Eisenhower matrix: two questions per task

List everything that's yelling at you. Tick Y or N for both questions, and the two answers pick the box. Don't rank anything or color-code it. Give it ten minutes at most, then start the first thing in Today.

Date _____ Timer: 10 min _____ Started at _____

The list · one line per thing

Task, email, errand, "quick question"	Bad if it waits a day?	Matters in a month?
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N
_____	Y N	Y N

	Bad if it waits a day: yes	Bad if it waits a day: no
Matters in a month: yes	Yes + yes **Today** Do it today. If this box and the one below hold more than three, use the order underneath.	No + yes **This week, with a slot** Important stuff doesn't get urgent until it's on fire. Give it a day and a time. What / Day + time
Matters in a month: no	Yes + no **Today, the small version** Do the least that stops the bad thing, or hand it to someone. Don't polish it.	No + no **Can wait, or can go** Cross it off, or write a date to look at it again. No guilt either way. What / Look again on

Too much in the two today boxes? · fixed order, no comparing

1. **Real deadline in the next 24 hours** something actually happens if it slips
2. **Someone is waiting on it** to do their part
3. **Smallest first step** you could start it in five minutes
4. **Still tied?** coin flip, then go

First thing
one physical action, start it now

_____

The siren check for the 2pm pileup

When every item on the list has a little red siren on it, ask each one a single question before you sort: what actually happens if this waits until tomorrow? Write the honest answer. "Someone is mildly annoyed" counts as an answer. Tick the two boxes, then copy it onto the list on page 1.

The sirens

What actually happens if it waits?

a late fee is real, a red badge isn't

The siren	What actually happens if it waits until tomorrow	Real deadline?	Someone waiting?
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N
		Y N	Y N

This week's slots · from the no + yes box

Did the slot happen?

moving it is fine, deleting it isn't

Task	Slot (day, time)	Happened?	Moved to
		Y N	
		Y N	
		Y N	
		Y N	
		Y N	
		Y N	

Don't make it pretty.

Spending 40 minutes on a beautiful matrix and then answering emails anyway is a classic. Ten minutes, then start.

Urgent-looking is a trick.

In Zhu, Yang and Hsee's 2018 experiments, people often took a smaller payoff just because the task looked urgent.

List over 40 items?

That's a triage job first. Brain dump it, cut it to today's three, then come back here.

> "I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent."
>
> Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, quoting an unnamed former college president. The four-box grid came later, from time-management books.