



## PRIORITISING YOUR WORKLOAD

### Prioritising using Rock, Pebbles, Sand

Do you ever find that you spend a long time doing little fiddly things then find that you have no time left for the larger tasks you need to get done?

Try this experiment. Take a jar, some rocks, some pebbles, and sand. What happens if you put the sand in first then the pebbles? The rocks won't fit. But if you do it the other way, put the rocks in first, then pop in the pebbles around the sides of the rocks, then sprinkle in the sand it all fits in no problem at all.



What does this mean? It is an analogy for how to make the most of blocks of time. If you do the big tasks first (the rocks), you will find time for the smaller tasks (the pebbles) and you'll easily sprinkle in the sand (the little fiddly things). So if you deal with the rocks first you'll still find time for the other tasks to fit around it.

But it doesn't work the other way. If you deal first with the minutiae, the small things, you end up giving short shrift to the more important tasks and deplete your energy on these little things. And the little things will expand to fill the time available.

If you find this technique too challenging, you can set yourself a strict half-hour or so to knock over as many of the little things as possible before you start. Once time is up, you then use the block of time to work on the big important tasks. So draw up a table with 3 columns and put all your work into these columns

**ROCKS** are the important and urgent tasks.

**PEBBLES** are the tasks that may also be important but are not as urgent.

**SAND** is the little fiddly tasks that you can slot in anywhere.

Do the rocks first, then the pebbles, then the sand.

Another approach you might like to try is the Rule of Three.

#### Rule of Three Technique

- Circle the top 3 tasks that need to be done. What is most important and most urgent?
- Put them in order from 1 to 3.
- Start at the first task and complete it before moving on to the second.
- Once all three tasks are completed, look through your list again to choose the new top 3 tasks.
- Don't cheat yourself – you have to complete fully the first task before moving to the second.

First, write a list of everything you need to do. Circle the top 3 tasks that need to be done. What is most important and most urgent? Put them in order from 1 to 3. Start at the first task and complete it before moving on to the second. Once all three tasks are completed, look through your list again to choose the new top 3 tasks. Don't cheat yourself – you have to complete fully the first task before moving to the second.

There are many different methods of prioritising. You need to try different ones and see what works for you. You will find more in the Time Management Skills unit on [www.studyskillshandbook.com.au](http://www.studyskillshandbook.com.au)

*Learn more this year about how to improve your results and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by working through the units on [www.studyskillshandbook.com.au](http://www.studyskillshandbook.com.au).*

The School's access details are:

Username:

Password: