

# 7 bad habits you should break to be more productive

There's no question that successful entrepreneurs have a lot of discipline. But even the most disciplined people sometimes have a hard time being productive. But here's a secret, though: being productive isn't that hard. It's all about breaking bad habits and establishing good ones. Sound too simplistic? It's not.

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Making small tweaks to your routine can have a big impact on your productivity. If you feel like you're always behind schedule and never seem to get things done, here are a few bad habits that you should break today in order to be more productive.

## 1. Constantly checking your smartphone while you work

Getting distracted frequently is one of the main productivity killers in the workplace, and using a smartphone to check things like social media updates or the performance of your investment portfolio while you're on the job is the best way to be constantly distracted.

To overcome this bad habit, you don't necessarily have to take things to the

extreme and turn your cellphone off at work, but it is a good idea to at least mute your notifications from social media and other sources that are unlikely ever to be urgent. Another tip is to program your workday with pre-established breaks where you can quickly get the updates you crave without disrupting your workflow. Just make sure not to set breaks so frequently that they defeat the purpose.

## 2. Cluttering your workspace

Some people make it a habit to toss everything they have in their hands on the first patch of available desk space, creating total chaos after a short while. Keeping everything in disarray and completely unorganised is the best way to waste time and be unproductive since it makes it hard to find the things you need to get work done.

Additionally, it's no secret that clutter clutters the mind. It has a negative psychological effect that blocks or slows down our thought process. This is not to say that you need to take things to an OCD level of cleanliness and neatness, just that you should dedicate at least a small fraction of your morning or early work hours to tidy up your workplace to make things easier to find when you need them.

## 3. Trying to work on too many things at a time

You might think that being able to juggle multiple tasks at once sets you apart from the pack, but it doesn't. In fact, a 2009 study from Stanford showed that multitaskers are actually less productive than those who focus on one thing at a time.

In other words, working on too many things at once, like checking your credit account's balance while writing a blog post and answering emails, all at the same time, isn't a skill; it's a bad habit. It stretches multitasker's brains over the limit because they end up having a hard time focusing on only one thing when they need to.

Also, if you think that they're probably just better than everyone else at quickly switching their focus from one task to the next, you'd be wrong. The same study also showed that people who focus on one thing at a time perform better than multitaskers when asked to change to a new task quickly.

*So, next time you're working on something important that needs to get done ASAP, shut out all other tasks and distractions to focus only on getting your work done as quickly and accurately as possible.*

## 4. Procrastinating to work on difficult tasks

When faced with difficult tasks, people are often tempted to put them off until later, especially if there's no immediate need to get them done right away. The argument is that it's better to complete small but easily manageable tasks right away to build momentum towards the more difficult one later. As logical or intuitive as this may seem, it rarely works. Most of the time, procrastinating on difficult tasks makes them seem harder and harder as time goes by, deciding to tackle them become ever more difficult.

On the other hand, we all have a limited amount of mental energy. As we use it up, our decision-making abilities and productivity deteriorate, which is known as decision fatigue. By postponing difficult tasks, we're effectively making the conscious decision to work on them when we're at our worst, making the task even more difficult than it needs to be.

Also, if a task seems hard and you postpone it on the grounds of its complexity, the whole thing will end up becoming a self-fulfilled prophecy by the time you start working on it. Remember, if you believe something is hard, it'll become hard regardless of how easy or hard it was, to begin with.

Consider the alternative, starting with the most difficult task. By addressing the elephant in the room right away, you'll work on it when your mental energy and productivity are at their highest, making the task a lot easier to complete. Once you finish that one difficult task, it'll be downhill all the way. You'll have the easiest tasks in front of you, and you'll be high on endorphins from finishing the first task, so you'll have the best disposition to tackle the rest of your work.

## 5. Not getting enough sleep

Ever notice how after a sleepless night, you can get hung up on some difficult words or sentences while proofreading your work, and it seems like the longer you stare at them, the harder they get? This is because sleep deprivation affects brain function and makes it harder for us to filter out distractions and focus on our work.

A good night's sleep can enhance productivity and happiness, help you make better judgments, and provide access to bigger and better ideas. If you're a night owl, it may be hard to cram 8 hours of sleep at night, especially if you have to work in the morning, but the positive effects on your health and productivity are well worth the effort.

## 6. Snoozing the alarm in the morning

If you're the type of person who immediately gets up in the morning when you hear the alarm go off, good for you. But many people have the bad habit of snoozing their alarms in the middle of their sleep when they go off. Doing this trains your brain to treat the alarm as a cue for sleep because that's exactly what happens when you hit the snooze button and doze back off after being woken up. By the time you notice how late it is, you end up racing your way through your morning routine, desperate to get to work.

In the end, you neither get a good night's rest nor do you get up in time for a healthy morning routine that will make your day more productive.

If you want to be more productive in the mornings, you should actually use your bedtime as an alarm. By going to bed at the same time every night and spending only as much time in bed as you need to get a good rest, you'll let your body do what it's naturally programmed to do: sleep at night and power up in the morning.

But how do you break this alarm-snooze cycle? You can either deactivate the snooze function in your alarm, or you can forgo the alarm altogether. Some of the most successful people in the world, like Oprah Winfrey, never set alarm clocks to wake them up in the mornings. Oprah even goes as far as to admit that not setting alarms is one of her secrets to success.

By not setting the alarm, you'll force yourself to go to bed earlier so as to wake up naturally after a good night's rest on time for your morning coffee.

## 7. Using mobile devices in bed

Mobile devices and other electronics with digital displays can severely hinder our sleep and productivity. The short wavelengths in the blue light that most electronic devices emit through their screens can alter our mood, our energy levels and the quality of our sleep.

This is because this type of light interferes with our natural circadian rhythm and suppresses our body's release of melatonin, a hormone that makes us feel sleepy at night. In other words, blue light tricks our brain into thinking it's still daytime and that we should be awake, so we end up sleeping less. As we saw before, sleep deprivation is a common cause of reduced productivity.

We can avoid this bad habit by shutting down our mobile devices at the same time every night, so we're not tempted to go on social media or anything else that keeps us up all night long.

## The bottom line

If you want to be more productive, it's time to break your bad habits. This post provided a list of the most common productivity killers and how they can affect your health or ruin your sleep patterns. By avoiding these behaviours in the first place, you'll have an easier time getting things done at work and taking care of yourself when you're not there. It may take some effort, but with enough discipline, I promise that this is something worth working for!

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