Here are some basic rules on time management: Tell people how you want them to work with you, or how to use your time. Return the favor, treat their time as you want your time treated. No meetings without agenda. No long documents without a short summary. Make sure you know what is expected of you.

Stefan Töpfer, CEO and Chairman of Winweb

What time management skills do you use?

Learning objectives:
Unit 15
Business communication skills
Discussing time management;
Fluency: Talking about decisions and plans; Asking and answering questions about time management techniques
Reading: Article about wasting time at work; Article about working without clocks
Listening: A conversation about a delayed project; A talk on time management
Phrase bank: Talking about time
Vocabulary: Time collocations, Working conditions
Grammar: going to, going to vs will
In company interviews

Units 13–15

Life without time
How dependent are we on time? Is life without clocks less stressful? One company decided to find out. At AOL, they removed all the clocks from their UK headquarters. Then everybody carried on working as usual.

They wanted to investigate how pressure of time can lead to stress, and to see how an environment without clocks would affect productivity. They say that time is money, and most companies use time to control their activities because it is easy to measure. On the other hand, humans have a biological clock which doesn’t necessarily correspond to the standard eight-hour working day. We are more productive in the morning, and then our efficiency tends to drop off after lunch. So, if you’re feeling hungry, why not have something to eat instead of waiting for the lunch break? Or, if you’ve finished your work, don’t hang on until it’s time to clock off, just go home.

So, what happens when you rely on your own body clock instead of artificial deadlines? According to one worker, ‘Most people carried on as normal, although some took advantage of the opportunity to have an early lunch.’ Another said ‘This is great. It makes sense to be able to work when you need to and leave the office when you don’t.’ On the other hand, one secretary found the experience ‘disorientating’. However, one office manager was in no doubt: ‘Thank goodness we are going to bring the clocks back tomorrow. Make no mistake, a clockless office leads to chaos. Some people may be less stressed without clocks, but you need to know where people are and when, and meetings, for example, can last forever if you don’t have a time limit.’
5 Find words and phrases in the article in 4 which mean the same as the following:

a continue
b result in
c quantify
d fall quickly
e wait

6 Complete the sentences with the words and phrases in 5.

a Time management methods ___________ unnecessary stress.

b In some businesses, it is difficult to ___________ efficiency.

c When you have to make a decision, it’s best to ___________ until the last minute.

d If you ___________ in the same job for a long time, you lose interest.

e The amount of activity in an office ___________ on a Friday afternoon.

7 Which of the sentences in 6 do you agree with? Discuss with a partner.

8 Look at this sentence from the article in 4 and answer the questions.

Thank goodness we are going to bring the clocks back tomorrow.

a Does the sentence refer to the past, present or future?

b Which of the following is closest in meaning to we are going to bring the clocks back?

We would like to bring the clocks back ...

We intend to bring the clocks back ...

We have to bring the clocks back ...

9 Plan how you are going to spend your next working day. Then explain your plans to your partner like this.

At 9.00, when I arrive at work, I'm going to check my email. Then ...

The new database

1 Match the words and phrases (a–d) with the definitions (1–4).

a deadline
b delay
c behind schedule
d time frame

1 late

2 point in time by which something must be done

3 a hold-up

4 period in which something is expected to happen

2.18 Listen to the conversation and answer the questions.

a What problem is the conversation about?

b When was the system supposed to be online?

c When is it going to be ready now?

d What do you think of the IT technician’s attitude?

2.18 Listen again and complete the phrases with one word for each gap.

Contractions count as one word.

a We’re worried because it’s ___________ ___________

b Well, yes, I’m sorry about ___________ ___________, but there have been some problems ...

c ... the system was supposed to be online last October. You ___________ ___________, and it’s now February.

d ... not compatible with the new design. That means we have a ___________ ___________

e What do you mean? How ___________ ___________ ___________

f Are you saying that ___________ ___________ for all this is now next October?

g Can you guarantee that you’re giving us priority on this? Will ___________ ___________?
Complete the phrases so they are true for you. Then compare your ideas with a partner.

a It takes me ________________ to get to work in the morning.

b I ________________ meet my deadlines.

c In my company we ________________ time frames for getting things done.

d When people are not on time for meetings ________________.

e IT projects ________________ behind schedule.

f At work the schedules for projects are ________________

g When things are delayed I ________________

h In my country, ________________ on time.

Wasting time

1 Match the words to make four common collocations.

bottom    balance
delicate   caught
get        time
waste      line

2 Use the collocations in 1 to complete the introduction to an article.

Lots of people are so afraid of getting caught, they never (a) ________________ at work. They work the entire eight hours. They are right to be afraid. There is a (b) ________________ between not doing any work and doing too much. The (c) ________________ is you must get your work done. If you start wasting hours at a time, you’ll (d) ________________. To be an effective time waster, you have to find small ways to eat up time. Remember, you can’t waste the company’s time if you don’t work for the company. However, with a little effort, no one will ever know how little you do.

Wasting time at work

3 Here are the headings from the rest of the article. What tips do you think the author gives under each heading?

- Be sloppy
- The Internet
- Meetings
- The computer
- Office conversations

4 Look at page 142 to see what the author recommends.

5 Complete the sentences with words or phrases from the text on page 142 that mean the same as the words in brackets.

a ‘Your papers are ________________.’ ‘Yes, but I know where everything is, so don’t touch anything.’ (untidy)

b Before making an important call, you should ________________ time to prepare for it. (reserve)

c I only use the Internet to get specific information. I don’t have time to the Web. (move around from link to link with no particular aim)

d My job requires a lot of ________________, so I need a good Internet connection. (information searching)

e People who always ________________ and agree with everything are no use at all. (move head up and down)