



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO GETTING STUFF DONE

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Everyone wants to be more productive. We want to be able to get more stuff done so that we have time for the things that we enjoy.

Some people seem to be able to get everything done on time with little to no stress. Others struggle to get even the simplest tasks completed. What is it that makes some people so productive, and how can you become more like them?

In this guide, we're going to do a deep dive into productivity. We'll look at what productivity is and why it's important. Then we'll go through specific tactics and strategies to help you get more done in less time.

Ready?

Let's dive in.



WHAT IS PRODUCTIVITY?

Before we get into tactics and strategies for getting more done, let's make sure we're all on the same page regarding productivity.

What exactly is productivity?

If you process 100 emails in an hour, is that productive? Maybe. If you finish a project ahead of time, are you being productive? Again, maybe.

See here's the thing. Productivity is more than just getting things done. You can get a lot done and not be productive. You can get only one thing done and be very productive.

Productivity is getting the *right* things done at the *right* time.

Let's break that down a bit.

Being productive means getting the RIGHT things done. What are the "right" things? The things that are most important and will make the biggest difference in your life.

The right thing could be something seemingly mundane, like an email, or a task in a million-dollar project. It depends on which is most important at the time.

Productivity is also about getting things done at the RIGHT time. This means getting things done when they need to be done. It means

getting the most important things done exactly when they need to be done.

Productive people hit deadlines. They don't procrastinate. They prioritize and manage their time well.

Are you starting to get the picture? When you're trying to be productive, it's not just about checking off as many items on your to-do list as possible. It's about making sure those items are the most important and completing them in a timely manner.

Now that we have a clear understanding of what productivity is, let's dive into some tips and tricks for actually getting stuff done.



START WITH WHY

Before you start trying to be more productive, it's important to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. You need to know why you're trying to get things done. You need to connect with your purpose, your values, and your passions.

This will help you stay motivated and focused on the tasks at hand.

We're going to get into goal setting in a minute, but before we do, it's essential that you have your "why?" in place. Knowing what you really care about will help you set goals that are aligned with your personal values. It will also help ensure that your goals are meaningful and fulfilling.

To help you identify your core values, ask yourself these questions:

- What do I care most about?
- Who is most important to me?
- What do I want to achieve in life?
- How do I want to make a difference in the world?
- In what ways do I want to grow or improve myself?
- What legacy do I wish to leave behind?
- How can I contribute to the well-being of my community or society?

These questions will help you dig deep and find your purpose. Don't rush through them. Take time to ponder them. Perhaps get a notebook and write down your answers.

Siqi Chen said, "**Life is short. Do stuff that matters.**" You only have a certain number of years to make a difference in the world and reach your achievements. You need absolute clarity on your "why?" to make the most of your time and energy.



SET CLEAR GOALS

Now that you have your "why?", it's time to start setting goals.

Every goal must be connected to a larger purpose. The goals you set should flow out of the answers to your "why?" questions.

For example, say that one of your core values is professional success. You are driven to succeed at your job and you're willing to do the necessary work. This overarching value can fuel any number of goals.

It can help you have the drive to get projects done quickly and efficiently. It can also help you develop the skills necessary to succeed in your field. Or, it could motivate you to pursue a promotion or raise.

If one of your core values is family and relationships, then your goals may revolve around spending more quality time with loved ones. This could include setting aside specific nights for family dinners, planning vacations together, or just spending time together.

The point is this: your goals should be fueled by your values.

See, there will eventually come a point when you ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? Why am I putting in all this hard work?" In those moments, you need to be able to look back at your values and remember why you started in the first place.

Setting SMART Goals

The SMART process is one of the most effective ways to set and achieve goals. SMART stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound

It's important to have each of these elements in your goals. Let's break down what each one means:

Your goals should be SPECIFIC, leaving no room for ambiguity or confusion. For example, instead of saying "I want to get in shape," say "I want to lose 35 pounds and lower my body fat percentage to 15%." Vague goals can't be achieved. You have no way of knowing whether or not you hit your target.

Your goals should also be MEASURABLE. In other words, you should be able to track your progress regularly to know how close you are to achieving your goal.

For example, you could say, "I want to increase leads for my business by 25%." By having metrics in place, you always know exactly where you stand relative to achieving your goals.

Your goals should be ACHIEVABLE, meaning that they should push you out of your comfort zone, but not so much that they become impossible. Setting unrealistic goals can lead to frustration and a feeling of failure.

It's important to challenge yourself, but also be realistic about what you can accomplish.

Your goals should be RELEVANT. This means that they should have an important impact on your life in some way. For example, setting a goal to learn a new language could be a good thing in general, but not necessarily relevant to your goal of getting promoted.

Lastly, your goals should be TIME-BOUND. This means that you should have a specific deadline in mind for when you want to achieve your goal. This adds urgency and helps you stay on track towards achieving it. For example, "I want to increase business leads by 25% by the end of this quarter."

By following the SMART method, you can set clear and achievable goals that will help guide your actions and ultimately lead to success.

It's important to regularly review your goals. This helps you stay on track. You can compare your actual performance to the goal you set. It also keeps your goals top of mind, which can help motivate you to take action towards achieving them.

Additionally, as you grow and change over time, your goals may need to be adjusted. Regularly reviewing and reassessing your goals allows for flexibility and the ability to pivot if necessary. It's important to not view goal setting as a one-time event, but rather a continuous process that evolves with us.



PRIORITIZE YOUR TASKS

Ideally, you want to work on your most important tasks when you have the most energy and are the most alert. This makes sense on a fundamental

level. The most important things in your life should be the top priorities in your day.

However, to match your tasks with your energy, you need to know when you're most energized and when you tend to fade. This requires self-awareness and tracking your energy levels throughout the day.

Once you have a good understanding of your energy patterns, you can structure your day to match these peaks and valleys.

For example, if you know you're the most productive in the morning, schedule your most important tasks during this time period. Alternatively, if you tend to feel sluggish after lunch, do low-priority tasks like emailing or responding to chat messages.

Dale Carnegie said, "**Do the hard jobs first. The easy jobs will take care of themselves.**" He understood that the jobs that are hardest are usually the most important ones. They require more dedication and more energy than unimportant jobs.

You must resist the temptation to do the easy tasks first. For example, it's probably not the best use of your energy to dive into email when

you first start working. Rather, save that for when your energy levels are lower and you need a break from more intensive tasks.

The key is to be intentional with how you use your energy. **By matching your tasks with your energy levels, you can maximize productivity and ensure that the most important goals are being prioritized.** It's a simple but effective strategy for achieving success in both work and life.

Use the Eisenhower Matrix

If you're not sure which tasks you should be working on first, the Eisenhower Matrix can be very helpful. Developed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the matrix is a way to prioritize tasks based on their urgency and importance.

The matrix is divided into four quadrants:

- Important and urgent
- Important but not urgent
- Not important but urgent
- Not important or urgent

Important and urgent tasks should be your top priority. These are typically time-sensitive tasks that require immediate attention.

Next, focus on the important but not urgent tasks. These are usually tasks that require a long, sustained amount of work. It can be hard to get these things done because they're not urgent, which is why it's essential you make time to work on them.

For example, say you determine that writing a book can really help catapult your career to the next level. While it's not urgent, it is important and requires a significant amount of time and effort.

Similarly, the third quadrant consists of tasks that may be urgent but are not important. **These tasks should be delegated or eliminated altogether if possible.** One caveat to this is what's called the "Two Minute Rule".

If a task can be done by you in two minutes or less, just do it then and there. Don't bother with trying to find someone else to do the task for you.

Finally, the last quadrant is reserved for tasks that are neither urgent nor important. These are distractions that should also be eliminated to maximize productivity.

Batching Tasks

Another way to handle tasks that are important but not urgent is by doing them in batches. For example, you may set aside a certain amount of time every day to go through your email and chat messages and respond to all of them.

This way, you are not constantly interrupting your workflow to respond to individual messages, but rather tackling them all at once when it is most convenient for you.



WORK SMARTLY WITH OTHERS

There's a good chance that you work with other people, whether in an office or virtually. And while it's great to have teammates, they can sometimes hinder your productivity and keep

you from getting things done. You need to have processes in place for working with others in an effective way.

Plan for Interruptions

One of the biggest challenges when working with others is dealing with interruptions. Since you can't control other people's actions, it's important to plan for these interruptions and set boundaries.

For example, if you have a project that requires uninterrupted focus, communicate this to your team and ask them not to disturb you during specific times. This will allow you to fully concentrate on the task at hand and avoid unnecessary disruptions.

It can also be helpful to build in buffer times throughout your day so you have some room for interruptions. For example, if you want to get a task done in 45 minutes, give yourself a full hour in case an interruption arises.

Another way to handle interruptions is to defer them to a specific time of day when you can handle them in a focused manner. For example, say you're working on an important task and

someone asks if they can have ten minutes of your time. Instead of stopping what you're doing, schedule a time later in the day to address their concerns. **This way, you can stay on track with your work and still give the person the attention they need.**

Learn to Say "No" Gracefully

If you want to be productive and get things done, it's important to learn to say "no" in a graceful manner. The reality is that if you don't take control of your time, others will do it for you. You need to learn to say "No," in a way that doesn't offend the person but is still firm.

This may be an uncomfortable skill to develop at first, but it's crucial for your productivity and well-being. You can start by politely declining requests that don't align with your priorities or schedule.

For example, "Thank you for thinking of me, but I'm currently working on a project that requires my full attention. I'm happy to circle back on this at a later date."

Consider using the "No, but," strategy when declining people's requests. When someone

asks you to do something for them, decline but also offer them an alternative. For example, "I can't do that at the moment, but I'm happy to look at it tomorrow morning."

This way, you can still be helpful while also prioritizing your own tasks. Remember, it's okay to say "no" when it comes to protecting your time and productivity.

Delegate or Outsource Tasks

We touched on this already, but it's worth giving more attention. If at all possible, delegate tasks that don't align with your strengths or priorities. **This way, you can focus on the tasks that truly require your attention and expertise.**

If you have a team, consider assigning tasks to members who are more suited for them, rather than taking on everything yourself. If you work independently, look into outsourcing tasks that take up too much time or are not in line with your values.

Remember, your time is valuable and should be spent on tasks that bring value to you and others. Don't hesitate to delegate or outsource when necessary.



FOCUS ON FOCUS

One of the great hindrances to productivity is distractions. And the harsh reality is that distractions are everywhere. All of us are carrying around distraction devices in the form of a smartphone. Our email is constantly pinging and we get Slack messages throughout the day.

Then there is social media and YouTube and Reddit and a million other sites on the internet that can suck away our attention. It's up to us to prioritize where we focus our attention.

It's important to focus on focus. In other words, do everything you can to promote your focus. Andrew Carnegie understood the importance of focus. He said:

And here is the prime condition of success, the great secret— concentrate your energy, thought and capital exclusively upon the business in which you are engaged.”

Without focus, we won't get anything done. We'll fritter away our time and energy on things that don't really matter. So what can you do to promote more focus?

Ruthlessly Eliminate Distractions

The starting point is to do everything in your power to eliminate unnecessary distractions. This may mean turning off your phone during working hours or setting specific times to check your email and social media. It may also mean blocking certain websites while you're trying to work.

Tools like Freedom and RescueTime can block websites and apps that distract you when you should be focusing on work.

Another way to eliminate distractions is to reduce the noise levels in your workspace.

This could mean using soundproofing or noise-canceling headphones to block out external sounds.

It's also important to let others know when you need some focused time and ask them not to disturb you during those periods.

Remember, every time you give in to a distraction, it takes you away from your main goal and decreases your productivity. You need to be ruthless when it comes to eliminating distractions.

Embrace Single-Tasking

It's easy to fall into the trap of trying to multitask. You start working on one thing and then something else catches your attention and you shift to work on that thing. Then you shift your attention back to the other thing and before you know it, you're multitasking.

Studies have shown that multitasking is not effective and actually decreases our productivity. Every time you shift your focus from one thing to another, it takes time to get in the proper mindset to work on what's in front of you.

Instead, try single-tasking. Focus on one task at a time and give it your full attention until it's completed. This allows you to fully immerse yourself in the task and produce better quality work in less time.

Time management expert Cal Newport recommends doing "deep work" as often as possible. Deep work refers to dedicating substantial blocks of uninterrupted time to engage in meaningful work on significant tasks.

It entails deliberately setting aside shallow activities such as email or texting, and instead, devoting focused attention to accomplishing important objectives.

Remember, time spent multitasking is time lost that could be spent doing deep work. Embrace single-tasking and watch your productivity soar!

Optimize Your Workspace

Your workspace can have a big impact on your focus and productivity. If your workspace is cluttered, noisy, or uncomfortable, it's easy to get distracted and lose focus.

Take the time to organize your workspace so it's conducive to productivity. This can include decluttering your desk, setting up a comfortable chair, and minimizing distractions like loud noises or bright lights.

Consider using a white noise machine or ambient focus music to block out distractions and create a more peaceful environment.

Personalize your workspace with items that inspire you or make you happy, such as photos, plants, or motivational quotes. This can help create a positive and enjoyable atmosphere for working.

Also, think about the layout of your workspace. Keep frequently used items within reach and set up your computer in a way that minimizes strain on your neck and eyes.

Take Breaks

Taking breaks is essential for maintaining focus and productivity throughout the day. It may seem counterintuitive, but stepping away from work periodically can actually help you get more done in less time.

Consider taking your breaks at the times when your energy and focus are the lowest. This gives your brain time to rest and reset, as well as giving your body a break too.

Taking breaks can also help prevent burnout and increase creativity.

During your breaks, try to do something unrelated to work, such as taking a walk, reading a book, or listening to music. This will give your mind a chance to recharge and come back to your tasks with more energy and focus.

Use the Pomodoro Method

The Pomodoro Method is a time management technique that includes bursts of focused work followed by periods of rest.

It works like this:

- Set a timer for 25 minutes (1 Pomodoro)
- During that time, choose a task and focus exclusively on it
- When the timer rings, stop and take a five-minute break
- After four Pomodoros, take a longer break (20-30 minutes)

A few notes on this strategy. First, if you have a task that is going to take more than four Pomodoros, you should probably break that task down into smaller tasks. This allows you to see how much progress you're making, which is a morale booster.

Second, if you have tasks that will take less than one Pomodoro, group them all together into a single session. Third, ensure that you always stick to the task at hand. No checking email, chatting on Slack, or browsing the web.

The point of a Pomodoro is to give all your attention to one thing. This laser focus can help you get much more done.

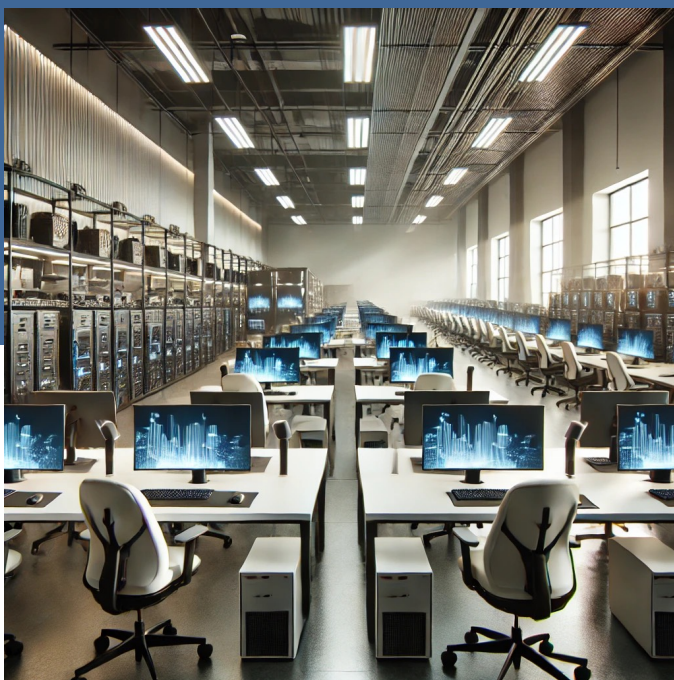
Implement Time Blocking

Time blocking is a simple, yet powerful way to prioritize tasks and finish them by the deadline. It works like this. You assign specific tasks to specific times of the day and block that time off in your calendar. You treat these blocks of time just like you would an important meeting. You have to do them.

The power of time blocking is that it allows you to be in charge of your calendar. Instead of reacting to every email and request that comes in, you have a plan for your day. This helps you stay focused and eliminates distractions.

Time blocking goes hand-in-hand with task prioritization. You can block off time when you are at your best for the most important tasks. This ensures that you are making the most of your productive hours and getting the most important tasks done first.

In addition, time blocking allows for breaks in between tasks. This gives your mind a chance to rest and recharge before tackling the next task. It also prevents burnout and fatigue, which can greatly decrease productivity.



UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY TO THE FULLEST

You can be productive without using any technology. With just a pen and paper, you can make a to-do list that works perfectly well. That

said, technology can supercharge your productivity.

Here are some of the best apps and digital tools:

Task Managers

Task management tools serve as digital to-do lists. They can help you stay on top of tasks and keep your priorities in order. They can also make project management significantly easier. They allow you to list all the tasks in a project, move them around in priority order, and assign due dates.

Some of the best task managers are:

- **Todoist** - A simple, yet powerful task management app. Easily organize all your tasks and get reminders on due dates.
- **Trello** - A visual task management tool that uses boards, lists, and cards to organize and prioritize tasks. Great for collaborative projects.
- **Asana** - A project management tool that allows you to create and assign tasks, set deadlines, and track progress. Ideal for

teams or individuals managing multiple projects.

Time Tracking

Time tracking tools can help you see how much time you're spending on tasks. You may be surprised to find that some tasks take much longer than expected, while others take less time. This information can help you better plan your schedule in the future.

Some of the best time-tracking apps are:

- **Harvest** - This app is incredibly easy to use while also being very robust. Great for solo entrepreneurs or teams.
- **Toggl** - A simple, yet powerful time-tracking tool. It allows you to track your time across multiple devices and seamlessly switch between tasks.
- **RescueTime** - This app runs in the background of your computer or phone and tracks how much time you spend on certain websites or applications. It also provides detailed reports on your productivity habits.

Note-Taking

Note-taking apps allow you to gather all your thoughts in a central location and organize them by various categories. These apps can also be useful for writing documents, taking meeting notes, or brainstorming ideas.

Some of the best note-taking apps are:

- **Evernote** - A popular app that allows you to create notes, save web clippings, and even attach files. It also has a great search function for finding specific notes.
- **OneNote** - Microsoft's note-taking app that syncs across all your devices. It offers features such as drawing and handwriting recognition.
- **Notion** - A powerful app that combines note-taking with project management and task tracking. It has a clean, customizable interface and is great for team collaboration.

Calendar Apps

A productive person takes control of their calendar. They aren't reactive and don't allow their day to get derailed easily. A calendar app that syncs across all your devices can be a very helpful tool, especially if you implement time blocking.

Some of the best calendar apps include:

- **Google Calendar** - A great free tool that syncs across all types of devices. It allows you to easily create time blocks, set up meetings, and receive reminders.
- **Fantastical** - This app has a user-friendly interface and allows you to add events with natural language commands. It also integrates with other popular apps such as Todoist and Trello.
- **Apple Calendar** - For Apple users, the built-in calendar app is a great option. It has features similar to Google Calendar and integrates well with the Apple ecosystem.

Cloud Storage

If you work across multiple devices (laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.), cloud storage is essential. This allows you to access your files from anywhere, making it easier to work on the go.

Some popular cloud storage options include:

- **Google Drive** - A widely used and trusted option for storing documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. It also integrates with other Google apps such as Gmail and Google Docs.
- **Dropbox** - Another popular choice that offers a user-friendly interface and easy file-sharing options. It also has a feature that allows you to sync specific folders with your computer, making it easy to access files offline.
- **OneDrive** - Microsoft's cloud storage option, which comes with certain Office 365 plans. It offers seamless integration with other Microsoft apps and allows for real-time collaboration on documents.



TAKING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide. We defined productivity, established your "why", set goals, and talked about a variety of productivity strategies.

Here's the thing you need to know about these strategies. They all build upon one another and complement each other. So you don't have to implement them all, and certainly not all at once.

Rather, try to start with one or two strategies that will make the most difference in your life. You could start by eliminating distractions or you could embrace single-tasking. Or maybe you feel like time blocking would give you the most bang for your buck.

Start small and slowly add on more and more strategies as you become increasingly more productive. Over time, you'll become a productivity powerhouse.