1.4 The Pomodoro Technique

Work in twenty-five-minute segments.

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When you're working on something that requires you to concentrate for an extended period of time, such as coding, writing, or analyzing data, you tend to get distracted after a short while. After a brief mental break, you will find it easier to resume focus and return to the task at hand. The Pomodoro Technique encourages you to work this cadence deliberately into your schedule—working for twenty-five minutes, then stopping for five.

When people follow this method, they often report better clarity, higher levels of attentiveness, fewer mistakes, and increased productivity. Structuring distinct work and break times also helps alleviate the urge to escape work because you know a scheduled break is on the way.

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- Structuring work into short segments encourages stronger focus and higher levels of productivity.
- The expectation of a break helps the brain fight resistance to concentrating on the task at hand.
- Every time you complete twenty-five minutes of work, you feel a sense of achievement, which fuels further productivity.

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- Some people resist structuring their productive time in the belief that it will feel restrictive.
- Deeper work may require a level of concentration and focus beyond what the Pomodoro Technique can cultivate.

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Set a timer for twenty-five minutes. While the timer is running, focus entirely on work; don't engage with distractions such as texting or checking social media. At the end of twenty-five minutes, when you hear the alarm, take a five-minute break to do whatever you feel like—respond to a few emails, take a bathroom break, do a quick meditation. Set your timer to ensure that the break doesn't exceed five minutes. After four twenty-five-minute sessions, take a longer break (fifteen to thirty minutes) to restore your energy and mental sharpness.

Some people find it helpful to stick precisely to the segments dictated by the timer. They stop work even if they are in the middle of a sentence and restart the moment the five minutes are up. Others prefer to give themselves a little flexibility while still maintaining the basic framework.

Digital Pomodoro timers are easy to find, or you can simply use the alarm on your phone. Some people even find it helpful to use a physical timer. At first, the Pomodoro approach can feel rigid, but those who stick with it generally find that it enhances their productivity considerably. You may want to give yourself a few sessions to experiment with it and try to find a rhythm that works for you.

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The Pomodoro Technique: The Acclaimed Time Management System That Has Transformed How We Work, by Francesco Cirillo (Crown Currency, 2018).