28 Time Management Tips and Techniques to Become Fearlessly Productive

By Samphy | YSAMPHY.COM
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This is not just another article about time management techniques and tips. Almost 10,000 words long, it is one of the most comprehensive guides on the internet.

The tips and techniques will help you take back control of your time to do what matters for you and your career if you do apply them.

Let's dive in.

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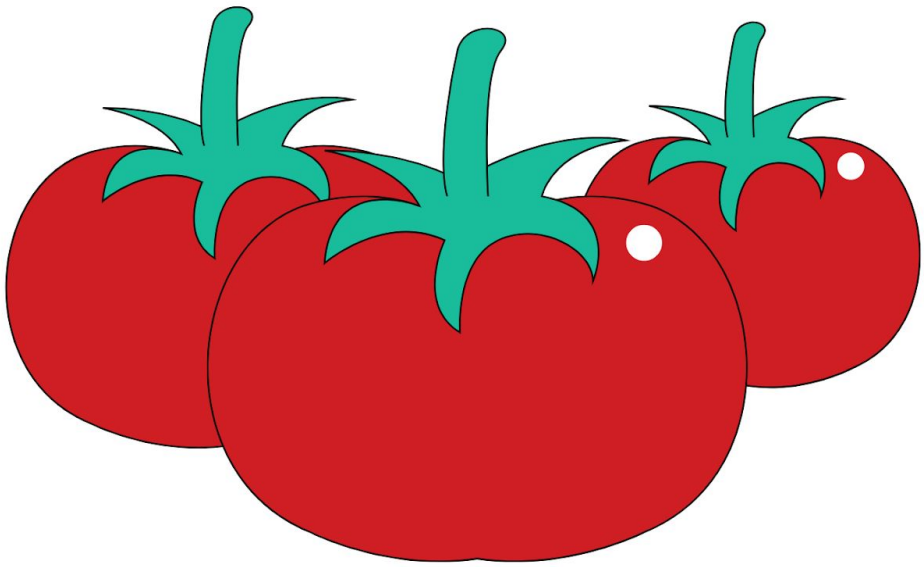
5 Time Management Techniques of Fearlessly Productive People

In this section, you'll learn five time management systems that fearlessly productive people use to achieve top performance.

Just in case you wonder what the differences are between techniques and tips here. The former refers to a set of tips put together to effectively manage time. Tips are single pieces of advice with a single step or multiple small steps.

Let's begin with the techniques.

The Pomodoro Technique



Pomodoro is a great time management technique I use myself.

The technique suggests that you time your task for 30 minutes. In that chunk of time, you work for 25 minutes and take a break for 3-5 minutes.

Then you repeat the process until finishing your task.

Every four Pomodoros, you take a long break of 15-30 minutes.

The process

The basic process involves the following:

1. Choose a task to do
2. Decide how many sessions you want to work on it
3. Set a timer to 25 minutes
4. Work on the task until the timer goes off
5. Check your task with a checkmark
6. Take a break for 3-5 minutes
7. Repeat the timer and continue the task
8. Take a long break of 15-30 minutes after four Pomodoros

All you need to implement this technique are a kitchen table and a piece of paper. There are also a lot of apps you can choo

se from.

For me, I use BeFocused Pro for my Pomodoro timer.

Pros:

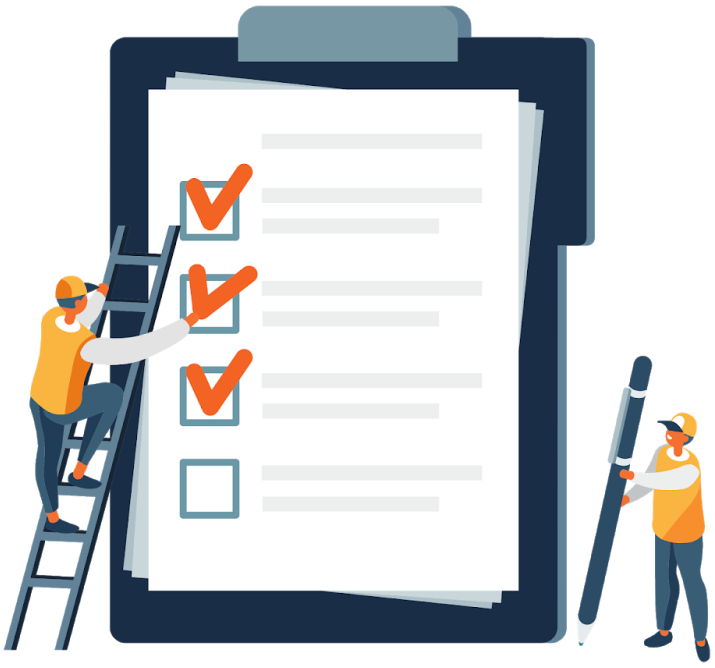
- The Pomodoro Technique is easy to understand and get started. All you need are a timer, paper, and a pencil.
- It is super practical for time management. You work in chunks of time that you plan daily so if you follow your sessions, you will be able to stay on top of time.
- Checking off the Pomodoro sessions feels good. You can quickly feel a sense of accomplishment doing it.
- The break after each interval lets us pause, take a step back, and reflect. It also makes it fun and not exhausting to work.
- Not only does the technique help you achieve what matters to you and your career but also the work that you have to do.

Cons:

The technique does not focus on why and how to plan and prioritize.

It could feel like 25 minutes is not enough to concentrate our attention on the task at hand. This is true for deep work like writing, drawing, and programming.

Getting Things Done (GTD)



GTD is a very popular productivity system created by New York Times Bestselling Author David Allen in 2001.

This technique helps you set up a sophisticated system for your to-do lists, reminders, and weekly reviews and free your mind from having to remember tasks.

The Process

There are many ways to implement GTD. Here's the easiest way I find to use this productivity system for effective time management:

1. Capture everything. Put everything important in the inbox of your task list. Your inbox is the placeholder for your tasks, *not* your head.

2. Process your inbox. You organize your tasks as follows:

- For tasks that take less than 2 minutes, do it immediately.

- For tasks that take more than 2 minutes, put it in the Next Actions list.
- Waiting for is for tasks you are waiting on someone else.
- For a task that needs subtasks, use the Projects folder.
- Some day/maybe is for things that you want to do but not so important and do not have a deadline.

3. Do it. After step 2, you will be left with the list of priorities from your Next Actions list to focus on.

So, every day you capture and process your tasks both new ones and the ones in your Inbox and then prioritize a few in your Next Actions list and act on them.

Like I wrote this is a sophisticated system and I recommend you read the book to learn more: Getting Things Done: Stress-Free Productivity.

Pros:

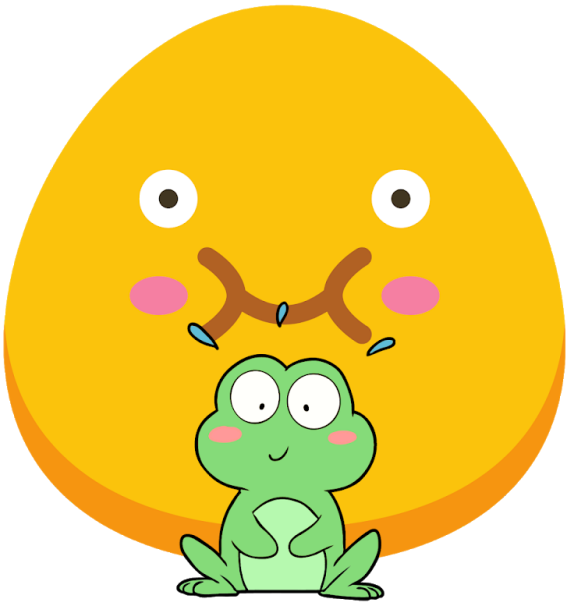
- GTD is one of the best productivity systems that focuses on processing and organization. You can capture every task, big or small, and also stuff that could distract you while you're focusing on your task.
- You no longer use your head to store your tasks but use it for innovation and creativity. All your tasks have their own home, the Inbox.
- The technique can apply to almost any area of productivity such as task management, email management, social media management, and so on.
- You can *always* know what to do. If you have only ten minutes before the meeting starts and feel productive, you can pick from your Inbox and do an easy action for easy wins.

Cons:

No space for creative procrastination. Collecting and processing your tasks (and stuff) can make your buckets full of things that need your attention when in fact we hardly have time for so much.

Not specific about time management. But how do you choose what to do? How much time should you give to each task? GTD suggests that you make decisions based on context, time available, energy available, and priority.

Eat That Frog!



Eat That Frog! is another popular productivity system. Brian Tracy explains how to use this technique in his book that he wrote in 2017: Eat That Frog!: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time.

The technique suggests that you do the most important tasks, first thing.

And, you can apply this technique in these simple steps:

1. Clearly define and write down your goals.
2. Identify tasks you need to do to achieve the goals you set.
3. Prioritize your three most important tasks, based on the 80/20 principle. Meaning working on the 20% tasks that contribute to 80% of your growth.
4. Delegate tasks that someone else can do
5. Delete unnecessary tasks
6. Plan every day in advance
7. Eat That Frog, first thing in the morning
8. Focus on a single task until you complete it
9. Do your other tasks only after you complete your MITs

How do you manage your time, using the Eat That Frog! technique? Brian advises always making the effort to work on high-value tasks and delegate or remove low-value tasks.

Pros:

Eat That Frog! is inspirational. All the principles the book suggests could motivate you to take action and be productive.

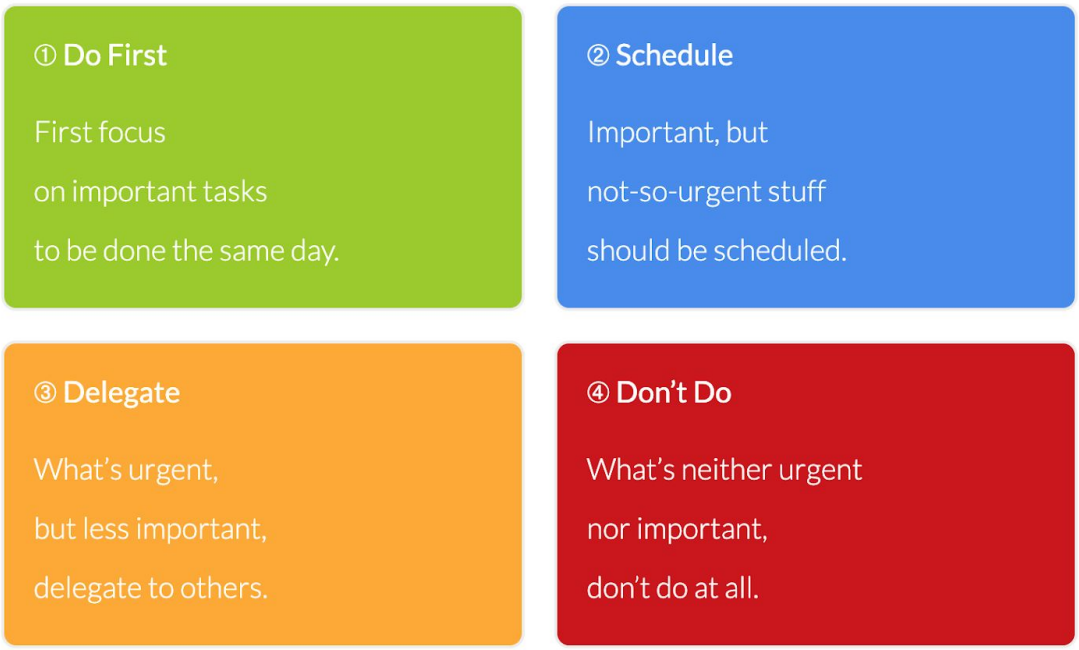
You work mostly on your priorities. Low-value tasks will be delegated and unnecessary tasks deleted every day. If you can stick to the technique long enough, you will achieve great things in your career.

Cons:

The book does not lay out the system the way GTD does. Instead, it gives you principles you can use to take control of your time.

Eisenhower Matrix

Here's what the matrix looks like:



Source: Eisenhower Matrix

The matrix suggests:

1. Start with the most important tasks (MITs)
2. Schedule those tasks that are important but not so urgent
3. Delegate what's urgent but less important
4. Don't do the things that are neither urgent nor important.

Pros:

It's a simple technique to use. You just need to identify your tasks and put them down in the right quadrant.

Cons:

It does not take into consideration other dimensions of productivity such as context, time available, and energy available.

The 5 AM Club

The 5 AM Club technique advises rising at 5 a.m. to build morning routines for productivity and self-improvement.

What will you do exactly?

It's the 4 Interior Empires and 20/20/20 Formula.

I'll explain:

The 4 Interior Empires refer to the Mindset, Healthset, Heartset, and Soulset. The advice is that you must not just focus on the mindset. That's

only 25% of your inner potential. You must also focus on your health, emotions, and also spirituality.

The 20/20/20 Formula is the 20-minute chunks of time that you use to get the best out of rising at 5 a.m. The first 20 minutes should be for physical health; the next 20 minutes for reflection, mindfulness, and meditation; and the last 20 minutes for reading and learning.

What does this have to do with time management, you ask?

In short... these morning habits help you seize your day.

Pros:

This technique provides timeless and valuable lessons to seize the day. As they say:

- if you get better, everything else will get better, for you.
- And, this: Life doesn't get easier, YOU just get stronger.
- Also, rising at 5 a.m. adds more time to your day to get your work done. For example, by doing so, I have an entire hour to write before my kids wake up.

Cons:

- The 20/20/20 formula should just be a guide, NOT a rule. For example, if you're getting caught in an emotionally-draining situation, you might benefit from spending more time meditating than exercising and learning.
- Also, regardless of how much time you have until the world gets you, writing or creating should also be part of your morning routines, without a plan.

That's it for time management techniques.

Without further ado, let’s dive in and learn these tips for better time management.

23 Simple Time Management Tips to Seize Your Day (Plus 2 Bonuses)

This part of the article is about simple tips you can use to seize your day.

Choose what works for you and your situation, but do apply them if you want to get the best out of your time reading here.

Now, let’s get started.

1. Plan at the End of the Day

Doing this can help you wrap up your day nicely and give you a sense of control of your time. You go home resting assured that tomorrow will be another day for great work.

How you do it is totally up to you. Paper and pencil work perfectly. I use the app Todoist that I can access from all my devices and easily find my tasks using different contexts.

If your tasks also come in emails, then it's a good time to process and turn them into tasks that you will further sort out the next day. Remember, though, that the goal is not to reply and do more. It is to capture your tasks and plan for the next day.

Use the 2-minute rule for email processing. Act on those emails that take you 2 minutes or less. If it takes more than that, task it for the next day.

2. Rise Early

Rising early means more time in your day. If you want two hours more, get up two hours earlier. An hour is all you need? Great.

However, no experts would recommend you sacrifice your sleep to wake up early. It is crucial to get enough sleep, so you should take a nap if you didn't get enough sleep the night before.

That said, waking up early is one of the best time management tips I'd recommend, especially if you really want to make time for self-improvement in solitude.

While the 5 AM Club advises rising at 5 a.m., you can do it at 6 a.m. or 4 a.m. instead. The goal of rising early is for you to grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

And of course, to start your deep work before the world gets your attention.

Here's what you can do to make rising early meaningful:

- **Meditate.** I meditate for 10-20 minutes as soon as I rise. You can do it as little or as long as you need to feel centered. A meditation app is good to get started, but it's not necessary.
- **Journal.** I use the Five Minute Journal, but paper and pencil are fine. The goal should be to start the day with gratitude, set the intention for a great day ahead, and do daily affirmation.
- **Read.** Of course, there are several ways to learn like experimenting and doing it. However, reading is a necessary foundation for other learning activities. I spend at least 30 minutes reading a book every morning, but you can do whatever amount of time that works for you.
- **Exercise.** I started it with just a single pushup. Then, a minute. Yes, one minute! Sounds crazy, I know. But that's how I started (and quitting) most of my habits: reading, meditating, quitting smoking, and in fact, rising early. That's how baby steps lead to big changes.
- **Do deep work.** Whether you have always wanted to write, draw, or start a business or side hustle, make it part of your morning routines.

It sounds like a lot to do, but 120 minutes should be enough time to do them. You could spend your first 30 minutes exercising, meditating, and

journaling, 15-30 minutes reading a book, and the rest writing, creating or doing whatever makes you feel great.

3. Clear Distractions Like a Minimalist

I don't have to tell you all the growing sources of distractions these days. All the easy social media and communication platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, WeChat (the list goes on) make it much worse now than 10 years ago.

That said, it is *you* who decides how distracted or indistractable you are.

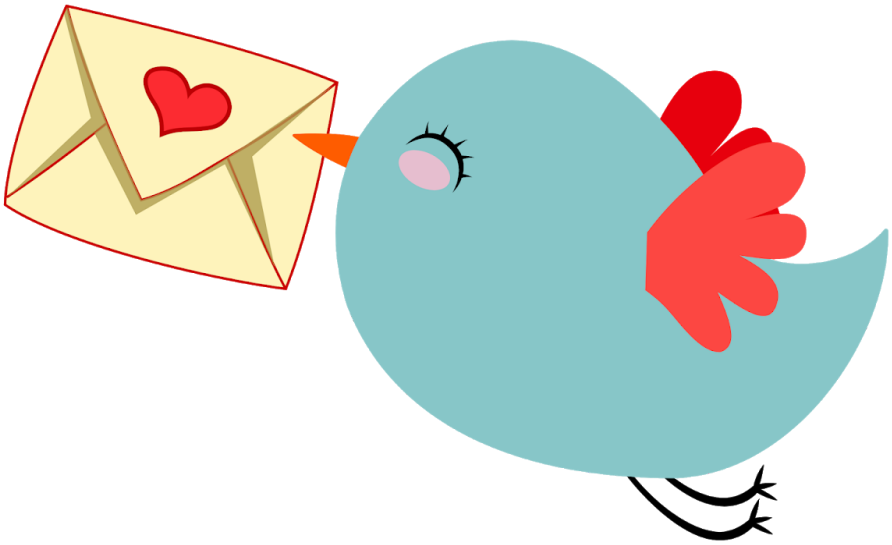
Here are a few ways to cope with distractions:

(Notice how I don't use the word distraction-free!)

- **Configure your phone to beat distractions.** Learn how to do it here.

- **Turn off notifications.** Now, this is a MUST. Turn off notifications from not just the social media and chat apps and email programs but also most of your other apps on your smartphone and computer.
- **Enable "Do Not Disturb".** Yes, this function on your phone is for you to not be disturbed. Chances are that you already use it when you sleep. But, are you also using it when you work? If not, go ahead and enable it now.
- **Silence your phone.** This adds another layer for your distraction-less day.
- **Close your email program while working.** Do you notice how often you turn to the refuge of checking email when you get stuck? Just a minute of it can get you to checking and responding to emails, which is easier to do. So, go ahead and close your email program when you work.
- **Use Freedom.to.** Or any other similar programs to force yourself to enjoy the freedom from distractions. So, set it to work when you need to focus.
- **Catch yourself getting distracted.** Switching to emails while working, again!? Notice it to yourself. Observe body sensations. Breathe. And gently return to your task every time you catch yourself getting distracted.
- **Build your focus muscle, one minute at a time.** Focus is a muscle. The more you train it, the better you get at finding and staying focused. Like exercise, you can't force it. Instead, you can build it better, one minute more at a time. When you want to do something else other than the task you're working on, tell yourself to stay with the task just a minute more.

4. Achieve Inbox Zero in 10 Minutes (Or Less)



While other productivity experts advise starting your day with the most important task, I found it counterintuitive to how my brain works. I can't focus if I don't know what's come in my inbox.

Probably, it's because early in my career, I was trained to keep my eye on my inbox where tasks and all sorts of communication (important or not) come to me.

That said though, I do *not* recommend checking and replying to emails first thing. In fact, you don't have to do this at all. If you're better off starting your day differently, go ahead.

The goal is to feel a small win by achieving inbox zero.

How?

Great question. Here are my four simple rules:

Rule #1: Spend no more than 10 minutes. Even better if you can spend less than this. How? What if I get a hundred emails a day? The next rules will answer this question.

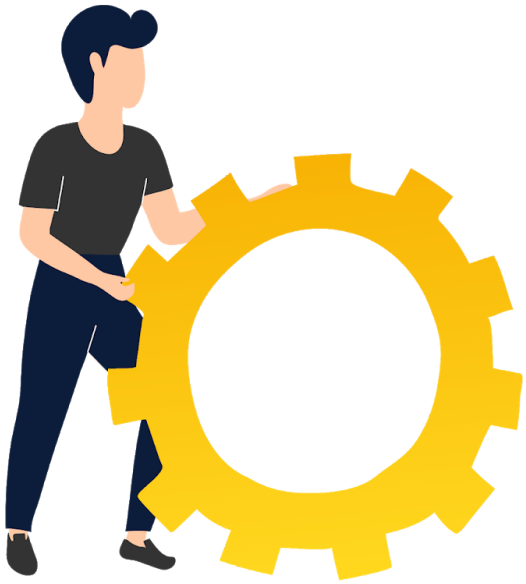
Rule #2: Do NOT reply to emails. You can reply if it takes less than two minutes, but try not to do it. This is not an email time. Remember? The goal is to get a small win by getting your inbox empty.

Rule #3: Turn emails that need your response to tasks and put them in your Action folder.

Rule #4: Archive all emails that you don't need to act on. Mostly, you don't need to delete your emails as most email accounts now give you more than enough space to store thousands of emails.

Simply put, you process your emails in any way you want as long as you can get to an empty inbox, within 10 minutes or less.

5. Revisit Your Daily Plan



Now that you have turned your emails to tasks, your to-do list has gotten longer. So, it is important to go through them quickly to make sure it is realistic.

This is what you do when revisiting your plan:

- Check whether the daily list is doable.
- Add tasks that you need to do if any.
- Adjust, if necessary, by moving tasks to later, deleting those that you no longer need to act on, and delegate those that others can do.
- Plan when you would like to wrap up your day. This is especially important if you are a freelancer and want to strike a better work-life balance.

The goal here is to keep your daily task list realistic and impactful. This should take no more than 5 minutes.

6. Prioritize Your MITs

Now, it's time to plan and prioritize your most important tasks (MITs).

Here's my three-step process:

> **Step 1: Go through your daily to-do list.**
>
> **Step 2: Pick a few for your priorities.** I recommend choosing no more than 3 MITs a day. In fact, if you are easily distracted, start with just one. Our attention resources are limited.
>
> **Step 3: Assign the amount of time you will work on each of them.** I recommend that you make an effort to spend between 4 and 6 hours a day working on your MITs. In my experience, less than 4 hours isn't sufficient to achieve something great. Part-time commitment delivers part-time results. More than 6 hours a day will likely get you to fall behind on other tasks that you also need to do to keep your sanity. So, it's crucial to give yourself 1 or 2 hours of buffer time to do other tasks related to communication and admin.

To prioritize for the best possible impact, consider these two powerful questions:

- **What is the most important thing today?** Use this question to guide you towards the most important work for the day.
- **What contributes to 80% of my career growth?** The Pareto principle suggests that 20% of the work produces 80% of the results. So, if you're a legal associate, your impactful areas of work could be your legal work, not admin or HR work.

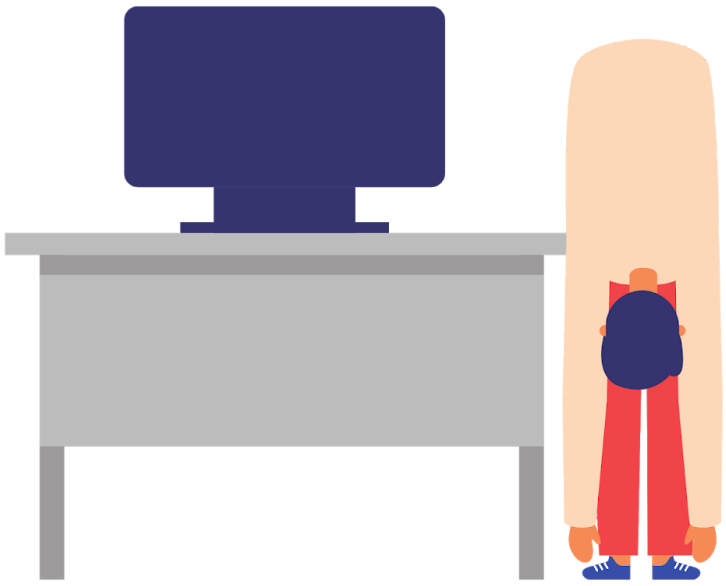
If it helps, here are three ways to ruthlessly prioritize your tasks.

> **The 80/20 principle.** Choose the 20% tasks that contribute to 80% of your career growth. For example, if you're a content editor, your time could be more worth writing and editing content than designing graphics or monitoring promotion campaigns.

The Urgent/Important Matrix. This principle suggests that you try to work on two types of tasks: important/urgent and important/not urgent.

The Task Chunking Method. I propose this method for you to use if you have too much on your plate. Often in this situation, achieving one task leaving the others undone would cause us to feel overwhelmed and behave inefficiently (working slowly, getting distracted easily, being unable to think clearly...). Therefore, chunking your tasks into subtasks can get you in control, creating the right conditions for focus.

7. Take Regular Breaks



I learned this the hard way. As I'm getting old now, sitting more than 60 minutes at a time gives me a backache. I realized that I needed to take regular breaks and that's when I found out about the Pomodoro Technique.

Basically, here's what to do:

- Work for 25-30 minutes
- Take a short break of 3-5 minutes
- After four sessions, take a long break of 15-30 minutes
- Repeat

But, doesn't that affect our productivity, you may ask? Yes, it does… *positively*.

Focusing for too long, without a break, not only is exhausting but also bad for your health. Physically, you will have backache and a pain in the neck, among other physical illnesses. Emotionally, you will get stressed out and it will affect your relationship with yourself and others around you. In my experience, even meditation and physical exercise wouldn't help much.

More importantly, your brain will freeze after a certain amount of focus time. It is an average of two hours for me when I am in a good state of health, but more or less for you depending on other factors such as my emotional state, and the number of distractions I have to deal with.

When your willpower is used up, you can't think straight.

Eventually, it will burn you out.

I experienced this myself. I never wanted to stop and take a break when I was in the state of flow. That did not change until I was almost burnt out.

By pausing for 5 minutes after 25 minutes of focused concentration, work is better fun for me. I don't feel too tired by the end of the day. Ideas flow effortlessly. And importantly, I can attend to my kids every 25 minutes as I work remotely and my kids are staying home due to the coronavirus outbreak.

8. Start Your Day by Doing the MITs

If you follow along, you'll feel ready to take on the most difficult tasks of the day. They are usually the ones that produce impactful results for your work and career.

Calm and clarity are there to help you focus.

Also, you know how to be highly efficient, using the Pomodoro Technique.

However, I find that even when we start by doing the MITs, we often get distracted.

Distractions can easily get you because they are much more enjoyable to do than your MITs.

You tend to reach out for your phone and scroll endlessly through your Facebook or Twitter feeds. Or maybe, checking emails and responding to them are also work you need to attend to. You think, "I might get better ideas after a break," when in fact a break means checking emails.

Checking and replying to email is not a break. Scrolling through your endless Facebook feeds could be, but it is not a good break that helps you boost productivity.

The truth is…

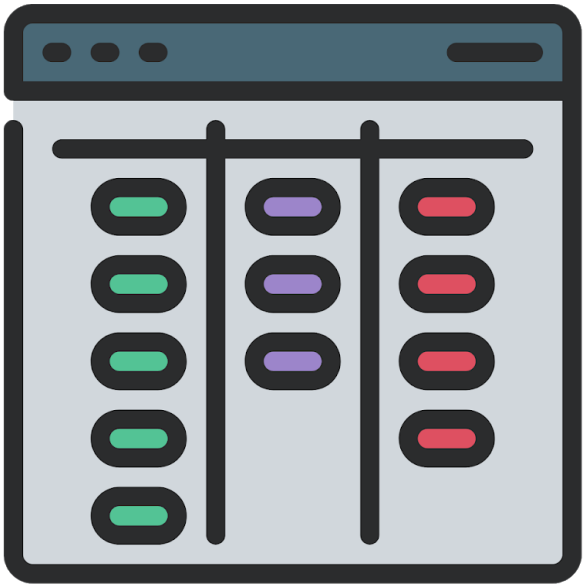
Although you need to feel relaxed to tap into your genius, creativity lies outside your comfort zone. The good news is that you can keep calm when stretching.

So, is it clear where I'm going?

Never get distracted! Be indistractable**.**

When you feel the discomfort trying to stay focused, just observe what body sensations appear and how you behave. You might start fidgeting and reach out for your phone or check your emails. Be an observer, breathe, and gently return to your task.

9. Batch Tasks for Optimal Focus



Too many scattered tasks can lead to a scattered mind. Then, the focus will become more difficult. Task batching can concentrate your mind and save your limited resources of mental energy for other tasks you need to work on.

Task batching is a great way to put together similar tasks that are usually small and complete them in a single Pomodoro session or more. (If you haven't tried the Pomodoro Technique yet, it's time to check it out.)

Of course, you don't have to use the Pomodoro Technique. It is just good if you look for a simple system to efficiently manage time and take regular breaks between work intervals.

Now how do you batch your tasks?

There are different ways to do it, and here are just six of them:

- **By similar tasks.** Emails and calls can be done in a batch. Others include quick appointments and meetings. Emails and messages.
- **By locations.** These include tasks that need to get done on your computer. Shopping is another location-based batching. Tasks that you need to do in your office, or at home.
- **By projects.** Chances are that you always work on multiple projects at the same time, so batching tasks by projects can bring order to your mind and allow you to work more efficiently.
- **By people.** Sometimes, there are tasks that we need to do with or for certain people. For example, if you work for a client as a productivity coach, you might want to batch tasks for that client and schedule a time window for them.
- **By your level of energy.** Batching tasks based on your energy level makes you efficient in your work and life. Work on important tasks when your energy is high, and low-value tasks when it is low.
- **By the amount of time.** Time-based task batching is another good way to help you manage your time better. Certain tasks require only a few minutes and they scatter all over your to-do lists. Say, You have been very well prepared for an important meeting at 3 p.m. Now it's 2:30 p.m. There are 30 minutes until the meeting, and you feel like catching up on work a bit. In this case, you would want to do small tasks that take a few minutes and save some 5 minutes or so to center yourself before your important meetings. Those tasks could be making a quick call to your coaching client to follow up on how he's been with his commitment for the week. Or, reply to that email for an appointment with you.

But, doesn't it take a lot of time to do the batching? Isn't it more efficient to just go through my task lists and pick whatever I want to work on?

While you can do that, it is more efficient to batch tasks. It brings order to your mind and allows you to focus better and longer.

Task batching could be a bit complicated if you use paper and pencil for task management. But, if you use a good tool for task batching, it could be a breeze.

I use Todoist and it makes it effortless for me to sort my tasks. And this brings us to the next time management tip to ride on the wave of digitalism in today's world.

10. Use a To-Do List App

Task management was very difficult back in 2009 when I really had to embrace productivity. I was drowning in all the tasks and projects I had to deal with every day.

I read Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity, and apply the techniques. It took me a great deal of time and effort to hack Microsoft Outlook to implement the system. I used several trays and folders, too. (It was 2009, you know!)

While that let me keep my mind for ideas, and not for tasks, it was not advanced enough for task batching. For example, sorting tasks based on the amount of time and level of energy would be time-consuming.

Using a to-do app really makes time management a lot more efficient for me.

I've tried a handful of apps such as Wunderlist, Google Task, and Microsoft To-Do. Todoist is the most advanced and sophisticated to-do app. It took me a few days to learn the tool but it's worth it.

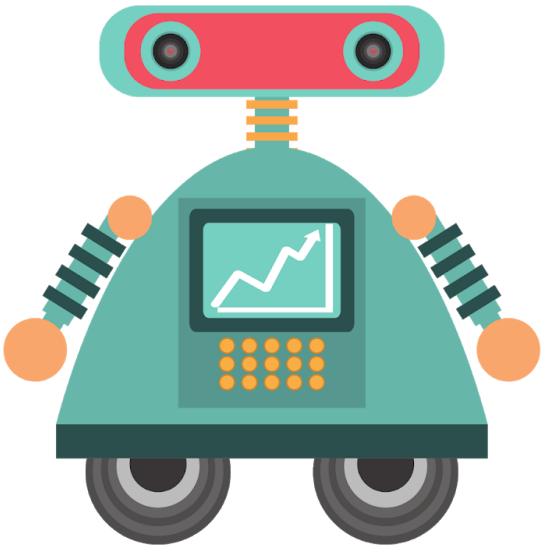
That said, you can use any other to-do app that works best for you.

A great to-do app will:

- make it easy to add and organize your tasks
- create subtasks under bigger tasks
- sort them in any way you want such as priorities, amount of time you have, projects, clients, and so on
- easily turn emails to tasks

Basically, it should be GTD-ready. David Allen's GTD is one of the most comprehensive productivity systems in the world. In fact, most of the most popular to-do apps you can find in your app store are designed based on that, including Todoist.

11. Automate Simple Tasks



Now, this to me is a very important topic when it comes to time management.

Never underrate the power of automation. Have you heard of an accountant who automated the compilation of income reports? How about a network operator who eliminated the need for network operators in his company through automation?

And a guy who authored *thousands* of academic books through automation?

The truth is there are endless possibilities, from busywork to creative tasks. That will continue to redefine the way we work (and live).

The good news is that you don't have to be a programmer to automate your work. There are a whole bunch of tools out there. It might take a bit of time

to learn but it is worth it. The more you can automate your tasks, the more time you can save for the technical and analytical areas of your work.

9 Ways to Automate Your Work

Here are just a couple of simple work automation ideas you can try:

1. **Automate email organization.** Chances are that you either use Gmail and Outlook. These email clients allow you to create several rules for emails. For instance, you can automatically mark as read and archive email newsletters or group messages that you no longer read but still want to see what they're up to whenever you want.
2. **Use canned responses.** If you find yourself sending the same replies or emails over and over, you can create canned responses to save you a minute or so each time. In fact, this tip is saving me about an hour each day.
3. **Create automatic replies.** The most common automatic reply people send is the vacation message. But there are other automatic replies you might find helpful. For example, you can use it to let others know your reply time.
4. **Proofreading.** You can automate proofreading services like Grammarly and Hemingway App to help you write better.
5. **Organize to-do lists.** Todoist comes in handy here. It lets you easily organize and sort your tasks and to-do lists. For example, if you want to work on a certain project now, with a few clicks you can pull all the tasks for the project.
6. **Use keyboard shortcuts.** I find it lacking to talk about automation without mentioning the power of keyboard shortcuts. It saves me countless clicks a day as I work on different software applications from Chrome to Office apps. Never underestimate the time you can save learning to use keyboard shortcuts.
7. **Schedule appointments.** Still sending emails back and forth to check when is a good time for people you want to invite to your meeting? There's a better way. You can automate it by using services like

Doodle. Sometimes, I am frustrated why it's taking so long for Google or Microsoft to add this feature to their suites?

8. **Tracking hours.** If you're a consultant charging your clients based on the hours that you spend, chances are that you're already using some software to track your time. But if you don't, it's time to give it a try. I use HoursTracker but there are so many other apps and services out there that you can find that fit your needs.
9. **Manage passwords.** Do you save your passwords in the notes on your phone? Or still using a physical notebook? Don't tell me you're using the same passwords for everything! The truth about password management is this. You don't have to remember them at all, except one. It's the master password of your password management app. I've been using Dashlane for more than two years now and will never go back to the old way of managing my passwords.

Endless Possibilities to Automate Your Work (and Life)

Like I wrote at the beginning of this section, not only can you automate busywork but also creative work like writing. And with the current pace of digitalism, automation will continue to shape the way we work and live. It's unstoppable.

While our computer programmers continue to develop new automation apps and services, the best I recommend to begin with are Zapiers and IFFT. Just with these two services alone, you can automate 50,000+ things in your work and life.

12. Delegate Like a Leader

One of the biggest mistakes I made when I worked as a manager in my day job was this:

I did not delegate enough.

I hope you are not making this same mistake. Not only does smart delegation take the weight of your shoulder but it also empowers your team.

A great leader leads. By delegating smartly, you will have time to continuously improve your leadership. In fact, the growth of your team alone should already be a great indicator of your leadership.

All this said, notice how I put it? Smart delegation, right?

The 7-Step Process of Smart Delegation

1. **Delegate for Growth.** Delegating work should not only be about getting work off your back but also for the growth, both of your own and the person to whom you delegate the work. For them, it could be to expand their skill set. The growth for you should be to have more time and energy to lead your team better.
2. **Delegate Democratically.** While it is important to delegate to the right person, you should always check with your team members. Maybe, another member of your team has wanted to learn how to do the job and you should give them a chance. It could also happen that the person with lots of experience doing it wishes to spend their time and energy doing another job (which you can delegate!). Or they could just simply be having too much on their plate already and would appreciate it if someone else on the team could help.
3. **Delegate Your Why.** You don't have to delegate a clear outcome to delegate your why. It is great to know what outcome you want. But there are times in life when we do not know what it will look like. When your why is clear, then what and how will be easier, and even better. It is like when you teach a child to learn A for Apple, all they learn will be exactly that: A for Apple. But if you teach them to think for themselves, A is for other things that might even surprise you! Let your team entertain you where possible.
4. **Discuss the Outcome.** Now that the why is clear, a smart leader will discuss the outcome of the task. They do it even when they already know what they want. Why? It's democratic. The person who carries out the task will engage and own it better. More importantly, they know precisely what a good and bad outcome will be like.
5. **Delegate the Entire Job.** Take this example. You are a content manager and part of the work in your department is to send out a weekly newsletter. You have a content officer to whom you would like to delegate the job. Which part of the newsletter job will you delegate? The content ideas? The outline? The writing? The

publishing? The delivery? You got it. Delegate the entire job to help them grow and be proud of what they do.

6. **Delegate Ownership.** How would you behave differently when you feel the ownership of the work that you do? Let me guess. You will feel more responsible to do it well. And as a result, you will do your best. All the previous steps will make the person to whom you delegate the task feel the ownership of it.
7. **Reflect Together.** Reflection is a vital part of smart delegation. If the task takes time to finish or if it is regular work, you should do this regularly until your team can perform well without your supervision. The reflection should focus on the lessons learned for both yourself and the team member to whom you delegate the work.

13. Schedule Time for Low-Value Tasks

The popular advice is that you must 'eliminate' low-value tasks. The truth, though, is that you can *not*. Getting rid of them completely is impossible.

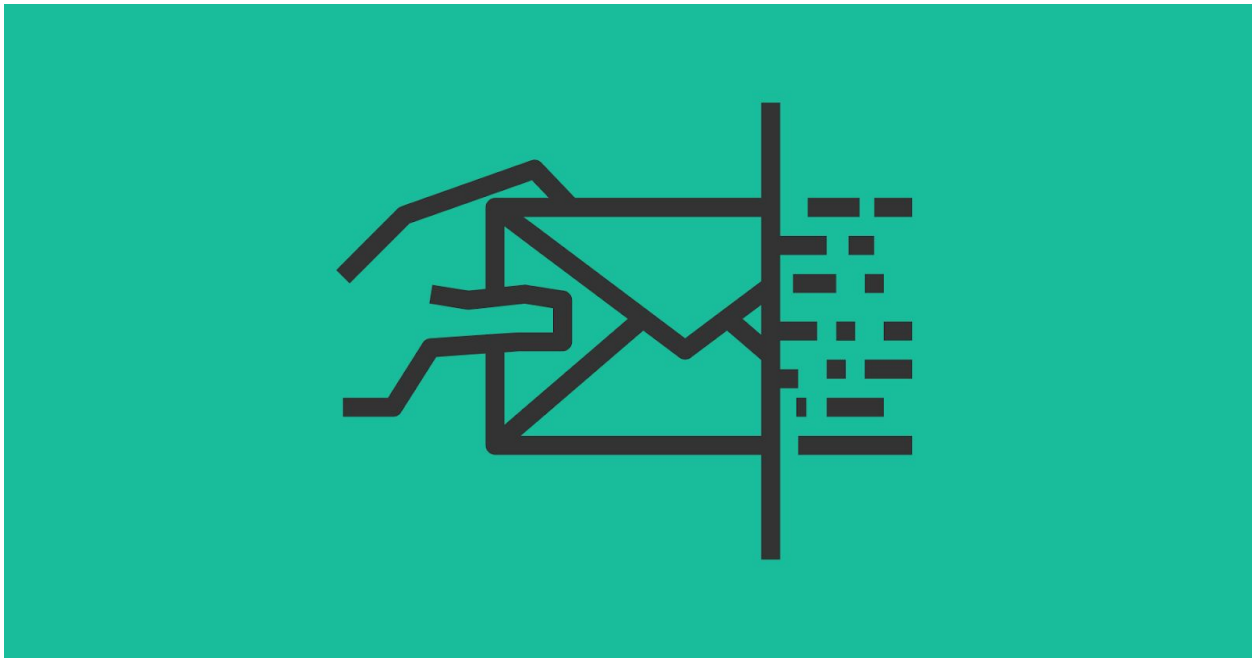
Also, you can't ignore low-value tasks that need to get done. For instance, as a CEO you have to approve certain requests from your team. Your assistant can review them for you but they can't sign on your behalf.

Besides, it is impossible to focus all day long. Your mental resources are limited. Your concentration time-span might be 20-35 minutes or perhaps 90 minutes.

What is the best way to deal with low-value tasks?

Schedule time for them. Usually, a good time for me is after I'm done with my MITs. It's either the end of the morning or right after the lunch break. It could be a different time window for you. The key is to make sure that it is a good fit for your energy level. In other words, if the task requires lots of mental resources, schedule it when your energy is high. If you only need low energy to complete the task, do it after you have completed your MITs.

14. Schedule Time for Emails



Scheduling doesn't have to be fixed but it has to be in line with your flow of work and energy. I could be either before or right after the lunch break when you have completed all your important daily tasks and routines.

Doing so helps you get and stay focused while you're working on your important tasks. You rest assured that you will get to them, instead of using your energy to think of them all the time.

Here are three simple rules you can use:

Schedule only 3 times a day for emails. One in the morning as you're revisiting your plan. That is to process emails as part of your plan for the day. Then, act on and reply to emails towards the end of the morning or right after the lunch break. Finally, the third time should take place at the end of work hours, to plan for the next day.

Spend no more than 10 minutes to process emails. Email processing that takes place in the first and third-time slots should not take you more than

10 minutes. Remember, the goal is to plan your day with all the tasks that come with emails.

Set a maximum of 30-60 minutes to act on emails. If email is not the only source of your work tasks, 30-60 minutes is the maximum of time you should spend on it. Of course, if you're an email support staff member, you'll have to calculate the right timing and time limit that works for you.

15. Give Every Task a Time Limit

You don’t have to strictly do the time boxing or chunking where your day is made up of one-hour blocks of time filled with tasks. My experience doing that wasn’t so sweet at all. In fact, I missed it 100% of the time when I experimented with this.

However, giving each task a time limit has several benefits.

It is time management! Ever spend too much time on one task only to find that you only have 30 minutes until the end of your workdays and you have to finish another task that will take at least 90 minutes? Then you have to work overtime, leaving your family waiting at home. Not a good work-life balance if you do this often. Yet, the truth is that if you don't give our tasks a time limit, time management just won't work for you.

You set a boundary for work and life. By giving your task a time limit and sticking to it, you can guess more correctly what time you will get home to your loved ones or do whatever you need to get recharged for the next day.

Task management becomes more efficient. Knowing that you have to complete the task within the time limit forces you to be productive. It also brings clarity to your day. You know what to work on next and how much time you have for that.

16. Use 1-Minute Rule to Beat Procrastination

“I’ll do this later.” “Wait.” “I’ll check Facebook just a bit.” “I’m not in the mood now. I’ll just be easy on myself.” “I have lots of time and this will take a few minutes to finish.” “It’s ok to put this off a bit.”

These were the kinds of self-talks I would tell myself when I did not feel like working, or in other words, ...procrastinated!

In my experience, procrastination is one of the biggest issues that you have to first deal with to become fearlessly productive. Simply put, if you can’t beat it, you can’t be productive.

Using the 1-Minute Rule, you can easily stop procrastinating almost immediately.

How does it work?

Easy. Just force yourself to work on anything for a single minute longer. If not, you can follow this 7-step process:

Step 1: Start with awareness. Are you scrolling through your Facebook feeds for 30 minutes already when in fact you’re supposed to be writing that important report? It is great that you can bring that to your awareness.

Step 2: Pause. Stop scrolling through your Facebook feeds and you do not have to work on your report yet. Just pause and…

Step 3: Breathe. Take deep breaths in and out, for a minute. Count your breaths. If it helps, you can also close your eyes and put a timer for this practice.

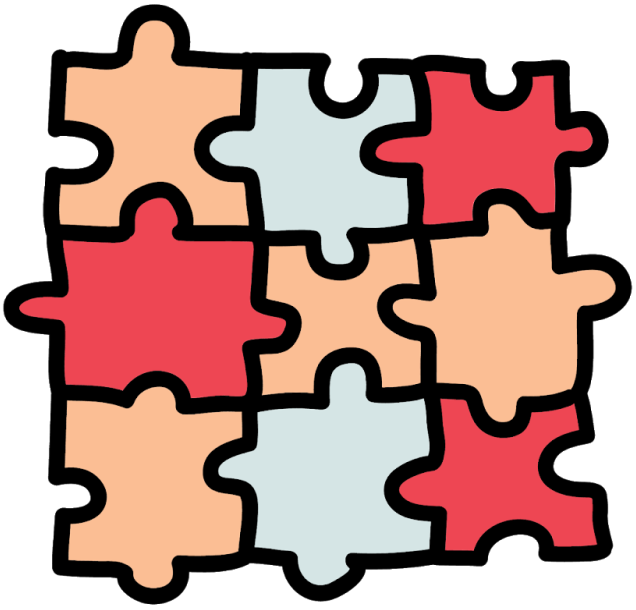
Step 4: Sit with the task. What should you be working on now? Bring that to mind and ask yourself these questions: What does it feel like? Are my breaths shallow or deep? Fast or slow? How is your heart beating? This could take just 30-60 seconds or so, to move your mind from your breath to emotions and body sensations, and therefore, it prepares you for the 1-minute action.

Step 5: Just do it for a minute. The previous 4 steps should bring better calm and clarity to your mind. They will make your 1-minute action easier to do and stick with. Now, just do it for one minute. If it's writing, just write whatever that comes to mind about the task. If it requires multiple steps, you can use the one minute to plan out the steps.

Step 6: Reward yourself. This is important should you feel motivated to do more of it. It does not have to be big. A bow in and out as a form of respect could work. You can just literally pat yourself on your chest. A smile in appreciation is just another reward. There are endless possibilities to reward yourself.

Step 7: I'll do it just another minute. Check-in with yourself first before taking this step, but if you follow the previous steps, in my experience, doing another minute could turn into 60 minutes, effortlessly.

17. Break Large Tasks into Manageable Chunks



Break up report writing that takes 40 hours of work to complete into small chunks of tasks that you can accomplish in an hour or so.

Chunking makes the large task less overwhelming. It also brings better clarity and lets you focus better. In fact, this is similar to the concept that makes good habits stick. If you want to build muscles, start by doing one push up a day, every day. That's how baby steps lead to great changes.

Also, it allows you to do other tasks.

Here are a few ways to chunk your tasks:

- **Break up a large task for the time it requires to accomplish it by the deadline.** If 30 minutes is all you need to spend daily to submit the report by the end of the month, you may benefit from limiting the task to 30 minutes a day.
- **Chunk your task for the length of time you can spend on it.** Sometimes, 30 minutes a day is all that you have to work on it. In that case, you'll need to be realistic and if necessary, negotiate a deadline before you actually begin working on it.
- **Turn the large task into small and precise subtasks.** Preparing for a meeting presentation could be made up of these subtasks: brainstorming ideas, finding supporting examples/data, choosing graphics, adding notes, and rehearsing. The key here is to make it as precise as possible.
- **Chunk it based on the nature of work it requires.** For example, report writing may require collecting and collating data, research and analysis, developing the outline, choosing the tone, writing the summary and conclusion, writing the body...

There are no rules for task chunking. The key is to make it manageable based on the length of time and level of energy you have. And this brings us to the next tip.

18. Align Your Work and Energy

A great tip about time management I got exclusively from Vanessa Van Edwards, Bestselling Author of Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People, is this:

"Time management is energy management. In other words, we often think about productivity in terms of tasks completed and time spent. I think every type of task has a different kind of energy. For example, I might be in a fast-paced mood and want to blow through a bunch of emails or I might be in a contemplative mood and this would be a good time to dig into the research or write a blog post. My number one tip for time management is to think about the task and the optimal energy, time and place to do it. I know I should always write in the morning when I am fresh. But I should save emails for slow afternoons. Then I get both done faster!"

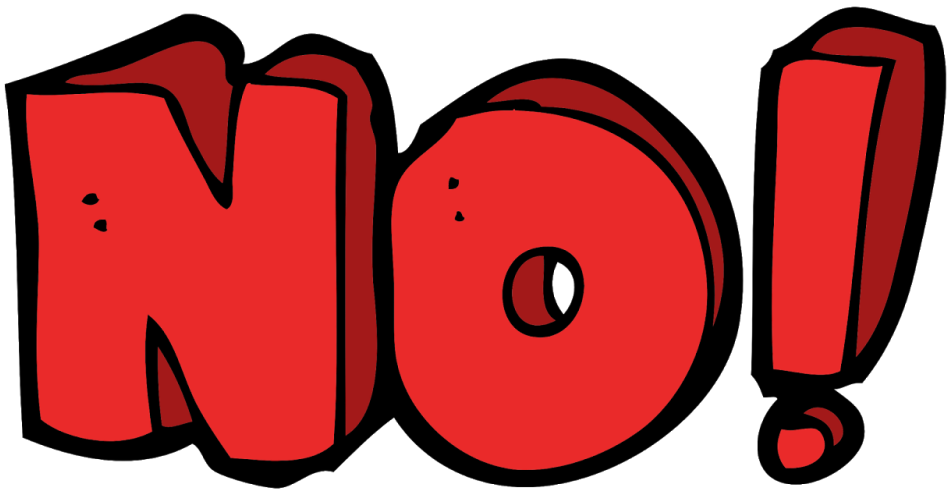
Usually, people pick the task that fits the energy they have. A contemplative mood, for instance, could be great for work that requires lots of focus such as writing, drawing a masterpiece and interviewing (or getting interviewed) for a job.

A less-known practice about energy is that we can optimize it for the type of task you need to work on. 10 minutes of meditation can get you into a focused mood for writing. The 7-minute workout that you did at 5 a.m. this morning could give you the confidence you need for the interview you are having at 8 a.m.

So, when you need to work on a task that you don't have the right energy for, ask yourself, What can I do to optimize my energy for that?

It is best to schedule your day around your energy. But know that you can align your energy for the task that you need to work on, too.

19. Say No to What You Want



Yes, you read it right.

It is not enough to say no to what others want you to do. You must also say no to what *you* want to do. Do you need to finish that report today but want to reply to an email from your boss, a bit?

Sometimes, the temptation to do what you want could be irresistible. It could be more difficult to say no to yourself than to others. When you can say no to what you want and focus on what you need, saying no to others could also get easier.

You need to learn to say no to what you want to say yes to incredible things that make you happy in your work and life. It takes great efforts but with daily practice, you will get good at it.

Take the following steps to learn how to say no to your non-essentials:

First, know your daily priorities. By doing so, you know exactly what you need to do to make your day great. For example, when you know that the most important things today is writing your blog post, and submitting the report that you've been working on for the past four days, it will make it more difficult to do something else until you have completed the two tasks.

Then, list down your wants that could take your attention away from your important tasks. Usually, these are habitual patterns we keep getting into every time we are faced with a difficult task. For example, you go for unnecessarily long gossip with a colleague whenever you feel stuck. Others could be checking emails and scrolling through your social media feeds.

Commit to following one course until successful (FOCUS). Use chatting with other colleagues or checking emails and messages as a reward you can give yourself after you complete your important task.

Catch yourself getting distracted. It could be difficult at first. You might go hours without even noticing it. But with practice, good planning, and a strong commitment, you will get good at it, sometimes, even before you actually get distracted.

Pause. Take a few deep breaths and bring your mind home to your body. Stay with the sensations and feelings without judgment. Your breaths could be shallow. Your chest might feel tense. Just observe how your body and mind react.

Finally, gently return to your task when you're ready. You can use the 1-minute rule to make a comeback easier.

20. Don’t Multitask

Why do I talk about multitasking in a time management article? Simple. When you multitask, you become less efficient. In fact, it takes up to 40% longer to complete a task than if you do a single task.

Multitasking causes stress. Mistakes happen more often than not when you multitask. It drains your energy faster and you will become exhausted sooner. In the long run, it could cost you your health.

If you follow the tips and techniques in this guide, stopping multitasking will become easy.

Learn to let each task fill your world.

21. Avoid Half-Work

James Clear, the author of the Atomic Habits, coined this term, half-work.

He advises eliminating half-work at all costs.

The technique suggests that if you start doing something, you have to finish it. For example, if you decide to follow a particular workout regime, stick to it until the end of the program.

Don't do anything else if you plan to write for 90 minutes. No checking your phone, email, or social media during that time.

It allows you to be more self-disciplined and get things done faster as you keep your concentration on the task you're working on without distractions.

Bonus #1: The Maker's Schedule vs Manager's Schedule

Paul Graham introduced this concept back in July 2009. He believes that makers (like writers and programmers) prefer to use time in units of half a day at least. “You can't write or program well in units of an hour,” Paul wrote. “That's barely enough time to get started.”

The manager’s schedule is different. People on this type of schedule work in blocks of 60 minutes. You can (and usually do) change what you're doing every hour.

Paul’s article so hit home for me. It takes me some 90 minutes to get in the flow of writing and whenever I can, I will prefer to spend the whole day writing, without interruptions. However, as a facilitator and consultant, I

also understand the importance and power of meetings and working with others.

An African proverb reads, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Therefore, it is crucial to strike a balance between the maker’s schedule and the manager’s schedule.

How?

There are no one-size-fits-all rules for this. But you can follow my guide here.

Start by using the first 2-3 hours at least for your MITs. If you’re a maker, you might want to spend the whole morning on your craft.

Do emails, calls, messages, and low-value tasks when you’re in a fast-paced mood. For me, this usually happens in the afternoon. But, there are days when I feel so energetic until late afternoon and do them just before I wrap up my day.

Make meetings work. Meetings are necessary. The problem is mostly the way we run them. Productive meetings should be engaging, invite all the voices (especially the silent ones) in the room, and employ creative processes. That’s why it’s a good idea to hire a facilitator for your important meeting.

Bonus #2: Make Your Phone Work for You

The reason for this being a bonus is that this is not a technique nor a tip. But it is very important if you really want to take back control of your time and life.

An average person spends 3 hours and 15 minutes a day on their phone – more than enough to finish a book or publish a long article every week.

Rethink your relationship with your smartphone and stop making it your boss.

Here are some of my phone configurations that could be helpful for you:

Turn off app notifications. I do not get notifications about new messages or emails. Apps that I allow for notifications are Todoist, Calm, Habitica, Sleep Cycle, BeFocused Pro, Dashlane, and my calendar apps. Basically, only notifications from my productivity apps are on.

Enable Do Not Disturb Mode. Only calls from my contacts can get through. If your work requires analytical and creative thinking, this feature is necessary. You can always return the call if you want to afterward. Schedule time for phone calls and messages if that works.

Place productivity apps on your home screen or dock. This saves a few clicks and swipes each time you want to open a productivity app – enough time for a quick phone call every day.

Turn off "Raise to wake" to add an extra step to getting distracted from my difficult and meaningful tasks. And oftentimes, this one additional layer works for me.

Click here to learn how you can make these configurations.

That's it. Thanks for reading this far!

Over to You:

I hope this comprehensive guide helps you manage your time better.

Now I'd like to turn it over to you:

What was your favorite technique or tip from this guide? Which one will you apply?

Or maybe you have an excellent time management tip or technique that you think I should add.

Either way, let me know by leaving a comment on the post at https://ysamphy.com/time-management-techniques-tips.