

# 10 Ways to Maximize Productivity

With the busy lives and juggled schedules of today, it's easy to find yourself with very little time left to do the things we want to do with our lives.

One solution to this problem is to cut down on the number of tasks you have to worry about. If you have things in your life that take up time but are unnecessary, cutting them out will free up some time for you. That's simply a matter of deciding what matters to you and if it's truly worth your time.

But, we wouldn't be trying to increase the *productivity* of our time if we didn't already have full plates with tasks that to some degree are required of us.

Luckily there are easy steps we can take to become more effective at achieving more in less time, leaving more time and energy to do the things that actually matter to you

## 1.) Get Enough Sleep

If you have ever pulled an all-nighter before an important event, you know how difficult it can be to keep your mind on your task and stay focused and alert.

Without enough sleep, we begin to rapidly lose focus on what we are trying to do and the quality that we do it with, and that is just one detriment of not getting enough rest.

You are also likely to be stressed more easily, more prone to be emotional or moody, as well as suffer from physical problems like dehydration and headaches.

Which aside from more serious health issues, does you no favors in the productivity department.

Your body and mind need to be able to recover from yesterday, process everything you took in, heal physically, and then have the energy and focus to do it again.

If you don't allow yourself this time, you will be fighting a losing battle when the time comes to take action. Nevermind trying to get things done effectively.

Chris Bailey, author of "The Productivity Project", shares a tip that states for every hour of sleep that we lose, we lose two hours of productivity.

So next time you are deciding between getting some sleep and staying up and grinding through, do yourself a favor and catch those Z's.

## **2.) Eliminate Distraction**

This is a tough one for many people, but if its time to get some work done, its also time to put your phone away, or at least turn on your 'do not disturb" function.

If you are trying to increase how much you get done and every minute or so your phone notifies you of some alert that catches your attention, even if you have the will power to ignore it, that notification has still pulled your focus away from your task.

If it's not a digital distraction, then suddenly while you are trying to focus, you conveniently remember you need to do laundry. Or walk the dog. Or pay the bills. Or watch the next episode of your favorite show has just been uploaded to your favorite streaming service.

If you struggle to stay focused, one of the simplest ways to rid yourself of distractions and time-sucks like these is to simply remove either the distraction or yourself from the area if possible.

Take a trip to the library, go to your favorite coffee or tea shop and go all out on what it is you want to get done. Just make sure the location allows you to get in the zone and focus on what you are trying to do.

### **3.) Big Tasks First**

It might seem like a good idea to try to get as much of your list done as possible by doing all of the little tasks first so that all you will be left with at the end will only have the one big thing left to focus your attention on.

However, this creates a false sense of accomplishment. When its time to step back and see how far along you are in your work you might find that you haven't done too much.

On top of that, you have now used a lot of your energy, focus, and will-power, (which, in a 24-hour time frame we know can be way more finite than we would like.) Leaving you with an empty fuel tank for your most challenging items.

This leaves you with plenty of opportunities to find yourself distracted or to put off the task entirely for another day.

So, tackle the big stuff first and as early as possible that way if somehow you didn't finish any of your other tasks, you got the most important thing done first, and can feel good about yourself at the end of the day.

### **4.) Ask Yourself Why**

This may seem like a no-brainer but bear with me. Before you can find your focus and get the coal churning, you will need a good reason to get this task done that matters to you!

This can serve as both a motivational tool if you have a long term goal in place and are working on a small part of the larger picture. But this can also serve to provide some clarity in other forms. Asking yourself why it matters can also provide some insight into your motivations and goals in life in a bigger way than you imagined. Either way, if you are not invested it can be very difficult to start a project let alone finish it with efficiency.

If you have a large report that your manager wants on their desk yesterday but you also hate your job, it might be a bit difficult to sit down and get that done.

By asking yourself this question, you have flipped the tables on the situation and allowed yourself the ability to find a reason for it to mean something to you. Even if it is just the peace of mind found in having your mission completed.

The positive effects of asking yourself why the items on your to-do list matter to you leak into the rest of your life as well.

When we have a reason and a purpose for doing something, we also find some direction and purpose for what we would like our lives to look like overall. This will lead you to want to be more efficient and deliberate in other areas of your life.

## **5.) Get Started**

If you have even had a gym membership this concept should come as no surprise.

The hardest steps to take are usually the first ones out the door. And this relates to your productivity as well. If you want to get more done nothing can help as much as getting started.

More often than not, once we get started on a project, we tend to gather some momentum that is extremely effective at carrying us through the rest of the way.

If it's really difficult for you to get started or you are a creative and you are having some sort of block this is even more effective.

You don't have to imagine tackling the whole project at once. It helps to even tell yourself that you will just work on your task for 10 minutes. Usually, by the 10-minute mark, you are in the

flow of work and will probably end up finishing what you started. If you don't, that's fine too, because you got 10 minutes worth of work more done than you would have had you not started at all.

## **6.) Set Goals and Milestones**

Setting goals in life is one of the easiest ways to focus on bite-sized objectives along the way to your version of success.

If your goal is to clean out your attic but you know it's going to be a multi-day project, don't set your goal simply as *finish cleaning out the attic*.

It's much easier to take on big items by breaking them up into more manageable and less discouraging chunks. So, for the attic, you might choose to organize everything into categories first before you do anything with your stuff.

By doing this, you have gotten closer to your original goal of *finishing the attic*, but measurably.

Setting goals also brings focus to your original task. It's hard to be efficient if you just start cleaning out the attic for cleaning's sake, versus, you want to give half of the clutter away to a charity because your stuff is just collecting dust for you.

So your goals bring with them focused, bite-sized chunks that don't discourage you because a project might just be too large to take down all at once, and markers by which you can then track your productivity.

## **7.) Know your Numbers**

If you want to be serious about getting more done in less time, you have to know how long it takes you to get your stuff done at the pace you are completing them now.

For example, you want to streamline your morning routine.

And let's say you get up at 6:00 am and have to be out the front door by 8:30.

In this amount of time you would like to exercise, prepare and eat breakfast, shower, get dressed and read a book and have some coffee or tea.

Before you can begin to minimize the time it takes to scramble your eggs you will need to know how long it is taking you.

Once you have timed your tasks and know how long they take to complete, add those times together and get an idea of how long your whole morning routine is taking you.

From here we can begin to work on being more efficient in each area of our morning. Maybe you could cut your workout down from one hour to 45 minutes if you turn up your intensity a bit.

Or when you make breakfast, you never know what you want to eat and it takes you 10 minutes to decide. To improve this we can have everything you want to cook prepped and pulled the night before.

Whatever the case may be, by making ourselves aware of the time it takes to complete a task, we can then take steps to improve upon how long that takes by making small adjustments until we become as productive as we would like to be.

## **8.) Stop Procrastinating**

Procrastination is something that every person does. Much of the world today provides instant gratification. Technology has allowed us the freedom of ordering not only our items but our groceries to our doors.

We no longer have to go to the movie theater or even the store to buy a movie. It is streamed on our devices at home or on the road.

However, many of the things in our lives that matter and will make a lasting impact don't happen instantly. They take effort, focus, attention, and patience.

This does not sit well with most of us, as we become more used to instant gratification for what we do, which, with time and technology, has rapidly required much less input on our part.

This has two impacts on our mindsets. One, we become more off-put by things that require more of our attention and time; especially if it does not provide some sort of reward immediately once the task is complete. Two, we become desensitized as to why we feel less inclined to tackle meaning full work that we know is good for us.

Once all of this comes together, it's very easy to put things off for another time that is more convenient for us. Until it never gets done.

To avoid this slippery slope of putting things off until *tomorrow* or *later*. All we have to do is change the perception of our tasks to match our new instant gratification lifestyles.

If a task is obscure we just have to bring some clarity and structure to the project so that it won't feel so overwhelming and we can get started. If your task is boring, find a way to liven it up so that you can have a little fun with it.

If your project is difficult and you put it off because you are not sure where to start; do some research and remember that taking the time to make yourself more knowledgable on the topic will as also make the job easier and faster.

If there is no real reward for you personally in your project and that is the reason you put it off for later; have some fun and create a reward for yourself based on how much you can complete in a given amount of time.

## **9.) Focus on One Thing and One Thing Only**

Trying to cross multiple items off of your list at once might seem like a good plan. Many of us in our busy lives even pride ourselves on our ability to juggle many of the things life throws our way.

However, this is something we want to avoid if we want to be truly productive. We have to remember that being *busy* is not the same as being *productive*. This means that while you might be able to do five things at once, if we aren't any closer to accomplishing anything we are not doing much different from being lazy or putting the task off entirely.

When we are focused on one thing, we can use all of the other tools that we have gained to make our work more effective at bringing us closer to accomplishing our goal.

## **10.) Relax**

I know, how are we supposed to be more productive if we are taking it easy? However, have you ever had a deadline for a project and found that because you are so stressed about completing it you can't get much done? Peace of mind and happiness can play a major role in how productive we can be.

When we are relaxed but deliberate with our efforts things tend to flow much more easily and naturally and allow us to express ourselves in our work in ways that when we are stressed we simply cannot achieve.

Take deliberate breaks while you are working if you sense you are losing focus or burning out. Play some music that allows you to be calm and alert ( while making sure music is not distracting us). Or make sure you have enough time to do what you need to do so that you don't need to rush through your project.

Part of being productive is being able to enjoy to some extent the work you are doing. The enjoyment and fulfillment that comes with productive work can lead us into a state where accomplishing something can be all the reason we need to naturally move into more efficient

ways of working that don't require us to push ourselves or apply unnecessary pressure that can result in procrastination and aversion to our tasks.