

Time management based on the ALPEN method (by Lothar J. Seiwert)

The **ALPEN method** helps you to plan and structure your working days efficiently. You only have to spend a few minutes daily to prepare a written plan for your day.

The method is based on the following 5 elements:

- Writing down your **A**ssignments, planned activities, and appointments
- Estimating how **L**ong it will take you to complete your work
- Planning buffer time (German: **P**ufferzeiten)
- Making decisions (German: **E**ntscheidungen)
- Review (German: **N**achkontrolle)

1) Write down your assignments and activities:

Ideally, you should do this on the evening before the next day. Prepare a to-do list with all the tasks and activities you need to get done and all your appointments and breaks (!) for the following day. If necessary, you can also add any pending work left over from the day before to the list. It is not necessary to follow any particular order when writing down these items.

2) Estimate how long the work will take:

Now estimate roughly how much time you will need for each item. Please keep in mind:

- Be realistic in your time estimates and base them on your experience
- Don't make your time schedule too tight
- Set a time limit
- For appointments, also write down the exact times

3) Plan buffer time:

It's impossible to rule out delays, so you should include buffer times in your plans, based on the following approximations:

- Use 60% of your time to plan specific work and activities
- Set aside 40% of your time as a buffer (reserve 50% of your total time buffer for unexpected and spontaneous activities)

Even if you follow this 60:40 rule closely, you may not always be able to get everything done. Among other things, this may be due to your personal performance curve (take breaks!).

4) Make decisions:

Set priorities: What do you need to get done first? What is more, what is less important? What can be delegated? Is there anything that's not necessary and can be dropped?

5) Review:

In this review, you should check if you managed to complete your tasks and if your planning was accurate. You should pay particular attention to the quality of your planning and use the insights and experience gained to improve your planning in the future. Check if you completed the items on your to-do list to make sure that you haven't forgotten anything and that nothing remains unfinished. Any work that you didn't get done or left incomplete should be included in your plan for the next day.