

Leverage Your Schedule to Improve Your Life

When you're working, raising kids, and struggling to find time to take a run or read a book, it's common to feel like your days keep getting away from you. Mixing a few of these hacks and habits into your schedule can help you take back some control of your time and meet your personal and professional responsibilities with more energy and purpose.

1. Make the most of your mornings.

Several studies have found that ["morning people" are less likely to feel depressed than "night owls."](#) And although our sleep patterns and preferences are partially genetic, there are things you can do to feel more energized when your feet hit the floor.

Try waking up an hour early and filling that time with some physical, mental, or spiritual exercise. Work on your painting or hammer away at that novel. Brightening the mornings by throwing open the shades or eating your breakfast outside can also tell your body that it's time to get going.

Once you've found a morning routine that energizes you, stick to it. You may never become a morning person, but you'll enjoy your mornings a lot more and feel more prepared for the rest of your day.

2. Take a break – and not just at lunch.

Everyone knows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But many of us secretly place a bigger emphasis on lunch. We need that midday break to unplug from work and enjoy a long walk or a favorite podcast with our meal.

Adding some minibreaks to your day can give you a more consistent recharge than trying to cram all your rest into your lunch hour. One popular technique, the Pomodoro Timer, suggests taking a five-minute break every twenty-five minutes. If that's not practical at your job, just try something simple like getting up out of your chair every half hour to stretch, walk around the office to chat with coworkers, or grab a breath of fresh air.

3. Minimize your multitasking.

Do you pride yourself on your ability to juggle multiple projects at once? Research suggests that [maybe you shouldn't](#). Multitasking can overload your brain, raise your stress levels, and result in sloppy work.

[The Pareto Principle](#) says that 20% of our efforts yield 80% of our results. Rather than scattering your time across several projects at once, try to organize your to-do list and identify those 20% of tasks that are going to drive your most important results by the end of the day. You'll head home feeling more accomplished and more confident about where to focus your energy tomorrow.

4. Don't work after work.

The work from home revolution has added some valuable flexibility to how we get things done. But when the boundaries between home and work get too blurry, many of us tend to err on the side of work. Is all that unpaid overtime helping you get ahead? Or is your job's takeover of the kitchen table slimming down family time more than it should?

Multitasking at home is often every bit as inefficient as multitasking at work. When you clock out for the day, toss your laptop in your bag, power down your work phone, and give the most important people and passions in your life the attention that they deserve.

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