What is a To Do List?

The common “to do list” or TDL is a time management tool that is as simple as it is effective. Most people, given a list of items to do, will forget one or more unless prompted. By writing yourself a TDL and by ticking off the items that you have done, you are minimizing your chances of forgetting something and attempting to maximize your efficiency. Below is a simple TDL that covers some items that are due to be competed no the 22/05/2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>My TDL Tasks</th>
<th>22/05/2012</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Contact ICT101Lecturer about assignment 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Go to Library to look for resources for ICT101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use Library Computer to check emails and Learnline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pay rent at real estate!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ring mum after 5pm to wish her a happy Birthday!!! Don't forget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many different ways to create a TDL and all you need to do is experiment and find a system that you prefer. Sometimes, just writing down the things you need to do for the day helps you to clarify what you are doing and then helps to jog your memory to add things you had forgotten. As you get more familiar with using TDLs, you often get a lot better at doing them and sticking to them.
Time Management Tools- TDL

1. Create a list of things to do each morning

If you don't keep track of what you want to accomplish, you're not going to have a chance for effective time management. Create a to-do list at the beginning of each day. The list can include business and personal items and can be put on paper, your computer or even your mobile phone. Refer to the list several times during the day and use it as a motivational tool to keep you focused and on track to achieving those items.

2. Write down all follow-up items on your list

To keep track of new things that come up during the day, simply place them on your daily list at the bottom. If your list is full or you honestly do not think you can get it done today, place it on your list for tomorrow or the day after or whenever it is due or required. This means you are starting to do some forward planning and this is important. Not everything is “due” today but if you have thought about doing it, why not make a record of it somewhere that will effectively help you remember to do it when it is “due”?

3. Carry forward unfinished work and follow up

Sometimes you just do not get all of the items on your daily list completed. Simply carry them forward and add them to your list for tomorrow and make sure you do your best to get them done. But what do you do when an item you haven’t completed at the end of the day keeps getting moved onto the next day’s list? You don’t want to carry an expanding list of activities from day to day to day. The fact that you are carrying it forward more than twice means you are not really trying to get it done or perhaps it simply is beyond your abilities to get done! If the activity is important, get it done. If it's not important, or you cannot seem to get it done, make a note (e.g. waiting for lecturer to respond to my email) or perhaps suggest who could get it done for you (e.g. sending it to Terry to edit and return).
4. Keep track of due dates

Use your list to keep track of due dates. This includes commitments to work colleagues and friends. If you’re not clear or are looking to make a goal, ask when an activity needs to be completed, write it down, and then use your time management skills to make sure the work is done on time. If you can’t meet the commitment, for example meeting a due date for an assignment, communicate that before it is due to your lecturer and negotiate a new due date.

5. Create a list of priorities for this month and next

Making a list for today is a start. But often larger tasks or “time critical” tasks will need to be on a list well into the future. A good option is to make a master list for the month, of things that must be done at certain times. For example, paying your bills, participating in online forums for your units, attending a training day for work or even attending a wedding interstate. These things require planning and more importantly, they may take time away from your daily list of things that need doing. If you are unprepared, you will be caught out and all of a sudden you start failing to achieve deadlines and goals. This is known as time slip or time slippage. Once you start slipping, things can start to get chaotic. Having a master list helps to keep you focused on what you want to accomplish this month. As the month progresses, start adding the items to your daily lists or you could have written daily lists a month in advance and added these things as the first items on the daily lists.

6. Keep track of longer-term reminders

Your daily to do list isn’t going to help you for follow-ups or repeat items you’ll need to remember in the distant future. You need to have a way to keep track of this follow-up and to remind yourself in the future to get these items done. Placing an item on your monthly master list (for whatever month it is due in) is a way to effectively plan for that future event. Even if it is a year later, when you come to that month, the item would be waiting for you.
7. Keep all of your current work in one area

Over time, you will most likely work on many separate activities. Remember to keep your things organised. Keep your current work in one area where you can easily find them and access them. When you finish a project or unit of work or study, move the folder elsewhere into an “archive” area. You will still be able to find it easily but it will not be cluttering your workspace and getting in the way. Labelling things clearly is the key and placing them all in folders, boxes or drawers where you can find them is the best method. If you are using a computer to store your information, make sure you use a logical folder structure and keep things in the right place. Below is an example of how you might set up your folders if you were studying ICT, Chemistry and Physics.