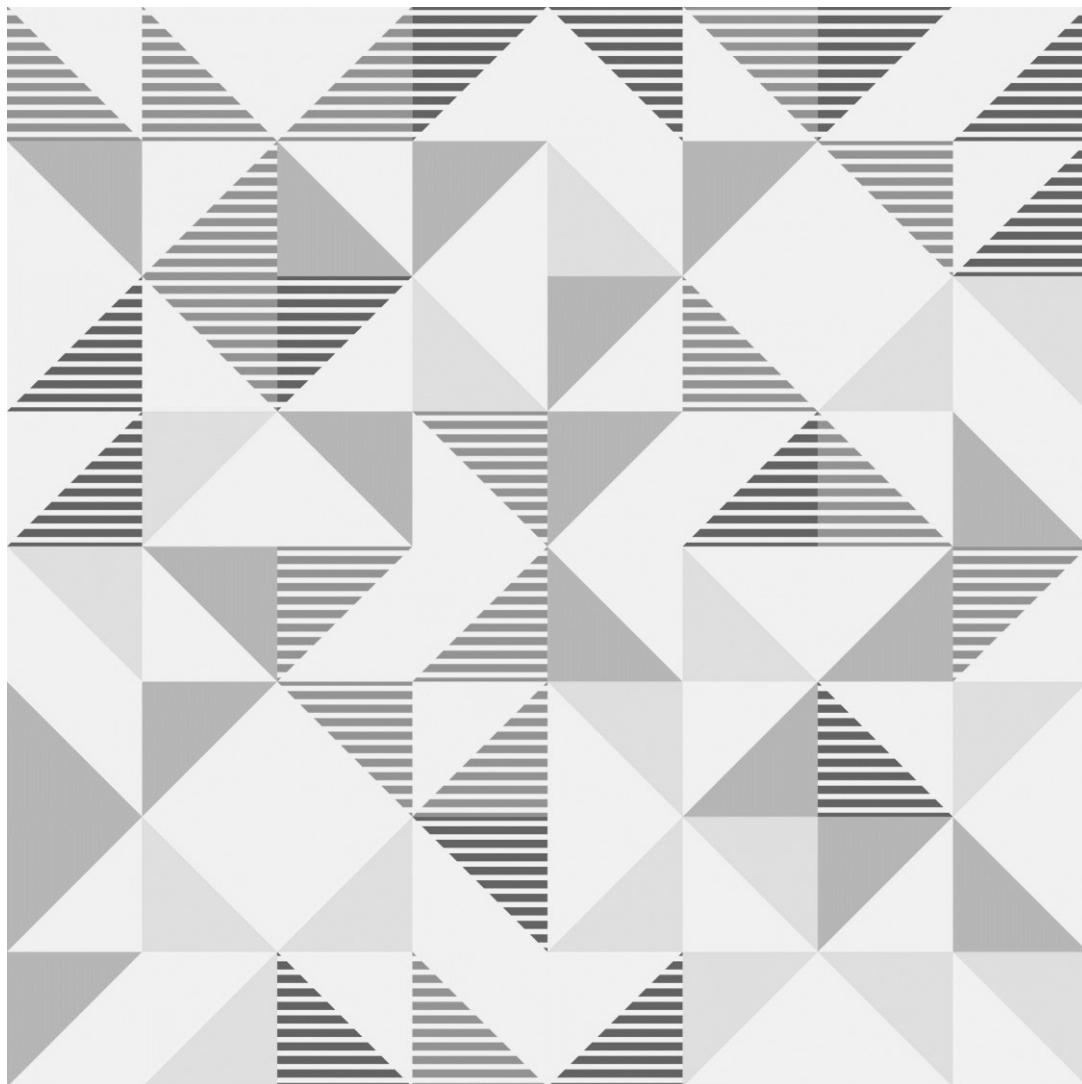


# The Productivity Workbook



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[www.stevefenton.co.uk](http://www.stevefenton.co.uk)

Published by Swift Point Press.

ISBN 978-1-365-13158-5

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No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. The link supplied above provides a similar human-friendly summary of the license, as well as the full text, which is somewhat more verbose.

# Introduction and Refresher

This workbook is aligned to The Pomodoro Technique, which is one of three tools that form something I call the *Ultimate Productivity Suite*. When I say productivity here, I'm not talking about squeezing more juice out of yourself. You are not an orange. Productivity is about paying more attention to how your time is used, making your work more joyful, and feeling more relaxed. You do your best work when you take care of your mind and feel fresh.

If you are looking for tools to help with the other two techniques, all you need are some folders (physical works best, but digital can work too) and a wall, window, or portable board to place sticky notes on.

Here are the tools from the *Ultimate Productivity Suite* along with their authors. Each has a website and a book that you can use to dive deeper into the technique. I keep physical copies of these books and they are filled with bookmark tabs. I refer to them regularly. If you are already familiar with these techniques, you'll find a quick refresher for each one on the next page.

- Getting Things Done – David Allen
- Personal Kanban – Jim Benson & Tonianne DeMaria Barry
- The Pomodoro Technique – Francesco Cirillo

Use *Getting Things Done* to collect and organize all your **projects** and to generate your next **action** for each one.

Use *Personal Kanban* to track your **projects** and **actions** as **options**, to track your progress, and to limit how much you attempt to work on at one time.

Use *The Pomodoro Technique* to manage your daily time and focus on the **actions** on your Personal Kanban board.

Seneca, one of the most famous Stoic philosophers, once wrote the following two quotes in *On the Shortness of Life*.

*“It is not that we have a short time to live,  
but that we waste a lot of it.”*

and

*“Putting things off is the greatest waste of life:  
it snatches away each day as it comes and  
denies us the present by promising the future.”*

If you want to achieve your goals, you need to guard your time with even greater diligence than you would guard your personal property or your money. If you lost every penny you own, you could still get more money; but time is absolutely fixed. It is with this in mind that we combine three personal productivity techniques to take ownership of our time and achieve our purpose. To dive deeper into this school of philosophy, I recommend these books:

- On The Shortness of Life - Seneca
- The Manual - Epictetus

## Getting Things Done

Read more at: [gettingthingsdone.com](http://gettingthingsdone.com)

### Key Points

1. Collect *stuff* that has your attention
2. Make it actionable. Is it a multi-step *project*? What is the next *action* you need to take?
3. Organize these *projects* and *actions* (see Personal Kanban, below)
4. Review your *projects* and *actions* regularly
5. Do the *actions* (see The Pomodoro Technique, below)

Getting Things Done (GTD) reduces clutter in your head by moving it into a system of organization. It also has a great process to classify all the stuff in your head into a tiered system of projects and actions. These actions are the key to defeating procrastination and, well, getting things done.

## Personal Kanban

Read more at [www.personalkanban.com](http://www.personalkanban.com)

### Key Points

1. Visualize your work
2. Limit work-in-progress

Take all the things you need to do (*projects* and *actions*) and write them on sticky notes. Put them up on a wall of *options* so you can visualize the work you have to do. Create a space on the wall for in-progress items and limit the number of things you can do at once. Once a task is done, move it to another area on your wall, so you can get a sense of accomplishment, review what you've done, and improve your work.

## The Pomodoro Technique

Read more at: [francescocirillo.com](http://francescocirillo.com)

### Key Points

1. Start your day by planning your time
2. Pick a task from the plan
3. Set a timer for 25 minutes
4. Work on the task until your time is up
5. Mark the session down on paper
6. Take a break

The Pomodoro Technique is key micro-skill to making small things happen. Getting the small things done is the best way to achieve the bigger things. Each 25-minute session is a short period of intense focus. By intentionally putting off all external interruptions (and internal distractions) for a short time, you will make progress. The achievements may seem small, but they soon add up.

# How to Use This Workbook

## The Basic Process

Start each day by planning out your tasks on the Daily Planner. Write the task name and in the “Planned” columns write down how many sessions you think it might take to get the task done. Split up the task if it will take more than 5-7 sessions. You can use this estimate to work out how many tasks to add to your day. Think about what key tasks you’d really like to achieve and place your top three items in the special space at the top of the planner. Other tasks go in the second list.

When considering your session limit, bear in mind that a great day could see you complete around 14 sessions. A realistic day is likely to have fewer sessions because of interruptions and unplanned work. Everyone is different and no two jobs are the same. You can track the number of sessions you complete each day to learn what number to use for your own planning.

When you are ready to focus on a task, set a 25-minute timer and work exclusively on the task until it rings.

When your session is complete, mark down the session in the “Actual” column. Use the tally system to add each session, i.e. ||||| |||. If the task is complete, cross it out (and move the sticky note on your **Personal Kanban** board).

After each session, take a 5-minute break. After four sessions, extend the break to 30 minutes. There is a handy reminder of these breaks along the bottom of each daily planner. The breaks are an integral part of this technique as they help you maintain your focus.

## Managing Interruptions

Try to defer all interruptions until after the session. Once you complete the session, you can deal with missed calls, emails, and other distractions *before* you take your break. Don’t set your break timer until you’re ready to get away from your desk. What you do with your break is up to you, you can go for a walk, meditate, or get a coffee; anything that isn’t *doing more work!*

If something urgent comes up, cancel your timer, and don’t record the session. You only want to record the number of uninterrupted 25-minute sessions you managed to have, as this will help you plan your day around your personal reality. Deal with the interruption and then come back when you are ready to focus again, setting your timer for a new full 25-minute session.

## Managing Unplanned Tasks

There will almost certainly be unplanned tasks that you discover along the way. If they don’t need to be done right now, switch to **Personal Kanban** mode, or **Getting Things Done** mode to manage the unplanned work. If it must be dealt with today, add it at the *bottom* of your daily planner.

## Managing Unfinished Tasks

For each unfinished task, you can choose to include it when you plan your day tomorrow or push it back out into your **Personal Kanban** system. Simple.

## Weekly Review

Review the work you completed each week and reflect on how you might improve your productivity. This is also an opportunity to revisit your options and work out your next actionable steps.

Turn the page to start your productivity journey!

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A 3x2 grid of six empty rectangular boxes, likely for drawing or writing, arranged in three rows and two columns.

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