

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

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.

11. **SUCCES:** From Chip and Dan Heath's book, *Made to Stick*, SUCCES is a set of characteristics that make ideas memorable ("sticky"): sticky ideas are Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional Stories.
12. **Eat the Frog:** Do your most unpleasant task first. Based on the saying that if the first thing you do in the morning is eat a frog, the day can only get better from then on.
13. **80/20 Rule/Pareto Principle:** Generally speaking, the 80/20 Principle says that most of our results come from a small portion of our actual work, and conversely, that we spend most of our energy doing things that aren't ultimately all that important. Figure out which part of your work has the greatest results and focus as much of your energy as you can on that part.
14. **What's the Next Action?:** Don't plan out everything you need to do to finish a project, just focus on the very next thing you need to do to move it forward. Usually doing the next, little thing will lead to another, and another, until we're either done or we run into a block: we need more information, we need someone else to catch up, etc. Be as concrete and discrete as possible: you can't "install cable", all you can do is "call the cable company to request cable installation".
15. **The Secret:** There is no secret.
16. **Slow Down:** Make time for yourself. Eat slowly. Enjoy a lazy weekend day. Take the time to do things right, and keep a balance between the rush-rush world of work and the rest of your life.
17. **Time Boxing:** Assign a set amount of time per day to work on a task or project. Focus entirely on that one thing during that time. Don't worry about finishing it, just worry about giving that amount of undivided attention to the project. (Variation: fixed goals. For example, you don't get up until you've written 1,000 words, or processed 10 orders, or whatever.)
18. **Batch Process:** Do all your similar tasks together. For example, don't deal with emails sporadically throughout the day; instead, set aside an hour to go through your email inbox and respond to emails. Do the same with voice mail, phone calls, responding to letters, filing, and so on – any routine, repetitive tasks.
19. **Covey Quadrants:** A system for assigning priorities. Two axes, one for importance, the other for urgency, intersect. Tasks are assigned to one of the four quadrants: not important, not urgent; not important, urgent; important, not urgent; and important and urgent. Purge the tasks that are neither important nor urgent, defer the unimportant but urgent ones, try to avoid letting the important ones become urgent, and as much as possible work on the tasks in the important but not urgent quadrant.
20. **Handle Everything Once:** Don't set things aside hoping you'll have time to deal with them later. Ask yourself "What do I need to do with this" every time you pick up something from your email list, and either do it, schedule it for later, defer it to someone else, or file it.

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