10 Surefire Time Management Strategies That Work

### How to Manage Time and Increase Efficiency

Do you dread the start of each workday? Do you feel overwhelmed or unsure of what to tackle first? You can overcome much of that stress with these tried-and-true time management strategies.

1. Use visual timers. Pomodoro and other timing methods make it much easier to get focused for set periods of time. If you are someone who has trouble concentrating for long periods, then don’t! Focus for short periods instead.

2. Revamp your note-taking. Instead of just jotting notes in a list down a lined page, try different methods of note-taking that help prioritize tasks and ideas. For example, split a page into four sections by drawing lines down the middle and across. Label each section — for example, call the top left “Priority,” the top right “Tasks,” the bottom right “Ideas,” and the bottom left “Later.” Jot notes in the appropriate boxes; this structure helps you visualize what to tackle first and what to deal with at a later date. Other methods include the [Cornell system](https://www.howlifeunfolds.com/learning-education/paper-secret-learning-tool-will-work-you?&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=Writing+Tips+-+Productive+Learning+-+Exact&utm_keyword=note+taking+methods&gclid=CjwKCAjwtpGGBhBJEiwAyRZX2rs5z3fokJkW3VbqSMigSCnvCcp1gSLCZQ9peFXzG_y9u42L8f3CjxoC2KAQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds), bullet journaling, and sketch noting (which is very much like mind mapping).

3. Start the day with fun. Make the first task of your workday something you really enjoy. Put on headphones and listen to an upbeat song. [Look at cute puppies](https://www.instagram.com/puppiesofinstagram/?hl=en). Tend to the plant at your desk. Say hello to your co-workers. Whatever gives you joy.

4. Use musical cues to stop and start tasks. Use an app like My Music Timer (App Store only) to start and stop specific songs when it’s time to start working on a task or when it’s time to stop. Or, you can play music only while working on a task: set a sleep timer on Spotify that shuts off at a specific time. Or, use [Mr. Timer on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYo5An-3L_eOd1l5WQdU3oQ) to play background music for set periods of time.

5. Review your time spent on tasks. If there is a specific task you do regularly, like read and reply to emails, turn on your phone’s stopwatch function when you start that task and turn it off when you finish. Note how long it took to accomplish. Then, build that time into your work schedule. When you periodically review how long it takes to do certain tasks, you can better manage your overall workday.

6. Make a task list. Feeling overwhelmed by all the to-dos rolling around in your head? Not sure what you have to get done today? Start the day by making a bulleted task list. Just jot down everything you can think of, one after the other. Then, prioritize those tasks. You’ll find that most of them do not need to be done immediately; instead, you can bubble the most important two or three tasks to the top of the list, and get started with the most important one.

7. “Chunk” your tasks. I’m a big advocate of time chunking. Rather than detailing every single task I have to do, I group my to-dos into blocks or chunks of time. (Or you can call them buckets. Or cups. Whatever works for you!) For example, I have a chunk of time dedicated to any kind of administrative task: filing paperwork, organizing receipts, calling my accountant. I don’t lock myself into a single task or get stressed about accomplishing specific things; instead, by giving myself room to work in a broad area (small business administrative tasks are pretty broad) I can focus on things that I can do right then and not worry about the things I can’t get to right away.

8. Ask when you’re not sure. t sounds like a no-brainer, but plenty of people are reluctant to ask their co-worker or boss to clarify an assignment. If you watched the classic sitcom Seinfeld, you may remember the episode where George Costanza isn’t paying attention when his boss gives him an assignment; he spends the entire episode trying to figure out what he’s supposed to be doing, too embarrassed to go back and ask the boss for clear instructions. Don’t be like George.

9. Use every resource you can find. Don’t reinvent the wheel. The biggest benefit of the internet is that you can look up so much information and so many resources with just a few keystrokes. If a task seems daunting and you’re not sure how to tackle it, chances are someone has dealt with this problem before. Look up time management techniques. Search for resources related to the technology or process you’re working with. Build on what’s already been done, rather than grind through and try to learn it all from scratch.

10. Set and stick to your finish time. You may have a long task list to finish, but you also have a life outside of work. Use task scheduling or chunking methods to break up your workday into manageable blocks of time, and when the time for a task is past, start the next one. And don’t stay late at the office: When the day is done, shut down your laptop and go home. You can start again tomorrow.

These 10 surefire tips to manage your time and workload at work can increase your productivity and reduce anxiety. I don’t know about you, but when I’m overwhelmed with tasks and deadlines, my anxiety skyrockets. That’s when I get back to basics and do what I know: These tips work.

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