50 Tricks to Get Things Done Faster, Better, and More Easily, Part 5

By Dustin Wax

We all want to get stuff done, whether it's the work we have to do so we can get on with what we want to do, or indeed, the projects we feel are our purpose in life. To that end, here's a collection of 50 hacks, tips, tricks, and mnemonic devices I've collected that can help you work better.

41. **Checklists:** When planning any big task, make a checklist so you don't forget the steps while in the busy middle part of doing it. Keep your checklists so you can use them next time you have to do the same task.
42. **No:** Learning to say "no" – to new commitments, to interruptions, to anything – is one of the most valuable skills you can develop to keep you focused on your own commitments and give you time to work on them.
43. **Unschedule:** Schedule all your fun activities or personal life (the stuff you want to do) first. Fill in whatever time's left over with uninterrupted blocks of work. Write those into your schedule after you've completed them. Reward yourself after every block of quality, focused work.
44. **Purge:** Regularly go through your existing commitments and get rid of anything that is either not helping you advance your own goals or is a regular "sink" of time or energy.
45. **One Bucket:** Minimize the places you collect new inputs in your life, your "buckets". Ideally have one "bucket" where everything goes. Lots of people experience an incredible sense of relief when everything they need to think about is collected in one place in front of them, no matter how big the pile.
46. **50-30-20:** Spend 50% of your working day on tasks that advance your long-term, life goals, spend 30% on tasks that advance your middle-term (2-years or so) goals, and the remaining 20% on things that affect only the next 90 days or so.
47. **Timer:** Tell yourself you will work on a project or task, and only that project or task, for a set amount of time. Set a timer (use a kitchen timer, or use a countdown timer on your computer), and plug away at your work. When the timer goes off, you're done — move on to the next project or task.
48. **Do Your Worst:** Give yourself permission to suck. Relieve the pressure of needing to achieve perfection in every task on the first run. Promise yourself you'll go back and fix any problems later, but for now, just run wild.
49. **Make an Appointment with Yourself:** Schedule time every week or so just for you. Consider the state of your life: what's working? What isn't working? what mistakes are you making? what could you change? Give yourself a chance to get to know you.
50. **[This space left intentionally blank]:** This is a big list, sure, but it's not an exhaustive one. The last space is left for you to fill in. What works for you? What would you like to share with the rest of the lifehack.org community? Let us know in the comments — or write your own list and link back to us!

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