



Prioritizing and Working to a Timeline

If you have created a list of tasks after reading and highlighting the document governing your review, and if you have sorted the tasks with awareness of how they elicit emotional or physical reactions in you, you are in good shape.

You know what you need to do, and you have some awareness of where you will feel challenged. That's good.

Other critical information you need—and you probably have become aware of this through university emails—centers on the timeline for submitting your materials.

Many universities ask candidates whose research is reviewed by people outside the institution to prepare the research part of the dossier earlier than the remaining parts.

You may have some urgency, then, in selecting your publications and in creating a summary of your research focus, and perhaps also updating your CV.

So, do that.

Your complete dossier may be due later, however, perhaps near the start of the Fall term.

If you have begun this preparation process early enough, you can allocate a couple hours each workday for a while and not feel pressured.

If you have compressed your dossier preparation timeline by delaying your start, it's doable, but you will need to work more hours each day.

Alternating between *creative* tasks of writing statements and *menial* tasks of tallying each term's

student credit hours will be even more important for you.

Prioritize starting. Start anywhere. Once you have started, you will keep going.

I found it easier to start with the compilation of teaching data (I didn't need to read the words; I just put the numbers in the right places), but you may find it easier to start by preparing your research statement, if you have energy about that.

Just start. Choose one task and do it. Then choose another.

Perhaps not the first tasks, but early in your preparation, create Crappy First Drafts of your most challenging statements. Those may be your teaching and research statements.

Creating the drafts helps you become aware of where to place relevant data that you encounter as you do other tasks.

When you see that data, go back to your drafts and place reminders and references on where to find things to insert later—for example, “quote student from Fall 2018 who said it was way too much work but then it helped them get a great internship” or “link article on women in tech startups to university emphasis on diversity and inclusion”—save that draft document, and go back to your task of the day.

If you are not familiar with timeboxing and the Pomodoro techniques, they are worth mentioning here.

Timeboxing works backward from a target completion date and divides the available time from now until then into chunks of work so that your first task isn't the only task you finish.

If you want to draft your teaching, research, and service statements before the end of June, then you plan days to work on each of these, rather than focusing on getting the first one “perfect” before starting the next.

Timeboxing means setting boundaries for start and end around each task or sub-task. It is born of the mindset that something is better than nothing, and good is better than best. Timeboxing lends itself so well to revising, to iterating.

The Pomodoro technique takes its name from the tomato-shaped timer that its originator used. It is based on the premise that we can stand to do anything, even a task we dread, for 20 minutes.

So, the technique consists of setting a timer for 20 to 25 minutes, focusing on that one task for the duration, then taking a stand-up break for a couple of minutes, and doing it again.

Ultimately, you must find what works for you. Some days during this process, you may feel like you are sailing through the writing, bringing to bear great, reinforcing evidence on the merits of your case. Other days, you may feel like you have to grip the furniture to pull yourself toward your desk to do that day's tasks.

But doing the work—completing your tasks—however it feels—is a great investment in yourself. It

can help you with job security and professional marketability.

And without doubt, doing the tasks will help you navigate a process that will help you clarify—to yourself—what you have accomplished, what has motivated you this far, and what aspirations you hold for what's next.