
The Pomodoro Technique

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The Pomodoro Technique is a productivity and time management method developed in the late 1980s by Francesco Cirillo. The technique uses a timer to break down tasks into intervals of work, each separated by a short break. An interval is called a Pomodoro, the Italian word for “tomato,” named after the tomato-shaped timer Cirillo used as a student in college.

The Pomodoro Technique may be particularly useful for you if:

- You are easily distracted
- You exhaust yourself by working past the point of maximum production on a daily basis
- You have a lot of open-ended tasks (e.g., studying for an exam, research for an academic paper, etc.)
- You are excessively optimistic about how much you can accomplish in a day
- You enjoy gamified productivity

The aim of the Pomodoro Technique is to provide a simple tool/process for improving productivity. Using this method can help to:

- Alleviate anxiety
- Enhance focus and concentration by cutting down on interruptions
- Increase awareness of your decisions
- Boost motivation and keep it constant
- Improve your work or study process
- Strengthen your ability to persevere through complex situations

How does it work?

Step 1: Decide on a task, or list of tasks, that you would like to complete. The tasks should be small enough to accomplish within 25 minutes. If you are working on larger projects, try to break them down into smaller chunks.

Step 2: Set a timer for 25 minutes. You are encouraged to use a timer with sound, as the noise will make it easier to snap out of a concentrated state. Attempting to keep track of time in your head or by glancing at the clock will only make it harder for you to focus entirely on the task at hand, or will cause you to lose track of time altogether.

Step 3: Work on the task and minimize distraction. Each Pomodoro should be a full 25 minutes of concentrated work. Limit your access to distracting apps, turn off notifications, and work in a productive environment.

Step 4: Take a 5-minute break. As soon as the timer goes off, step away from your work and do not be tempted to continue. If it helps, step into another room, grab a snack or a drink of water, and return after 5 minutes.

Step 5: Repeat steps 2, 3, and 4 three more times. At this point, you should have completed four Pomodoros total.

Step 6: Take a longer 30-minute break. After four Pomodoros, take a 30-minute break and then assess your progress with your task. This break is meant to restore and refresh your mind. If there is still work to be done after the break, repeat the Pomodoro Technique until you have completed your goals for that working session.

Things to Note

- The Pomodoro Technique works best during the time of day you are naturally most productive. This could be in the early hours of the morning or late at night, depending on your preference.
- You can modify the length of the Pomodoros to meet your needs. If 25 minutes of concentrated work is not enough, try upping the interval to 30 or even a full 60 minutes. Similarly, if 25 minutes is too long, you can try 15 or 20 minutes instead. The number of Pomodoros you complete is also up to you, depending on your preferences and schedule. As long as you are establishing a pattern of focused working periods, you are on the right track to increasing your productivity.