

21

PRODUCTIVITY
IDEAS
TO GET MORE DONE



Introduction

If you're working from home, then your ability to get lots done and stay on task is going to have a huge, direct impact on your lifestyle and happiness. Finish early and you have the option to simply head downstairs, make a cup of coffee and start relaxing! There's no commute, no boss looking over your shoulder, and no requirement to work set hours (so long as the work gets done). Heck, you could even put that extra time to *good use* by starting a side project, further developing your skills, etc.

Then there's the fact that working from home can mean working in your perfect work environment, near to the people you love, and with the freedom to come and go as you please – or even to completely change your work hours!

But if you don't have the discipline and motivation to actually get work done, then it can be a completely different story. Now you're more likely to find the experience highly stressful and overwhelming: you might well find yourself with a huge list of tasks that you have no idea how to tackle. The line between downtime and work might have become blurred, and you might be constantly working late, forgetting to shave, and generally failing to maintain a work-life balance.

Read on and you'll discover 21 productivity tips, hacks, and ideas that can make a huge difference. They have been organized into categories for your convenience!

1. Eat the Frog

Eating the frog is an expression that comes from a Mark Twain quote: “If it is your job to eat a frog, then you should do that first thing in the morning. If it is your job to eat two frogs, then you should eat the biggest, ugliest one first.” What this tells us, is that it is sensible to tackle the biggest and most difficult project first. By doing that, you make sure that you have provided the maximum value each day, and you do the hardest work while you have the most energy and resolve.

2. Kaizen

Kaizen is a Japanese term that comes from the country’s manufacturing industry. This term refers to the process of making lots of tiny changes to a process, in order to see a large cumulative benefit over time.

For example, if your computer currently take 5 minutes to boot up, and you start it up twice a day, that means you’re losing 10 minutes of productive time daily. Either you could use that time to do something else (make a call for instance), or you could upgrade your computer. Either way, you might now only spend 2 minutes booting up.

That’s now reduced your wasted time from 50 minutes a week (200 minutes per month) to 14 minutes per week (56 minutes per month). That’s a gigantic difference. Changing the order you complete tasks can have a similar impact.

3. The One Minute Rule

This rule states that we should always complete tasks immediately if they will take less than one minute. This removes them from our mind, meaning that they aren’t hanging over us and causing stress.

4. The 80/20 Law

The 80/20 law tells us that 80% of your yield will come from 20% of your work. The key to being as effective as possible then, is to identify that crucial 20% that is going to result in the most profit.

5. Pomodoro

The Pomodoro technique is a technique that involves setting timers for when to work and when to take a break. This structured approach ensures you *get* a break (removing the urge to procrastinate) but allows you to carefully define when and for how long.

6. RescueTime

RescueTime is an app that you can use in order to monitor just how much time you spend on each task during the day. They say that “that which is monitored, improves.” In other words, when you see where your time is actually going, you will be given greater control over how to spend said time.

7. Todoist

Todoist is a to do app. This app makes it very easy to create new tasks thanks to a powerful natural language engine: you can make the tasks by speaking just as you normally would! It also offers a lot of integration with other powerful apps and tools.

8. Apple Watch

An Apple Watch is a surprisingly powerful tool for productivity. Not only does it allow you to get notifications on your wrist (meaning your phone can stay

firmly in your pocket), but it can even let you add todo items and more to your wrist, making sure that they are always easily accessible.

9. Notion

Described by some as a “second brain,” Notion is an extremely powerful note-taking app that lets you create web pages, tables, lists, embedded images and videos, and MUCH more. It’s extremely flexible and easy to use, and essentially it can adapt to however you wish to use it.

10. Freedom

Freedom is an app that will allow you to block specific apps and websites on your computer. This is powerful stuff for those who find themselves distracted by Facebook or other websites when they’re meant to be working!

Get More Done by Typing Faster

In the digital age, a lot of what we consider 'productivity' happens on the computer. Being productive tends to mean writing e-mails, filling in data entry and writing copy. In all these cases, typing is our main form of 'output' and that means we will always be limited by the speed at which we can type when it comes to productivity.

Learn to type at the speed of thought then and in theory you could drastically upgrade your productivity and complete a lot more work in a day. Read on and we will look at how you can learn to type faster.

11. The Right Keyboard

One thing that will right away make a huge difference to your typing speed and output (and thus offer great ROI) is the quality of keyboard you are using. To type as fast as possible, you should look into getting a keyboard that is comfortable such as a mechanical keyboard. While bigger keys can avoid errors, you don't want to use a keyboard that's *too* big or you will end up travelling further to reach the keys.

12. Finger Placement

When you next go to type, take a look at your hands to see where they lie naturally before you start writing. Ideally you should have your thumbs on the spacebar with your 8 fingers on A, S, D, F and J, K, L and :. Let this be a guide but not a set-in-stone rule, as you might find this depends on the size of your hands and of your keyboard.

13. Play Games

Playing games can help a lot. One of the best is 'The Typing of the Dead' which is notable for being an *actually fun* computer game, rather than one of those dull tutorial games that you'll never actually want to play.

14. Dvorak

If you're up for a challenge, then you might decide to try switching to Dvorak. Dvorak is an alternate keyboard layout that is supposed to be more efficient for writing and which is very popular with some coders and writers. It will take a while to learn and the evidence is mixed but if the idea appeals, give it a go!

15. Practice

Most important of all though is to practice. And if you're looking for a fun/convenient way to do that then you could always take up journal writing in the evenings!

Home Office Ideas

Your office is the space where you will be *doing* your work. It can play a large role in making you either more or less productive, so it is crucial to make sure it is as conducive as possible to your productivity.

16. Get a Plant

A plant can have a big impact on the way an office feels because it introduces something natural into an otherwise very unnatural environment. Not only that, but a plant will also stimulate the release of feel good hormones like serotonin. Among other things, these have been shown to improve creativity by helping us to relax!

17. Make it Inspiring

Filling your office with things that inspire you about your own work is a fantastic way to put yourself in a more productive and creative mindset. When we find work inspiring, that makes it *inherently* motivating, such that there is no effort involved when trying to convince ourselves to keep working on something.

18. Create Work Zones

A work zone is a space within your office where you can reach everything you need to. This term is often referred to in kitchen décor, but it makes a lot of sense in an office too. You should be able to sit at your desk and easily reach all the things that you need to be able to work with.

Health and Fitness

Finally, your health and fitness are crucial if you are going to be as productive as possible while working from home. Many people allow their health to deteriorate when they work from home, as they have no requirement to walk or travel. Likewise, a lack of social interaction or sunlight can cause health issues.

Making sure to stay on top of this can ensure that you have the energy, enthusiasm, and good health to continue doing your best work.

19. Exercise

Exercise is extremely important for those that work from home. This can help to undo much of the damage that is caused by sitting by a desk, and it becomes even more pertinent if you have no commute, and no reason to get up and walk across the room even!

Doing some form of steady state cardio – such as running, cycling, or walking – will help you to strengthen your heart which can in turn prevent early mortality associated with desk work. This will also help to increase your calorie burn throughout the day (your active metabolic rate or AMR) in order to ensure that you don't gain unwanted weight.

20. Protect Your Sleep

One thing that is very important when working online is to make sure you get enough sleep. This can be interrupted if you struggle to turn off from work and relax, or if you work near the environment where you sleep (avoid this wherever possible).

Getting enough sleep is crucial if you want to start the next day feeling energized and enthusiastic. Some things you can do include making sure that your room is as dark and quiet as possible, while also keeping it a lightly cool temperature.

Try as well to make sure that you avoid light emitting devices (like phones) for at least half an hour before bed. These stimulate the release of cortisol and dampen the sleep hormone melatonin, thus making it much harder for us to drift off to sleep.

21. Spend Time Outdoors

Spending time outdoors is one last, final way to ensure that you combat the negative effects of working from home, and therefore boost your ability to focus and work.

Spending time outdoors not only boosts sleep (which helps us work better as we have seen), but it also increases vitamin D, which helps to regulate important hormones in the body related to focus, energy, and metabolism.

Fresh air is just as important, while the greenery can actually help to boost creativity and prevent symptoms such as SAD. Another option is to invest in a plant for your desk, alongside a daylight lamp which will produce a similar wavelength to the sun. But nothing beats the real thing!