

task completion

the action or process of finishing something

It's very easy to think, "Of course, I complete all the tasks I touch, eventually". But then you get an email from a colleague who wonders why you didn't respond to their email a few days ago. Little things can slip by us and we can think we've completed a task, when really, we only touched it or thought we had completed it.

Why It's Important to Complete Tasks:

- *So you don't waste time working out "Where was I?"
- *So you don't forget your intentions for the tasks e.g. what you were going to write in the letter
- *Because the time spent on an unfinished task is lost time as could have spent it on something else
- *To reduce the build up of negative feeling each time you remember you haven't completed a task
- *To reduce the likelihood of mislaying things, for instance, "Where did the paperwork go I was planning on sending to another department?"
- *To reduce the possibility of pretending you are progressing a task when you are really just procrastinating
- *To feel more in control

How to Improve Your Task Completion

2 Minute Rule:

As a group, we discussed the 2 Minute Rule back in the Email Management series held in 2020. The name of this strategy was inspired productivity consultant David Allen. It states, **"If it takes less than two minutes, then do it now."**

This means, if you open an email and read it, respond immediately. Complete the task. Most emails can be responded to in just a few minutes and then the issue is closed, or your portion of it is closed, for now. Or if you need to speak to someone about an issue (and it will only take a couple of minutes) do it immediately when possible. Close the issue.

Mind Your Hours:

If you want to give your working hours a makeover, you've got to know how long your activities take. One of the most prolific children's book illustrators can project exactly how much time a drawing will take (and actually measures each by how many Seinfeld reruns will play in the background before she's finished). She uses that knowledge to set goals for specific time periods — i.e. three illustrations in a day.

To get the same understanding of your own work or productivity, it's recommended you keep a time log for a full week so you also capture the weekend — that's when people tend to be less conscious of what they're doing. The goal is to be helpful, not to make you hate your life. For instance, some people update their time log twice a day. Another person might want to do it more frequently, using a computer or smartphone app. Whatever you choose, make it something convenient that will also allow you to faithfully track what you've been spending time on.

Consciously Micro Monotask:

To the best of your ability, set up your work environment to encourage the performing of **one task at a time**. It's probably not realistic to think that we can block off hours at a time for a single task, but even committing to monotask for five minutes can yield productivity benefits. Here are a few small changes you can make:

Work in intervals: Set a timer for five or 10 minutes and commit to focusing on your assignment for that amount of time. Then allow yourself a minute of distraction, as long as you get back on your task for another five or 10 minutes.

Distractions: The tendency to become distracted is primal and arose in our earliest days as humans, when we needed to respond instantly to lions, tigers and other predators that threatened us. Every sensory input was deeply interesting, and our response to it was sometimes a matter of life or death. Our brain has not let go of this ancient survival mechanism. Fortunately, the more we work on focusing on one task at a time and ignoring distractions, the more we exercise the prefrontal cortex – the more evolved part of our brains. Then it becomes easier to focus.

When we're able to promptly and consistently complete our tasks, not only are we happier in our roles and have higher satisfaction in our roles, we're able to prove our worth to our employers.



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