

Discipline and Self-Control: You Can Be Your Own Worst Productivity Enemy

Discipline is your ability to maintain consistent, productive behavior. To maximize your productivity, you need to learn to do what must be done, and to exercise restraint over your own impulses, emotions, and desires. If you're self-disciplined, you exhibit consistent focus in your daily work -- even when you don't feel like it. Try these tactics to keep you on track during the day.

1. **Know your natural energy cycle and work effectively during peak times.** We all have a natural time during the day when we feel up (prime time) and a natural time when we feel down (down time). Knowing both your prime and down times and knowing how to handle them is an important productivity enhancer.
2. **Control perfectionism.** Realize that some things are good enough as they are. If you suffer from the disease of perfectionism, things may never get done to your satisfaction, so learn to be flexible.
3. **Avoid procrastination.** Don't put things off, or wait until the last minute to do them. Otherwise you'll always have a sense of impending doom hanging over your head, and will end up operating in permanent crisis mode.
4. **Force yourself to slow down when necessary.** Realize that speed can be counterproductive; some tasks need to be done slowly in order to be done properly. As the saying goes, the only person who ever had his work done by Friday was Robinson Crusoe!
5. **Determine on your own what you will accomplish each day.** Don't allow others to dictate your schedule, insofar as this is possible. Set rules about the things you choose to do, and the people you choose to interact with.
6. **Work productively from your home office and avoid distractions.** Working at home comes with its own set of distractions. Be aware of your personal weaknesses, and create rules about what you may and may not do during the day.
7. **Handle common, routine tasks on a daily basis so things don't pile up.** Practice clutter control. Taking care of common tasks every day -- especially those you don't really enjoy -- will keep them from getting out of hand.
8. **Arrive at appointments and meetings on time.** In fact, try to be early on a consistent basis. Instead of annoying people with your lateness, reap the benefits of arriving before everyone else.

9. **Avoid workaholism.** Try not to work more than 40 hours per week, and don't take work home with you, on vacation, or to bed. It's fine to be a conscientious employee, but don't be compulsive about it.

10. **Work hard, and "put your nose to the grindstone" every day.** It's not necessary to work ten or twelve hour days, but you should work hard the eight hours you're in the office.

Strive for the self-control and confidence gained when you enforce your own rules. It may be a pain, but in the end, it gets the job done. Following these tips will help you complete your high priority tasks, without getting sidelined by menial or trivial activities.

© 2012 Laura Stack. Laura Stack is a personal productivity expert, author, and professional speaker who helps her clients create Maximum Results in Minimum Time® and develop high-performance cultures. She is the president of The Productivity Pro®, Inc., a time management training firm specializing in productivity improvement in high-stress organizations and the 2011-2012 President of the National Speakers Association. Since 1992, Laura has presented keynotes and seminars on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in today's workplaces. She is the bestselling author of five books: *What to Do When There's Too Much to Do*; *SUPERCOMPETENT*; *The Exhaustion Cure*; *Find More Time*; and *Leave the Office Earlier*. Laura has been a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, Xerox, and Office Depot. She is the creator of The Productivity Pro® planner by Day-Timer and has been featured on the CBS Early Show, CNN, and the *New York Times*. Her clients include Starbucks, Cisco Systems, Wal-Mart, and Bank of America. To have Laura speak at your next event, call 303-471-7401 or visit www.TheProductivityPro.com to sign up for her free monthly productivity newsletter.