

# Optimize Your Output

Productivity is generally thought of in terms of input versus output – a calculation of how efficiently projects and tasks are completed, the time spent to complete them, and the quality of the final product. When it comes to daily life, however, productivity isn't a simple equation.

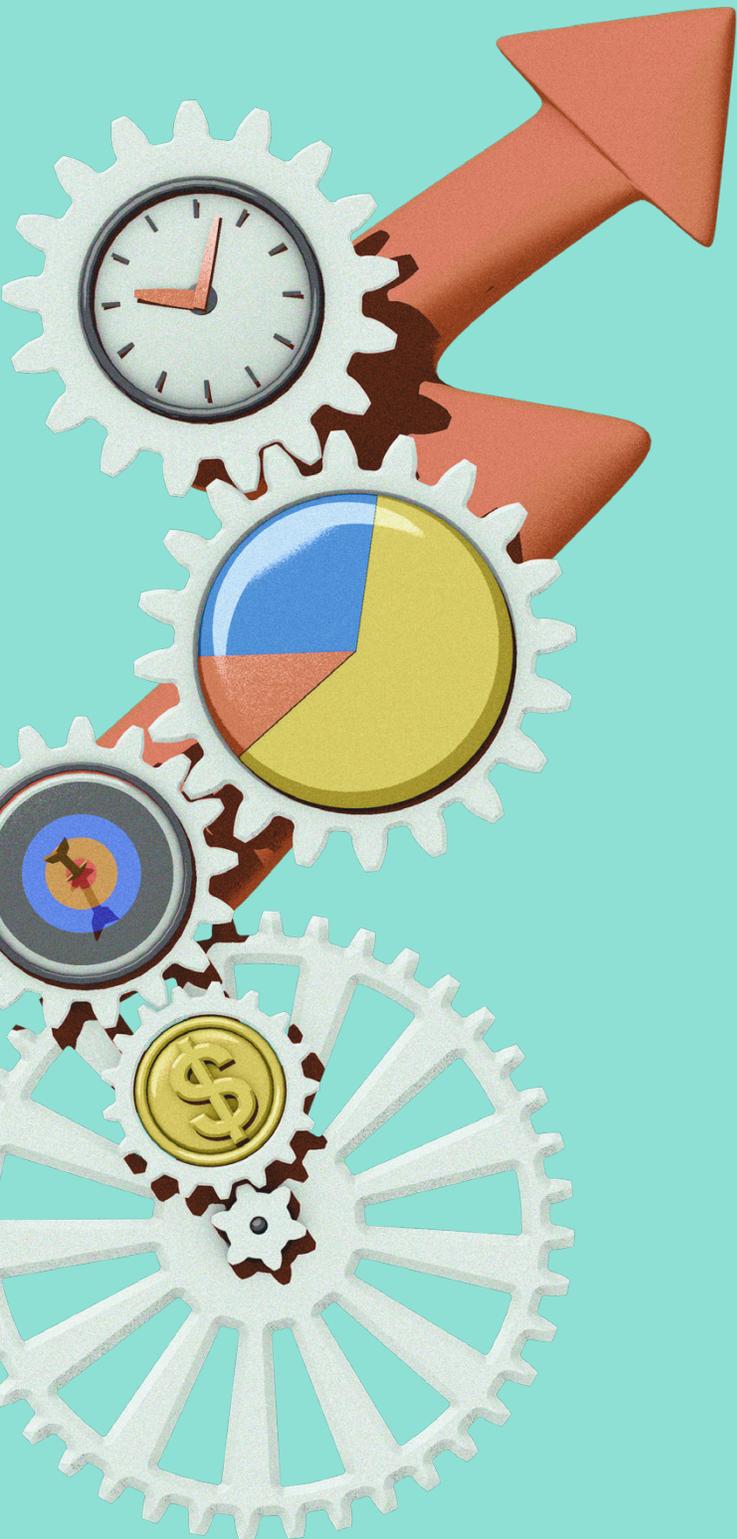
Author and expert on the science of productivity, Charles Duhigg, tells us that productivity isn't merely a product of spending more hours at your desk or making more significant sacrifices. Instead, he says, productivity is about the choices we make and how we arrive at them.

There are countless tips, tricks, and life hacks out there that aim to help us better manage and track daily to-dos. While many of those techniques are quite handy and have value, they often focus on specific types of tasks, or they relate to only one life aspect. Becoming truly productive requires a much broader approach. It's a lifestyle based on a few simple standards that frame your day and ultimately trickle down to shape the way you carry out tasks in all areas of life.



**24**  
HOURS  
A DAY

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## Straighten up your space

One of the things that can affect productivity the most is also the least obvious. It isn't a noisy coworker, an unexpected visit from a neighbor, or emails. Your environment has more of an impact on productivity than almost anything else because, unlike the coworker and the neighbor, your living and workspaces aren't brief interruptions. Messy, disorganized spaces can be distracting, overwhelming, and frustrating, which can lead to stress and anxiety. Taking the time to clean surfaces and equipment, thoughtfully organize files, and even personalize the space is well worth the stress reduction and time in order to stay focused on what needs to get done.

## Do yourself little favors

You know yourself better than anyone, which means you also know what it would take to make your day go smoother. Do things for yourself tonight that you'll benefit from tomorrow.

For example, most of us set an alarm before bed because we know that if we don't, we might not wake up on time, right? Start treating other everyday constants – like choosing an outfit or packing up your laptop and government ID – as if they're just as important.

Also be aware of behaviors that can put you in a bind, such as putting off tasks that you can and should handle today. You'll thank yourself in the morning for getting gas on your way home tonight. Even small habits – like tuning the television to the channel that airs your favorite morning show before you turn it off for the night, or putting that package by the door so you remember to take it with you the next time you leave – can save you time and promote a more productive lifestyle.

## Schedule everything

Yes, everything! It's easy to lose momentum when there's room in your day to get off track. Since you're more likely to actually do something if you schedule time for it, the calendar blocking method is an effective tool for getting more done and doing more of what you want. Calendar blocking ensures that every hour of the day is accounted for – from meetings and time to work on specific projects, to working out, lunch, short breaks, and even personal tasks like laundry and grocery shopping.

### 9 benefits of calendar blocking

1. You get to dictate your day, not the other way around
2. You make sure that each hour has a purpose
3. Your priorities get the attention they deserve
4. You build in time for yourself
5. You keep track of how, where, and with whom you spend time
6. You're able to see and correct for work/life imbalance
7. You're better able draw a line between what is and isn't important
8. You benefit from built-in boundaries
9. You learn to estimate how long it takes to get certain things done