

Managing Your Time

Talking about how you use your time is a common topic of English conversations. I mean - who doesn't love talking for **hours on end** about how much time they spend, save or waste every day?

In this lesson, you'll learn how to talk about managing your time clearly and confidently.

You'll also practice how to explain how you manage deadlines, and how your daily routine has changed over time.

Common questions about time

Here are some real-life questions you might hear in conversations or exams:

- How do you usually spend your time during the week?
- Are you good at managing your time?
- What do you usually do when you're short on time?
- Do you ever waste time? How?
- What helps you stay organized?
- What time of day do you work best?
- Has your routine changed over time?
- What activities do you wish you had more time for?

Talking about your experience

Let's look at how to talk naturally about your time habits, routines, and how you manage - or sometimes waste time.

How you usually spend your time

Describe your daily or weekly routines and how your time is used.

- I usually try to plan out my day in the morning.
- I spend most of my time working or studying.

- In the evenings, I like to relax and do something low-stress.
- I often make time for a short walk during the day.
- Weekends are when I catch up on things I didn't finish.

Q: How do you usually spend your time during the week?

During the week, I mostly spend time working and studying. I usually plan my tasks in the morning, and in the evening I try to relax a bit or go for a walk.

Useful collocations

- Plan out my day.
- Make time for.
- Catch up on.
- Spend time working.
- Low-stress Activity.

You can also say...

- I try to stay on top of things - I keep organized and don't fall behind.
- I set time aside for... - I reserve time for something.
- I block off time - I schedule time in advance.
- I fit it in when I can - I do it when there's time.
- I wind down in the evening - I relax before bed.

How about you?

- I usually spend most of my time...
- In the mornings, I like to...
- I try to make time for...
- I often catch up on...
- My evenings are usually...
- I block off time for...

How your routine has changed over time

Share how your time habits have changed and improved.

- I used to leave everything until the last minute, but now I plan ahead.
- I've started using lists and apps to stay more organized.

- Over time, I've learned to avoid multitasking.
- I've noticed I work better at certain times of day now.
- My routine changed when I started working from home.

Q: Has your routine changed over time?

Yes, a lot. I used to just do things whenever I felt like it, but now I use a plan and try to stick to it. I've also learned what times of day I focus best.

Useful collocations

- Used to.
- Plan ahead.
- Stay organized.
- Work better.
- Stick to a routine.

You can also say...

- Over the years, I've changed a lot - I've improved my habits.
- I've become more organized - I've learned better habits.
- It's taken me time to figure it out - I've learned slowly.
- Now I have a system that works - I've found a good method.
- These days, I try to be more consistent - I aim to follow the same plan regularly.

How about you?

- My routine has changed because...
- I used to... but now I...
- Compared to before, I spend more / less time on ...
- Over time, I've learned to...
- I've started...
- Nowadays, I work better when...
- I've become more...

How you manage your time

Explain your approach to time management and staying organized.

- I use a to-do list to plan my day.

- I try not to leave things until the last minute.
- I check my schedule every Friday afternoon.
- I break my work into small tasks and set time limits.
- I'm learning how to prioritize better.

Q: Are you good at managing your time?

I think I'm getting better. I use a list each day and try to stick to it. I also check my schedule at the end of the week so I know what's coming up.

Useful collocations

- Manage my time.
- Leave things until the last minute.
- Check my schedule.
- Break work into tasks.
- Set time limits.

You can also say...

- I try to stay on schedule - I follow the plan.
- I block things out by the hour - I plan specific time slots.
- I build in breaks - I add rest time into my day.
- I try not to overbook myself - I avoid planning too much.
- I keep an eye on the time - I stay aware of how long things take.

How about you?

- I try to manage my time by...
- I usually make a list of...
- I check my calendar every...
- I break my tasks into...
- I give myself...
- I try to stay on schedule by...

Times when you feel under pressure

Talk about moments when time feels limited or stressful.

- I get stressed when I run out of time before a deadline.

- Sometimes I spend too long on one thing and fall behind.
- When I'm short on time, I focus only on the most important tasks.
- I try to avoid rushing things, but it happens.
- I feel the most pressure in the days leading up to an exam or big task.

Q: What do you usually do when you're short on time?

If I'm really short on time, I focus on the top priorities and let the rest wait. I also try to avoid multitasking because it just stresses me out more.

Useful collocations

- Run out of time.
- Short on time.
- Fall behind (with tasks).
- Struggle to meet deadlines / miss deadlines.
- Focus on priorities.
- Feel under pressure.

You can also say...

- I'm up against the clock - I don't have much time.
- I'm racing to get it done - I'm working very fast.
- I've got too much on my plate - I have too many tasks.
- It's a real time crunch - it's a busy, high-pressure moment.
- I'm working to a tight deadline - the due date is soon.

How about you?

- When I'm short on time, I...
- I feel most under pressure when...
- I try to stay calm by...
- When I have to meet tight deadlines, I often ...
- I usually focus on...
- Sometimes I fall behind because...
- It helps if I...

Wasting or losing time

Share how time sometimes gets lost or used in unhelpful ways.

- I sometimes waste time scrolling on my phone.
- I lose track of time when I'm online.
- I get distracted easily when I'm tired.
- I regret it when I put things off for too long.
- Social media is the biggest time-waster for me.

Q: Do you ever waste time?

Yes, definitely. I can easily spend too much time on my phone without even noticing. Then I realize an hour has gone by and I haven't done anything useful.

Useful collocations

- Waste time.
- Lose track of time.
- Get distracted.
- Put things off.
- Time-waster.

You can also say...

- I end up doing nothing - I waste the time.
- Time just slips away - time goes without noticing.
- I go down a rabbit hole online - I get stuck on the internet.
- I lose focus quickly - I get distracted fast.
- I know I should be doing something else - I realize I'm wasting time.

How about you?

- I sometimes waste time by...
- I lose track of time when...
- I often get distracted by...
- One thing that wastes my time is...
- I usually put things off when...
- I try to avoid wasting time by...

What helps you use time well

Talk about the tools, habits or tips that work for you.

- I use a calendar to plan things out in advance.
- I try to focus on one thing at a time.
- I set timers when I really need to concentrate.
- Having a routine helps me stay on track.
- I always try to start tasks early if I can.

Q: What helps you stay organized?

Having a clear routine helps a lot. I also use timers and make a weekly plan so I know what I'm supposed to be doing and when.

Useful collocations

- Plan things out.
- Stay on track.
- Set timers.
- Start early.
- Focus on one thing.

You can also say...

- I plan ahead - I prepare early.
- I stick to my schedule - I follow my plan.
- I start things in good time - I don't leave it too late.
- I like to keep it simple - I avoid overcomplicating.
- I go one step at a time - I work slowly and steadily.

How about you?

- One thing that helps me is...
- I use tools like...
- I find it easier when...
- I try to stay on track by...
- My routine helps me...
- I usually stay organized by...

Bring it together - full model monologue

I must admit that time is something I've had to think about a lot more carefully over the years. I mean, I used to waste a lot of time scrolling on my phone or doing things at the last minute, but now I think I'm making more of an effort to try and manage my time more effectively.

So, for example, every Friday afternoon, I like to check my calendar and kind of map out the week ahead, you know? I also do my best to finish any urgent tasks by the end of the day, just so they're out of the way.

So, that means if I'm meeting my manager at 3pm on Thursday to go over some deadlines or something, I want to be ready well before then - and *not* at the last minute.

In a week or so, I'll be starting a new project, which I'm a bit nervous about. So, I know I'll have to try and get all of my main tasks done first thing in the morning, when my brain actually works.

If something isn't urgent, I'll just push it back to later in the week. At the moment, I'm working from home, which I think helps me save a lot of time. I do get distracted sometimes, especially leading up to busy weeks, but I'm trying to be more mindful of that.

I guess for me, managing my time just makes everything feel way less stressful and a lot more under control.

Key topic vocabulary

This section helps you build range and clarity when you talk about time. It includes different ways to say common ideas, useful collocations, and real expressions people use in daily life.

Synonyms

Different ways to say key words or ideas related to time and routines.

- Manage time - organize how you use time.
- Waste time - use time badly.

- Save time - use time efficiently.
- Spend time - use time doing something.
- Make time - find time for something important.
- Run out of time - have no time left.
- On schedule - planned and on time

Action collocations

Common verb + noun phrases used when talking about managing your time.

- Plan your day - organize tasks for the day.
- Stick to a schedule - follow your plan.
- Set a timer - use a clock to limit your time.
- Make a to-do list - write down what you need to do.
- Prioritize tasks - decide which things are most important.
- Miss a deadline - fail to finish on time.
- Take a break - stop working for a short time.
- Check your calendar - look at your planned events.
- Start early - begin before the deadline.
- Finish on time - complete something by the deadline.

Descriptive collocations

Adjective + noun combinations to describe how you use or feel about time.

- Tight schedule - very full and busy plan.
- Busy week - a week with lots to do.
- Flexible routine - a routine you can change.
- Stressful day - a day that feels too full or rushed.
- Productive morning - a morning when you get a lot done.
- Long break - a rest for more time than usual.
- A tight deadline - not much time to finish.
- Free time - time when you're not working.
- Daily habit - something you do every day.
- Bad time management - not using time well.

Phrasal verbs about time

Common multi-word verbs used when talking about time and routines.

- Run out of time - not have enough time.
- Catch up on - do something you missed earlier.
- Put off - delay or postpone.
- Take up (time) - use time.
- Cut down on (time) - reduce how long you spend on something.
- Fit (something) in - find time to do it.
- Look ahead - think about the future.
- Get around to - finally do something you planned.

Prepositional phrases with time

Useful expressions with prepositions to show time, order, or timing.

- At the last minute - just before it's too late.
- In the morning/afternoon - during that time of day.
- By the end of the day - before the day finishes.
- From now on - starting today and continuing in the future.
- Over the next few days - in the coming days.
- In good time - with time to spare.
- On time - exactly at the planned time.
- Behind schedule - later than planned.
- Up until now - before this moment.
- Ahead of time - earlier than expected.

Grammar and vocabulary patterns for talking about time

This section shows you how to build fluent, natural sentences using common grammar structures and time-related vocabulary.

Collocations

Useful verb-noun and adjective-noun phrases you can use to talk about time clearly and naturally.

- Spend time wisely - I try to spend time wisely during the week.
- Waste less time - I'm learning how to waste less time on social media.
- Make time for rest - I always try to make time for rest on weekends.
- Run out of time - I sometimes run out of time before finishing everything.
- Save time by planning ahead - I save time by planning ahead.
- Prioritize tasks - I prioritize tasks so I don't feel overwhelmed.
- Start early - I like to start early if I have a big project.
- Finish on time - I try to finish on time, even when I'm busy.
- Stick to my routine - I work better when I stick to my routine.
- Manage my schedule - I check my calendar to manage my schedule.
- Take regular breaks - I take regular breaks to stay focused.
- Set time limits - I set time limits so I don't spend too long on one thing.
- Get distracted easily - I get distracted easily when I'm tired.
- Check my calendar - I check my calendar every Friday afternoon.
- Feel under pressure - I feel under pressure when I have too many deadlines.
- Stay on track - A to-do list helps me stay on track.
- Plan my day out - I plan my day out each morning.
- Start things in good time - I try to start things in good time so I'm not rushing.
- Fit everything in - Some days it's hard to fit everything in.
- Catch up on things - I use the weekend to catch up on things I missed.

Grammar patterns

These are grammar structures you can use to talk fluently about time habits, routines, and deadlines.

- I've been [verb + ing]...
I've been working on my time management lately.
- I tend to [base verb]...
I tend to get more done in the morning.
- I used to [base verb]...
I used to leave everything until the last minute.

- I'd like to [base verb]...
I'd like to improve how I use my time.
- By [time phrase], I try to...
By the end of the day, I try to finish all urgent tasks.
- [Time phrase] + present perfect
Over the years, I've learned to plan better.
- I'm [verb + Ing] at [specific time]
I'm meeting my manager at 3 on Thursday.
- [Past time marker] + past simple
I missed my deadline the day before yesterday.
- In [time period], I'll [base verb]...
In a few weeks, I'll be starting a new course.
- Until [time], I'm going to...
Until the end of the month, I'm going to focus on this project.
- As soon as [present simple], I [verb]...
As soon as the clock hits nine, I start working.
- No later than [time point]...
I try to finish my reports no later than Friday morning

Reference:

Dan's Real English (s. f.). *Talk about MANAGING YOUR TIME in English*. Retrieved from: <https://dansrealenglish.com/talk-about-managing-your-time-in-english>