

# Helping your future self



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**T**HIS month I have a couple of tips to share with you to help yourself in the future.

This column outlines some tips and techniques for dealing with incoming information which isn't for use straight away, leaving us to deal with things we need to work on now without worrying about forgetting those things for future.

## Tickler file

Attending a meeting next week? Do you have the agenda? Minutes of the previous meeting? Your update from the actions you were assigned? Where is the meeting? How are you getting there? Do you need to book travel tickets? How and when will you collect them? There's a lot of information we need to have ready for a meeting, though much of it we need to prepare for in advance. A tickler file can help store this sort of information in an organised way, ensuring you always have the information you need when you need it. The concept of a tickler file (also sometimes referred to as the 43 folders method) is that you store information based on when you are going to need it in future. You'll need some folders to create your tickler file, yes you guessed it – 43 of them. 1-31 are for the days of the month, and the other 12 are for the months of the year. That way you can store material in the relevant folder and review each day to keep it current. Every day, you can take the documents for the day out, and move the file to the following month. A daily review will ensure you always have the items you need on the right day, and that the system is kept up-to-date. I highly recommend checking out the video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGOFU\\_M\\_YB8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGOFU_M_YB8).

Some people have adopted this for electronic filing – it works well with labels in Gmail or tags in Evernote as you can assign both a month and a date to each message.

## Future tasks

The tickler file helps you keep documents and other materials in order ready for future reference, but how about tasks you need to remember to do on a particular

## Getting things done



day, or those you need to do in future but can't begin yet. You need to record these somewhere you trust so that you can free your memory whilst knowing you'll be reminded about them at the right time. There's a few ways of dealing with this, including:

- Adding time specific tasks to your calendar
- Including a note about time specific tasks in your tickler file (along with accompanying documentation if applicable)
- Using your to-do list to set start dates for tasks.

The final way is my preferred method as it keeps all my task information in one place and enables me to regularly review the status and change it easily if required. To me, a start date of a task is almost as important as a due date of a task. If I can't start work on something yet, I don't want to constantly be reminded about it, but I do want to be reminded about it once the time comes to start working on it. I review all my tasks at least once a week so if any can be actioned sooner than initially thought, I simply move the start date so that the task becomes active. Until then however, it remains recorded in my to-do list but doesn't keep reminding me until I can do something about it. Many online to-do list systems have functionality to help you manage this – I'd recommend trying it out.

## New developments

Evernote has recently added reminder functionality which enables you to set due dates so you receive in-app and optional email alerts, a to-do list created from current reminders, and the ability to easily re-order items based on priority. For more information see the video at: <http://youtu.be/afyORbYS7Hs>

Omnifocus 2 for Mac is currently in development, with a forecast

view (so you can see at a glance what you need to do for each day in the next week), and review functionality (to make it easy to review your projects on a regular basis). I'm currently testing it and finding it really easy to use. [1]

Evernote electronic reminder

