PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT » **PRODUCTIVITY**

How to Be Efficient

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Being efficient can be a struggle. Fatigue, anxiety, procrastination, and the barrage of daily distractions stifle productivity. Although the obstacles to greater efficiency are imposing, you can take some simple steps to improve your efficiency. Getting enough rest every night, dividing large projects into smaller and more manageable tasks, and setting time limits and deadlines for yourself are simple steps you can take to make yourself more efficient.

Method 1

Method 1 of 3:
Changing Habits

1 **Get 7 – 9 hours of sleep** **every night to stay alert and relaxed.** Inadequate sleep can lead to fatigue, which can sabotage your productivity. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.[1]

- Teens should aim to get 8 – 10 hours of sleep a night. [2]

- To help yourself establish a healthy sleep routine, set an alarm to remind yourself to go to sleep at the same time every night.

- If you find that you are still fatigued after getting at least 8 hours of sleep a night, you may want to consider consulting a doctor, as daytime fatigue may be a symptom of sleep apnea or another underlying health condition.[3]
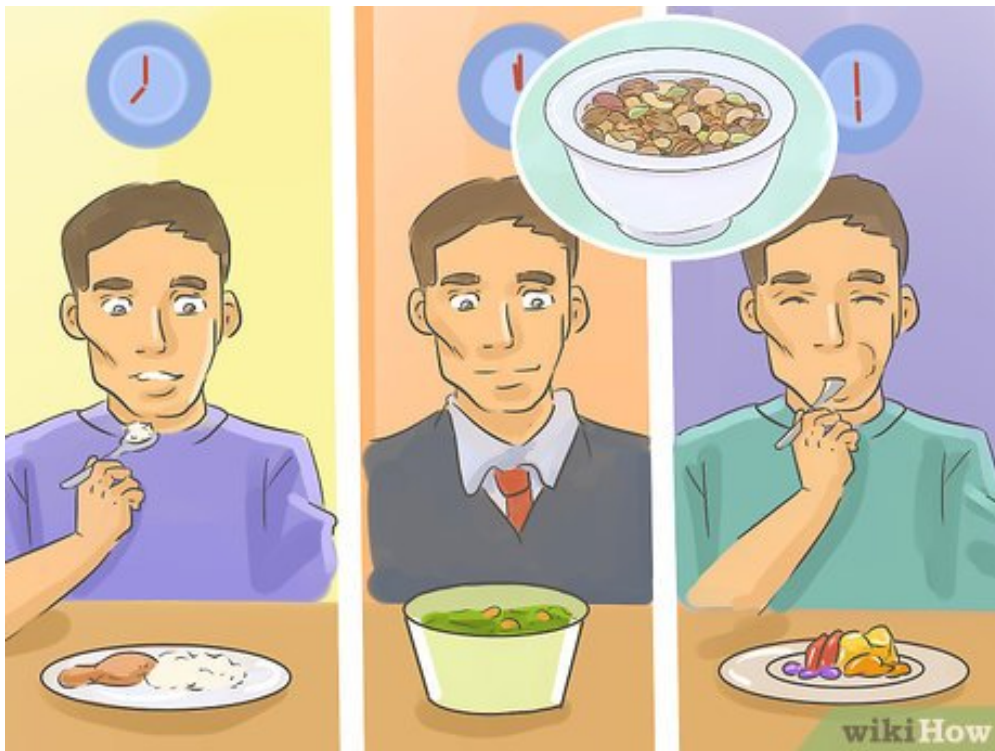
2 **Eat healthy snacks** **throughout the day to provide your brain with fuel.** If your body is hungry when you work, your productivity will suffer. Healthy snacks like almonds and chia seeds have fatty acids that will keep your mind alert and focused. Fruits and vegetables are also healthy options.[4]

- Avoid snacking on carbohydrates or junk food. These foods can drain you of energy.

3 **Save important and difficult tasks for times when you feel energized.** If you feel most focused and energized in the morning, work on your most important or difficult task then. And, if you're a night owl, use your mornings to work on simple and unimportant tasks. Trying to complete important or difficult tasks when you feel fatigued will reduce your overall productivity.[5]

- Everybody works best at different times of the day, so experiment with your schedule to find out when you work most efficiently.

4 **Adopt a confident and relaxed posture to increase your confidence.** The physical posture you assume can have a psychosomatic and neurological effect on you. Imitating a confident smile and posture, for example, can spur your brain to feel confident, which can lead to gains in productivity.[6]

- Forcing yourself to smile, for example, can lead to the release of endorphins, which will help you feel less stressed about a project.[7]

5 **Try to say no at least once a week.** If you're the type of person who is always saying yes to your coworkers, friends, and family members, you may find yourself in the position of having trouble finishing important tasks because you're always doing things for other people.[8]

- Saying no can be difficult, but committing yourself to turning down at least 1 request from a friend, coworker, or family member a week will free up additional time for you to finish an important project or progress toward one of your long-term goals.[9]

- When deciding whether to say no to a request, ask yourself the following questions: Can the requester finish the task on their own? Is there anyone else available to help? What are the consequences if the task isn't completed?

1 **Write down your short-term and long-term goals so you can prioritize.** Rank your goals and tasks for the next decade, year, month, week, and day. Having this list nearby will allow you to stay focused on the most important tasks before you.[10]

- When setting goals, start by imagining where you want to be in 5, 10, or 20 years, and then create an outline of the shorter-term goals you'll need to accomplish to reach this goal.

- Be as precise as possible when you're setting your goals. If your goals are more concrete, it will be easier for you to think of the concrete steps you'll have to take to reach them.

- Keep these lists of goals somewhere visible while you work to keep yourself motivated.

2 **Create a daily to-do-list to organize your day.** The best time to write up a to-do-list is right before you go to sleep. Write down all the tasks you need to complete the following day in order from most important to least important.[11]

- Break your day into hour-long time-slots and assign a task to a specific time slot. [12]

3 **Set time limits for all your tasks.** Setting a firm time limit for a task will force you to finish it in a certain amount of time. If you set aside a relatively short amount of time, you will force yourself to complete your work without procrastinating.[13]

- Setting a time limit that is too short can cause you to rush and produce lower quality work, so try to find the sweet spot between a deadline that is too short and one that is too long.

- Set a deadline by which you know you can finish the task, but only if your work is free of distractions.

4 **Take advantage of short 5-minute periods to complete small tasks.** Set aside 2- to 5-minute periods throughout the day. During these short windows of time, commit yourself to completing one small task. This can be composing a short email, checking a voicemail, etc. Completing a task within a 5-minute window will give you a sense of accomplishment and motivate you to complete more tasks[14]

- Try to set aside 1 of these short periods once every hour or so.

- Try to limit the amount of time you spend thinking about the task before doing it. Overthinking can lead to anxiety and procrastination.

5 **Break large tasks into smaller, more manageable parts.** Large projects can be overwhelming. Worrying about completing them can cause intense anxiety, which can lead to procrastination. Treating large projects as a series of small tasks can ease some of this anxiety.[15]

- If you are writing a 10-page paper, for instance, approach it one paragraph at a time.

6 **Take a strategic break every hour to stay energized.** Working nonstop without a break can leave you fatigued and steadily reduce your efficiency. Try to work hard and stay focused without distractions for 50 minutes and then take a 20-minute break.[16]

- Working without taking enough breaks over a long period of time can lead to burnout, which may lead to a deterioration of your efficiency over the long term.

- When you take your break, write down all of the things you did in the past hour so you can see how you're managing your time.[17]

Method 3 of 3:
Getting Things Done Faster

1 **Avoid multitasking so you can focus your attention on a single task.** In the modern world with cellphones, email, and the internet, it can be difficult to avoid multitasking. Focusing on more than one task at a time, however, can prevent you from getting into a flow.[18]

- If you're doing work on your computer, try installing an app or program that limits your access to websites that are not required for your work.

- When working on a project, silence your cellphone and keep it in another room, out of reach. Designate specific times to check for any messages and voicemails.

2 **Find shortcuts to complete tasks you do on a regular basis.** If you regularly use certain computer programs to do work, for example, learn keyboard shortcuts for common actions. Or, if you frequently write emails to schedule meetings, make a template for that type of email so that you don't have to write them from scratch every time.[19]

- Ask colleagues and friends about any shortcuts they may use to speed up their work.
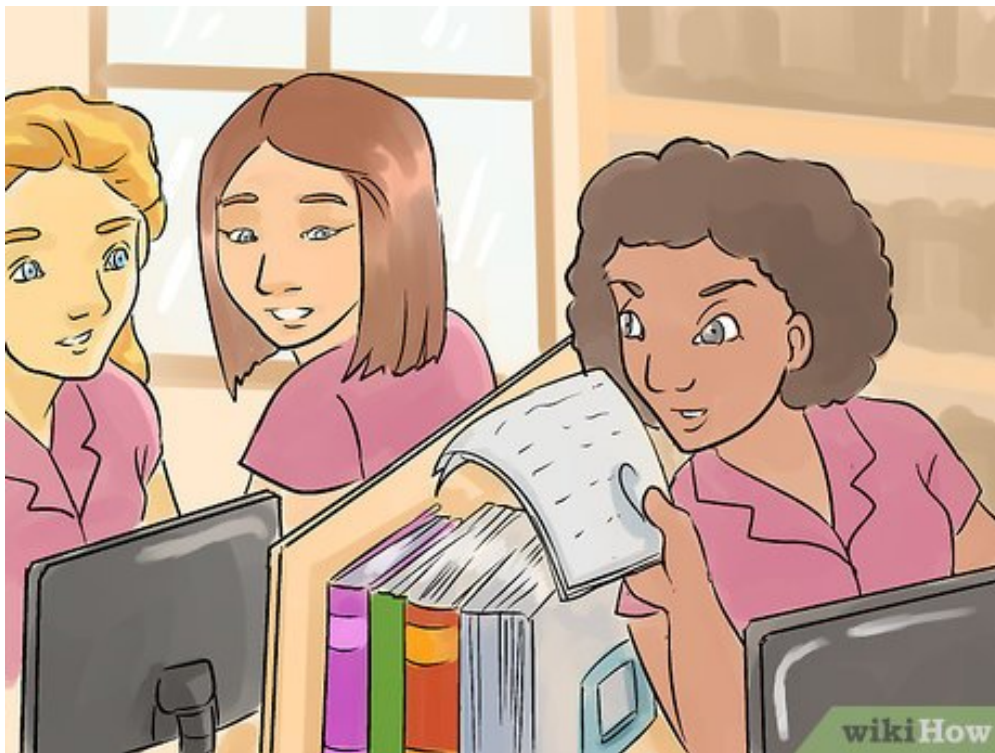
3 **Delegate tasks to classmates, friends, or employees.** [20]   If you are working on a school or work project, make sure the workload is divided evenly among everyone who has a stake in the project's completion. Trying to do all the work yourself will stress you out and prolong the time it takes to finish the project.[21]

- When delegating, try to present your request as an appeal for help rather than an order to minimize friction.

- If you're not the one in charge of the group or team and believe the workload hasn't been distributed evenly, explain to the group leader or another member of the group that you could use some help completing the task(s) assigned to you.

- If you feel that the other members of the group or team aren't doing their part, avoid pointing blame and instead try to get them involved in the project by asking for help on specific tasks.

4 **Reduce the number of daily decisions you have to make.** Making decisions takes energy. The more decisions you make, the more energy you expend. You can reduce the number of daily decisions you make and conserve your energy by eliminating or outsourcing decisions about simple daily tasks, such as what to wear or what to eat.[22]

- To simplify your daily decision about what to wear, simplify your wardrobe. Reduce your choice to two or three different outfits.

- Make a weekly breakfast, lunch, and dinner plan, so that you don't have to agonize about what to make on a daily basis.

⑦ Expert Q&A

What can I do to become more efficient?

Rahti Gorfien, PCC
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Expert Answer

Keep track of the things you do every hour. Write down anything you worked on or got distracted by so you can see how well you're using your time.

Helpful 2   Not Helpful 0

What are the benefits of being efficient?

Community Answer

The benefits are numerous, too many to be listed. All in all, one's whole life will improve in all possible ways and one feels more satisfied, fulfilled, happy; everything becomes more meaningful and just right.

Helpful 18   Not Helpful 2

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This article was co-authored by Rahti Gorfien, PCC. Rahti Gorfien is a Life Coach and the Founder of Creative Calling Coaching, LLC. She specializes in working with artists, entrepreneurs, and college students in creative fields. Rahti is accredited as a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) by the International Coach Federation, an ACCG Accredited ADHD Coach by the ADD Coach Academy, and a Career Specialty Services Provider (CSS). In addition, she has personal experience in the fields she coaches - she is an alumnus of the New York University Graduate Acting program and has been a working theater artist for over 30 years. She was voted one of the 15 Best Life Coaches in New York City by Expertise in 2018. This article has been viewed 127,680 times.

★★★★☆
13 votes - 94%

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