

Managing Procrastination and Building Healthy Routines for Success

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Outline

- Understand why procrastination occurs and how it impacts productivity
- Learn practical strategies and tools to improve time management and reduce stress
- Develop sustainable routines that support academic and professional success



Where do you spend most of your time and energy?



Procrastination

Voluntary and unnecessary delay of a give intended action, despite the expectation of negative consequences (Steel, 2007)



Why do we procrastinate?

Common causes among graduate students:

- **Fear of Failure:** The thought of producing imperfect work can lead to avoidance.
- **Maladaptive Perfectionism:** Experience self-criticalness when unable to meet imposed high standards.
- **Overwhelm:** A large, complex task feels unmanageable, so you avoid it.
- **Lack of Motivation:** Difficulty seeing the value or progress in daily tasks.

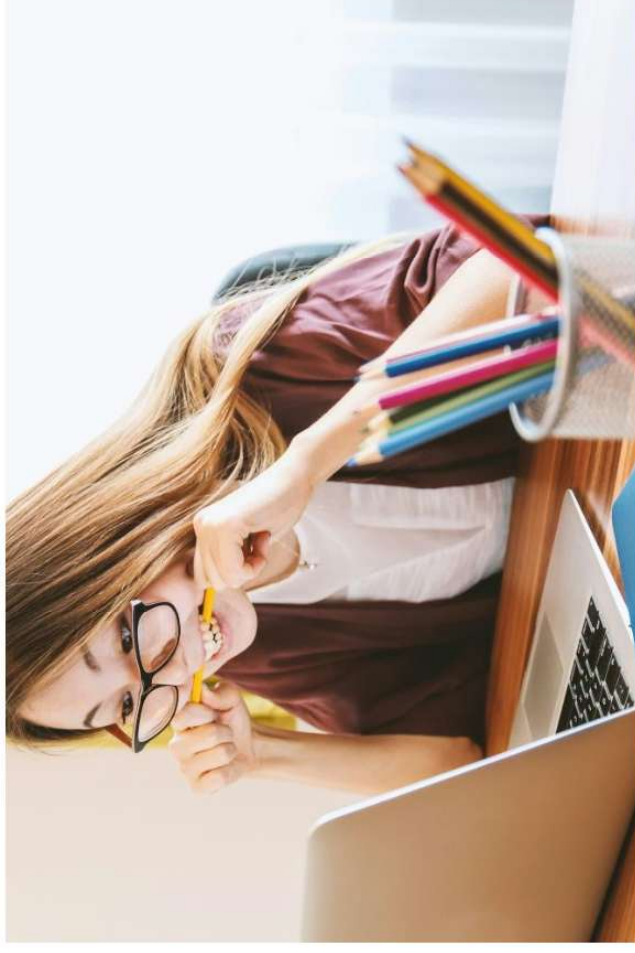
(Siriois, 2016; Flett et al., 2012; Moate, West & Rice, 2019)



Impact of Procrastination

- Academic performance (e.g., incomplete assignments)
- Poor quality work
- Poor sleep (quantity and quality)
- High stress and anxiety levels
- Imposter phenomenon
- Burnout
- Feelings of guilt

(Custer 2018; Steel, 2007; Sirois et al., 2013; Herut & Gorfu, 2024)



Why Time Management Matters?

- Completion rates are influenced by planning, self-regulation, and research structure.
- Effective time management allows graduate students & researchers to:
 - Maintain **focus** on their work
 - Contribute to research **productivity**
 - **Reduce** procrastination
 - Improve work + life **balance**





What are the areas in which you are productive?

What are the areas that you think you're procrastinating in?



What is Time Management

Time management is an effective skill to **organize your schedule** and **balance responsibilities** without feeling overwhelmed.

Importance of Time Management

Graduate school, including *candidacy**, will be a life-changing experience: From structured coursework to a highly autonomous phase, which increases the risk of procrastination, fatigue, and burnout.

How will I know I have learned time management tools?

1. Do I feel less stressed and more in control of my schedule?
2. Am I making time for personal upkeep, such as rest and self-care?
3. Do I complete my responsibilities before deadlines?

Time Management



Enhanced Academic Performance and Engagement

Research suggest that **time management behaviors**, such as setting goals and task prioritization are link to **higher academic achievement, task completion rate** and mitigates academic procrastination (Patzak at al., 2025)

Reduce Stress & Anxiety

Effective time management **reduces anxiety, prevents burnout, improves resilience**, and gives students **greater control** over their academics.

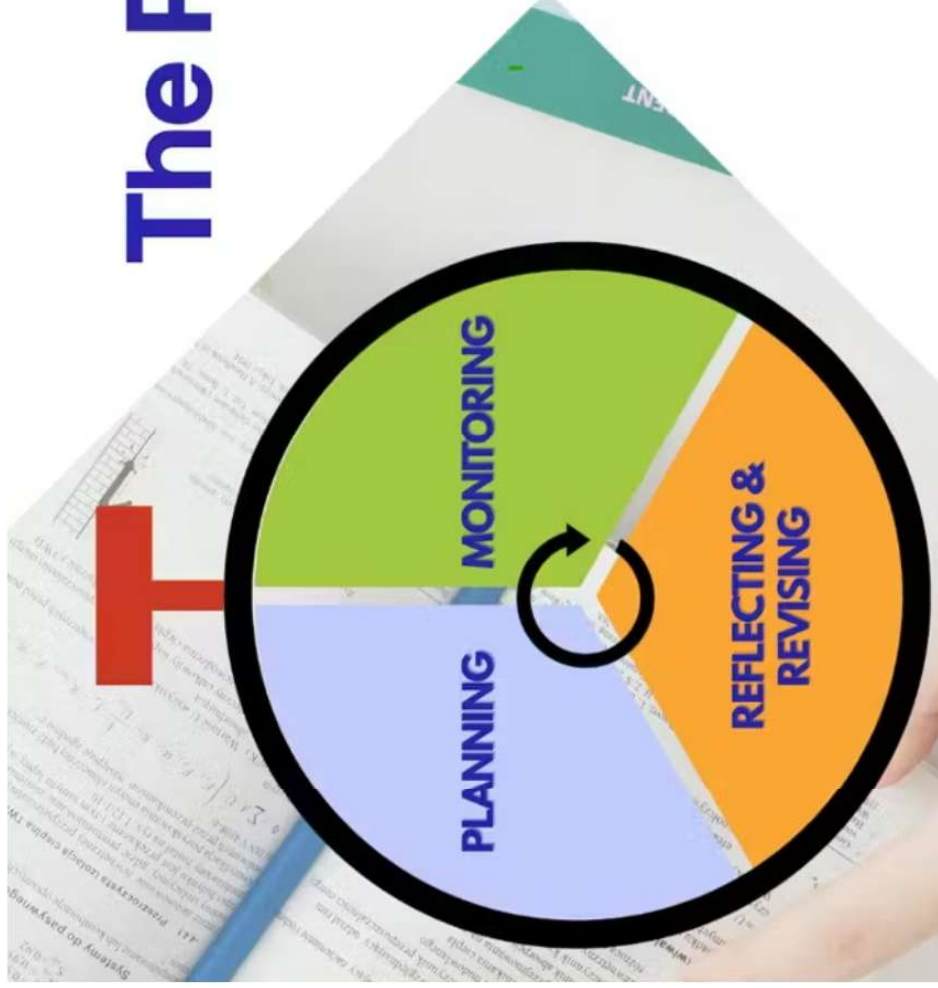
Buids Lifelong Habits

Time management builds **self-control, self-efficacy, and focus:** skills that support long-term success.

Benefits of Effective Time Management



The Process of Time Management



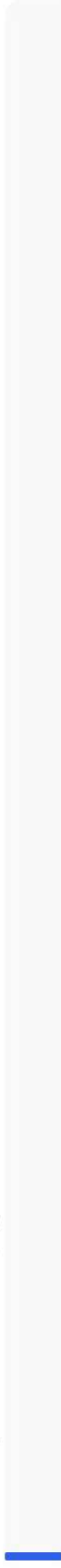
This is a **Continuous Process**

Be aware and receive feedback on
your perceived control of time

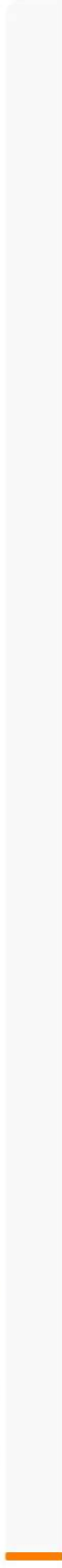
***This process allows for change
and evolution over time***

Rank these productivity habits from most to least helpful for you:

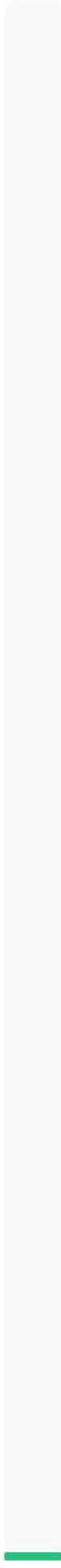
Setting clear daily goals



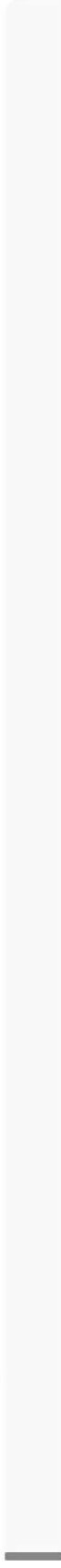
Taking regular breaks



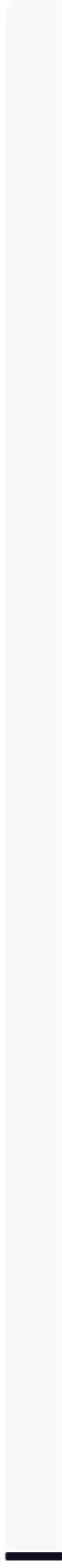
Using a planner or calendar



Eliminating distractions



Prioritizing tasks



Evidence-Based Time Management Strategies



Covey's Matrix

Identify **high-priority** areas of focus to spend your time on.
 ► What is most important and plan out a schedule based on priorities.

Try Covey's Matrix

- The 4 quadrants each represent how time is divided according to importance and urgency.
- The key is to spend most of your time in **Quadrant 2**.
- **Tip: On a weekly basis.**



		Covey's Matrix	
		Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Quadrant 1 – Necessity (Consequences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with emergencies or crises • Pressing problems • Tasks due today or tomorrow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term projects • Planning ahead • Prevention • Relationship building
	Not Important	Quadrant 3 - Decide	Quadrant 4 – Waste
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions • Some calls, emails or reports • Proximate, pressing matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time wasters • Some calls/emails • "Escape activities" 	

Covey's Matrix Poll: Send your advisor the first draft of a grant proposal due in May 2026.



	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Quadrant 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crises • Pressing problems • Deadline-driven projects 	Quadrant 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Prevention • Proactivity
Not Important	Quadrant 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions • Unnecessary projects & assignments • Emails 	Quadrant 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Escape" activities • Irrelevant tasks

Covey's Matrix Poll: Update [LinkedIn](#) profile.



Important	Urgent	Not Urgent
Quadrant 1	Quadrant 2	Quadrant 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crises • Pressing problems • Deadline-driven projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Prevention • Proactivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Escape" activities • Irrelevant tasks
Not Important	Quadrant 3	Quadrant 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions • Unnecessary projects & assignments • Emails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Escape" activities • Irrelevant tasks 	

Covey's Matrix Poll: Finish and submit research paper- due tomorrow.



Important	Urgent	Not Urgent
Not Important	Quadrant 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crises • Pressing problems • Deadline-driven projects 	Quadrant 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Prevention • Proactivity
	Quadrant 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions • Unnecessary projects & assignments • Emails 	Quadrant 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Escape" activities • Irrelevant tasks

The Ivy Lee Method + Eisenhower matrix

- 1 Urgent + Important
- 2 Urgent + Important
- 3 Not urgent + Important
- 4 Not urgent + Important
- 5 Not urgent + Important
- 6 Urgent + Not important

Or

The Ivy Lee Method + Value vs. Effort Matrix

- 1 High Value / Low Effort
- 2 High Value / Low Effort
- 3 High Value / High Effort
- 4 High Value / High Effort
- 5 High Value / High Effort
- 6 Low Value / Low Effort

Ivy Lee Method + Eisenhower Matrix:

Ivy Lee Method + Eisenhower Matrix Activity

Attend to meeting/classes

Send/ reply emails

Read paper for next lab meeting

Submit final quiz that is due next Thursday

Practice self-care

Buy groceries

The Ivy Lee Method + Eisenhower matrix

- 1 Urgent + Important
- 2 Urgent + Important
- 3 Not urgent + Important
- 4 Not urgent + Important
- 5 Not urgent + Important
- 6 Urgent + Not important

Or

The Ivy Lee Method + Value vs. Effort Matrix

- 1 High Value / Low Effort
- 2 High Value / Low Effort
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- 4 High Value / High Effort
- 5 High Value / High Effort
- 6 Low Value / Low Effort

Time blocking and task management

Strategy: Break tasks into manageable and SMALLER tasks

- Calendar
- Weekly Planner
- Daily Planner/ Ivy Lee Method
- Backwards Planning (overall goal)



Calendar

- Merge ALL calendars into ONE
- Color coding
- Set a time for everything and stick to it (as much as possible)
- Share SMART Goals for your schedule

The screenshot shows a Google Calendar interface for the week of November 1-7, 2020. The calendar is color-coded by activity type: blue for reading/study, green for exercise, yellow for work shifts, and purple for meetings. The schedule is organized by day from Sunday to Saturday, with time slots from 9 AM to 7 PM. A URL 'https://gsrsrc.ucr.edu/' is visible at the bottom right.

Day	Time	Activity
SUN	1 PM - 2 PM	Zoom with family
MON	9 AM - 11:30 AM	Chapter 2: linear regression for scaling
MON	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	exercise and lunch
MON	12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Chapter 2: measurement error analyses
MON	3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	lab meeting
MON	4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Chapter 4: digitize
TUE	8:30 AM - 10 AM	read/skim literature on vertebrae, take
TUE	10 AM - 12:30 PM	GSMP shift
TUE	12:30 PM	lunch
TUE	12:30 PM	GSMP shift
TUE	1 PM - 5 PM	GSMP all GradStac
TUE	1 PM - 2 PM	STPM meeting w/
WED	8 AM - 9 AM	exercise
WED	9 AM - 12 PM	GSMP shift
WED	12 PM	lunch
WED	12:30 PM - 4:30 PM	GSMP shift
WED	4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Chapter 4: digitize
THU	9 AM - 10 AM	coffee with Bryan
THU	10 AM - 12:30 PM	GSMP shift
THU	12:30 PM	lunch
THU	12:30 PM	GSMP all GradStac
THU	1 PM - 2 PM	STPM meeting w/
FRI	9 AM - 12:30 PM	Chapter 2: make figures
FRI	12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	exercise and lunch
FRI	1:30 PM - 5 PM	Chapter 2: start writing introduction
FRI	5 PM - 6 PM	lab hangout
SAT	9 AM - 6 PM	go for a hike!

Weekly Planner

Major Goal of the week: Research and save (in Zotero) 6-10 sources related to my topic

Monday

Major Goal of the day: Prepare keywords terms and choose where you will search for literature

Morning (9am-12pm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write your research question down - Identify separate research concepts within your research question
Afternoon (2pm-4pm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brainstorm synonyms and broader and narrower terms for each of the research concepts - Identify where you plan to search for literature
Evening (5pm-7pm)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consult Library Research Guides for your subject area(s) for recommended literature sources, including subject-specific databases - Organizing this information into a table may help you identify keywords to use when searching for relevant literature



Ivy Lee Method

- Each day, write down 6 tasks in order of their importance
- Work on one task at a time until complete, then move down the list
- The ones that are not completed move to the top of your list tomorrow



Daily Planner

Backward Planning

Ideal for overall or long-term goals:

- ▶ Grant proposal
- ▶ Presentations
- ▶ Programming
- ▶ Group/Team projects

Easy steps:

1. Define goal
2. Set up a due date (to complete the project)
3. Identify key tasks
4. Estimate times for each task
5. Set up specific dates to complete those tasks



Backward Planning

- For overall or long-term goals.
- Five steps!
- Example:
 Submit grant proposal by Oct 15th

Assignment/Task	Deadlines for each	Smaller Tasks	Est. Time for each	Completed by
Submit Grant Proposal.	Oct 15 th 2025	1. Identify needs and focus. 2. Find prospective grants. 3. Develop general proposal and budget. 4. <i>Send first draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback*</i> 5. Submit letter of inquiry. 6. Receive request for formal application. 7. Prepare specific proposal. 8. <i>Send second draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback*</i> 9. Submit proposal before the deadline!	7 days	July 28 th , 2025
				Oct 15 th 2025

Let's practice... What is the main assignment/task to work on for backward planning?

Assignment/Task	Deadlines for each	Smaller Tasks	Est. Time for each	Completed by
Submit Grant Proposal.	Oct 15 th 2025	1. Identify needs and focus. 2. Find prospective grants. 3. Develop general proposal and budget. 4. Send first draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback* 5. Submit letter of inquiry 6. Receive request for formal application. 7. Prepare specific proposal. 8. Send second draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback* 9. Submit proposal before the deadline!	7 days	July 28 th 2025
				Oct 15 th 2025



Let's practice...What are the smaller tasks, and when do you want to complete?

Assignment/Task	Deadlines for each	Est. Time for each	Completed by
Submit Grant Proposal.	Oct 15 th 2025	7 days	July 28 th 2025
	<p>Smaller Tasks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify needs and focus. 2. Find prospective grants. 3. Develop general proposal and budget. 4. Send first draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback* 5. Submit letter of inquiry. 6. Receive request for formal application. 7. Prepare specific proposal. 8. Send second draft to supervisors and colleges for feedback* 9. Submit proposal before the deadline! 		Oct 15 th 2025



Management Tools

Strategy: Establish a sustainable routine

Utilize tools that will help you to establish a healthy and productive routine:

- Include time for meeting with students, grant writing, adm. time, meals and self-care.
- Group similar tasks (e.g., meetings and taking notes) together to increase efficiency.
- Set clear boundaries for work and rest.



Category	Tools/Apps/Software's	Key Benefits for PhD students
Project Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trello - Notion - Microsoft Loop - Microsoft To-do - Reclaim. Ai* 	Visual Kanban boards for tracking dissertation chapters (To-Do, Doing, Done).
Time Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rescue Timer* - Pomodoro - Tooledo - Productive (Habit Tracker app) 	Provides data on where your hours <u>actually</u> go, helping you identify "time-wasters".
Focus & Deep Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily Habits - Freedom* - Forest* - The BRICK* 	Blocks distracting websites/apps during scheduled research blocks.
Reference Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zotero - Mendeley 	Automates citations and keeps literature organized from day one.
Complex Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Click Up* - Monday* - Microsoft Planner 	Best for students needing highly customized workflows and goal tracking.

Management Tools

Notion

- Project management
- Tasks and to-do lists
- Notes
- Reminders
- Collaborative work
- Free*

Everything you need to do your best work.



Docs →
Build any page, communicate any idea.



Wiki →
One home base for all your knowledge.



Projects →
Manage any project from beginning to end.



Notion AI →
Finds what you need. Does what you need.



Calendar →
See all your commitments in one place.



Goals →
Track progress toward what's most important.



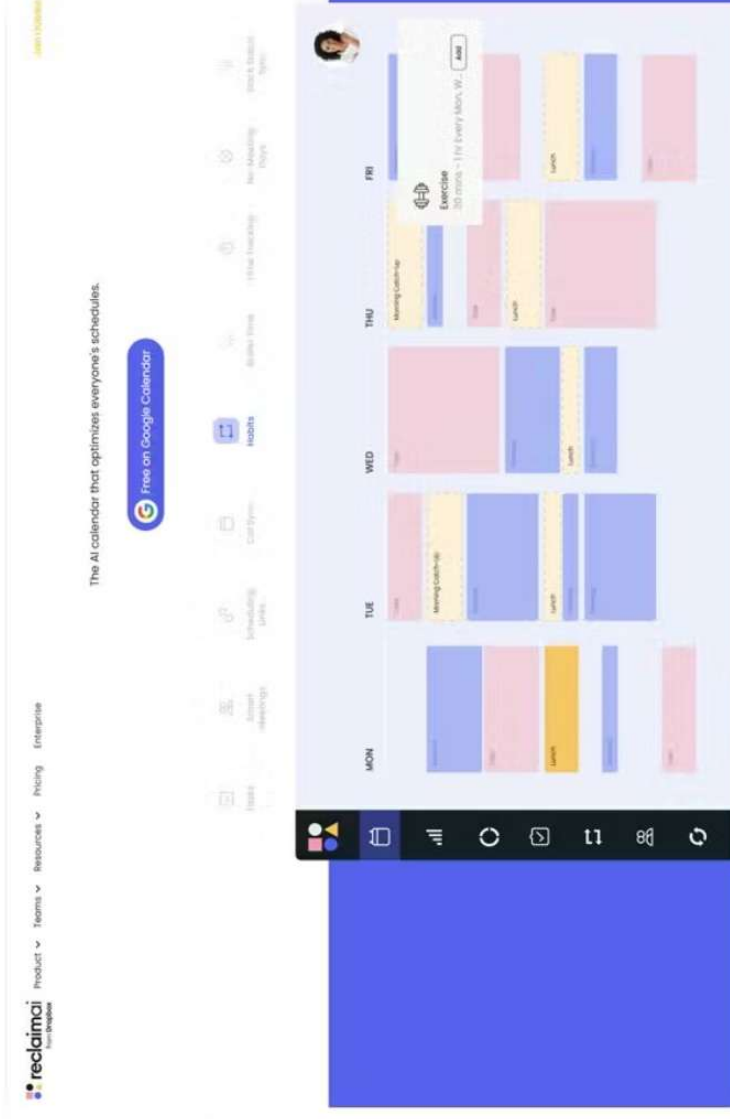
Sites →
Make any page a website in minutes.



Templates →
Get started with one of 30,000+ templates.

Reclaim.ai

- Productivity
- Time blocking for Google Calendar
- Time-tracking
- Reminders
- Collaborative work
- Free*



Brick LCC

- Productivity
- Reduce smartphone distractions
- Magnetic bottom
- Strict Mode: Prevents deletion of the Brick app, ensuring stronger commitment to limiting distractions
- \$59

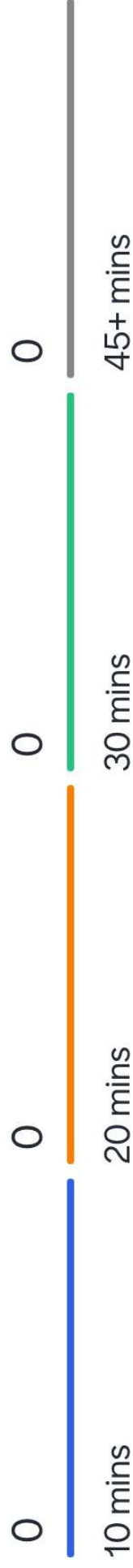


Task Switching Has a Cognitive Cost

- When you switch tasks, part of your attention stays stuck on the previous task
- This is called “attention residue”
 - Research shows that it takes approximately **23 minutes** to refocus on a task after an interruption (Mark, Gonzalez & Harris, 2025).
- Even small interruptions reduce performance on the next task
- People perform worse after switching tasks, even when the tasks are unrelated



How long can you focus without distractions?





Eat The Frog

Do your most important, hardest work first
thing in the morning to win the day!

1.

Identify Your Frog

a.k.a. your hardest, most important task for the day. Just one!

2.

Eat It

Do your most important task first thing in the morning.
Don't give yourself the chance to put it off for later.

3.

Repeat Every Day

You'll be amazed how quickly small steps taken consistently
add up to big accomplishments.



The Pomodoro Technique

Stay focused and improve your productivity with intentional breaks.



1. Decide on the task to be done
2. Do 1 pomodoro
 - Set the timer to 25 minutes
 - Work on the task uninterrupted until the timer rings
 - Take a short 5 minute break
3. Repeat 4 times
4. On the break treat yourself to a rest break of 15-30 minutes

Available in Website & Apps:

- <https://pomofocus.io/>
- **Focus To-Do: Pomodoro & Tasks***
- **Plantie - Stay focused***




*In apps purchases

*Basic version is free

Let's practice.. open your calendar and schedule one 60-minute deep-work block next week.

1. Open your calendar
2. Make a new event
3. Title deep-work block
4. When/Where/ What exact task?/Barriers?/ Backup plan?
5. Set a reminder



Overestimate the time to complete tasks	 <p>Give yourself flexibility</p>
Weekly Review	 <p>Spend some time reviewing what you have accomplished and adjust for next week!</p>
Accountability Loops	 <p>Peer, mentor or group to check in.</p>
Take Healthy Breaks	 <p>Add Breaks to your daily routine</p>

Write First, Edit Later	 <p>Prioritize "getting words on the page" without obsessing over perfection.</p>
Strategic "No" "Let me clear with my advisor... before saying yes."	 <p>Actively decline non-essential commitments.</p>
Practice and Schedule Self-Care	 <p>Remember to foster your general wellbeing</p>

Strategies and Tips for "Success"

Taking Breaks

- Taking regular breaks can help you be more productive than working without stopping.
- Effective vs Ineffective breaks.
 - If effective, even a minute break can help!

Type of Break	Suggested Activities	Benefits
Get creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daydream• Set a new goal• Learn something new	Creative activities have a variety of potential benefits. They can help you exercise your right brain, give your prefrontal cortex a break, improve your memory, and help your brain produce dopamine.
Move	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move• Connect with nature or a streetscape• Change your environment• Do a small chore	Any kind of movement is a great way to take a break; it increases your executive functioning and also improves your alertness, attention, and motivation. Even a simple change in location, inside or outside, can produce calming effects or help you fight off boredom. Moving around and completing a small task may even provide a sense of accomplishment that can help build your productivity and motivation.
Nourish your body and mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meditate• Take a power nap• Drink coffee or tea• Have a healthy snack• Listen to music	Taking a step back to take care of your body and mind can help you reduce stress and feel more rested, productive, and attentive when you return to your work.
Socialize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call a friend• Reach out to family• Speak with a roommate	When you engage with others, you experience a feeling of social connectedness, which can create a positive emotional state.

<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/taking-breaks/>



Let's practice... You suddenly have 30 minutes free. What healthy break activity would you like to try?



Self-Care Practices

<p>Physical Activity</p> <p>10 Minutes personal walk + activity unrelated to dissertation or stimulating (not work-related)</p> 	<p>Mindfulness & Breathing</p> <p>Techniques like box breathing help regulate the nervous system</p> 	<p>Structure-Healthy Eating</p> <p>Easy and healthier snacks- nutrient-dense (fruit, protein bars, veggies)</p> 	<p>Positivity affirmations</p> <p>Sticky notes- shared with others and with yourself</p> 
<p>Self reward for achieving goals</p> <p>Treat yourself – backward plan your celebrations- add to your calendar</p> 	<p>Task Fusing</p> <p>Something you enjoy + something you do not enjoy</p> 	<p>Sleep</p> <p>Time to recover- awareness – productivity Power naps</p> 	



Let's practice... Schedule time for self-care:

1. Open your calendar
2. Make a new event
3. Title Self-care
4. What/When/Where/ How long
5. Set a reminder

**SELF-CARE
IS THE
BEST
CARE**

Campus Resources



GatorWell Health Promotion Services

- Stress management techniques
- Wellness Coaching for Academic Success



Counseling and Wellness Center:

- Workshops
- Individual and group counseling
- Podcast



RecSports

- Exercise/fitness
- Yoga
- Massage



Care Area and U Matter, We Care

- U Matter, We Care extends UF's caring culture by educating our community about signs and symptoms of distress and provides students and employees in distress with the appropriate resources.
- Contact U Matter by phone at 352-294-CARE (352-294-2273) or by email at umatter@ufl.edu.



UF Teaching Center & Reading & Writing Center

- Time Management Strategies
- Test Prep and Test Taking Strategies

