




Ultimate 8-step productivity guide

Are you or your team always spending your days in a frantic blur of emails, encroaching deadlines and urgent tasks?

The good news is that it's always possible to dramatically reduce your stress – and get more stuff done – by changing the way you work.

There are many ways to become more productive in work and life, and the best ones have been compiled in this handy guide.

So, let's dive right in. 



Personal time management and productivity



What are the foundations of a productive day? These five basic tips will help you get more done at work, home, and everywhere in-between.

> Build good habits

Neuroscience tells us that keeping a routine around sleep, work, meals, etc. will save valuable mental energy (and time) because you've planned ahead.

> Avoid multitasking

Pick one thing at a time to focus on – you'll get more done.

> Take breaks

Make sure you stop working a couple of times every day. Go for a walk, read the news or update your social media – inspiration can come from anywhere, but only if you provide the space for it to happen.

> Use a system

Popular time management systems like the Pomodoro Technique and GTD (Getting Things Done) can help to keep your day on track when the pressure is on.

> Be agile

Change is a constant (and inflexibility is the enemy of innovation), so know when it's best to embrace disruption and adapt your system.

01

Scheduling and to-do lists

02

When you're faced with long meetings, frequent interruptions, and urgent last-minute tasks, it's hard to find time for important work. How can you schedule your time more productively?



Clear your messages

Schedule a time (e.g. 30 minutes each morning) for [inbox housekeeping](#).



Stay focused

Know what you can realistically achieve and keep your daily to-do list short – [six to 12 tasks](#) is ideal for most people.



Allow 'buffer' time

Interruptions and unexpected events are inevitable, so it pays to budget time for them.



Eat the frog first

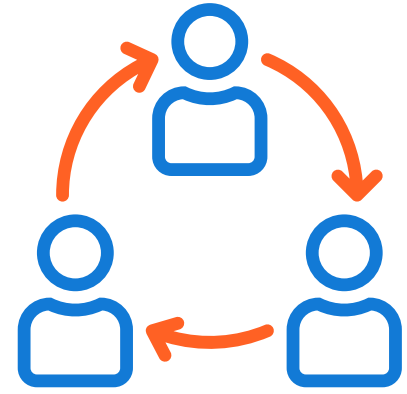
If you [eat a live frog](#) in the morning, then your day can only get better. So tackle your hardest (i.e. most important) task first, ideally in the morning while you're still fresh.



Regularly re-assess.

Analyse your activities to identify tasks that can be [delegated](#), [outsourced](#), or [removed](#).

Project and team collaboration management



Every project faces a raft of internal and external challenges to keep it on track and within budget. These tips will ensure your project proceeds smoothly.

> Nail the brief

Briefs aren't just for creatives, they're critical to any well-run project, so make sure you're clear on items like budget, goals and milestones. This will provide solid groundwork for the project's success.

> Keep meetings short and productive

There are lots of ways to make meetings productive, but in short: focus on problems and challenges, not Sunday's football.

> Check in with the team daily

Consider using collaboration tools – such as [Slack](#), [Trello](#) or [FlowDock](#) – that allow team members to update their status, post questions, and track their time. This will help to keep the project on track, and reduce need for meetings.

> Track risks

Encouraging open communication will help you and your team to predict and minimise risks before they derail the project.

> Evaluate

Was the project a success? Did it meet its goals? What lessons did you learn that could help to improve the success of future projects?

How to do 'deep work'

According to productivity expert [Cal Newport](#), deep work is “the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task”. This can help you to master complicated information more quickly, and produce better results in less time.

These three basic rules can help you achieve your best deep work:



01 Schedule hyper-focused time. Find agreed-upon times when you will work without distractions such as social media, the internet, and even the phone. This will allow your mind to reset and achieve maximum focus.



02 Embrace boredom. Instead of consuming content during break times, let your mind wander and create its own ideas.



03 Focus on the important stuff. Try to eliminate unnecessary tasks and meetings that are keeping your brain distracted and uncreative.

04

Relaxation, mental health and work/life balance

Self-care is a vital but often neglected part of staying productive. These lifestyle tips will help you get more done with less stress.



Book some downtime

When planning your week, schedule time for family, friends, and other activities that help you recharge.



Adopt a healthy lifestyle

Scientific studies have linked regular exercise and healthy diet with better mind-body health and productivity.



Turn out the lights

Most people need at least 7–8 hours' sleep each day for their mind and body to function optimally.



Plan that holiday now

Visualising yourself on that beach will help keep you motivated and energised.



Join a yoga or meditation group

Mindfulness training activities like these have been shown to improve general well-being and productivity.



Remember the big picture

Find time each week for activities that help you realise important personal and career goals.

Software tips and tricks

06

We will often use dozens of different software programs and apps over the course of a workday – some more helpful than others. Here are some ways to make them work better for you.



Launch applications on startup

Many programs have a 'quick launch' feature. Make sure it's enabled for frequently used programs like MS Word or Excel.



Create templates

Do you often answer emails from potential clients? Write daily status reports? Build up a library of templates that can be repurposed for specific people/cases.



Use a website blocker

Browser plugins like Strict Workflow and StayFocusd lock you out of distracting websites when you should be working.



Use email plugins

Do a quick search and you'll find dozens of email productivity tools that will help you regain control of your inbox.



Use a grammar checker

If writing isn't your strong suit, use your word processor's spell check feature. Or go one further and use an app like Grammarly that can help you craft better, error-free messages, documents and social posts.

Hardware tips and tricks

07

Having the right tools and gadgets in your workspace is another essential step to improving productivity. Here's how to optimise yours.



Add a second monitor:

Dual screens make it much easier to manage all your open program windows, which can result in significant productivity gains.



Use a high-quality mousepad:

You might not think you need one, but a good mousepad will keep your mouse pointer moving accurately, reducing errors such as closing/opening the wrong app.



Get a headset:

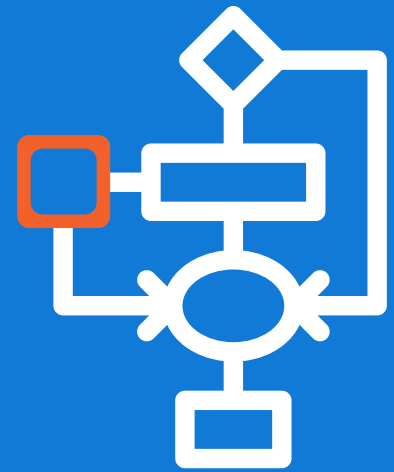
If your office has an IP telephony system, a good headset will allow you to make and receive hands-free calls easily.



Get a docking station:

Available in all shapes and sizes, a docking station allows you to connect extra peripherals without having to hunt around your computer for the right port.

Workflow and business process management



The final touchstone of good productivity is good management of your business tasks, documents and processes.

> Organise your data:

Structure your documents and other files using a logical hierarchy that makes them easy to find and categorise.

> Prevent document duplication:

Having multiple versions of the same document is a disaster in waiting. A shared cloud-based file system such as DropBox or OneDrive ensures everyone always sees the same information.

> Train your staff:

As people can often have their own way of doing things, this ensures everyone always follows the same protocols and processes.

> Automate where possible:

If your organisation has tasks and processes that are highly standardised or repeatable, consider finding ways to automate them using technology.

> Review processes regularly:

Are outdated tools and workflows limiting your organisation's success? Adjust when needed.

Conclusion

These productivity tips will help you get more done in less time and give your team the velocity it needs to reach its goals.

And remember, consistency is the key. By applying this advice every day, you'll soon have good habits that stick.

Sources

- [Work Smarter, Not Harder: 21 Time Management Tips to Hack Productivity](#)
- [35 Quick and Simple Tips for Better Productivity](#)
- [Five Best To-Do List Tips](#)
- [How long should your to-do list be?](#)
- [7 Tips for Managing Your Schedule Like a Pro](#)
- [10 Tips for Project Management Success](#)
- [14 Project Management Tips For Better Team Collaboration](#)
- [Cal Newport, *Deep Work*](#)
- [Four Rules for Eliminating Distractions and Cultivating Deep Work](#)
- [Exercise Increases Productivity](#)
- [Yoga Is Officially Sweeping the Workplace](#)
- [Grammarly for Microsoft Office](#)
- [Strict Workflow](#)
- [StayFocusd](#)
- [How to Organize Your Email: 13 Management Tips](#)
- [Increasing Productivity: How Dual Monitors Can Save You Time and Money](#)
- [Productivity tips for your workspace](#)