

Productivity hacks

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We all want to work smarter, not harder. You may feel like there “aren’t enough hours in the day” sometimes. But what if you could squeeze more out of the hours you have? Here are some hacks that can help you make the most of your days.

Turn up your focus

Sometimes multi-tasking turns into getting less done. Your brain is so busy processing multiple tasks that you end up working more slowly. Or worse, you end up forgetting or messing up one of your tasks (It’s okay; we’ve all been there).

Try to focus on one important task at a time. And get rid of distractions. Turn on your “do not disturb,” put away your cell phone and leave the rest of the items on your to-do list for later. And exercise! Just 30 minutes a day of activity sharpens your focus and increases your energy.¹

Don’t trust your memory

Wouldn’t it be great if your brain could remember everything? Sadly, we just have too much to recall throughout the day — appointments, grocery items, phone calls to make. The list goes on and on. Not only are you likely to forget great ideas and important items, but you can waste a lot of energy trying to remember things.

Let your brain focus on doing things. Carry a notepad with you and write down important ideas or information. Your memory will thank you for it.

Use the five minute rule

Do you tend to procrastinate? Have you been putting off a task? Sometimes getting started is the hardest part.

Instead of thinking about doing the whole task, which can feel overwhelming, commit to working on it for just five minutes. Five minutes might not seem like much, but once you start you may want to keep going.

Be predictable

Scientists have found that your ability to make good decisions decreases throughout the day.² So, you want to treat your decision-making as a limited resource.

Try making certain things routine to avoid brain drain. Some highly successful people have used this technique to be more productive: Steve Jobs wore the same outfit every day so he never had to think about what to wear. Tim Ferriss eats the same breakfast each day. And President Barack Obama puts his non-urgent emails into three buckets: “Agree,” “Disagree” or “Discuss.”²

Stop working

You’ve got a project you want to get done. You’ve been working for hours. And your deadline is looming. But then something happens — your brain turns off.

When you push yourself past your limits, you’re going to burn out. Once that happens, you’re no longer productive. At that point, it’s better to stop working and take a break. Come back to work when you’re refreshed and you’ll make better use of your time. And check out the Pomodoro technique (<http://pomodorotechnique.com>) to learn how you can cycle your breaks.

You can’t create more hours in the day but you can make the most of them. Try some of these hacks or ask others what works for them. You might be surprised by what you can accomplish.

¹ Cohen, Jennifer. 6 Ways Exercise Makes You Smarter. Forbes. May 8, 2012. www.forbes.com/sites/jennifercohen/2012/05/08/6-ways-exercise-makes-yousmarter/#74c3c44e7109. Accessed January 2016.

² Cohen, Andrew. Why You Should Limit Your Number of Daily Decisions. Entrepreneur. May 5, 2015. www.entrepreneur.com/article/244395. Accessed January 2016.