



# Restoring Balance:

## A guide to classroom management and behavior.

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# Prioritizing Time Management: Focusing on What Matters.



**FOUNDED BY  
DR NERMIEN ISMAIL**

## Introduction:

The purpose of this handbook is to help teachers develop effective strategies for prioritizing their daily and weekly tasks. Through guided reflection and practical tools, participants will learn how to identify high-impact responsibilities, minimize distractions, and streamline their workflow. By the end of the session, teachers will have a clearer sense of how to organize their time, balance competing demands, and focus on what truly enhances teaching, learning, and professional growth.



# What is a priority? What are our priorities?

## Purpose

Priorities are the tasks, goals, and responsibilities that have the highest impact on student learning, professional growth, and classroom effectiveness.

They are not just the most urgent items, they are the most meaningful ones.

## Asking the Right Questions:

- Does this task help students learn and grow?
- Does it align with my school's policies, curriculum, and handbooks?
- Does it support my long-term professional development?

*If the answer is yes to any of these, your task becomes a priority.*

## How do We Identify a Priority:

| Filter    | Guided Question   | Example in Teaching  |
|-----------|---|--|
| Impact    | <i>Does this directly benefit students or improve learning quality?</i>                       | Giving Timely Feedback<br>vs.<br>Formatting Bulletin Boards. |
| Urgency   | <i>Is there a deadline or immediate need?</i>   | Grades due<br>vs.<br>Optional Workshop                       |
| Alignment | <i>Does this support school goals, expectations, curriculum, or your role as an educator?</i> | Collaborative Planning<br>vs.<br>Unrelated Committee Work    |



# Categorizing Your Priorities:

Use time-management frameworks to organize your workload visually and mentally.

## The ABC Method:

| Category | Meaning                                  | Teaching Example               |
|----------|--|--------------------------------|
| A-Tasks  | Must be done today; critical to success. | Prepare today's lesson         |
| B-Tasks  | Important but can wait.                  | Review new curriculum updates. |
| C-Tasks  | Low-impact or optional.                  | Decoating classroom walls.     |

## The Eisenhower Matrix:

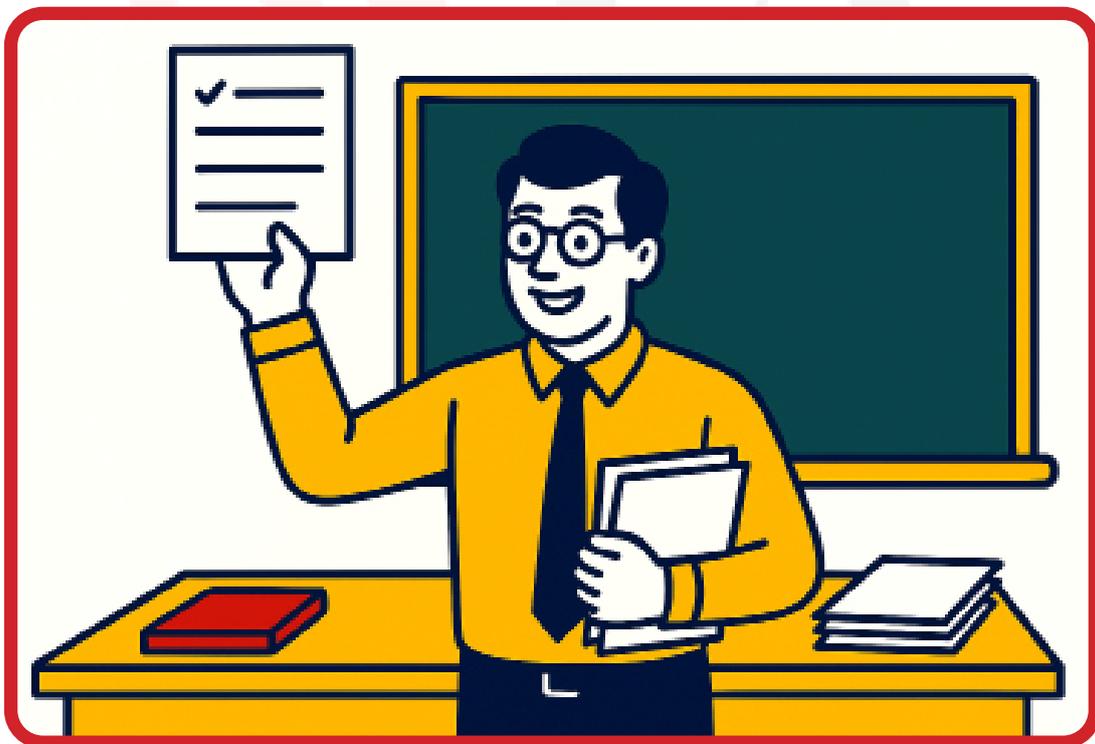
| Quadrant  | Description                | Example   | Action                              |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Do First  | Urgent & Important         | Grading for BLB, progress reports, parent emails. | Immediate attention.                |
| Schedule  | Important & Not Urgent     | Planning next week's lessons.                     | Set a time to do it.                |
| Delegate  | Not important & Urgent     | Printing worksheets                               | Assign or automate.                 |
| Eliminate | Not important & not Urgent | Reading education articles.                       | Let it go, till you have free time. |



## How to Utilize Priorities:

- **Plan Weekly:** Set aside 15 minutes on Sunday to map out your strategy for the week.
- **Update that plan** on Tuesday or Wednesday as plans and priorities tend to change.
- **Time-Block:** Dedicate uninterrupted blocks for high-priority works (Grading and Lesson Design).
- **Automate & Delegate:** Use Google tools like Calendar and Keep to reduce time spent on routine tasks.
- **Reflect Weekly:** “Ask” yourself regularly during the week, “Did I spend most of my time this week on necessary and vital tasks?”

*“If everything is a priority, nothing is.” - Stephen Covey*



## Weekly Reflection Prompts

- List five tasks you did this week with brief descriptions.
- Which one of these had the greatest impact on your students?
- Which could have waited or been delegated with time management?
- How can you adjust your schedule next week to focus on the top two priorities?

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# Recognizing and Managing Distractors

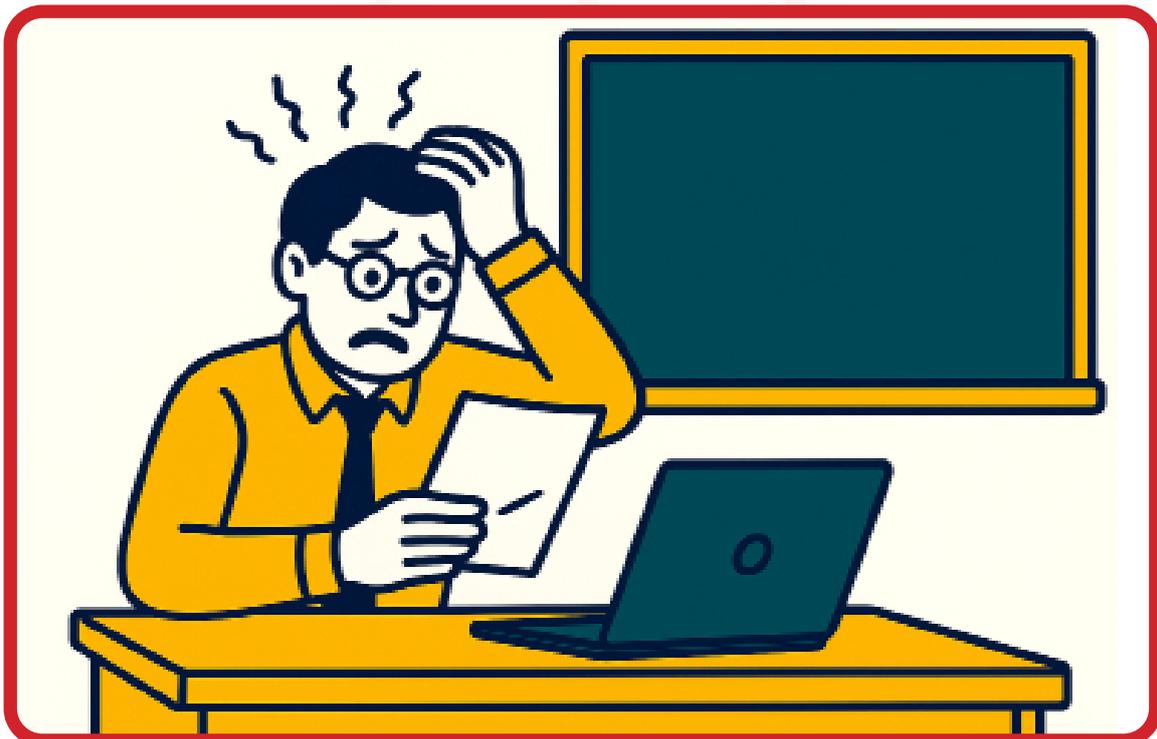
## Understanding Distractors

- Distractors are anything that pulls your attention away from the task at hand or priorities that require your full attention.
- Not all distractors are considered “bad”, but unrecognized ones fragment your time, lower quality, and can increase stress and anxiety.

*“You can do anything, not everything.” - David Allen*

- Distractors can disguise themselves as “important” work: endless and tangential emails, last minute requests, or attempts to “perfect” a current piece of work that you have either already finished or still working on.

| Type                       | Description   | Impact  |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Digital Interrupt          | Notifications, email alerts, WhatsApp, and other chat programs. | Breaks focus; 10 min can turn into 45.                                    |
| Reactive Work Habits       | Constantly responding to requests and questions.                | Sets you on an anxiety level of everything being urgent.                  |
| Overcommitment             | Saying “yes” to everything                                      | Leads to burnout; less time for your own priorities.                      |
| Environmental Distractions | Noise, clutter, and interruptions                               | Can raise stress and anxiety. Lowers efficiency.                          |
| Perfectionism              | Spending too much time on inconsequential details.              | Consumes time meant for higher impact work and bogs you down on re-edits. |
| Social/Emotional Fatigue   | Managing constant student issues or work colleague issues.      | Drains emotional energy; lowers focus and takes away from self-care.      |



# Strategies to Overcome “Distractors”:

## Reflection

- What consistently pulls my attention away during my planning and teaching time?
- When do I feel “busy” but not actually productive?
- What tasks do I use to procrastinate on harder, more demanding work?

## Strategies

### A. Control the Environment

- Declutter workspace — fewer visual distractions.
- Set “Focus Blocks” (30–45 minutes) where you silence notifications and close extra tabs.
- Use background sounds or timers (Pomodoro apps, Lo-Fi playlists).

### B. Control the Schedule

- Check emails at set times (e.g., before school, after dismissal).
- Keep short “buffer periods” between classes or meetings to reset.
- Color-code your Google Calendar (red = teaching, green = planning, yellow = meetings).

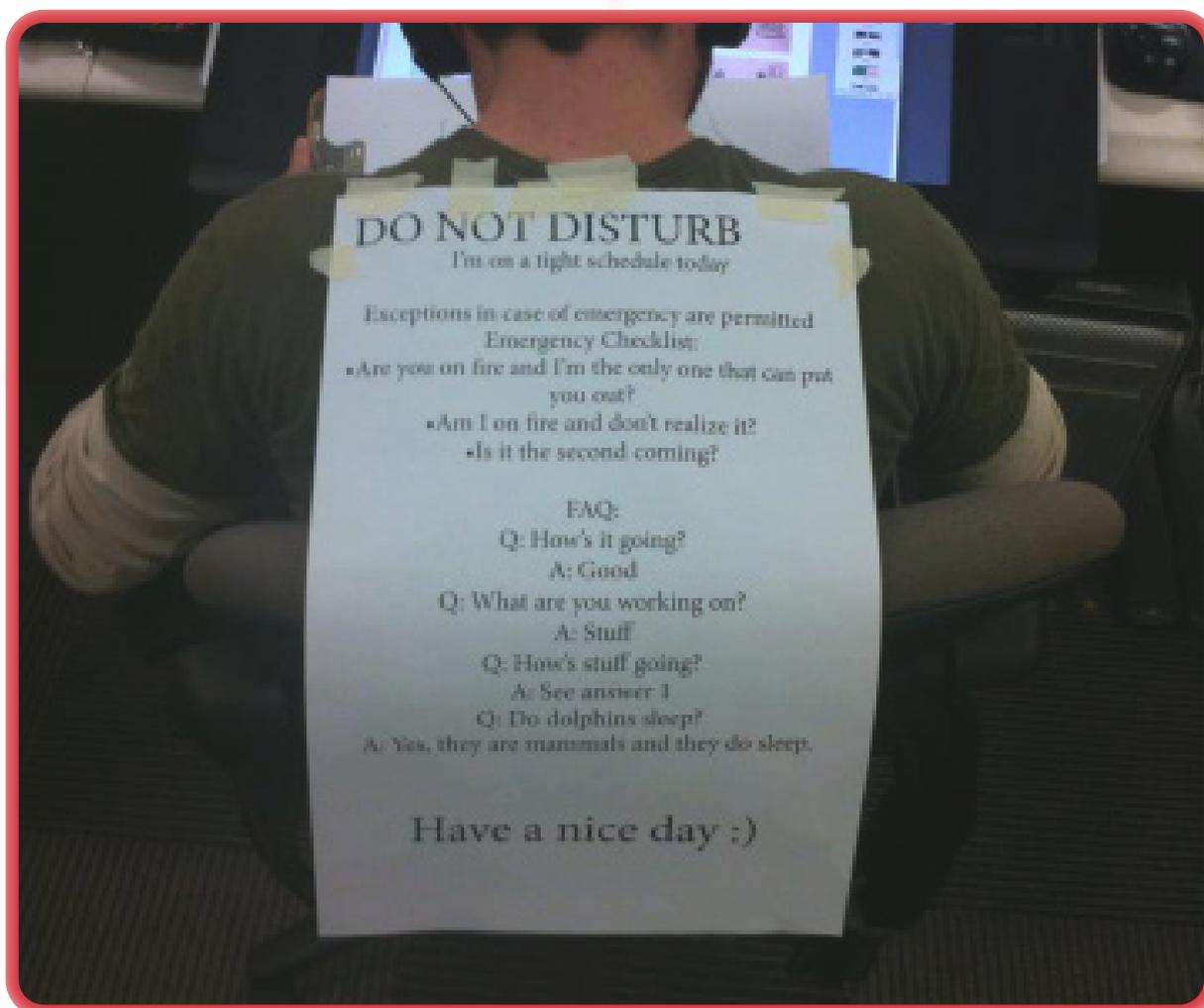
### C. Control the Mindset

- Accept that not every task deserves your full energy.
- Use the “2-Minute Rule” — if it takes less than two minutes, do it now; otherwise, schedule it.
- Recognize the difference between being helpful and being available 24/7.



# Tools

| Tool                            | Purpose   | Example   |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Google<br>(Keep/Tasks/Calendar) | Centralize To-Dos to prevent mental clutter.                                  | Schedule grading comments and progress reports.                               |
| Focus Mode Apps                 | Temporarily block social media sites or notifications.                        | Forest, Stayfocused, and Minimalist sites/apps.                               |
| Pomodoro Technique              | Alternate 25 min on and 5 min off (mini breaks) for as long as a task is set. | 3 rounds = 1 strong hour of work. Windows 11 has a Focus app that is perfect. |
| Batching Tasks                  | Group similar work to save time.  | Grade all essays at once instead of groups.                                   |



## Quick Reset Practices:

- Step Outside for 3 deep breaths between classes/projects/tasks.
- Write tomorrow's top 3 priorities before leaving for the day.
- Practice the mantra; "I can't right now, but I can later." The art of saying "no".
- Use a "Do not disturb" sign during tasks that require focus.

# Streamlining Repetitive Tasks:

Why streamlining matters...

Repetitive tasks are the silent time thieves of teaching.

These are the routines we repeat daily or weekly grading, attendance, emails, lesson prep that consume valuable mental bandwidth.

Streamlining them means reducing friction: finding faster, smarter, and more consistent ways to handle routine work so your energy can go where it counts — teaching and relationships.

**“Don’t Automate what should be eliminated.” - Tim Ferris**



## Identify Your Repetitive Tasks

**Tools to help reduce and automate some tasks.**

- Google Forms & Sheets: Set up lesson reflection or checklists for corrections.
- Autofill & Templates: class surveys and scaffold lesson activities.
- Email Filters & Labels: Let Gmail sort messages into folders (e.g., “Parent Contacts,” “Admin Memos”). Available in Google Gmail
- Scheduled Posts: Pre-schedule announcements or assignments in Google Classroom. Announcements for your students and classes; quiz reminders, reviews, meetings online outside of school.

**\*\*\*Example: Instead of rewriting “Great progress, keep working on...” 30 times, create a feedback bank in Docs and copy-paste from it.**

## Other Tools to Help Efficiency...

Each teacher can use these tools in addition to the tools available on your BLB accounts.

| Tool                          | Function                             | Benefit                         |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Google Classroom              | Assign, collect, and grade digitally | Reduces paper handling          |
| Canva for Ed.                 | Create reusable templates            | Visual consistency              |
| Google Tasks/<br>Keep         | Quick to-do and checklists           | Keeps planning centralized      |
| Autocrat by<br>Google(Add-on) | Auto-generate personalized documents | Speeds up report writing        |
| Notion / Trello               | Visual workflow boards               | Tracks multiple projects easily |



### Reflection Activity:

Choose one reflective task you often do.

Write down:

- How much time it takes weekly?
- How it could be batched, automated, or simplified?
- What tool or method you'll test this week?

# Creating an Action Plan That Works for You...

An action plan helps teachers move from awareness to application. It's a short, structured roadmap that identifies what needs to change, when, and how. The goal: to turn priorities into habits that improve daily focus and reduce stress.

## 3-Step Action Plan:

| Step                              | Description   | Example  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Identify Your Top 3 Priorities | Choose three tasks or goals that will have the greatest positive impact on your students or teaching this week.           | 1. Provide feedback on essays<br>2. Update lesson slides for Unit 3<br>3. Contact parents of struggling students |
| 2. Assign Time Blocks             | Schedule specific, realistic times for each task protect those times as appointments with yourself.                       | Feedback: Sunday 2–3 p.m.<br>Lesson slides: Tuesday morning<br>Parent emails: within 24 hours                    |
| 3. Reflect and Adjust             | At the end of the week, evaluate: What worked? What was delayed? What distracted you? Use that insight to plan next week. | “Feedback took longer than expected next week I’ll start earlier and close email tabs during grading.”           |

**\*\*\* Key tip: “Your calendar should reflect your priorities, not your interruptions.” Block what truly matters, even if that means saying “no” to lesser tasks. It’s an art!**



# Appendix: A

## ABC Method

| Step                                     | List                             | Notes |
|--|----------------------------------|-------|
| <b>A</b><br>Critical And<br>Urgent       | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6. |       |
| <b>B</b><br>Important but<br>less Urgent | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6. |       |
| <b>C</b><br>To-Do-List<br>Not Urgent     | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6. |       |

# Appendix: B Eisenhower Matrix

**Urgent**

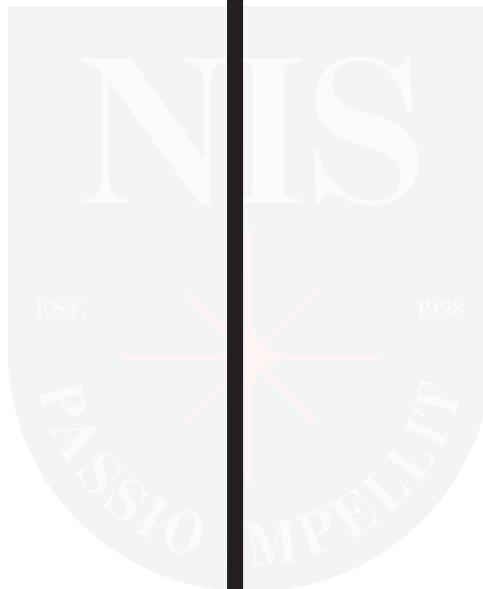
**Not Urgent**

**Due**



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**Not Due**



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## Notes:



*“Every great teacher doesn't avoid the storm, they learn how to bring calm to it, within the classroom.”*



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