planning and exerting the control of time spent on specific tasks in order to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and thus production.<sup>3</sup> Time management is therefore key for the success of a project.

### Why does it matter?

Employers in various sectors often seek candidates with attributes related to project and time management, such as organizational skills, multitasking, budgeting abilities, and the ability to prioritize and meet deadlines.<sup>4</sup> Mastering these skills has a direct impact on career success and work-life balance, as well as resolving problems and conflicts in order to keep a project on track.<sup>5</sup> Project management skills are considered prerequisites to a leader's success. In fact, management skills often overlap with [leadership skills](#), as both involve problem solving, decision making, planning, delegation, communication, and time management.<sup>6</sup>

Time management skills are not only important in the workplace, but they are also necessary during your studies, and to help you manage your personal commitments and interests. From a psychological perspective, efficient time use has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety.<sup>7</sup>

## Cultivating Project & Time Management

According to top North American employers, project and time management skills are areas that are lacking in newly hired graduates.<sup>8</sup> Alongside the project management experience you are gaining as a graduate researcher, McGill offers a variety of professional development programs to help you develop project and time management skills (see "Taking Action" section for suggestions).

However, outside the scope of these programs, employers stress the importance of developing project management skills in an experiential context.<sup>9</sup> Although you may have supervised someone, applied for funding, and managed your research projects during your studies, employers may require experience outside of academic research (e.g., volunteer at an organization or paid position) or certifications. Seeking co-curricular activities and experiences on- and off-campus will help develop and demonstrate these particular management skills. Consider planning an event or coordinating finances and budgets as part of a student committee, club, or professional association.

## Quick Guide to Being a Successful Project Manager<sup>10</sup>

- Have a long-term strategic vision of your project and set goals and milestones accordingly
- Display forward thinking and anticipate dealing with the unexpected
- Develop troubleshooting strategies if your project gets sidetracked
- Establish your own personalized time management system: prioritize tasks, switch focus between projects/tasks to deliver on schedule, and balance constraints (cost, scope, time).<sup>11</sup>
- Conduct a thorough risk analysis and management for yourself, your team and others involved
- Assess your current workload and commitments before taking on new projects.

## Quick Guide to Effective Time Management<sup>12</sup>

- Be self-aware, identify your most and least effective habits and ways of working.
- Structure your time by allocating adequate periods for activities and breaks
- Set goals, make task lists, and prioritize following the SMART criteria<sup>13</sup>
- Experiment with different digital or paper planning tools (e.g., Outlook or google calendar, kanban boards, productivity apps, bullet point to-do lists, paper agenda).
- Use strategies to overcome procrastination; consult this [link](#) for some suggestions.

# Taking Action

## Professional Development & Training

- Check [myInvolvement](#) for upcoming workshops and programs under “Lead Project: Project & Time Management”.
- Courses - [McGill School of Continuing Studies - Project Management Courses](#) (\$): A variety of course selections, including credit and non-credit in addition to certificate programs.
- Courses - [McGill Executive Institute - Project Management Program](#) (\$): An intensive program designed for professionals and managers.
- Workshops - [Mitacs Training Workshops](#): it includes regular and online project & time management for advanced degree graduates.
- McGill Workshops - [Skills for Time Management](#), offered by Counseling Services, covers strategies to increase productivity and manage your time for academic success. [Work Hard, Play Hard Webinar](#) offered by McGill’s Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Additional workshops can be found [here](#).

## Gaining Experience

- Volunteer to lead small initiatives in student clubs and local community organizations: [Engage McGill](#) | [McGill Volunteering Opportunities](#).
- Find a mentor who holds project-based role within an organization: [Mentoring Across McGill](#).
- Join and volunteer with local project management association such as [PMI-Montreal](#).
- [Applied Student Research](#) (ASR) - McGill Office of Sustainability: take on projects at McGill. Consult the [ASR Toolkit](#) for a step-by-step guide to plan, finance, and execute a project.
- [Sustainability Projects Fund](#): apply for funding, and practice how to design and implement an environmentally- or socially-focused project.

# Resources

## Websites

- [ProjectManagement.com](#): One stop resource for project managers for webinars, templates, tools, practice areas for agile and risk management.
- [A Girl’s Guide to Project Management](#): popular blog for practical solutions, templates and advice on project management.
- [Project Times](#): This site provides trends or insights from project management gurus.

## Apps

- [Forest app](#): #1 ranked productivity app.
- [Time Management Resources](#) (OSD): List curated by McGill’s OSD.
- [A Life of Productivity](#): Website with resources and tips on productivity.

## Video Clips

- [Time Management](#) (McGill OSD): 30-second video clip on what Time Management is all about.
- [Time Management Tips for PhDs](#) (University Affairs): 3-minute video given by a senior consultant at Direct Corporate Solutions.

## Groups & Associations

- [Project Management Institute - Montreal Chapter](#) (PMI-Montreal).
- [Project Management Association of Canada](#) (PMAC-AMPC).
- [International Project Management Association](#) (IPMA).

## Literature on Time Management

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## References

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- <sup>1</sup> What is Project Management? Project Management Institute (2018).
- <sup>2</sup> [What is Project Management? Association for Project Management \(2018\)](#).
- <sup>3</sup> [Harnessing the river of time: a theoretical framework of time use efficiency with suggestions for counselors. Kelly, W.E. \(2002\)](#).
- <sup>4</sup> [Professional Development: Shaping Effective Programs for STEM Graduate Students. Denecke et al. \(2017\)](#).
- <sup>5</sup> [Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Vitae. \(2011\)](#).
- <sup>6</sup> [Management Skills List and Examples. Doyle, A. \(2018\)](#).
- <sup>7</sup> [No time to worry: the relationship between worry, time structure, and time management. Kelly, W.E. \(2003\)](#).
- <sup>8</sup> [Professional Development: Shaping Effective Programs for STEM Graduate Students. Denecke et al. \(2017\)](#).
- <sup>9</sup> [Professional Development: Shaping Effective Programs for STEM Graduate Students. Denecke et al. \(2017\)](#).
- <sup>10</sup> [Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Vitae. \(2011\)](#).
- <sup>11</sup> [A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge. PMI \(2003\)](#).
- <sup>12</sup> [No time to worry: the relationship between worry, time structure, and time management. Kelly, W.E. \(2003\)](#).
- <sup>13</sup> [SMART Goals. Haughey, D. \(2017\)](#)