



TIME SAVED
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HR

The exact amount of time saved really depends on how you use and pair up the strategies shared here, but you will save precious minutes, guaranteed!

The New Art of Multitasking

Experts are redefining the smart way to get more done in less time.

BY CHRISTINA VERCELLETTO

As an uber-efficient multitasking working mom, my M.O. was to have three Google docs open, check email every 10 minutes and text my husband/kids/cousin whenever I thought of anything to say. Plus I gave in to clickbait every time a line like “What That Dull Ache Could Mean” appeared on the perimeter of my laptop screen.

I thought I was getting it all done perfectly—except I wasn’t. So much skittering back and forth makes your brain work more slowly and less creatively, except for this loophole: Scientists have found that multitasking in other ways is actually beneficial. The secret to getting twice as much done in half the time depends upon how you match up your tasks.



1. Mind and Matter

Mundane physical chores—think vacuuming, mopping, weeding, washing dishes—can prime you to delve into thorny emotional issues. “Psychologically stressful events are often processed more easily when you are releasing physiological stress,” explains John Huber, PsyD, chairman of Mainstream Mental Health in Austin, TX. “Repetitive physical activity effectively turns off some of our filters to release our creative, problem-solving side.” When Dawn Rose of Marietta, GA, felt stuck and anxious over in-law issues, gardening cleared her head. “The beginning of a solution came to me after working in the yard,” says Dawn. “I realized for the first time how I might be contributing to the problem.”

Quick Fixes

Productivity experts share their best time-saving tips

“Use an ‘Action Today’ List”

“It consists of only three or four tasks that have to be completed or at least started that day. The action today list keeps you from feeling overwhelmed, helps you focus on the most important tasks and leaves room for dealing with the inevitable daily curve balls.”

—MIKE GARDNER, author of *Business Owners: Your Family Misses You*

“Give yourself a screen curfew”

“You’re probably used to battling your kids over when to turn off the TV or put the electronics away so they can go to sleep on time. You should follow suit. By setting a curfew of 9 p.m. for all your devices, you’ll be in bed by 10:30, which is when the body is primed for good-quality sleep, which will increase your energy and make you sharper the next day.”

—SUHAS KSHIRSAGAR, MD, author of *Change Your Schedule, Change Your Life*

“Pause and catch your breath”

“We’ve trained our minds to be race cars. They can easily spin out of control. Our bodies have a different pace, a different clock. The rhythm of the heartbeat and breath is naturally steady, as is the cycle of nature all around us. Catch your breath—its natural rhythm balances the racing of your mind. A long outbreath calms the nervous system and improves focus and task performance.”

—MARGARET MOORE, author of *Organize Your Emotions, Optimize Your Life*

“Plan the important stuff first”

“On Fridays, think through the week ahead. What are your top professional priorities? Your top personal ones? When can you do them? Put them on your calendar, ideally as close to the start of the week as possible. If you accomplish the most important goals by Tuesday, you’ll feel on top of the world!”

—LAURA VANDERKAM, author of the upcoming *Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done*

2. Stop and Go

Leverage your wait times—and I'm not just talking about the precious minutes you spend on hold for customer service. Think smaller. While at the gas station, for example, do a fast car cleanup by tidying the glove compartment or wiping down the dash. On your evening commute, take a few minutes to journal about what went well at work and why or to create a to-do list for tomorrow. "Use bits of 'free' time built into part of a task you're already doing to accomplish another," says Nekeshia Hammond, PsyD, a time management expert in Brandon, FL.



TWO IS ENOUGH

No matter how much of a pro you think you are, avoid trying to juggle three tasks. "Your prefrontal cortex will always discard one," says neuroscientist Etienne Koechlin, co-author of a study on the topic. Experts think we might not be able to handle three things at once because our brains have only two cerebral hemispheres.

3. Up and Down

Pair tasks that use different skill sets, such as driving and having a catch-up conversation with your kid, suggests Hammond. (A plus: Teens are more likely to open up without eye contact.) Tweeze your eyebrows while chatting on the phone (just pop on your headphones). Take an audio language lesson while walking on a treadmill or around your neighborhood. Bonus: Research shows that completing easy cognitive tasks while working out may make you exercise harder.

4. Love and Hate

Try layering a dreary-but-necessary task (transferring photos off your at-capacity phone) with something enjoyable (sipping a latte at the coffee shop). While I'm not sharing this with my kids, an Ohio State University study found that studying while watching TV made the former far more gratifying. And that's often all the incentive needed to get a must-do done. So take your laptop to that diner you love and finish your taxes while eating lunch. Or draft a dreaded work email while treating yourself to a pedicure. You'll overcome the biggest time-suck of all: procrastination.



Tap for Success

JOTNOT PRO

(Android and iOS, \$5)

Quickly scan documents (like contracts or magazine recipes) with your phone and then email to yourself or save to the cloud. "With this app, you'll never need to own a desktop scanner," says Jeff Sanders, author of *The Free-Time Formula*.

FOXIT PDF

(Android, iOS and Windows, free)

Cut back on printing. "I can open a file, add my actual signature, save it and send it to someone, all without printing," says personal productivity consultant Peggy Duncan. The software even allows collaboration on documents with other people.

CLOCK

(iOS, free)

"The Clock app preloaded on iPhones and iPads is probably the one I use most," says Duncan. "It's my alarm clock, reminder and kitchen timer." Share your schedule and sleep needs and the new Bedtime feature will even let you know when to turn in.

FOCUS@WILL

(Android and iOS, \$10/month)

Stop being distracted by your background music. "Focus@Will provides tracks designed by neuroscientists to help you concentrate," says Sanders. Answer a few questions and the app sends you instrumentals tailored to your personality and type of work.

—KAITLYN PIRIE

Epic Fail

Turns out you're not alone—even FC editors can crash and burn after spreading themselves too thin.



"I was on the phone (on speaker) engrossed in conversation and doing my makeup. I used my lip liner on my brows and they ended up wine-colored. New trend? I think not."

—DORI PRICE, Beauty & Fashion Director



"I was texting with this really cute guy while also texting my best friend. She asked to see a picture of him, but guess who I actually sent the picture to?!"

—NICOLE PAPANTONIOU, Assistant Food Editor



"I was warming up my son's milk, trying to get him upstairs, grabbing his pajamas and filling up his humidifier. Meanwhile, I'd forgotten that I'd left his bath running. The tub ended up overflowing. That's when I realized I'm a hot mess sometimes and I might as well have a sense of humor about it."

—SUGEY PALOMARES, Social Media Editor



"I often do a 'walk and talk,' where I call a friend as I walk my dog—I have 45 minutes, so I'm being productive! One day I was holding the phone between my ear and shoulder as I squatted down to pick up my dog's poop, and the phone almost fell into it! It was enough of a close call that I now wait until my dog does his business before dialing."

—LIXANDRA URRESTA, Research Chief