

# Singletasking Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Singletasking digs into neuroscientific research to explain why we're not meant to multitask, how you can go back to the old, singletasking ways, and why that's better for your work, relationships and happiness.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



I've done my fair share of multitasking research. Last year I even put together a report on the science behind it, held multiple webinars about how you can stop it, and published a massive guide with 32 changes to stop multitasking. Yet, I'm still far from perfect, and always keep learning that I can still singletask more.

You can never really read enough about this subject, because we all need to be reminded of this again and again over time. I'm glad Devora Zack released this book in 2015 to help you and I remember.

Here are 3 lessons to get you back to *Singletasking*:

1. Multitasking is as bad as being drunk, and costs the US \$175 billion a year.
2. Combine multiple hacks and techniques to stay in singletasking mode for as long as possible.
3. You should not only singletask for productivity, but also for your happiness.

Are you all about that singletasking life? Let's get you there!

**Lesson 1:** Multitasking is as bad as being drunk, and costs the US \$175 billion a year.

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One day I almost crashed my parents' car, because I was fumbling around with my phone and not looking at the road. While that was a good (and probably necessary) lesson, I don't recommend learning it the hard way.

Studies have found that being on the phone while driving is just as bad as being drunk behind the wheel. Combined with the fact that 70% of all drivers do use their phones while maneuvering through traffic, this becomes a scary statistic. In fact, at any given moment during daylight hours, around 6% of people are using a cell phone, which is as if **every 17th car you see in traffic has a drunk behind the wheel.**

This adds up. Around 17% of all car crashes are a direct result of distracted driving, racking up \$175 billion each year in economic and societal costs. This makes multitasking the second biggest source of roadkills and car crashes in the US.

Oh, and guess what number one is: drunk driving.

## Lesson 2: The more hacks and techniques you combine, the longer you can singletask.

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What makes multitasking complex and a tough problem to crack is that it's not just one habit. It's not like you can "stop multitasking" from one day to the next, because it's a combination of many small things that you do, which, in total, add up.

The only way to really learn to become a singletasker is to **combine many hacks, techniques, and small habit changes over time**, which will gradually turn you into a very focused person.

Two of these changes Devora suggests are:

1. **Cluster tasking.** By simply batching similar tasks, you can save a lot of mental capacity, because you're repeating the same thing again and again. For example, I only do my coaching calls on Thursdays and Fridays, to make sure I can spend the other days creating. You could batch writing-related tasks, like answering email and writing protocols, into one block, talking-related activities like calls and meetings into another, and physical work, for example at home, into another.
2. **Leaving buffers in your schedule.** Doctors always have two 30-minute slots each day, which they keep empty, in case emergencies turn up. If you pack your schedule too tightly, it's only a matter of time until you fall behind. By keeping a buffer you account for sudden changes and unpredictable tasks, and can still finish everything without having to rush and do multiple things at once.

**Note:** For 32 more of these (which, if all combined, *really* add up), you can check out the massive guide to help you focus on what matters.

## Lesson 3: Singletasking won't just make you more productive, it'll also make you happier.

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This I hadn't heard before, but it makes perfect sense. The biggest benefit of singletasking is that it makes you happier, and more fulfilled.

Harvard did a study on this, using an app to track peoples' levels of happiness, with over 2,000 participants. They found that **people are much happier when they're living in the moment**, just thinking about what's going on right now and immersed in a single task at hand. It increases your attention span, which, if very short, means you're easily distracted and thus, more likely to be unhappy.

If you're constantly distracted, you're always missing out, because while you're busy doing something else, life happens. This was perfectly demonstrated in a Washington Post experiment, starring world-famous violinist Joshua Bell as an anonymous busker at a subway station – he only got \$32 in 45 minutes, because many people were staring at their phones, not noticing the incredibly beautiful symphonies in their ears.

Who did stop and listen? Kids. They never multitask. They just go through life with open eyes, curious about anything and everything and are always fully present in the moment.

So even if you don't believe any of the many points about singletasking and productivity, I'm sure you already know this to be true in your heart: singletasking makes you happier.

### Singletasking Review

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As I said, a great reminder, even for those who do singletask, to keep doing it. Even if you know a lot about multitasking and productivity already, *Singletasking* will show you how it ties into your happiness and fulfillment, which has a nice new ring to it. Always worth picking up and reading a few pages, it's like an alarm clock for your mind.

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### What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- Why multitasking isn't just fatal, but also hurts your productivity
- Which part of your brain shrinks when you multitask, and where evolution shows you you're not meant to
- How singletasking is a lot like meditation
- Why singletasking improves your relationships (and how people see you when you multitask in their presence)

- How you can become your own best friend by setting some time aside to do literally nothing

## **Who would I recommend the Singletasking summary to?**

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The 22 year old, who spends most of her time in class looking at her phone, the 67 year old, who's a really good singletasker, but feels lost in the sea of modern day technology and options, and anyone who ever sent a text while driving.