

10 Ways to Increase Your Productivity Today

Below are ten key habits for increasing productivity:

1. **Simplify.** Get in the habit of simplifying your life. Only keep papers you really need. Create a simple filing system that works for you. Only have on your desk what you are working on. Clean up the clutter and create a clean work environment. Physical clutter=mental clutter.
2. **Plan your day the night before.** Pick your top two focus areas for the following day. These should be important projects or tasks that contribute to results in your position. Pick no more than two. This ensures that you don't become overwhelmed by all you need to do. Picking two priorities allows you to focus quickly on where you will spend the majority of your day.
3. **Rather than create a "to do" list, schedule these two priorities into your calendar as appointments.** While a "to do" list can be helpful to get everything out of your head, it makes it very challenging to focus. There are too many items on the list to empower you to be productive. Don't allow your "to do" list to run your day. Pick the top two priorities and schedule a meeting with yourself to completely focus and accomplish them. The other things will fit in around your priorities and get done.
4. **Schedule at least two "productivity sprints" per day, ideally one in the morning.** Productivity sprints are 90 minute blocks of time for you to intensely focus on one of your priorities. This is when you shut your door (or go to another location), eliminate all distractions (close email, put your phone on 'do not disturb'), and intensely focus on the project at hand. It's amazing how much you can get done when you focus completely on one thing.
5. **Create a "no distraction" environment.** The average employee is interrupted 56 times a day. It's a wonder why we can't get anything done! During your productivity sprints, you should have no distractions. Put all electronic devices away, close down your email, and get prepared to be massively productive.
6. **Stop multi-tasking.** Despite what many professionals think, multi-tasking is counter-productive. It doesn't work. We can't possibly focus on more than one thing at a time. You may have multiple priorities, but you can only focus on one at a time. So pick one and concentrate.
7. **Turn off your email pop-up.** That ping that you see at the bottom of your screen every few minutes? It's a big time waster and distracter. Turn off the notification so you can focus and get results from what you are working on.
8. **Break larger tasks or projects into milestones or smaller steps.** Thinking about an entire project when you need to work on it only creates paralysis because of how much needs to get done.
9. **Focus on timelines, not deadlines.** A deadline is when something is due. A timeline is the time and effort you must put in to complete the task or project. Create timelines for each of your projects and schedule each component or milestone in your calendar.
10. **Take a break!** Rest and recovery are crucial to perform at your peak. Research shows that we can concentrate for about 90 minutes before needing a break. Getting away from your desk, taking a walk, or even reading for five minutes will give you the mental break you need to intensely focus and get more done.

Productivity Apps

Below are some popular applications that can help you manage projects, to-do lists, tasks, and overall become more productive:

- **Evernote:** a place to collect notes, ideas, document projects and more.
- **Wunderlist:** create to-do lists, reminders, and manage projects.
- **Google Calendar:** keep track of events online. You can share your calendar with family and friends and sync it with other devices.
- **Asana:** "Teamwork without email". Create task lists, organize projects, and get updates on projects without email.
- **ToDoist:** online to-do list and personal task manager.
- **Basecamp:** a project management tool. Basecamp makes it easy for people in different roles with different responsibilities to communicate and work together. It's a place to share files, have discussions, collaborate on documents, assign tasks, and check due dates.
- **Any.do:** manage and sync your tasks on multiple devices.
- **Toodledo:** a tool to increase your productivity and organize your life. More than just a to-do list, Toodledo provides you with a place to store your notes, lists and outlines. You can collaborate with friends, family or your co-workers, and store and sync all your data to your devices.
- **Clear:** a productivity app to create to-do lists, manage tasks, and get more organized.
- **Trello:** a project management app that lets you create "cards," for each project, upload files, and add checklists and due dates.
- **Teamwork PM:** manage your projects and teams. Includes a dashboard, project lists and tracks project activity.