IELTS Listening Lesson 24

Setting:

You will hear a university lecture on time management strategies.

Questions 1–6

Complete the sentences below.
Write NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

1. Good time management involves making _____ decisions about how to spend your time.

2. The Eisenhower Matrix helps people identify which tasks are _____ and important.

3. A SMART goal is described as Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and _____.

4. Time blocking discourages _____, which often lowers productivity.

5. The Pomodoro Technique consists of working for 25 minutes followed by a _____ break.

6. According to Parkinson's Law, work tends to expand to fill the _____ available.

Questions 7–10

Choose the correct letter, A, B, or C.

7. What is the purpose of the two-minute rule?
   A. Save time by skipping small tasks

B. Eliminate long-term projects

C. Clear mental clutter by acting immediately

8. When is it recommended to do the most demanding work?

A. Late at night

B. During high-energy periods of the day

C. After completing all smaller tasks

9. Why do successful people often follow daily routines?

A. To reduce decision fatigue

B. To avoid distractions

C. To improve their memory

10.   What is the benefit of reflecting on your use of time each week?

A. It reveals which tasks to delegate

B. It helps you identify energy levels

C. It improves productivity and learning

Script

Good morning, everyone. Thanks for coming to today's session. We're going to talk about a topic that has significant implications for your academic and personal success: time management strategies. Whether you're a student juggling assignments or someone working full-time while studying part-time, the ability to manage your time well is a critical skill that affects your productivity, mental well-being, and even your long-term career prospects.

Let's start by considering why time management matters. Most people think it's about squeezing as many tasks into a day as possible, but that's not quite right. Effective time management is really about making intentional choices—deciding what to spend your time on, when to do it, and how long to spend doing it. Without structure, even highly motivated people can find themselves overwhelmed or distracted. So, by applying a few proven techniques, you can take greater control of your day and increase your efficiency.

One of the foundational strategies is prioritization. A common method used in both academic and corporate settings is the Eisenhower Matrix. Named after the former U.S. president, this tool categorizes tasks based on two dimensions: urgency and importance. It's divided into four quadrants—urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and neither urgent nor important. By sorting your tasks this way, you're better equipped to focus on what genuinely needs your attention, rather than reacting to the loudest or most immediate demand.

Closely related to prioritization is goal setting. Clear goals give direction. A popular method is the SMART framework—goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. For example, rather

than saying, "I want to get better at writing essays," a SMART goal would be, "I will write two 1000-word practice essays over the next two weeks to prepare for my history exam."

Once you've set goals and know your priorities, the next step is planning your time effectively. One approach is called time blocking. With this technique, you divide your day into blocks of time, each assigned to a particular activity or group of tasks. For instance, you might reserve 9:00 to 11:00 for coursework, 11:00 to 12:00 for meetings, and 2:00 to 3:00 for reading or exercise. Time blocking not only helps you stay organized, but it also reduces the chance of multitasking, which, contrary to popular belief, tends to lower productivity.

Now, let's talk about one of the most common obstacles to good time management: procrastination. We all put things off sometimes, but chronic procrastination can seriously derail your plans. One proven method to counter this is the Pomodoro Technique. It's named after the tomato-shaped kitchen timer used by its creator, Francesco Cirillo. The technique involves setting a timer for 25 minutes of focused work followed by a short 5-minute break. After four cycles, you take a longer 15- or 30-minute break. This system is especially effective for tasks you're dreading, as it breaks them into smaller, more manageable segments.

Another helpful concept is Parkinson's Law, which states that "work expands to fill the time available for its completion." What that means in practice is if you give yourself two weeks to write a report, it will probably take you two weeks—even if it could be done in three days. So by intentionally setting shorter deadlines, you can force yourself to be more focused and efficient.

Let's also discuss the two-minute rule. This one is incredibly simple: if a task takes less than two minutes to complete, do it right away. It's surprising how often small tasks like replying to an email or tidying a desk can pile up and create mental clutter. Taking immediate action helps reduce that buildup and clears your mind for more complex work.

But time management isn't just about schedules and task lists. Energy management is equally important. We all have natural rhythms—times of day when we're more alert and times when we tend to feel sluggish. For many people, mental energy peaks in the late morning and again in the late afternoon. The key is to schedule your most demanding tasks—such as problem-solving, writing, or studying—for those high-energy times. Less demanding tasks like checking email or organizing files can be slotted into the low-energy periods.

Let's not forget about the power of routines and habits. Establishing a consistent daily routine helps reinforce positive behaviors and reduces the time spent deciding what to do next. This is why so many successful people—from writers to athletes—stick to regular schedules. When you eliminate decision fatigue, you free up mental resources for higher-order thinking.

And finally, let's touch on review and reflection. At the end of each day or week, take a few minutes to evaluate how you used your time. What went well? What distracted you? What could be improved next week? This habit of reflection ensures you're not only staying productive but also learning and evolving as you go.

In summary, effective time management is a multi-layered process. It starts with prioritizing tasks and setting SMART goals. It continues with using structured scheduling techniques like time blocking, and it includes

behavioral tools such as the Pomodoro Technique and the two-minute rule. Don't forget the importance of managing your energy, building routines, and regularly reflecting on your progress. These strategies, when applied consistently, can drastically improve your productivity, reduce stress, and help you achieve your academic and personal goals more effectively.

That's all for today's session. In our next lecture, we'll discuss how digital tools and apps can support these time management strategies. Until then, I encourage you to try out at least one technique we've discussed and see how it works for you.

Answer Key

1. intentional
2. urgent
3. time-bound
4. multitasking
5. 5-minute
6. time
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. C