

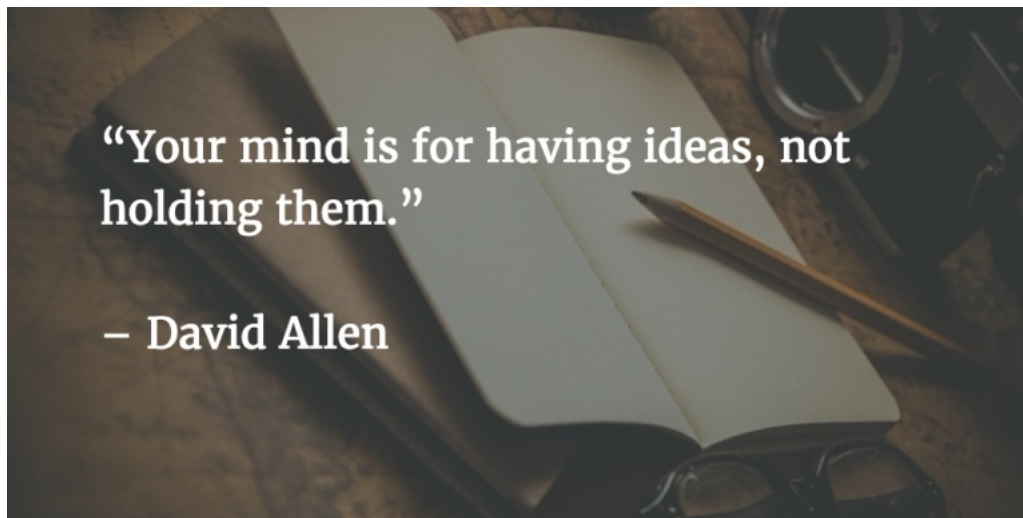
Getting Things Done Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/getting-things-done-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Getting Things Done* is a manual for stress-free productivity, which helps you set up a system of lists, reminders and weekly reviews, in order to free your mind from having to remember tasks and to-dos and instead let it work at full focus on the task at hand.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Getting Things Done hardly needs an introduction, it is the bible of productivity. David Allen has sold over 1.5 million copies of his simple, yet effective productivity system. The book has been revised and updated in 2015 to reflect the changes in technology, since it was originally published in 2001 – over a decade ago.

The GTD system has always been timeless, though. You could do it on paper, online, or now on your smartphone, the second you put down the book.

I won't be able to portray the system in full detail here, but since that's been done all over the internet, I'll happily take my top 3 lessons:

1. Use a “collection bucket” to store things outside your mind and stay focused.
2. Create a “next actions” list for all your projects to avoid thinking in the moment.
3. Do a weekly review of everything, or else!

Ready for productivity made simple? Let's go!

Lesson 1: Use a “collection bucket” to store things outside your mind and stay focused.

This one's been a major game changer for me in 2015. There's a reason it made #1 on this list.

You know that horrible feeling you have once you remember you have to buy milk?

You can't seem to un-remember it and it keeps nagging you, while all you're trying to do is work.

"Buy milk, buy milk, buy milk, buy milk, buy milk, buy milk, buy milk, ..."

"Dammit brain, shut up!"

With a collection bucket, it will.

Your collection bucket can be a simple piece of paper, a notebook or note inside Evernote, a note on your phone, or even a physical bucket in your office.

It serves as a means to collect all interruptions, whether they come in the form of thoughts in your mind or to-do's handed over to you by coworkers.

Whatever lands in your brain or lap while you're busy working (for example during a Pomodoro time block), goes in there.

This lets you deflect interruptions as they occur and keeps your mind from derailing, while you're on a productivity roll.

Of course this system is only good if you empty your collection bucket or buckets regularly, Allen suggests weekly.

Your brain will only get a feeling of relief from putting something in your collection bucket when it knows that whatever lands in there will be taken care of sooner rather than later.

Lesson 2: Create a "next actions" list for all your projects to avoid thinking in the moment.

Here's the major problem with to-do lists: They trick you into thinking you can know in advance how much you'll be able to achieve.

The bad news is, you can't.

Sure, you can make a list with 17 items, but none of that accounts for interruptions, crises, delays, other people or, and this too happens, a simple lack of energy where you're just not able to do as much.

David Allen suggest you do this instead: **Create a "next actions" list, where you list out all the specific tasks (= takes less than 30 minutes) of your current projects.**

That way you always know what to work on next, when you have the time and energy to work, meaning you just pull out the list, pick a task and go.

You can even have multiple “next actions” lists and sort them by project or location of where you’re able to do the tasks on it.

For example you could make these lists: laptop with wifi, laptop without wifi, phone, notebook.

Now, when you’re at the airport and your flight’s been delayed, but there’s no wifi and your phone is dead, you can still pull out your notebook list and do something on paper.

Note: The “next actions” list was a major part of [the beautiful productivity system for essentialists I described here](#).

Lesson 3: Do a weekly review of everything, or else!

These are just two of several lists in the GTD system and the thing with all lists is this:

They’re only as good as they’re up to date.

Therefore, a weekly review is crucial to making the whole GTD system work.

Empty your collection buckets on Friday afternoon, for example, and then update all your lists. You’ll get a bird’s eye view and make sure everything is complete.

This is the part that makes the whole system stress-free and if you slack on it, you’ll pay the mental price.

For example I always plan to empty my collection bucket on Fridays, but Friday is also publishing day on [my blog](#), which means I often don’t get around to it.

Then I end up doing the most recent tasks in it over the weekend, but will leave older and less pressing ones in there (for example cleaning out my Dropbox), which makes me wary of putting more to-dos in, as I’m not sure when I’ll actually do them.

Obviously, this is something I need to improve, in order to reap the full benefits of the system.

Getting Things Done Review

I share the opinion most people hold about [Getting Things Done](#): it works great – but only if you rigorously stick to its rules. It just might be the best productivity system there is, but it’s also demanding and thus very easy to fall off the wagon.

I’m not sure if I’ll ever use the system in full, but I want to give it a go. For now I’m happy with using parts of it and adapting it to my own needs.

I do love GTD, otherwise I wouldn't have written about it so much, and I highly recommend you check it out. The summary on Blinkist is more than enough to get you up and running – I'd then get the book once you start seeing results and really want to nail the details.

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What your brain really is (it's not a file cabinet)
- How to deal with the tasks in your collection bucket
- What you can do to make sure you're not jumbling together projects, tasks, appointments and other bits of information
- Why "outcome thinking" will help you create a solid "projects list"
- How to really use your calendar
- Which list will take care of the fact that you sometimes have to rely on others
- The tickler file you can use to send yourself reminders from the future
- Why your "someday/maybe" list isn't as unimportant as the name makes it sound
- How the natural planning method is derived from our instincts and can help you find new projects

Who would I recommend the Getting Things Done summary to?

The 28 year old grad student, about to start her first day at the new job, the 45 year old executive, who needs a change in workplace organization, and anyone who's ever felt behind on their to-do list.