

# Step By Step Guide to Optimizing Your time

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Whether you work for yourself or you work for another, your time is valuable. Almost everyone wishes for that extra hour in the day. By following this plan, in as little as one week you can discover on your own how to reduce wasted time and distractions.

*What difference would it make to your day if you walked into work with an organized schedule and could leave it all behind at the end of the day with a sense of closure?*

Imagine getting more work done than ever before and still having time for a walk in the park, or reading that sci-fi thriller that's been on your shelf for three months, or learning a new language!

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Check out the goal setting slidedeck <a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1jQI5LCcLGhVNjX9H0WcywKV8IK1LZf47">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1jQI5LCcLGhVNjX9H0WcywKV8IK1LZf47</a>	5
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## First off...

### Discovery

The first step is to determine what you are actually doing with your day. Do you get a constant stream of questions making it impossible to complete your assignments? Are you sipping delicious cups of matcha green tea instead of going to the gym?



- ★ Take a guess and list your top 10 time consuming activities *before* you do anything else. These are things that you believe you spend most of your time doing. They can be things that you choose to do or things that you must do for work or family.
- ★ Confirm your suspicions. Spend one week tracking your time. Track your personal and your professional time. Your goal is to create a clear picture of all areas of your life. I suggest doing both personal and professional as you can always break it down further later on. Your career often affects your personal life just as much as your personal life affects your career. *Use the “Time tracking” template in Google Sheets. Use the “Time” tab*

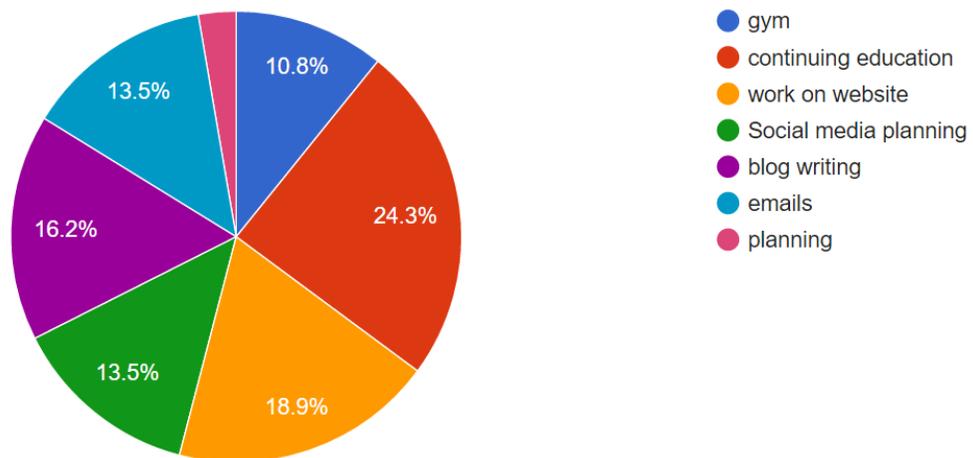


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as a template to record daily activity. [📄 Time Tracking Template](#) . If spreadsheets scare you, just use a piece of paper!

- It is easier and more accurate to keep a running tab as your day progresses to keep from spacing out on what you really did between your morning meeting and lunch. E.g. 9:00-10:00 am emails, 10:00-10:15 am answer questions from colleagues, 10:15-10:30 am phone conference.
- Be as specific as possible for this first process. Later on you will define each activity into a group.
- Be as accurate with your time as possible tracking down to *at least* 15 minute increments.
- If you spend less than five minutes on a task, make an effort to group it with something else within what you consider to be the same category. Try not to spend less than 30 minutes on an activity. Avoid distraction and interruptions!

Count



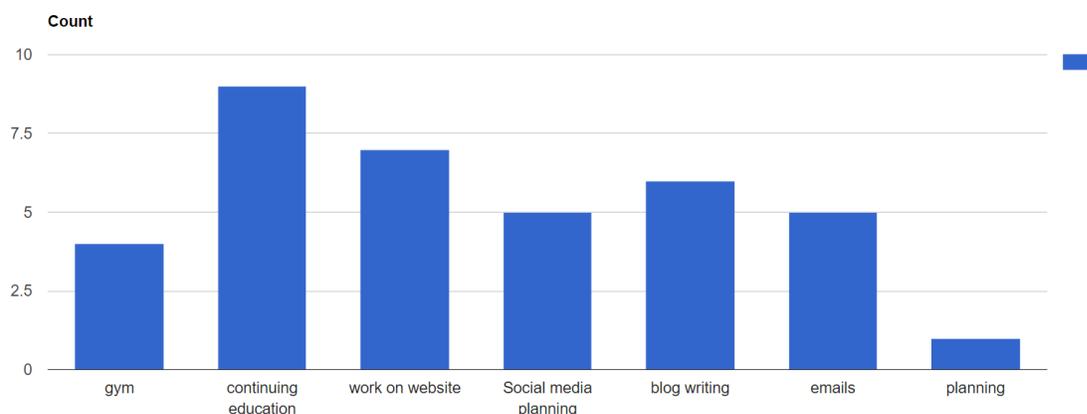
*Pie Chart of sample data*

- ★ If you forget a day, don't freak out! Move on to the next and pick up where you left off. You will want enough days to review for an accurate picture of your time expenditures.
- ★ If you are worried this will take too much time away from work....remind yourself that you are investing in your quality of life and work effectiveness! If you let outside factors influence your

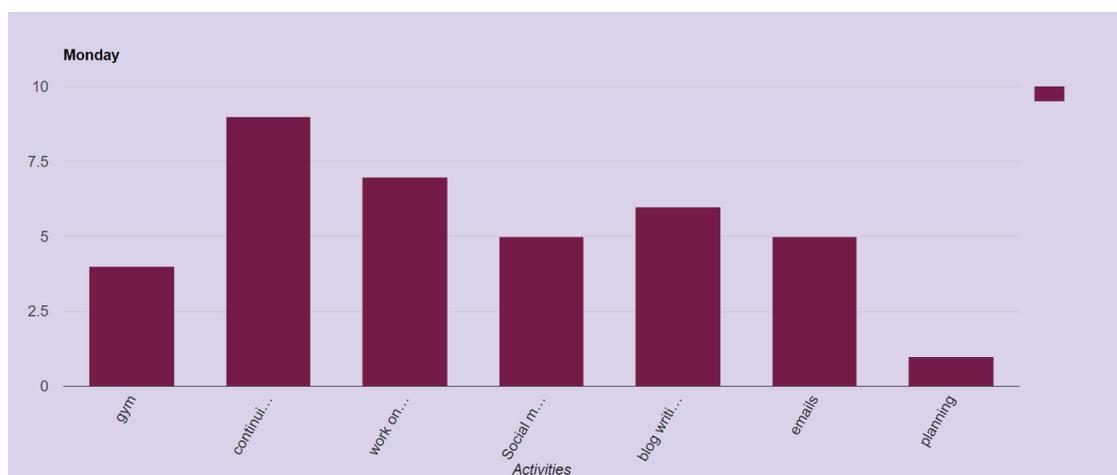


schedule more than you plan to make things happen you are not winning whether it is within your personal or business world! Take at least 15 minutes out of your morning and 15 minutes out of your evening per day to track activities. You deserve it!

- ★ For every *lost* block of 15 minutes think clearly about whether you were procrastinating, doing busy work or engaging in something that is helping you to reach your goals.
- ★ Once you have several days worth of activities, think ahead to how you would group these together. If blog writing will be lumped with posting to Facebook perhaps you want to call that time block “communication”. Establish how you want to group items ahead of time to save time on the next step.
- ★ If you have specific projects at work consider grouping them by client or project. How would the data provide information that will make your life easier? If you bill or track time spent on projects this is an easy solution



*Bar Graph created with sample data*



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*Bar Graph by Day created with sample data*

Getting to the meat of it...

## Analyze

The next step allows you to review and gain insight from your daily and weekly time consumption. Look for patterns and draw conclusions on good uses of your time, bad uses of your time and places that you can save time by improving your efficiency of the task.

- ★ Review your activity log and look for your top 10 activities. Write these down.
  - You will have many activities so you may need to review each entry and adjust to lump some activities together. E.g. “coffee with Jen” may turn into “coffee” or “socializing”. You may even want to lump together things like “coffee” and “happy hour” into “socializing”. Anything that was a one time task but significant can generally be included with other activities into something meaningful that tells you about your time management.
- ★ If you haven’t thought about your goals in a while this is the perfect time to revisit them. It is easy to get caught up in the everyday tasks of adulting and putting out fires and forget all about achieving your goals.



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## The fun part...

### Plan

Now that your data has been collected, scrubbed and organized you are ready to review and make some decisions.

- ★ Review your top 10 activities
- ★ Did the activities that you tracked in your log match your initial suspicions? This step is valuable to clearly define if your time is being consumed by things unintentionally. When we don't follow a plan this is generally the case.

Beyond your top ten.

- ★ Are there any activities that you would like to (and have the ability to) remove from your schedule? Some people find that it is easier to create a “not to do list” than a “to do list” especially when in a state of being overwhelmed. Can any of these be delegated?
- ★ Were there tasks that you started in one 15 minute interval but were continued and completed in broken time segments throughout the day? Focus is often taken away by interruptions all day long. This leads to wasted time trying to regain concentration and momentum. Can you set time aside where no one will bother you for activities that require intense concentration? Are there times of the day that you are unproductive or sluggish? Do you feel the most creative late at night? Schedule your activities intentionally.
- ★ Determine for each of these activities if it is an activity that is helping you to achieve your goals within your personal, professional and relationship categories.



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## Last things last

### Put into Practice

Once you have determined the areas you spend your time, how valuable each activity is to your goals and make an active decision on what to do next, you need to begin putting your plan into practice.

- ★ Organize and plan your day in either 30 minute or 1 hr time blocks. Evaluate your time consumption chart when planning for your future week of activities so that you keep control of your time.
- ★ Planning doesn't make perfect but it does give you a baseline for understanding what is going well and what could be improved. If your schedule doesn't work out the way you want it to day after day, stop and consider why this is happening. Often there are factors outside of your control but there is probably some action you can take to improve.
- ★ Prioritizing can be a life saver. If you can only get three (or one!) things done per day, start with those.
- ★ Different strokes work for different folks! A good ol' piece of paper will still provide you with valuable insight into distractions, time-blocking, optimal times, and awareness of activities that promote or detract from your goals.

*Practice with this exercise periodically and you will find that even though there are still 24 hours in a day that yours are more controlled and intentional!*

