

# Time Management & Time Blocking



# TIME MANAGEMENT AND TIME BLOCKING

There's a saying about finding time. I often wish I could find the time to do this or find more time to finish that or some other finding time axiom. But really, where are you going to find time? Is it hidden away or did someone else use some of your allotted time?

We all have the same 24 hours in a day. Yet why does it seem that some people get more done than others in that same amount of time? To be successful at anything we must learn to manage our time efficiently.

Did you know the average person checks their phone about 150 times every day? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([source: https://www.bls.gov/tus/](https://www.bls.gov/tus/)), we spend on average 5 hours a day on leisure activities including social media.

We waste time on our phones, on social media, and on the internet. Talking and trying to find lost documents at work wastes time. Time management has been a problem for millions of people for years.

Here are some of the top time wasters:

- No priorities or goals keeps you doing random tasks
- Procrastination causes you to be rushed to finish projects
- Perfectionism keeps you from making progress and moving forward
- Saying "Yes" when you are already overwhelmed and allowing others to take up your time
- Distractions take away from your concentration taking time
- Getting up late keeps you from taking advantage of starting earlier
- Social media and being online is a big one. Spending time on Facebook, Twitter, watching YouTube videos

Another time waster is taking on too much at one time. It leads to a time crunch often because we think we have plenty of time, so we end up doing other projects first (or, if we're honest with ourselves, spending time on social networking sites). Then before we realize it, you suddenly realize the deadline or launch date is here and you don't have enough time to get it done.

In this guide, I'm going to help you learn how to get control over your time. You'll discover how to determine how much time you really have, where you're wasting time and how you can optimize your time to get more done using different techniques and apps.

## Determine How Much Time You Have

*You will never “find” time for anything. If you want time, you must make it.*  
~Charles Bruxton

Let's ask ourselves, how much time do you spend doing work that you get paid for and how much is spent on task that make you no money, such as tweaking your website, creating another recipe, or wasting time online?

Don't know the answer? It's time to start tracking your time to see what you're doing that is taking you away from your goals. Of course, you only have 24 hours a day, with a certain number for sleeping, eating, work, and leisure. The trick is to determine how much time you are spending on everything and then finding ways to streamline or change the way you work.

One way to determine how much time you have is to use a free tracking tool like [Toggl](#). It tracks the amount of time you spend on your blog, with clients or customers and time spent online.

Another option is to write down everything you do in a day for a week. Include the amount of time you spend doing something. For example, let's say you are working away on a project then get distracted by Facebook. Write down the time you switched to Facebook and the time you returned to your project. You might be surprised that instead of just a few minutes to answer a post, you actually spent 30 minutes or more on Facebook. You can simply write it down or keep it in spreadsheet you create or use a time tracking tool or program.

[RescueTime](#) is one program that runs in the background to calculate the amount of time you spend on your computer visiting websites and monitoring the programs you use.

Determining where you are spending your time and how much of that time is wasted is the first step in taking control of managing your time.

## Where to Optimize Your Time to Get More Done

*Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.* ~William Penn

Now that you know where you are spending your time, it's time to optimize your time so you can be more productive. It's not difficult. Making a few simple changes to how you are doing things now can add that time you thought was lost.

Everything you need to do to meet your goals, whether for your business, your health or some other aspect of your life, needs to have an action plan. You should know the date you want to have it completed.

## How to Optimize

- Use a calendar or project management software like Trello to divide the project up into chunks. If you have a project that will take a long time to complete, do some work on it each week. You can assign tasks to others on the project and keep track of their progress through project management software.
- Make sure each project has a detailed list of steps to take in order to reach the deadline. Break down big projects into mini or micro tasks to keep from being overwhelmed.
- Outsourcing work that is a drain on your time is another way to optimize your time. You're freeing yourself up for other tasks, but your work is getting done. This works in your personal life as well. Hire someone to mow the lawn, run errands, or clean your house.
- If you're creating information products, you can outsource the writing, the graphics creation and the formatting, freeing up your time for marketing and networking. You can hire a project manager to oversee all aspects of the creation process and deadlines.
- Clear distractions by closing any web browser tabs not necessary to the task you are doing. Close your inbox and log out of social media accounts. Silence notifications on your phone as well. Use an app like [StayFocusd](#). This extension for Google Chrome restricts the amount of time you spend on time-wasting websites. The sites are blocked for a day after a certain amount of time has been used up.
- Forget multitasking. Many people think they are good at multitasking but really, it diverts your focus into different directions. You get distracted and forget what you were doing on one project. It takes longer to get back into the flow of each project. Instead set up specific times to do each tasks, say check email at a specific time, social media updates another time, working on a project at another hour.

## **Improving Your Schedule**

You can improve your schedule and increase your productivity in many ways.

1. Optimize your space. Set up your space so work flows efficiently. Keep your desk at work organized and set up so you can easily access areas you use the most, set up your workout area in a way that works easily for your routine. Organize your cabinets and refrigerator to find healthy foods for recipes and snacks quickly.

Remove clutter and unnecessary items. Having a clear, uncluttered area, in which to work and live, enables you to find what you need, when you need it. You'll also spend less time moving things around that are in the way.

2. Optimize your to-do list. Take time to write out your to-do list for each day. A good plan is to do this the night before, when you quit working for the day. That way you know what you need to get done at a glance. Get strategic on how you use and create your lists. Keep your to-do list simple. List the most important 3 to 5 things to do that day. Having a list of 15 or more tasks can be overwhelming, making procrastination more tempting. Break bigger projects into small, actionable steps that you can track and incorporate into your day.
3. Use Checklists. Checklists keep you moving on the right path. They help you organize your tasks for both long term and short-term goals. Checklists are good for helping you see exactly where you need to use your time and effort to be productive.
4. Use systems to organize your tasks and time. Time blocking, the Pomodoro Technique, and batching are different types of productivity systems to keep you focused on one task at a time.

The Pomodoro technique works by helping you ignore distractions. You get focused on your tasks by working in short bursts, with short breaks in between. Use a timer set for 25 minutes. Focus exclusively on that task. Don't switch between tasks, take a break, check social media, or look at your inbox. Once the time goes off, take a break, ideally a quick 5 minutes. Set the timer for another 25 minutes and continue working. Continue with this system for as long as you need in order to finish your tasks for the day. They also have an app that tracks time in the Pomodoro way. The Pomodone app, that works with many task management services like Basecamp, Wunderlist, Evernote, Trello and Asana.

Implementing simple changes, using apps and organizing yourself can all have a big effect on how much time you have to use. The more you can optimize your time, the more productive you will be.

## **Apps to Help Optimize Your Time**

One way to determine how much time you have is to use specific programs that track the amount of time you use on certain activities.

Here is a list of 5 tools to help you optimize your time.

- **Toggl** - Toggl is an easy to use app. It uses a time to track time spent on over 100 websites and applications you visit. You receive a visual report on what's taking up your time.
- [Workflow](#) - Workflow allows you to customize and organize important tasks using colored tabs, so you can keep track of everything. It integrates with apps like Google Maps, Facebook, Dropbox and others.
- [1-3-5](#) - 1-3-5 helps you organize and prioritize tasks by breaking them down from one big thing down to three smaller things and finally into five small steps.
- [30/30](#) - This time management tool lets you set a specific time to various tasks. 30/30 is free and downloadable to any device. ([30-30 Video](#))
- [Evernote](#) - Evernote is an app that keeps track of your thoughts, ideas, videos, links, lists, images, and audio recordings. With this app, you can sync with any of device.

## **Time Blocking**

It's easy to make the to-do lists, but what about actually doing the tasks? Sometimes we have so much going on that we get overwhelmed by it all. One way to master your tasks, especially big projects, is to use the Time Blocking System of productivity.

### **What is time blocking?**

Time blocking is a type of scheduling tool that helps you manage your time better. You work in big or small tasks in a set amount of time. You block out chunks of time for things that you have to get done each day. It works well for both small tasks and big projects.

For example, if your project is to modify your gift shop area or your warehouse. Instead of trying to do it all at once, you block out chunks of time for each part, say 30 minutes for planning, 1 hour for sourcing, and 2 hours for reorganizing.

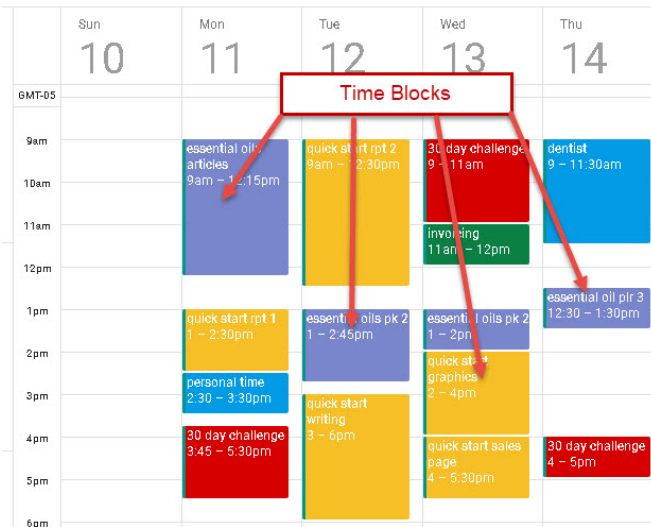
Time blocking isn't about getting rid of your to-do lists; it's about organizing your time according to priorities and making your to-do lists more manageable. Instead of working from a big, never ending, master to-do list, tackle those tasks with a specific time block (or several blocks for larger projects) that is more manageable. Having 3 items to a time block as opposed to a master list of 20 tasks makes the list easier control.

### **How To Time Block**

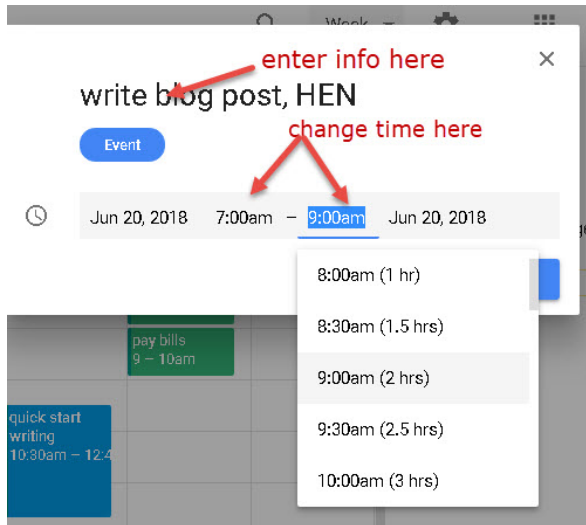
Step 1: Plan what your most important tasks are. These will be your biggest time blocks. Then list smaller tasks that you need to do such as invoicing or calling people. Remember to add in personal tasks such as doctor appointments, lunch and relaxing time. Use notepad, an app like Evernote or pen and paper to make a list of the things you need to do for the week. Working on the weekend before the upcoming week is a good time to do this.

Step 2: Schedule into blocks on your calendar. I recommend an online calendar like [Google Calendar](#), or iCal that can send you notifications and is easily updated and changed if emergencies come up. Add your items to your calendar, dividing your time into 30-minute to 2 hour blocks. For example, maybe your most pressing task is to finish a project you're launching in a few weeks. Block out two or three units for the week to work on the project.

I like to color code my blocks by project, newsletter, course development, personal appointments, and relaxation. So, let's say you have a project you're creating for your business, you're working on a project for a customer, you have a dentist appointment, need to do invoicing and want to relax for 45 minutes in the middle of the day. The course would be blue, the customer work is red, the invoicing is yellow, the dentist is purple, and relaxation is green block.



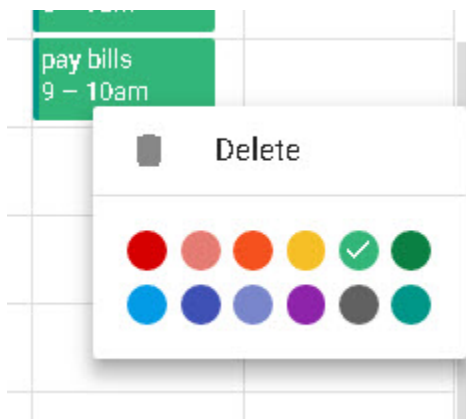
To add a task to the calendar, click on the time slot. A pop-up box opens where you can enter your task. You can also change the length of time here by clicking on the "begin" or "end" time.



You can also change time by clicking on the task and dragging up or down.

To change the color of a task, left click to choose a color.

You can remove or change the task as well by left clicking on it and hit delete.



## Tips for Time Blocking

- Each day will be different, maybe you handle coaching calls on Tuesdays and Thursdays, do content creation on Monday mornings and Wednesday afternoons you work on client projects.
- Remember to account for personal time and time to decompress – coffee breaks, lunch with the kids, booking vacation travel, and spending time on social media with friends.



- Things will pop up that you don't plan for. Don't get flustered and think you have to change your calendar completely. Instead, if it's really is needing your attention right now, go ahead and do it. Push your current task to the next available slot and then just carry on.
- It's not necessary to schedule short 5-minute things or reminders. Anything that's going to take you 15 minutes or longer should go on the calendar.
- At first, you may have trouble estimating how long a task will take. Schedule in a little extra time for those tasks. You can always adjust your calendar or move on to the next task.
- Schedule big projects or tasks over multiple time blocks covering a few days.
- Leave some blank space in your calendar every day for tasks that come up.

## **Apps for Time Blocking**

[Plan \(Web, iOS\)](#), is a simple, powerful way to time block. It is a calendar and to-do list in one program. You can quickly set up blocks of time by priority and projects.

[Week Plan \(Windows, iOS, Web\)](#), shows your schedule by the day, week or month and helps you plan all of your tasks according to what's happening in your life. Week Plan is good for visual organizers.

[Pomo Done](#) - PomoDone is a favorite among productivity enthusiasts—and for good reason! The simple concept of focusing your full attention in 25-minute bursts, and taking brief, deliberate breaks, is a powerful tool for turning big tasks into manageable ones. It's also an important part of the concept of time blocking.

Time blocks work as a way to manage your time by breaking up tasks into small blocks of time. Instead of a long to-do list that never ends, working in time blocks takes those tasks and assigns them to a specific time to accomplish them.

## **Here's What To Do Now**

We've all done it. We start a task, get sidetracked by something, and then return to the task, only to have trouble getting started again, or even remembering what we were trying to do in the first place. This often comes from not managing our time well. Poor time management is one of the top reasons we lack focus and don't finish projects on time.

Determining where you spend your time and how you might be wasting it is a very important step in gaining control over how you spend your time. Using apps such as Toggl or RescueTime will help you see where that time is going.

Once you know where you are wasting time, it's time to put systems and tools into play. Time blocking is a great way to mark out blocks of time for tasks you need to do each day. It's a simple process and the tools needed are free. Using an online calendar program, like Google Calendar or iCal, you block out 30 minute to 2 hour blocks of time for specific tasks.

Prioritize your time. When you set up your time blocks, identify your highest priority and block that in first. Then work backwards to the lower-priority tasks. Don't forget to block in time for social media, checking emails, and socializing with coworkers.

Block in time to decompress as well. This can be short 5 to 10 minute tea break or a longer stretch to relax.

Another way to manage your time better is to have help on tasks you don't enjoy or can't do well. Outsourcing work frees up your time so you can put it to use on tasks you are better at. Hire a virtual assistant to handle customer service issues. Hire a landscaper to take care of your lawn. Delegate housekeeping duties, graphic design needs, marketing, or anything else that be adequately done by someone else.

Use technology to help you be more efficient as well. Use apps for project management, to store lists and ideas, to manage time and keep you from wasting time.

Turn off notifications on your phone and computer when you're working on specific tasks.

Knowing what you need to accomplish each day keeps you focused.