

A tiny book about

# Everyday Productivity

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# Introduction

Do you often find your workday spiraling out of control? You start each day with a plan to get so much done, but soon find yourself distracted, focusing on low-priority tasks, and, simply, procrastinating.

If you can relate to that, this book is for you. Exactly you!

When writing this book, I talked to **50+** professionals, athletes, and founders, each one of them at the peak of their careers, and some even doing multiple things at once while running a happy family.

I put all the conversations I had with them in a mixer grinder.

Switched it on.

Ran it multiple times, *GRRRR GRRRR*.

When I opened the lid of the jar, I had **25 highly effective, and yet very simple tricks** that can be implemented by anybody for enhanced productivity in everyday life.

## So, how to read this book?

Each trick is its own little chapter and can be read in isolation. No need to read the book in sequential order or from cover to cover. Read what excites you and implement in your life what seems to easily fit in.

By no means do I assume that one should even try to put all 25 of these tricks to work in their lives.

Just applying three or four of these techniques into our lives will be a game-changer.

By the end of this book, if you don't see yourself getting **at least 10x more** productive, I'll walk the distance of my next flight!

That may be a bit too much, but you get the conviction, right?



Now I'll let you go and read this bundle of value I've put together for you.

If you find it valuable, do write back to me, I would love to hear from you. And share this book with your friends and family. Anybody can use a little help.

Now go. Read!

# The Sandwich Technique

*“I love sandwiches. Let’s face it, life is better between 2 pieces of bread.”*

*– Jeff Mauro*

Sandwiches make for a great breakfast. With vegetables/meat and cheese placed in between, it’s yum! Now imagine this, a sandwich without the slices of bread. Just the stuffing.

Would it still taste good? Um, not so much. The bread provides a nice cushioning for the veggies and cheese. Remove the bread and it’s a mess.

Now let’s apply the “sandwich” technique to our days.

How we start and end our day (slices of bread) is incredibly important in determining how we experience the day in between (veggies & cheese). Most of us are having our days without the slices of bread and it doesn’t taste great. The solution is to put in the slices of bread.

But how do we do that? Let’s find out.

## **How to make a “bread sandwich” day?**

Let’s first define “bread” in our daily context. Bread is the good stuff. Things that give you energy. Things that fuel you. Things that prepare you for harder things.

Different people like different kinds of bread. That is, different people derive energy from different kinds of activities. Some like to meditate, or do some exercise, or go for a run. While others like starting their day reading books.

Once you find the set of activities that give you energy, next is cushioning your days on both sides (morning & evening) with this set of activities. This will make the bread of your “sandwich day”.

But what about the veggies and cheese?

Well, you already have that sorted. It’s your work, the meetings, with all the distractions peppered in. If you manage to pack these in between 2 slices of bread (the good stuff), your sandwich (days) will taste great.

### **How to implement the sandwich technique? (steps):**

- Write down a few activities that fuel you, give you energy. Eg. meditation, going for a walk, hitting the gym, reading a book, playing with your kids, listening to music, etc.
- Put at least one of these activities in the morning and one in the evening routine.
- Feel free to shuffle between multiple activities from Step 1 to avoid monotony.
- Enjoy your sandwich day!

To give you an example, my morning starts with having a cup of tea with my family and chatting for a few minutes. And my evening ends with ten-kilometer cycling.

TLDR: Start and end your day with things that give you energy.

## Rule Of Three

*“Nothing happens without focus. Don't try to do everything at once.*

*Take it one step at a time.”*

*– Dave Ramsey*

Setting priorities takes guts. You've to make the hard decision of what's important and deserves your attention and what's not essential or can be dealt with later.

If you set out to do everything, you'll become overwhelmed and still not accomplish the important things. It's just not possible to do everything, even if we feel everything is vital in some way or the other. You still have to bring down the number of tasks for a day to do justice to them.

How do we do that?

By prioritizing. Or better put, ruthlessly prioritizing.

The Rule of 3 is perfect for anyone who finds themselves with too many things to do all the time.

### **What is “Rule of 3”?**

In the productivity context, “Rule of 3” refers to having no more than three priorities on a given day. It requires you to think and prioritize the three most important things that need your attention daily. Once you put these down, they take all your attention. You don't tend to other tasks until these three are accomplished.

This technique works because it forces you to think and ruthlessly prioritize the three most important things, eliminating the lesser important tasks for later. Thus, it saves your mental bandwidth. While also bringing clarity in execution and higher productivity levels.

## How to practice “Rule of 3”?

1. At the start of the day, take stock of everything that needs your attention, big or small.
2. Make a list of all the essential things you want to get done in the coming few days or weeks.
3. If something is too big, break it down into smaller things, and put them on the list as separate items.
4. Pick out the three most important things from this list.
5. Rank these 3 in order of importance, one being the most important.
6. Get working on them.
7. If you accomplish these three early in the day and still have energy for more, don’t chase to do more. Rest. The Rule of 3 is not a sprint but a marathon.
8. Review the three tasks you set out to accomplish today. Include them in the next day’s “Rule of 3” list if they’re not done yet.

TLDR: Have no more than 3 top priorities for any given day and put all your energy into getting them done. Having more than three priorities reduces your chances of getting the most important things done as the lesser important things keep distracting you.

Download the “Mailman Daily Planner” template (appendix A1) to start applying “Rule of 3” to your daily routine.

## Batched Meetings

*“If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings.’”*

*– Dave Barry*

Meetings are the enemy of productivity. If you have your meetings randomly spread across your day, they can easily suck up all your attention.

There’s a reason why meetings are so bad for creativity and productivity.

Meetings require some work before and after you are into them, plus they give off that anticipatory anxiety. That feeling, “ah I have that meeting coming up at 4!”

That just never goes away from the back of your head. Hence, you’re not able to do any amount of focused work.

We can’t let meetings ruin our days like this. It’s a sucker for productivity.

Is there a fix for this?

There is one, back-to-back meetings.

### **What is meant by “batched meetings”?**

“Batched meetings” is a practice of having all your meetings on specific days at select parts of the day. Basically, not letting your meetings spread across your calendar by limiting your availability to specific days and times.

Having back-to-back meetings is a great way to prevent the meetings from ruling your entire day. Once you set out a part of your day dedicated to meetings, you add some structure to your day. Which helps a great deal in making good use of the other part of the day for doing productive work.

## How to practice “batched meetings”?

1. Limit your meetings to specific days of the week. This would keep the other days free for undistracted work.
2. Have all your meetings in one part of the day, one after the other. It can be morning, or afternoon, or just before the end of the day. Keep a buffer of ten minutes between meetings to account for minor delays. If there are no delays, use this buffer to take some notes after a meeting.
3. Make your meeting availability clear to anyone who needs to get on a call with you.
4. Apps like [Calendly](#) are great in helping you choose your meeting availability hours and scheduling is as simple as sharing your link.

TLDR: Have all your meetings in batches, on specific days and select times. It can be the morning, or the afternoon, or the evening. Having meetings spread across the day disturbs your rhythm for the day quite a lot and you barely get any quality work done. By batching meetings, you protect the rest of the day for quality work.

## Batched emails

*“Deleting 200 spams a day is a drag. And I was checking my email constantly, rather than getting on with my real work, which is reading and writing. Email was becoming a distraction, a burden rather than a liberation.”*

*– Tom Hodgkinson*

According to the book – [Unsubscribe](#) – an average person checks their email 11 times per hour, processes 122 messages a day, and spends 28% of their total workweek managing their inbox. What was once a powerful and essential tool for doing our daily work has become a near-constant source of frustration, anxiety, and distraction from our work.

The problem is, emails just keep pouring in ALL THE TIME. That too at the time of others’ choosing. We have no control over our inbox!

This should not be like this. You should control when emails land in your inbox, and then, handle them in batches. Instead of the default way of checking your inbox all the time. Batched emails at pre-set times during the day are the way to go.

### **What is batched emailing?**

“Batched emailing” is not too different from batched meetings. It refers to the technique of processing your incoming emails in batches at pre-specified times, instead of handling them as they come in. So the rest of the day isn’t spent checking your inbox, and can instead be utilized for distraction-free work.

### **How to practice “batched emailing”?**

1. Close the inbox tab in your browser. Most of us keep it opened all the time, thus, inviting it to distract us.
2. Add two or three slots of twenty minutes each on your calendar for every weekday.



3. Open your inbox only during those slots, and process the pending emails.

### **How to practice “batched emailing” with Mailman?**

1. Install the Gmail plugin from [mailmanhq.com](http://mailmanhq.com) (works with all popular email clients).
2. Create a free account using the email on which you want to implement batched emailing.
3. Set your emailing schedule ie. the times at which you want your emails to land in your inbox.
4. Set up VIPs (emails that should reach you immediately without any delay).
5. You're set! Now you've complete control of your inbox and your attention.  
Just the way it should be.

TLDR: Schedule your emails and get them in pre-scheduled batches to protect your focus for quality work. [Mailman](http://Mailman) is a tool that can help you do this easily.

## Hard Thing First

*“The fundamental level of success is doing the hard things first – If you go for the feared thing first, then the rest of the day is easy.”*

– Robert G. Allen

It is our natural tendency to procrastinate on hard/challenging tasks. We think we’ll do it after we have completed the more manageable tasks. Unfortunately, this never happens as the smaller tasks take away all our time and energy.

How do we fix it, then?

By doing the hard thing first.

### **What is the “hard thing first” technique?**

“Hard thing first” is a prioritization strategy that involves doing the hard things first and only getting to smaller/more manageable tasks once the challenging tasks are completed. Just get the hard task out of the way first, and the rest of them will feel like a cakewalk as the difficulty level decreases as you proceed.

### **How to implement “Hard thing first”?**

1. Make a list of all your tasks.
2. Find the tasks that are important and somewhat difficult
3. Give these the top priority on your task list
4. Only get to the easier/smaller tasks once the hard tasks are done.

TLDR: Doing the “hard thing first” increases the chances of getting the essential tasks done as they’re given priority ahead of all other tasks.

## Time Blocking

*“Always remember, your focus determines your reality.”*

– George Lucas

How familiar does this sound – you start working on something, you make some good progress, you’re in a flow state but then, a notification pops. It’s your best friend! You check it out, it’s a cute picture of their dog. You love it!

But then you start talking to your friend, and before you know it, you’ve lost focus and got distracted from your work.

When was the last time it happened to you? If I have to take a guess, I’d say today.

Let’s look at some numbers/research. In [this study](#), Microsoft tracked how forty knowledge workers spent their time and attention when working in front of a computer. It found an average person is distracted or interrupted **every 40 seconds** when working in front of a computer.

**EVERY FORTY SECONDS!**

We cannot afford to get distracted so often if we want to get any work done. Is there a way out? Can we fix this?

Of course, we can. The solution – time blocking.

### **What is time blocking?**

*“A 40-hour time-blocked work week, I estimate, produces the same amount of output as a 60+ hour work week pursued without structure.”*

— Cal Newport, author of *Deep Work*

Time blocking is a time management method that asks you to divide your day into blocks of time. Each block is dedicated to accomplishing a specific task, or group of tasks, and only those specific tasks.

Every block is heavily protected with no scope for distractions to get in. You don't touch your phone, you don't answer any emails, you don't check Slack. All you focus on during a time block is the task at hand, nothing else.

### **How to practice time blocking?**

1. Make a list of what all you want to accomplish in the upcoming week.  
Not days, but the entire next week.
2. Schedule time blocks for all those activities on your calendar for the upcoming week.
3. Follow your scheduled time blocks religiously.
4. At the end of each day, check if you were able to do justice to all the time blocks scheduled on that day. If not, schedule another time block for the same task on another day.
5. At the end of the week, check if you accomplished all that you set out to accomplish that week. Reschedule unaccomplished tasks for next week. Rinse and repeat.

TLDR: Carve out big chunks of time to do deep work. Make sure to put away all distractions during this period and just focus.

Download the “Mailman Weekly Planner” template (appendix A2) to make effective weekly plans and assign tasks to every day of the week.

## Long breaks

*“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few moments, including you.”*

*– Anne Lamott*

It might feel criminal to take a 4-hour break from work. But you know what, sometimes it's the only way to convert a "bad day" to a "good/decent day." So don't just sit at your work desk if you can't focus; take a long break and get back at it with a fresh mind.

### **What is a “long break”?**

Within a day's context, a long break is a 2 to 4-hour break from work. This long break is helpful when you're having a bad day or not feeling like it at all. Getting a long break can give you a fresh start again, a far better choice than sitting at your desk and staring at your screen all day, not getting any work done.

### **How to take a “long break”?**

1. Communicate: Tell your manager that you'll be away from work for some hours as you cannot focus.
2. Go off slack, email, social media for those hours
3. A walk outside can help you refresh
4. A quick nap is another good option to get a fresh start
5. Get back to work once you've found the motivation to work

TLDR: Long breaks (2 to 4 hrs long) can help convert a bad day to a decent/good day.

## “No”

*“Love yourself enough to set boundaries. Your time and energy are precious. You get to choose how you use it. You teach people how to treat you by deciding what you will and won’t accept.”*

*– Anna Taylor*

It is tough to say ‘no’ to someone. That’s the reason why so many fall for the “yes trap.” So what’s the “yes trap”?

Saying ‘yes’ to avoid the guilt of saying ‘no.’

But why is it a trap? Because a YES is a NO to everything else that could be done using the same time and energy. Opportunity costs. Saying ‘yes’ to one thing means you’ll give less time and energy to something else.

Let’s accept it; you can’t help everyone. You have your own priorities to take care of.

We’ve to set our boundaries to protect our priorities, and saying ‘no’ is the only way to protect those boundaries.

### **What is saying ‘no’ all about?**

Saying ‘no’ is simply prioritizing your goals and not putting your hands into everything presented to you. You owe it to yourself to decline the things that don’t deserve your attention, or you simply can’t see yourself adding a lot of value. A ‘no’ guards your time and attention. It’s a tool for your well-being.

### **How to say ‘No’?**

1. **Communicate:** Tell them clearly why you can’t take this up at the moment, it can be you’re already swamped, or you have your priorities, or simply aren’t the best person to help.

2. **Connect:** If you can, connect them to someone who can help or just suggest reaching out to XYZ person with your reference.
3. **Share resources:** If you know any good resources that can help them, share them with them. This will only take 5 minutes of your time but will be incredibly beneficial for them.
4. **Quick advice:** Share quick tips on how they should move forward and the mistakes they should avoid. It will again take 5 mins but will be greatly appreciated.

TLDR: Saying 'No' is a tool to protect your time and priorities. If done correctly, you can still create value for others without making any commitments.

## Make headway

*“The hardest thing about getting started, is getting started.”*

– *Guy Kawasaki*

Some tasks feel too complicated or just hard to accomplish. You struggle to get working on them as they make you uncomfortable, so you try to avoid them or defer them to later. But that doesn't make the task any easier.

Is there a better way to tackle such tasks?  
Without endlessly procrastinating on them?

Try the “Make headway” technique.

### **What is the “make headway” technique?**

This technique involves scheduling a 30 min time on your calendar to break into that “complicated/ uncomfortable” task. In those 30 mins, do just that, focus entirely on that task. In simpler words, get started with it, make some progress, and try to get familiar with the task. At the end of these 30 mins, the task won't feel as daunting to you.

### **How to make headway?**

1. Select the task that you're finding difficult/complex/uncomfortable
2. Schedule a 30 min or 60 min time on your calendar for that task
3. During that scheduled time, focus entirely on making progress into the task
4. After the scheduled time, review how much progress you made.

TLDR: “Make headway” is a technique to get started and make some initial progress on complex tasks that you find uncomfortable at first.



## Live by the calendar

*“Time isn’t the main thing, it’s the only thing.”*

*– Miles Davis*

Here’s a story of Harry –

Harry just got done with a task. So now he starts figuring out what to work on next. Then it hits him that he has a meeting to attend in 10 mins. So he rushes to get ready for it.

While in the meeting, he recalls his partner had told him to get some groceries from the market. But, ah, he completely forgot!

Do you see how big of a mess that is? With our work and life converging into one, we need to get better at organizing everything. The old processes don’t work anymore.

How could Harry have avoided the above situation?

By planning better.

Of course. But how?

By “Living by the calendar!”

### **What is “living by the calendar”?**

Living by the calendar is the practice of putting everything on the calendar. Everything means everything. Whether it’s work or family, everything goes on the calendar. Schedule everything in time blocks in your calendar app.

Going for a walk from 6-7 in the morning. Make breakfast from 7:30-8 AM. Work on XYZ task 12-2 PM. Lunch 2-3 PM. Meeting with Hailey 3-4 PM. Go fetch groceries 5-6 PM. Family time 6-9 PM.

This is living by the calendar. It brings all you've to do in a day to one place. So you don't have to look around for what to do next. Instead, just take a look at your calendar, and you'll know what needs your attention at what time—no scope for forgetting anything.

Living by the calendar is like having your to-do list embedded in your calendar.

### **How to live by the calendar?**

1. Open your calendar app every evening. Put the app on your home screen.
2. Add your family members to the calendar to put stuff on your calendar whenever they want anything to be done from you.
3. Allocate time blocks to everything you need to do tomorrow.
4. Schedule time for everything meaningful, both family and work.
5. If anyone wants your time, ask them to block your calendar.
6. Live by the calendar and never miss out on anything again.

TLDR: Put everything on the calendar. Your tasks, meetings, just everything. This way, you'll not miss out on anything important.

## Get moving

*“You’ve got to exercise. Your health account, your bank account, they’re the same thing. The more you put in, the more you can take out.”*

*– Jack Lalanne*

Our lives are mostly spent sitting on a chair, staring at a screen in the technological age. All-day long! This is detrimental to our health. We were not built for this sedentary lifestyle. Our physical activity in a day is close to none. This is alarming at multiple levels.

Knowledge workers are hence at risk of long-term health issues. We need to do something about it before it’s too late. You don’t want backaches in your late 30s, right? Or do you?

What’s the solution, then?

Get moving! Or, in simpler words, exercising your body.

There is an added advantage to exercising. It also helps you get more productive!

### **How exercise improves productivity?**

[A study has found](#), increased productivity is noticeable within weeks of implementing an exercise regime. Exercise **raises your energy levels**, combats stress, battles fatigue, and improves general well-being. When you feel happier and energized, you're more efficient and effective at all tasks in life.

Work-out and exercise are great ways to give your mind and body a healthy break from work and increase overall well-being and productivity.

## **How to get moving?**

1. Find the physical activities that you prefer. E.g., running, working out, lifting, skipping roles, long walks, yoga, etc. Choose the activities such that all body parts are adequately exercised.
2. Make a daily workout routine comprising these activities.
3. Religiously follow the routine every day.
4. Experience increased energy and productivity levels over time.

TLDR: Exercising gives your mind a healthy break from thinking. These breaks help your mind take a break and perform better when you need it to. Physical exercise has a direct correlation to enhanced overall productivity.

# Checklists

*“The checklist is one of the most high-powered productivity tools ever discovered.”*

– Brian Tracy

Some tasks keep showing up, for example, publishing a blog. Every time you’ve to publish a blog, you’ve to go through the same set of activities. Research, make a blog outline, write the first draft, edit, proofread, publish, distribute. You need to do all these activities every time you want to write a blog.

But those are too many steps to remember every time.

Is there a more efficient way of doing this?

Yes, Checklists.

## What are checklists?

A checklist is a list of tasks that need to be performed to accomplish a big repetitive task. All significant tasks can be translated into checklists. Hiring, onboarding, writing a blog, making a video, planning a new feature are all examples of tasks that should have a dedicated checklist. Once prepared, these checklists can be easily pulled out whenever you’ve to perform the same task again.

## How to make checklists?

1. Identify the big repetitive tasks that keep showing up again and again.
2. Break down the repetitive task into smaller components/stages.
3. Assign one box in the checklist to each small component.
4. Use this checklist every time the task shows up again.

TLDR: Checklists are a great way to convert repetitive tasks into written processes that can be reused every time the task shows up. Download the “Mailman checklist template” (appendix A3) to make small checklists for all your repetitive tasks.

## Speak Up

*“Effective communication is the best way to solve problems.”*

– *Bradford Winters*

Sometimes you can't focus simply because something is hindering/bothering you. It can be the constant to and fro with a coworker or a family member making noise in the background while you work from home. These are easily solvable issues.

The solution – communication.

### **How can communication help in productivity?**

Communication is the practice of conveying your hindrances/botherations to the right stakeholders. In the above case, it can be simply asking your coworker to talk to you later. Similarly, politely telling your family member that their noise hinders your work and that you would greatly appreciate their cooperation can go a long way.

People are mostly unaware of your focus hours. It's your responsibility to communicate so that they can respect it. Speaking up isn't as hard as it might look in your head. Everyone is willing to respect your priorities, only if you let them know.

All you need to do is tell them, “I'm trying to focus right now,” and that should do the trick.

### **How to speak up? – reactive method**

1. Find what's bothering you/preventing you from doing your best work.
2. Find the best person to solve the issue (most often, it's the very source of distraction).
3. Go up to them (or message) to convey that you're trying to focus on something and request them to please cooperate.
4. Get back to focusing on your work.

## **How to speak up? – proactive method**

1. Prevention is always better than cure.
2. Find your focus hours or routine works for you. Then, write it down in a note or a document.
3. Make your focus hours/routine publicly available to the people you are most likely to interact with daily.
4. If anyone forgets about your routine, quickly send them your already written note and return to work.

TLDR: If your coworkers or family members disrupt your schedule, express your needs to those around you. They're more willing to co-operate than you think.

## Afternoon Naps

*“Think what a better world it would be if we all, the whole world, had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down on our blankets for a nap.”*

– Barbara Jordon

In Spain, locals enjoy a siesta between 2.00 pm-5.00 pm. During this time, shops close down, and employees enjoy a long lunch or healthy afternoon nap. Sounds great, doesn't it?

We've all experienced times when we've felt tired at work. Especially post-lunch after you've eaten a lot of carbs. Naps might be the solution to restore productivity in the post-lunch hours.

According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), a nap of up to 30 minutes can help “restore alertness, enhance performance, and reduce mistakes and accidents”.

Another study by [NASA](#) found that napping **improves work memory**. Working memory involves focusing attention on one task while holding other jobs in memory.

With remote work rapidly gaining adoption, it might be time to embrace afternoon naps at work. Although it is not as radical an idea as it may first sound, companies like Google, Nike, Huffington Post provide dedicated sleeping pods for their employees. And if you're working from home, you've your sleeping pods!

### **What are afternoon naps?**

It's a short period when you log off from work and get some quality sleep. Naps are shorter in length as compared to your night sleep. A typical nap would last no longer than 20-30 minutes at max.



## **How to take afternoon naps at work?**

1. Take naps in the early afternoon. Napping after 3 p.m. can interfere with nighttime sleep. Try to have your lunch early to make time for a quick nap.
2. Inform your manager/co-worker about your nap, and the time you'll be unavailable from work
3. Create a restful environment. Nap in a quiet, dark place with a comfortable room temperature and few distractions.
4. Keep naps short. Aim to nap for only 10 to 20 minutes. The longer you nap, the more likely you are to feel groggy afterward.

TLDR: Naps are a scientifically proven method to help your brain function better, both at work and otherwise.

## Log Your Distractions

*“Distraction is a killer of dreams, visions, and goals.”*

*– Topsy Gift*

How many times do you get distracted in a day?

Try to answer with a number. You have 30 seconds; I'll wait.

Were you able to answer that?

Maybe you were. Maybe not.

Most won't know how many times they get distracted in a day. That's because there are so many distractions that it's hard to keep track, from emails to Snapchat messages to Twitter notifications.

Distractions cripple our ability to do quality work. So we need to cut down on our distractions seriously. But before we do that, we need to become aware of what's distracting us and how often.

How do we get this awareness?

By logging your distractions.

### **What does it mean to “log your distractions”?**

The practice of logging your distractions involves maintaining a precise log of all your distractions. That means, whenever you find yourself distracted, you write it down in your distraction log.

What distracted you? Was it an email, or a Twitter notification, or something else? For how long? Did you spend half an hour in your inbox after getting distracted, or

did you quickly recover? What was the impact of the distraction? Were you able to focus again, or did it spoil your entire day?

Log every detail of the distraction. This will give you a clear picture of all your sources of distraction, the duration they keep you distracted, and lastly, the impact the distraction has on your overall productivity. This tracking practice itself will help you cut down on your distractions and enhance your focus ability.

### **How to implement?**

1. Download the “Mailman distraction log” template (appendix A4).
2. It has columns for logging all relevant details of the distractions.
3. Use it to log all your distractions throughout the day.
4. Review the log and see how many times you got distracted and which distractions were the most frequent.
5. Mindfully cut down distractions to optimize for better focus and productivity levels.

TLDR: Log your distractions is the practice of maintaining a daily log of all your distractions throughout the day. This will make you hyper-aware of what’s distracting you, helping you cut down on distractions and protect your focus.

Download the “Mailman Distraction log template” (appendix A4) to get started.

# GTD System

*“Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them.”*

*– David Allen*

[Getting Things Done](#), or GTD for short is a popular task management system created by productivity consultant David Allen. The methodology is based on a simple truth: The more information bouncing around inside your head, the harder it is to decide what needs attention. When information piles up in your head, it leads to stress, overwhelms, and uncertainty.

## What is the GTD system?

GTD method lays out how to dump all your mental clutter into an external system and then organize it so you can focus on the right things at the correct times. When your GTD workflow is set up correctly, you’ll be able to confidently answer “what should I be working on?” at any given moment without worrying that you might forget something important you need to do later.

## How to implement the GTD system? (Steps):

- **Capture Everything:** Capture every work-related task that crosses your mind in a list. No task is too big or small!
- **Clarify:** Process what you’ve captured into clear and concrete action steps.
- **Organize:** Put everything into the right place. Add dates to your calendar, delegate projects to other people, and sort your tasks.
- **Review:** Frequently look over, update, and revise your list.
- **Engage:** Get to work on things where you’re directly required.

TLDR: GTD system by David Allen lays out how to dump all your mental clutter into an external system and then organize it so you can focus on the right things at the correct times.

## Lead On The Day

*“Early to bed, early to rise makes one man, healthy, wealthy, and wise.”*

*– Old proverb*

This might be clichéd, but it is still valid.

Waking up early gets you an early lead on the day.

The early morning hours have a unique energy about them. Most importantly, they're distraction-free! Since you're just up from a good night's sleep, your mind is well-rested and ready to make the most out of the early morning hours. If you manage to do that, you've given yourself a head-start for the day.

### **What is waking up early all about?**

Waking up early is about getting up in the morning before everyone else does. It can be anywhere between 4 AM to 6 AM. Getting up early gives you those extra high-focus hours to get an early lead on your day.

### **How to get up early?**

1. Sleep on time: getting up early is not about cutting down on sleep. Instead, go to bed at around 9-10 PM at max, ensuring 7-8 hours of sleep.
2. Have a quiet, calm, and dark environment where you sleep.
3. Set the alarm for the time you intend to wake up.
4. Have a pre-set morning routine; you don't want to be wondering at 5 AM, “what should I do next?”.
5. Use the “Mailman habit tracker” template (appendix A5) to track your waking up early habit

TLDR: Waking up early can add some high-focus, distraction-free hours to your day to help you get an early lead on your day.

## Accountability Partner

*“Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result.”*

*– Bob Proctor*

Accountability is the mother of action. You're more likely to fulfill an office commitment than a commitment made by you to yourself.

Why is this so? The reason is simple, accountability. In the office, you're held accountable by your manager. But for a commitment made to yourself, there is no one holding you accountable.

For that reason, you should always have some accountability for your work. It'll ensure you do it because you know someone is watching and expecting you to deliver.

But what if you don't have accountability?

Create accountability.

The best way to do that is- Find an accountability partner.

### **Who is an accountability partner?**

Accountability partners are made up of one or more individuals who are willing to hold you accountable. The idea is that once someone other than yourself knows what you need to do or what you want to achieve, there is a greater incentive to go out and do it to avoid explaining why you didn't go to another person.

Accountability partners generally work both ways. Both you and your partner will be made aware of each other's commitments and be held accountable for them by their partner.

## **How to make an accountability partner?**

1. It can be a friend outside work or even a stranger you can trust with your commitments.
2. Your partner should have and be willing to share their commitments with you as well.
3. Communicate your commitment to your partner and ask them to hold you accountable and even nudge you when you don't report progress yourself.
4. Be a good accountability partner yourself by ensuring your partner is performing their commitments. This way, you'll set an excellent example for how you should be held accountable too.
5. Review progress with your partner after a week/month.

TLDR: Having an accountability partner to hold you accountable for your commitments will make you all the more likely to deliver on your tasks. This is because you don't like faltering on your obligations in front of others.

## Time-traveling Emails

*“Your future depends on what you do today.”*

*– Mahatma Gandhi*

This one is about creating accountability for your medium to long-term goals. The problem with medium to long-term goals is, we forget about them. And there’s no good way to hold ourselves accountable for things we have forgotten about.

Let’s say you decide you’ll learn to code within the next six months. This is your medium-term goal. Now, you can’t put it on your daily task list as this is a longer-term goal.

How, then, do you check if you learned coding in 6 months or not?

The solution – **schedule emails to your future self to create accountability.**

There is a neat email trick that helps you schedule emails for your future self. Using that trick, you can schedule an email to yourself saying –

---

*Yo pal!*

*A month ago, you decided you’ll learn to code within six months. One month has passed.*

*How much progress have you made on that? Was that a success?*

*Waiting to hear from you.*

*Best,*

*Your past pal*

---

That would be so cool, right?

Getting emails from your past self is holding you accountable. Mind = blown!



Now let's learn how to do it.

### **How to schedule emails for your future self?**

1. Open email composer.
2. Add your email address in "To."
3. Add a subject line, what the email is about.
4. Write your message for your future self.
5. Now instead of clicking 'send,' click on the tiny arrow next to the 'send' button and select 'Schedule Send' > "Pick date & time" > Choose the date you want to receive that email > 'Schedule send.'
6. Get ready to receive emails from your past self.

TLDR: Schedule emails to your future self to create accountability for your medium to long-term goals.

## Focus Music

*“If there’s one thing constant in this world, it is the power of music.”*

*– Josh Groban*

Can music help you focus better?

According to a [2007 study](#) from the Stanford University School of Medicine, music can help your brain absorb and interpret new information more easily.

The researchers found evidence to suggest that music can engage your brain in such a way that it trains it to pay better attention to events and make predictions about what might happen.

### **What is Focus Music?**

Focus music follows a particular pattern that mimics the brain waves present in a focused state. After listening for some time, the brain waves become entrained to the music, helping you get focused.

That said, Focus Music might still not be for everyone. While it works incredibly well for some, others can’t stand any music in their ears while they’re working. The question is, can it work for you? Let’s find out.

### **How to use “Focus Music” to be more productive?**

1. Sign up for a free trial account at [Brain.fm](#) or [Focus@Will](#) or [Endel](#).
2. During the trial, try to chart your productivity, both when you’re listening to the music and when you’re not. Let it just be a gut feeling telling you whether you were more focused with music or without.
3. At the end of the trial, evaluate your results. Did you find yourself more focused? Were you able to get more accomplished?

4. Additionally, you may want to explore these Spotify playlists: [Deep Focus](#), [Ambient Chill](#), and [Focus Now](#).

TLDR: A lot many people find it easier to enter a focused state while listening to focus music. [Brain.fm](#), [Endel](#) are some highly recommended apps that you can try out.

## Don't Trust Your Memory

*“Never memorize something that you can look up.”*

*– Albert Einstein*

Let me drop a bomb on you – you are not good at memorizing. You were not meant to be. Our mind is a processing unit, don't waste it as a storage unit.

Computers can memorize a lot better than we can and we can't beat them at it, however hard we may try. So what do we do?

*“If you can't beat them, join them.”*

*- Jim Henson*

We're going to stop trying to memorize, and join forces with technology. What that means is, we will stop trusting our memory and simply write everything down. Whether it is your thoughts, notes, things to do, work processes, bookmarks, basically everything. Just put it down somewhere, where you can easily find it when you need it.

It's far easier and more efficient to remember the name of one app that stores all your notes than to remember all your notes & tasks in your head.

### **How to practice “not memorizing”?**

1. Use apps to manage your notes, task list, habits, bookmarks, calendar.
2. Suggested apps for notes: Google Keep, Evernote, Notion
3. More sophisticated notes apps: Roam Research, Obsidian
4. Tasklist: Todoist, Asana
5. Tracking habits: Loops habit tracking app
6. Bookmarks: Readwise, Pocket
7. Calendar: Google calendar

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Just the tools I use to keep my mind available only for processing tasks.

TLDR: Write down thoughts, notes, tasks, everything. Don't waste energy and mental bandwidth on remembering which can be used for thinking, planning, or executing. Let the modern tools take care of your memory.

# Deadlines

*“Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.”*

*–Parkinson’s law*

Question for you: What’s the opposite of productivity?

*Hint: it starts with the same 1st 3 letters as the word “productivity”.*

The answer is procrastination.

Procrastination haunts productivity like nothing else. Our ability to put things off for later knows no bounds. But is there something that haunts the shit out of procrastination?

Oh yes, deadlines!

## **What are deadlines?**

A *deadline* is a particular point in time before which you must perform a task or accomplish an objective.

[Research shows](#) that deadlines can [help reduce](#) the likelihood that you will procrastinate both when they are self-imposed as well as when they are external.

The reason why deadlines are beneficial is that they help make your goals feel more concrete, by attaching them to a specific timeline. This is valuable from a cognitive perspective since we are more likely to [actively pursue goals](#) that we perceive as concrete, compared to goals that we perceive as abstract.

Deadlines for the win!

## **How to practice “deadlines”?**

1. If you have a manager, ask them if there’s a deadline for a given task. If there’s not, create a deadline yourself and communicate it to your manager to create accountability.
2. If you have customers or clients, before them asking about it, you tell them a deadline for their project, and let them hold you accountable.
3. If a deadline doesn’t feel right to you, communicate with your manager or customers to get it revised before you start work.
4. Create a work schedule leading up to the deadline to make consistent progress towards the end goal.
5. Finish within the deadline. Celebrate.

TLDR: Make use of deadlines to crack down on procrastination and get things done in the expected time.

## Break It Down

*“If you’re overwhelmed by the size of a problem, break it down into smaller pieces.”*  
– Chuck Close

Do you ever have a big task sitting on your to-do list? The one that you keep procrastinating on. Just because it’s so big that it overwhelms you even before you start. You are too scared and anxious to start working on that task.

If you have experienced that before, don’t worry, you’re not alone.

It happens to the best of us.

But then how do we deal with those big important tasks that intimidate us while sitting comfortably on our to-do list? Is there a way to tackle them with ease?

There is! The “break it down” technique.

### **What’s the break it down technique?**

The break it down technique refers to breaking down a big task into multiple smaller tasks. Then set aside time for each smaller task on different days spanning a week or a month, depending on how big the task is.

These smaller tasks are much less intimidating and can be easily done with the other tasks on your list. Making consistent progress on these smaller tasks will help you sail through the big task that you were too scared to start with.

### **How to break it down?**

1. Find the big task that’s annoying you.
2. Evaluate the different activities/steps required to accomplish the big task.
3. Convert each activity/step into a smaller individual task.



4. Schedule each small task on a specific day and time.
5. Smaller tasks can be planned out for a week or a month depending on when they have to be completed.
6. Now you'll have a bunch of small tasks instead of one big task. It'll feel less overwhelming and much more doable.

TLDR: Break a big task into smaller tasks and then schedule time for each of those smaller tasks.

# Wind-down

*“It’s not how you start, but it’s how you finish”*

*–Michael Phelps*

How you end your day is as important as how you start. It helps to follow a set wind-down routine at the end of the day before you go for a close. This routine should contain a review for the day, essential notes/tasks for the next day, and a check of your inbox to see if there’s anything that can be closed right away or anything that needs your attention tomorrow.

## What is a “wind-down” routine?

Wind down routine is much the opposite of your morning routine. It’s a routine to help you “wind down” your day. While a morning routine is more planning-oriented, a wind routine is more review-oriented.

The purpose of having a wind-down routine is to take a good hard look at your day and plan for the day ahead based on that. It brings a significant amount of clarity and organization to your work. But, most importantly, it marks the end of your day with a clear head so that you can finally stop thinking about work and be present for your family.

## How to craft a 30-min wind-down routine?

1. **Review the day:** What went well, what could be done better, what did you miss, etc.
2. **Clear your inbox:** Can something be closed right away, or does something need your attention tomorrow
3. **Plan the next day:** Write down the critical things you need to work on the next day, set a tone for the day ahead, so you don’t have to do a lot of hard work the following day

4. **Log your day:** How were you feeling in general, what activities you enjoyed most, what sucked your energy, what distracted you from work, etc.

TLDR: A wind-down routine helps you properly close the day so you can stop thinking about work while also setting a tone for the day ahead.

# Disconnect

*“Sometimes you just need to disconnect and enjoy your own company.”*

*– Dulce Ruby*

We are effectively living in the technological era. We have a screen in our pockets, a screen in our bags, and a screen in front of us. Oh, not to forget, a screen on our wrists too.

With so much tech tying us down, it's essential sometimes to break the strings and disconnect. Away from the devices and close to nature.

Before you think we are talking about a vacation, we are not. You don't have to go to a different place taking a week off to disconnect. You can do it every day, right where you are. That's what we're talking about.

## **What is disconnecting?**

In the technological era, making yourself unavailable to all external influences (notifications, emails, social media) for a specified time every day is disconnecting. It is the practice of deliberately putting all distractions away to connect with yourself.

## **How to disconnect?**

1. Turn off notifications for social media apps.
2. Use tools like [Mailman](#) to control your inbox.
3. Put your phone away for a part of the day.
4. Go for walks without any gadgets.
5. Implement a “no phone rule” in the family and dining area.

TLDR: Every once in a while, you should disconnect from your work and all your gadgets. A scheduled 1 to 2-hour break every day from all gadgets will help you connect better with yourself, contributing to an overall productivity increase.

# Tiny Book of Everyday Productivity

## *Hey, Congratulations!!!*

You finished reading “The tiny book of everyday productivity.” Now you know 25 highly effective frameworks to get more productive at work. But knowing isn’t enough; you’ll need to practice these tricks to get productive.

I’m well aware most professionals who get their hands on this book won’t read it. Of those who read, few will finish. And of those who complete, few will apply the tricks to their life.

Since you’ve done most of the hard work of reading this book, I don’t want you to miss out on any value. So try your best to take these tricks into execution. You don’t have to try all of them. Just a bunch that you can fit in easily in your schedule.

Use the productivity templates that my team has thoughtfully crafted for you. You can find them all at the end of this book.

If you apply the tricks, I can assure you won’t struggle with productivity again.

Feel free to come back to it whenever you feel unproductive.

Thanks for reading!

I wish you a happy and productive life.

Say hello to me on Twitter? [@mohitmamoria](https://twitter.com/mohitmamoria)

# Appendices

# DAILY PLANNER

## TODAY'S SCHEDULE

6-7 AM	
7-8 AM	
8-9 AM	
9-10 AM	
10-11 AM	
11-12 AM	
12-1 PM	
1-2 PM	
2-3 PM	
3-4 PM	
4-5 PM	
6-7 PM	
7-8 PM	
8-9 PM	

FOR TOMORROW..

DATE

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES

### TO DO LIST..

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

NOTE..

# Weekly Planner

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

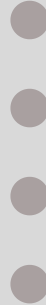
THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

## PRIORITIES



## TO-DO

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## NOTES

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dotted pattern, intended for taking notes.



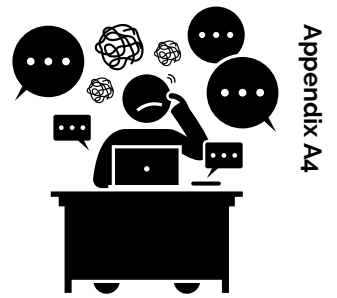
# CHECKLISTS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

S M T W T F S

# DISTRACTION TRACKER

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

# HABIT TRACKER TEMPLATE

[illegible]