HIGH IMPACT PRODUCTIVITY HACKS

goals infinite

ABOUT GOALS INFINITE

Goals Infinite was founded with one goal: we want to help people to achieve their goals and adjust their mindset to be more efficient. This site is for those who want to become better. We are not here to convince you, you have to make the conscious decision to become better and we are here to help you with the rest.

Every Friday we post a new article on our site on various topics such as motivation, mindset, productivity, planning and more. If any of these sounds interesting to you, I encourage you to subscribe to our newsletter, which will inform you about the latest content, news and upcoming events. To see our most popular articles click here.

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ABOUT
THE AUTHOR

Gabor Hosszu is the founder and head article writer of Goals Infinite. His obsession with self-help books, the growth mindset, planning and productivity hacks made him realise early, that continuous self-improvement is what drives him forward. No matter if it's finishing a master's degree, getting into the top 10% of players in a video game or losing 25 pounds, he was ready to take on the challenge.

Being passionate about personal development and helping others were the main reasons he launched this site. By trade Gabor is a mechanical engineer. His hobbies include being a chilli farmer, a video game nerd and a wannabe beer expert.

INTRODUCTION

I've had it with low impact productivity hacks! The internet is overflowing with tips and tricks on how to work more efficiently since productivity is such a hot topic nowadays. I've tried many of them but most of the time I was disappointed. The results I ended up with were much less than I expected no matter how long I tried. At one point I had enough. **Why even bother researching these hacks and changing your life according to what they say to increase your daily output by 1-2%?** This is how I ended up with the term low impact productivity hacks.

In the past year, I did my own research. **I've found 5 productivity hacks that I use every day and has the highest impact.** Since I started to apply them, tasks like writing articles for Goals Infinite takes about 50% less time. 50%! Some CEOs would sell their souls for a 50% increase in productivity. What would you do with all your free time, if you could be 50% more efficient?

Most of these hacks have been around for 10-15 years, but I'm guessing since you are reading this you don't know about them or don't apply them. The good thing is that they are easy as well. **Learn about making an efficient action plan, why scheduled work time is essential, the latest research on taking breaks, how to kill procrastination and the best productivity hack I've ever heard.** Build them into your daily routine, form a habit around them and you will be surprised how much more can you achieve than you thought before.

I wish you the best of luck on your journey to becoming more productive!

Gabor

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How to get more out of your action plan

A solid action plan is a good foundation for a productive life. Making a list of tasks is an excellent way to keep track of what you have done so far, and what is left. If you don't make action plans regularly or you just want to improve this guide is here to help.

The goal of this chapter is to offer easy to use steps to come up with a bullet-proof action plan or help you develop a more efficient way of doing one.

Action plans are awesome. **Since the day I started implementing them into my own life I started to feel their power.** To simply put it I was able to do more every day. Later on, I tried to improve the way I make these action plans and checked the results. It wasn't only about how much I achieved every day, but the way I felt during the execution of my plan. You'll be surprised how little changes can adjust the way you think about your tasks. First of all, let's talk about why you should make an action plan.

Why make an action plan?

An action plan is a great tool to collect and schedule all the necessary steps you'll have to take. Here at Goals Infinite we believe, that it is essential to have a good plan as it is what separates dreams from goals. Create plans and execute them regularly and you will be unstoppable.

The difference between a To Do list and an action plan

On a To Do list, you collect tasks under each other and cross one out when you are don with it. A**n action plan, however, answer the questions, Who, What, How, Why and When.** It is a lot more detailed than a To Do list. If you think all those extra bits of information are unnecessary (like the Who? when you are writing an action plan for yourself only) feel free to skip them. A To Do list is still better than no plan at all, but an action plan is superior when it comes to details.

Making a bullet-proof action plan

Having a plan is great, but often it is no more than a piece of paper with some chores one it. At least it feels like chores. It can be really demotivational to see a long list of undetailed bullet points that you HAVE to do. Here I collected some easy to use

guidelines that you can follow when creating an action plan, to make it is more actionable, user-friendly and to make you more productive overall.

Keep your list short. One of the most demotivating things is when you look at a list of tasks and it is 6 pages long. I can already feel the positive attitude fading away just by thinking about it. First of all, you don't need to cram every item for the next two months into a list. We all have 24 hours a day, so we can only achieve limited amount. Second, **if the list still grows long only with your daily tasks make separate lists.** Here's an example: make a list for the morning, for the afternoon and for the evening. You can separate your tasks by locations as well: office, plant, home. Now you don't have to deal with a huge list at a time.

Keep your tasks short. No one wants to see tasks, that are 2-3 lines long. **Keep it short, I recommend 5-10 words each.** If you feel the need to add extra detail, consider using the next trick.

Break down complex tasks into smaller ones. This is my number one productivity trick that I use all the time. It makes everything look easy and more doable. I already wrote an article on this, for more information read this.

Make your tasks actionable. Every task you put on the list must have a verb in it. Instead of "Report", write "Do the report for the Johnstone case". I found it to be the most efficient to put the verb as the first word. This makes every step an action that you can imagine instead of just being a boring bullet point.

Categorise your tasks. Batch processing is what you want to achieve with this. If you have to write 10 emails during the day, do all of them in one sitting. If you have to make 10 phone calls do them after each other. This is a more efficient way to deal with small but similar tasks.

Schedule your tasks. Estimate the required amount of time for each task, put them in order and set a deadline for each of them. According to Parkinson's law, a deadline increases productivity, especially when it is near. The only reason, why you should update your deadlines is when something unexpected comes up.

An action plan is a powerful tool, that every high achiever should implement into their daily lives. I hope these guidelines will help you to make an actionable and efficient plan that you can use at work or for your personal goals.

The power of time slots

One of the most common problems we have is "not having enough time". But what if you actually do have the time, but you didn't manage it well. We all have 24 hours a day and many of us achieve amazing things. They manage their time better than the rest of the population. Let's see how we often end up not having enough time.
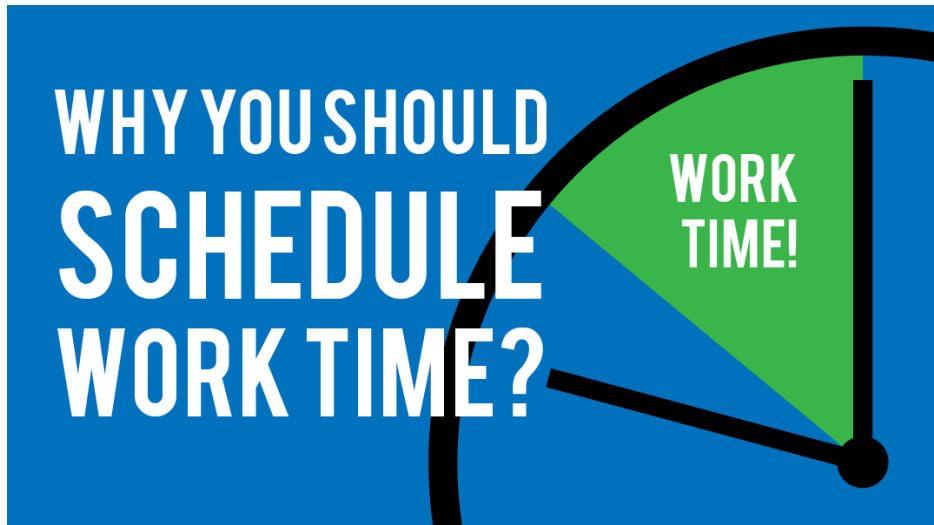
How we end up not having enough time?

When we plan to work on something we often don't go into detail with our planning. We just "want to work on it" without answering questions like when, where and how. Here's an example, think about when you tell yourself that you going to work on a project this weekend. What is the actual chance that you do your work? If you are like most of us you'll achieve very little or nothing at all. The reason for this is most of us has a problem with personal accountability, the ability to keep the promises that we make to ourselves.

This next productivity hack will help you with this exact problem. It is simply called The Power of time slots.

Solution: Scheduled work time

Let's go back to the previous example of promising yourself to work on a project on the weekend. How specifically does this promise sound? Not very, right? How likely you'll actually make progress? Not likely. **This weekend plan barely qualifies as a plan, it is more like a wish.**

To make your plan more powerful you have to be more specific. Answering questions like when, where, how, and for how long will make your plan much more impactful.

Listen to this: on Saturday I will work 2 hours on my project starting at 10 am and also another 2 hours in the afternoon starting at 4 pm. **Now this one is specific.**

We, humans, are strange creatures. Without rules, we tend to underperform as much as we do in an over-regulated environment. A **few rules are much better than numerous rules or no rules at all.** This applies working on a project as well. In the example above, we went from 0 rules to a healthy a amount. R**ules like this serve as a guide that point us towards the next step that we have to take.**

Now on your Saturday when you look at your clock and it says 9:45 your mind is going to think about the weekend project and soon you'll have to work on it. **The power of timeslots mentally prepares you the start working.**

Every time you schedule your work there's a much lower chance of procrastination and there's a higher chance of actually do your work.

Breaks: friend or foe?

We were told while we were kids to just sit down and study and when we were adults get to sit down and do our work. I always found this a very strange way to be productive and move forward. it turns out it was actually based on an old theory.

A misconception from the past

Studies from the past indicate that our attention is like a muscle it gets tired over time. This phenomenon was called vigilance decrement. This idea was accepted for a very long time because it sounded very plausible. Imagine sitting in front of a computer and doing the same tasks for 8 hours. It is nearly impossible. **You will lose focus over time because our attention gets tired just like a muscle after a workout they said.**

A professor from the University of Illinois called Alejandro Lleras rejected this theory. He suggests that our attention is not limited resource that runs out as we use it, but it shifts over time. From the previous example imagine sitting in front of the computer for 8 hours. At one point you start to distract yourself with surfing on the internet playing on your phone or having a conversation. Your attention did not run out, you are still paying attention. But you're paying attention to a different task to a different subject.

Lleras' studies indicate that the brain filters out unimportant stimulus it registers over time. So if you are paying attention to a subject or task that is unimportant you will eventually lose interest because your brain starts to filter parts of it out aka gets bored. **But if it is true how can you keep your productivity high throughout the day even with attention hungry, repetitive or boring tasks?**

How to keep your productivity high during the day?

Lleras continued his research and in 2011 he reported that people who regularly takes breaks tend to keep focus and their productivity high throughout the day. They tested this theory on 84 subjects who had to perform repetitive tasks on the computer. The results show that the subjects who had to take regular breaks had much better results than the ones who had to do it in one sitting.

"It was amazing that performance seemed to be unimpaired by time, while for the other group's performance was so clearly dropping off," Lleras said.

This result left the researchers to believe that our attention is not a limited resource and with regular brakes we are able to keep our focus.

So brakes are your friends but you can still do a break wrong. The best kind of break applies two rules:

First, a scheduled break is much better than a random break. Second, a break has to have a limited length. For example, as I'm writing this article right now I plan to have a 10-minute break after every 40 minutes of work. These rules make sure I have a small break once every 1 hour and keep my productivity high and my attention focused.

Find what works for you!

This rule works for me very well, I figured it out in college but back then I used to do 45 minutes of work and 15 minutes of break. You have to find what works best for you. I recommend starting with 50 minutes and 10-minute break so this adds up to one hour.

In conclusion take regular but short breaks to keep up your attention and productivity.

I'm beating procrastination, here's how!

We can procrastinate for numerous reasons, but the results are always the same. We do nothing and achieve nothing. Heck, we don't even start and this sometimes makes us feel guilty. Chronic procrastination is something that can stop you every time, no matter how good your idea is or how detailed your plans are. What if I told you, you can get rid of procrastination with a simple shift of your focus? The goal of this article is to offer a powerful solution to eliminate procrastination once and for all.

Eliminate procrastination with a simple shift of focus

When we procrastinate we push a whole task in front of us. All the steps from start to finish are compiled in one big ball that some of us roll for eternity. When we look at this ball and try to deal with it, there's a good chance we will be intimidated by its size and make the decision to just keep pushing it. B**ut do we have to deal with the whole task at once?**

I got great news, you don't have to. **You only have to do one thing to eliminate procrastination and that is starting.** Once you started, you are not procrastinating anymore. So, how about you focus only on starting instead of the whole process? Mountain climbing starts with putting on your shoes, washing the dishes starts with one plate and writing an article starts with turning on your computer.

Focus on the starting, not on the whole process or the finish line. After you start, it is easier to keep on going. The same happens in physics as it is harder to move a still object than keeping a moving object in motion. So simple concept, yet so powerful. This article explains procrastinations biological point of view perfectly, how the different parts of the brain battle each other and why this works. Here's a comparison of the two different approaches to a task.

How focusing on the whole process or the results will lead to procrastination?

- **Your focus is spread among the different actions you have to do.** A whole process is often a big bite that can look scary. The scarier it looks the more resistance you'll encounter.

- There are a **lot of variables and this causes uncertainty.** To face uncertainty with a positive attitude you'll need a whole set of skills. Lacking these skills or not being confident about them will generate resistance that often leads to procrastination.

- **You not only have to take more steps but also have to know the upcoming steps as well.** When it comes to procrastination looking further ahead will often make the tasks look less appealing.

- **More work.** Even the term more work can cause a mental obstacle that we often don't have the motivation to face.

How focusing only on the start will help you eliminate procrastination?

- **Pinpoint focus.** You only have one thing on your mind and that is to start working. You don't have to think about upcoming steps or obstacles, just one thing: to start as fast as you can with the highest momentum possible.

- **Fewer variables, less uncertainty.** Since you are focusing only on one thing, there will fewer factors that can cause uncertainty. In ideal cases, you only have to deal with one variable and that is you.

- **You only have to take the first step.** It is in your focus of attentions. Take the first step and let the rest follow.

- **Less work** is always appealing so it is met with less resistance. Less resistance equals less chance of procrastination.

Once you started, you are not procrastinating anymore. Focus on starting instead of the whole process.

The best productivity hack I've ever heard

There are thousands of tips and tricks on the internet on how to increase your productivity, but most of them are lacklustre or have very little impact. I recently came across a productivity hack that blew my mind. It not only helps with procrastination but also makes sure you'll do the work you scheduled. Sounds too good? I thought the same until I gave it a try.
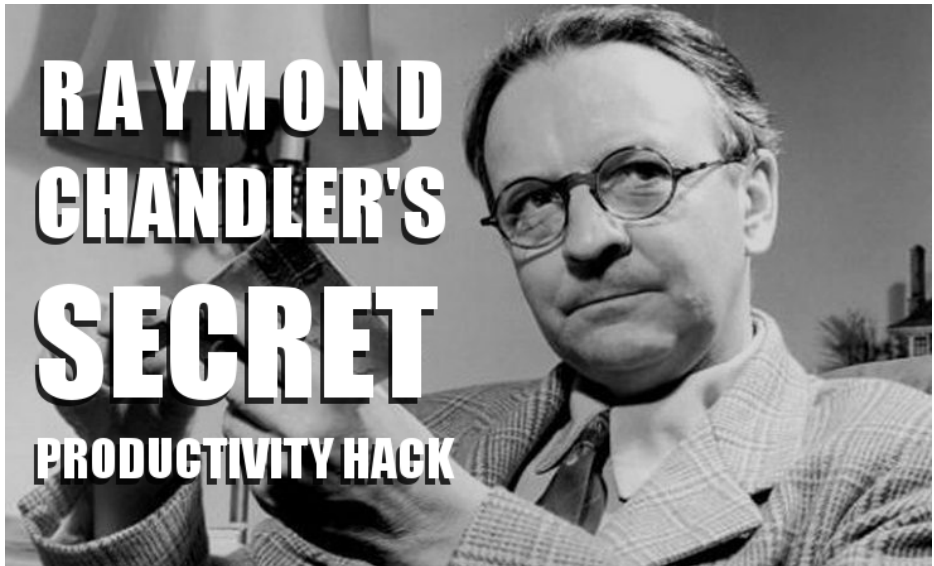

Raymond Chandler's secret productivity hack

The late fiction writer [Raymond Chandler](#) was convinced, that a good writer writes at least 4 hours a day. To fulfil this he scheduled uninterrupted time every day, where he was supposed to do his writing. He often struggled with this, like many of us struggle in a similar situation. Have you ever tried to spend 4 hours of focused work time in one sitting? **It is nearly impossible.**

He often found himself reading books or writing letters instead of working on his novels. (Let's face it, most of the time it is easier to do something else than to do the task we scheduled.) This infuriated him, as he made less progress or the desired progress took more time. **He decided to come up with one simple rule to solve this problem. This rule became the best productivity hack I've ever heard.**

The rule was simple. He knew that you should not force writing. If you are not in the mood, you don't have to write. But you are not allowed to do any other activity either. So, he gave himself two options:

1. **I may write, but it is not mandatory,**

2. **Not do anything else.**

What does "Not do anything else" means? It means you are not allowed to do anything productive (another task, housework, paperwork...) or anything that helps time fly (surfing the web, checking your phone, reading the news, writing emails...). You may look out the window, walk up and down in your room etc.
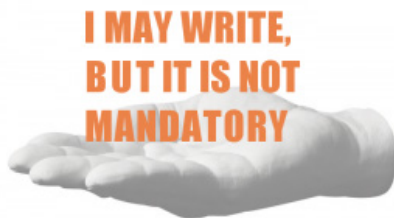
The rule basically says Writing or Nothing. Of course, it works with everything else as well like Homework or Nothing and Promote or Nothing, not just writing. Some literature even calls this rule **the Nothing Alternative.** It sounds super simple I know, but here me out.

Why does this rule work and how to apply it?

This seemingly easy rule works on many levels. Here are just a few:

- **First of all, you have a choice.** This gives you the feeling of freedom, which is rare when working.

- **Your mind won't feel forced to work.** Forced work is never efficient work.

- **You'll realise that doing nothing is boring.** The only thing that is less boring than nothing is working.

Applying this rule will help you deal with procrastination and spend your scheduled time productively. It does require some discipline and willpower, so the best is to get rid of the temptations around you. Here are some examples:

- Make sure you won't get interrupted by others,

- Turn off your phone (aeroplane mode or notifications off),

- Close the unnecessary tabs in your browser (or the whole browser),

- Get rid of newspapers, magazines and books from your workspace.

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