

Eisenhower Matrix – Tips for Prioritizing Your Tasks

1. Color-code tasks on your to-do list by importance as you add them to help you visualize high-priority items.

Green = Highest priority items

Orange = Second-highest priority items

Blue = Third-highest priority

Red = Not a priority

Once you've labeled your tasks by color, these colors will directly translate to your Eisenhower Matrix.

2. Limit tasks to 10 per quadrant. Limiting tasks can prevent you from feeling overwhelmed.

Even if you have a lot of tasks on your to-do list, try to limit your tasks to 10 items per quadrant. This will keep your Eisenhower Matrix from becoming cluttered and overwhelming.

You can make multiple matrices, but limiting your task list to necessary action items will ensure you're beginning the prioritizing process with no time to waste.

If you have more than 40 items on your to-do list, it might also be a good time to reflect on your expectations and intentions. Are you consistently over-extending yourself? Do you say 'yes' when you need to be saying 'no?' Are perfectionistic or people-pleasing tendencies preventing you from delegating? If your answer to any of these is yes, it may be time for a check-in or a session with a professional (supervisor, coach, therapist).

3. Separate your to-do lists to help you balance work and home life.

Separating your personal and professional to-do list tasks is another way to limit the number of items on your Eisenhower Matrix. Your work and personal tasks require different timelines, resources, and methods, and they'll likely require different thought processes as well. In order to effectively manage your personal and professional goals, you'll need to divide and conquer.

4. Eliminate, then prioritize. Eliminating first will make it easier to tackle your priorities.

With this strategy, you'll address quadrant four before moving on to quadrants one, two and three, by eliminating unnecessary tasks first to effectively prioritize. As you skim through your to-do list, assess what items you've written down that don't need to be there.

Up to 60% of our time at work is spent on work about work – things like sharing status approvals or following up on information. If you can quickly scratch off items, go ahead and do so. This will speed up the prioritization process and you'll likely go through a second round of elimination on the back end.