

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

## Part 4

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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.

31. **Write It Down:** Don't rely on your memory as your system. Write down the things you need to do, your schedule, anything you might need to refer to, and every passing thought so you can relax, knowing you won't forget. Use your brain for thinking, use paper or your computer for keeping track of stuff.
32. **Gap Time:** The little blocks of time we have during the day while waiting for the bus, standing in line, waiting for a meeting to start, etc. Have a list of small, 5-minute tasks that you can do in these moments, or carry something to read or work on to make the most of these spare minutes.
33. **Monotasking:** We like to think of ourselves as great multitaskers, but we aren't. What we do when we multitask is devote tiny slices of time to several tasks in rapid succession. Since it takes more than a few minutes (research suggests as long as 20) to really get into a task, we end up working worse and more slowly than if we devoted longer blocks of time to each task, worked until it was done, and moved on to the next one.
34. **Habits:** Habits are as much about the way we see and respond to the world as about the actions we routinely take. Examine your own habits and ask what they say about your relation to the world – and what would have to change to create a worldview where your goals were attainable.
35. **Triggers:** Place meaningful reminders around you to help you remember, as well as to help create better habits. For example, put the books you need to take back to the library in front of the door, so you can't leave without seeing them and remembering they need to go back.
36. **Unclutter:** Clutter is anything that's out of place and in the way. It's not necessarily neatness — someone can have a rigorously neat workspace and not be able to get anything done. It's being able to access what you need, when you need it, without breaking the flow of your work to find it. Figure out what is "clutter" in your working and living spaces, and fix that.
37. **Visualize:** Imagine yourself having accomplished your goals. What is your life like? Are you who you want to be? If not, rethink your goals. If so, then visualize yourself taking the steps you need to take to get there. You've got yourself a plan; write it down and do it.
38. **Tickler File:** A set of 43 folders, labeled 1 – 31 and January – December, used to remind us of tasks we need to do on a specific day. For instance, if you have a trip on March 23rd, you'd put your itinerary, tickets, and other material in the "March" folder. At the start of each month, you move the previous month's folder to the back. On March 1st, you'd transfer your travel information into the "23" folder. Each day, you move the previous day's folder to the back. On the 23rd, the "23" folder will be at the front, and everything you need that day will be there.
39. **To Don't List:** A list of things not to do – useful for keeping track of habits that lead you to be unproductive, like playing online flash games.
40. **Templates:** Create templates for repetitive tasks, like letters, customer reply emails, blogs, etc.

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