

# COMMENTARY

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## Hustle, bustle makes life far less fulfilling

Coming down off one of my busiest weeks in recent memory, I feel like I've tripped on a block of half-planned obligations and crashed face-first into the vast disorientation associated with sleep deprivation. Maybe it's exhaustion, or maybe it's just that I don't remember doing much else besides going to classes and going to work, but I'm beginning — possibly arrogantly — to believe that my recent life has descended into an apt metaphor representative of the modern world of caffeine double-doses, fast food and fast living.

And, frankly, that scares me just a bit.

About the time I graduated high school, I looked up at the rest of the world and saw people who were too busy with investment banking or petty political battles or other occupations that turned into 10- to 14-hour days. In some blend of revulsion and (what may be) naiveté, I told myself that I'd never be part of that world, that I'd always have enough of a grip on the moment that life would never slip by out of my control.

But as it turns out, all sorts of forces are conspiring against me. Everything in our society is geared to turbocharging, super-efficiency and instant gratification.

To wit: Some consumers are evidently unsatisfied with digesting information in real time. So, companies like technology firm Prime Image sell devices like the Digital Time Machine, which speed up video and audio recordings by up to 12 percent, without curtailing comprehension.

Laura Gaines, the company's vice president, touted the machine to the New York Times in a Thursday article, and offering potential customers — television advertisers included — a "66-second minute."

But, advertisements for products through an appeal to saving time aren't limited to adults. Through April, even the casual cereal devotee can trade two proofs-of-purchase from designated Post Kids Cereal boxes and \$1 for shipping for their very own personal digital assistant that features memory for an extensive list of lemonade stand suppliers and clients, and a planner for the hectic schedule of the modern multitasking 9-year-old.

Now, this is certainly not an argument against speed or modernization, or anything equally ignorantly Luddite. So-called competition of ideas is generally a positive process that improves the human condition: It creates better medicines; new, interesting meals; and tools that lighten the labor of human hands.

Even so, all this efficiency doesn't seem to save Americans much time. In 1997, Americans spent an average of 1,966 hours on the job — the most of any industrialized nation — according to the International Labour Organization.

So, what's the lesson? Reject the amenities of modern life? Clearly not. People invent those conveniences so that we can spend less time doing less fulfilling tasks and spend more time doing the things we enjoy, inside and outside the workplace.

Next week, God willing, I'm going to spend a little bit less work in the maelstrom of organizing and notes-sorting, and with any luck, I won't let down my high school self.

Contact the editorial editor at [traviswillse@dailymerald.com](mailto:traviswillse@dailymerald.com). His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Eric Layton Illustrator

## Tips to prevent landlord conflicts: Be proactive, protect your rights

*Editor's note: This commentary is part of the Emerald's and ASUO Legal Services' ongoing efforts to assist students through education as well as representation. ASUO Legal Services' attorneys are licensed to practice in the state of Oregon. Information disseminated in this article does not constitute legal advice and does not create an attorney/client relationship. For legal advice, contact an attorney licensed in your state. You should not make legal hiring decisions based upon brochures, advertising or other promotional materials.*

Many students visiting ASUO Legal Services seek assistance with landlord-tenant issues. Although conflicts with landlords are sometimes inevitable, there is a lot that tenants can do to protect their rights. The key is to be proactive in the landlord-tenant relationship.

### Read your lease

Read your rental agreement and any attachments carefully. Discuss any questions or concerns with your landlord, and confirm any changes in writing.

Be aware of your responsibilities under the agreement and live up to them. Pay your rent on time. Seek legal advice before attempting to withhold rent — this is permitted only in very limited circumstances, and only after specific procedures are followed.

### Keep records

It is essential to correspond in writing with your landlord. Many protections under Oregon law apply only when the tenant has given notice of a problem and requested repairs in writing. In-

clude dates on your letters and keep copies in a file with your entire rental agreement.

### Protect your deposit

When signing the agreement, discuss your expectations regarding the use of your deposit — will it be applied only toward repairs, or will it also be used for cleaning?



When you move in, do not assume that the landlord knows about pre-existing damages in the home. Send a letter detailing any concerns you have, and take pictures in a way that establishes the date they were taken. If the unit is not clean when you move in, notify the landlord and discuss the remedy. Confirm any agreement in writing.

Report other problems as soon as they oc-

cur. Sometimes minor problems, such as a leak, can cause major damage in the long run. The landlord may hold you responsible for expensive repairs if you fail to report such problems promptly.

Document the condition of the unit again when moving out. Take pictures of any damages for which you expect to be charged. Also include the walls, the floors, and appliances. You can ask your landlord to inspect the unit when you have removed all of your belongings and finished cleaning. Some landlords will agree, thus giving you a chance to do additional cleaning as needed.

### Terminating a lease

In a month-to-month agreement, you must give thirty days' written notice of termination. Even if your lease ends on a specific date, it will not hurt to confirm that you intend to move out at that time. (In fact, some term leases purport to require such notice, though such provisions are of questionable validity.)

Seek legal advice if you must break a term lease, or feel that you are entitled to do so due to the landlord's failure to abide by Oregon law or the rental agreement.

Give written notice of your forwarding address, and return the keys on the date you move out. If you do not receive your deposit within thirty-one days, or you feel that funds were wrongly withheld, seek legal advice.

Nicole Miani is an attorney at law for ASUO Legal Services.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Students, not big-money sports, should be priority

If the University selects the Howe Field site as its choice for a new basketball arena, it will, according to the consultant's report to the Athletic Department, displace not only the women's softball field, but also one or both of the Astro-Turf intramural fields, the Outdoor Program's

trip facility, the golf team's putting green and possibly the new Student Tennis Center. Even the hammer-throwing area and practice track associated with Hayward Field is suggested as a site for a parking structure. Of course, an arena and associated parking structures will also eliminate or obscure one of the few remaining open spaces near the University. With this selection, the University would pay homage to big-money spectator sports at the expense of the hundreds

of students who like to play, practice and develop their own bodies and physical skills.

I would hope that the University would value the health and skills of its students by leaving their participatory sports and recreational facilities in the heart of the campus. All of the other arena sites studied are better than Howe Field for these purposes.

Alvin Urquhart  
 emeritus professor of geography