

## 50 Tricks to Get Things Done Faster, Better, and More Easily, Part 3

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.

21. **Don't Break the Chain:** Use a calendar to track your daily goals. Every day you do something, like working out or writing 1,000 words, make a big red "X". Every day the chain will grow longer. Don't break the chain! That is, don't let any non-X days interrupt your chain of successful days.
22. **Review:** Schedule a time with yourself every week to look over what you've done that week and what you want to do the next week. Ask yourself if there are any new projects you should be starting, and if what you're working on is moving you closer to your goals for your life.
23. **Roles:** Everyone fills several different roles in their life. For instance, I'm a teacher, a student, a writer, a step-father, a partner, a brother, a son, an uncle, an anthropologist, and so on. Understanding your different roles and learning to keep them distinct when necessary can help you keep some sense of balance between them. Make goals around the various roles you fill, and make sure that your goals fit with your goals in other roles.
24. **Flow:** The flow state happens when you're so absorbed in whatever you're doing that you have no awareness of the passing of time and the work just happens automatically. It's hard to trigger consciously, but you can create the conditions for it by allowing yourself a block of uninterrupted time, minimizing distractions, and calming yourself.
25. **Do It Now:** Fight procrastination by adopting "do it now!" as your mantra. Limit yourself to 60 seconds when making a decision, decide what you're going to do with every input in your life as soon as you encounter it, learn to make bold decisions even when you're not really sure. Keep moving forward.
26. **Time Log:** Lawyers have to track everything they do in the day and how long they do it so they can bill their clients and remain accountable. You need to be accountable to yourself, so keep track of how much time you really spend on the things that are important to you by tracking your time.
27. **Structured Procrastination:** A strategy of recognizing and using one's procrastinating tendencies to get stuff done. Items at the top of top of the list are avoided by doing seemingly less difficult and less important tasks further down the list — making the procrastinator highly productive. The trick is to make sure the items at the top are apparently urgent — with pressing deadlines and apparently large consequences. But, of course, they aren't really all that urgent. Structured procrastination requires a masterful skill at self-deception, which fortunately bigtime procrastinators excel at.
28. **Personal Mission Statement:** Write a personal mission statement, and use it as a guide to set goals. Ask if each goal or activity moves you closer to achieving your mission. If it doesn't, eliminate it. Periodically review and revise your mission statement.
29. **Backwards Planning:** A planning strategy that works from the goal back to your next action. Start with the end goal in mind. What do you have to have in place to accomplish it? OK, now what do you have to have in place to accomplish what you have to have in place to accomplish your end goal? And what do you have to have in place to accomplish that? And so on, back to something you already have in place or can put in place immediately. That's your next action.
30. **Tune Out:** Create a personal privacy zone by wearing headphones. People are much more hesitant to interrupt someone wearing headphones. Note: actually listening to music through your headphones is optional — nobody knows but you.