

How to Concentrate: Be Like a Postage Stamp and Stick To It!

Nowadays, so many things compete for your attention in the workplace that it can be hard to concentrate on what's important. If you need to improve your ability to stay on target and focus on the task at hand, implement the tips outlined below.

1. **Set up your office for maximum productivity and minimum distractions.** You need privacy to concentrate and discuss sensitive issues. Don't just take what you're given; reorganize it into a configuration that works best for you.
2. **Avoid wasting time by daydreaming.** Daydreaming can be a real productivity bandit -- but as long as you don't use it to procrastinate, it can be very helpful. Harness its creative powers, and use it for thinking time that can lead to productive ideas.
3. **Remember things more easily.** Busy people need good memory skills to help them remember details. Sharpening your memory can be as simple as using good memory tools: always writing things down, keeping running lists, leaving yourself voicemails, etc.
4. **Focus on priority projects without getting distracted.** Be like a postage stamp: stick to one thing until it gets to its intended destination. Learn to juggle multiple tasks and projects effectively, but don't flit around from one item to another without completing anything.
5. **Focus on one thing at a time.** Don't "multi-task" or attempt to do too many things at once. Start by focusing one on item instead. Don't interrupt yourself, and prioritize your tasks so you know what needs to be done first.
6. **Make lists and record everything you need to do.** To keep from dropping the ball, capture every thought using either paper or electronic methods. This pulls what you need to do out of your memory and relieves your brain of the burden of repeatedly thinking about everything you need to remember.
7. **Read quickly and maintain concentration.** Learn to benefit from new reading techniques designed to boost productivity, and toss whatever's boring or useless to you. Getting through your reading more quickly frees up time for other priorities.
8. **Recognize signs of brain overload.** If you have no idea what to do first or where to begin, learn how to get your mind focused again. For example, create structure and deadlines for your work, jealously guard your attention from distractions, or try some deep breathing exercises.

9. **Get absorbed in a task.** Become fully present-focused. Learn to "get in the zone" and achieve a state of momentum where time seems to fly. Start by mastering your job, ensure no interruptions, and always strive to be in the moment.

10. **Concentrate on a task that bores you or doesn't really interest you.** Even tedious tasks must be completed. Get them done early so the rest of the day is more enjoyable, reward yourself for getting the job done, and vary your activities.

You can't get your work done if you're distracted. Learn to trim away all the minor things competing for your attention, and fine-tune your concentration to a laser-like focus. You'll be surprised at how much you get done -- and how much time you'll have to spend on what's really important.

© 2009 Laura Stack. Laura Stack is a personal productivity expert, author, and professional speaker who helps busy workers Leave the Office Earlier® with Maximum Results in Minimum Time®. She is the president of The Productivity Pro®, Inc., a time management training firm specializing in productivity improvement in high-stress organizations. Since 1992, Laura has presented keynotes and seminars on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in today's workplaces. She is the bestselling author of three works published by Broadway Books: *The Exhaustion Cure* (2008), *Find More Time* (2006) and *Leave the Office Earlier* (2004). Laura is a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, and Day-Timers®, Inc and has been featured on the CBS Early Show, CNN, and the New York Times. Her clients include Cisco Systems, Sunoco, KPMG, Nationwide, and 3M. To have Laura speak at your next event, call 303-471-7401. Visit www.TheProductivityPro.com to sign up for her free monthly productivity newsletter.