



7 Ways to Work Smarter Not Harder

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Do you ever find yourself sucking down coffee, working late, bending over backwards and stressing out to check off items on a never-ending to-do list?

You might be a hard worker — and that's great — but if you set aside a few minutes to think about the way you work, chances are you can find some ways to boost your productivity and decrease your stress.

Here are seven tips for working smarter rather than harder:

01 Prioritize.

It's become customary for every professional to sit at their desk to check their flood of emails first thing in the morning. Understandable — you never know when an urgent matter is sitting in your inbox.

But to maximize efficiency, take "immediate action on any messages that require two minutes of your time or less," time management expert David Allen told the *Wall Street Journal*. In other words, if it's something you can do right now, do it and get it out of the way. Then, work on the more time-consuming projects by urgency.

Here's a cool prioritization tool you should explore: Grid Analysis — it's great to help you track your priorities, even when there are several factors to consider.

02 Indicate Objective.

Ask yourself: What's the point of this? If you have no idea, then there's nothing fueling your motivation, causing you to move more slowly. For every task, right down the objective and put it somewhere near you. Read it over when you're starting to feel burnt out.

03 Stop Multi-Tasking.

We know what you're thinking: Doing two things at the same time should double productivity, right?

Wrong.

"A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it's performing tasks in sequence, rather than all at once," Clifford Nass, Ph.D. and professor of communication at Stanford University told *Women's Health*.

Doing two things at the same time is less efficient because our brains are simply incapable of doing multiple things at the same time effectively. It's that simple.

04 Don't be a Perfectionist.

As much as we'd all like things to go perfectly, in most cases, it can be a little self-destructive to worry too much about making things perfect. And worst of all, it just takes too much time. The best tactic is to do your best to get it done well.

05 Never be Late.

This one's a given. The key to proper time management and overall organization is to set shorter deadlines than anticipated. This way, you leave no room for procrastination, but sufficient time for potential setbacks.

For your next task, try opening an account at Toggl, an extremely simple time tracking tool to help you record how long you've been working on a project. Try and beat your own time the next time you work on the project!

06 Automated Tasks.

Our tech savvy world has not yet invented robot assistants — not for the general public, at least. It has, however, made it easy to cut down time on tedious tasks. Take a few minutes to search the web on sites like Life Hacker and How-to Geek to figure out if any of your tasks can be automated, whether it's to conduct tough calculations through Excel or analyze social media traffic using the site bitly, which generates analytics reports.

For instance, check out Life Hacker's list of repetitive tasks that you should automate, such as making Google search results automatically come to you.

07 Take Breaks.

Allowing yourself more breaks will increase your productivity simply by rejuvenating your mind and body. It's a mental fresh-start, which will give you more energy to tackle the next thing on the agenda with clear eyes. **C**



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Ritika Trikha is a career advice writer at CareerBliss.com, a website dedicated to helping people find happiness in the workplace. Trikha tackles all topics career-related, from job search to overall career strategy.