

Time Blocking

What is it?

Time blocking is a powerful productivity technique where you allocate specific blocks of time to focus on specific tasks or activities. Here's how it works:

Plan Your Day

Start by listing your tasks, meetings, and commitments for the day.

Allocate Time Blocks

Assign dedicated time slots for each task.

Stick to the Schedule

During each time block, focus solely on the assigned task. Minimise distractions.

Adjust as Needed

Be flexible but disciplined. If a task takes longer, adjust subsequent blocks accordingly.

Time Blocking

The Challenges

Time blocking is a powerful technique for managing your day more effectively. Here are some successful ways to implement it:

Task Batching:

Group similar tasks together and tackle them during dedicated time blocks. For instance, allocate one hour in the morning for all email-related tasks

Day Theming:

Assign specific themes or types of work to each day. Instead of scattering different tasks throughout the day, dedicate specific days to specific activities. For example, Mondays for administrative tasks, Tuesdays for meetings, and so forth

Time Boxing:

Set specific periods for each task or group of tasks. Use a planner or digital calendar to map out your day, balancing work-related duties with personal errands, breaks and leisure activities

Remember, time blocking helps you regain control of your schedule, making time for what truly matters.

Time Blocking

An Example

Here's a sample time-blocked schedule for a typical workday:

Morning (9:00 AM - 11:00 AM):

- 9:00am - 9:30am: Email and communication
- 9:30am - 10:00am: Creative work (writing, design, etc.)
- 10:00am - 10:30am: Team meeting
- 10:30am - 11:00am: Break

Midday (11:00 AM - 1:00 PM):

- 11:00am - 12:00am: Deep work (focus on important tasks)
- 12:00pm - 12:30pm: Lunch
- 12:30pm - 1:00pm: Administrative tasks

Afternoon (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM):

- 1:00pm - 2:00pm: Project work
- 2:00pm - 3:00pm: Client calls
- 3:00pm - 4:00pm: Break and stretch

Late Afternoon (4:00 PM - 6:00 PM):

- 4:00pm - 5:00pm: Review and planning
- 5:00pm - 6:00pm: Wrap up loose ends

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The Challenges

Sticking to a time-blocking schedule can be challenging due to several reasons:

Overcommitment:

Sometimes we allocate too many tasks within a limited time, leading to stress and inefficiency

Interruptions:

Unexpected phone calls, emails, or meetings disrupt planned time blocks

Lack of Discipline:

It's easy to deviate from the schedule without self-discipline

Task Complexity:

Underestimating how long a task will take can throw off the entire plan

Context Switching:

Frequent shifts between tasks reduce productivity

Resistance to Change:

Adjusting to a new time-blocking system takes effort

Unforeseen Emergencies:

Urgent matters can override planned blocks

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Staying On Track

Maintaining discipline in sticking to a schedule requires intentional effort

Set Clear Goals:

Define specific objectives for each time block. Knowing what you aim to achieve keeps you focused

Prioritise Tasks:

Arrange tasks based on urgency and importance. Address high-priority items first

Minimise Distractions:

Turn off notifications, close unnecessary tabs, and create a distraction-free environment

Use Reminders:

Set alarms or reminders for the start and end of each time block

Accountability:

Share your schedule with a colleague or use a productivity app to hold yourself accountable

Practice Self-Compassion:

If you deviate from the schedule, don't be too hard on yourself. Adjust and continue

Review and Reflect:

At the end of the day, evaluate how well you adhered to the plan and learn from any deviations

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Adapt for Hybrid Working

Adapting the time-blocked schedule for remote work involves a few considerations:

Flexible Hours:

Remote work often allows for more flexibility. Adjust your time blocks to match your natural productivity peaks. For example, if you're most focused in the afternoon, allocate deep work sessions during those hours

Communication and Collaboration:

- **Morning:** Reserve time for email and communication. Use tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams for team collaboration
- **Midday:** Schedule virtual meetings or video calls with colleagues or clients
- **Afternoon:** Continue project work and collaborate asynchronously

Breaks and Movement:

- **Take Regular Breaks:** Step away from your desk, stretch or go for a short walk
- **Lunch:** Allocate time for a proper lunch break away from work

Workspace Setup:

- **Ergonomics:** Ensure your home office setup is comfortable and promotes productivity
- **Distractions:** Minimise distractions (e.g., social media, household chores) during work hours

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Further Reading

Here are some recommendations of books on time blocking:

Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life by Nir Eyal

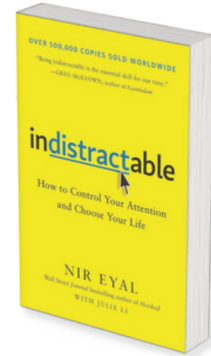
This book delves into the hidden psychology of distraction and offers practical solutions to regain focus. Here are the key points:

Understanding Distraction:

Eyal reveals why simply swearing off devices (digital detox) isn't effective. Abstinence often intensifies our desire for distractions

The Four-Step Model:

Eyal provides a research-backed approach to follow through on intentions. Learn how to control your attention and design your time effectively.



Empowering and optimistic, this book helps you live the life you truly want by mastering your attention.

Here are some other recommendations:

Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World by Cal Newport

- This book emphasises the importance of deep, uninterrupted work and provides strategies for achieving it

The 4-Hour Workweek by Timothy Ferriss

- Although not solely about time blocking, this book offers insights into optimising work hours and achieving efficiency

Eat That Frog!: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time by Brian Tracy

- A classic book on time management, it provides practical techniques for prioritising tasks

Make Time: How to Focus on What Matters Every Day by Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky

- Offers actionable advice on creating time for meaningful work

The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

- Focuses on identifying and prioritising the most impactful tasks