

Preface

The basic idea for the Pomodoro Technique came to me in the late '80s, during my first years at university.

Once the elation from completing my first-year exams had subsided, I found myself in a slump, a time of low productivity and high confusion. Every day I went to school, attended classes, studied and went back home with the disheartened feeling that I didn't really know what I'd been doing, that I'd been wasting my time. The exam dates came up so fast, and it seemed like I had no way to defend myself against time.

One day in the classroom on campus where I used to study, I watched my classmates with a critical eye, and then looked even more critically at myself: how I got myself organized, how I interacted with others, how I studied. It was clear to me that the high number of distractions and interruptions and the low level of concentration and motivation were at the root of the confusion I was feeling.

So I made a bet with myself, as helpful as it was humiliating: "Can you study – really study – for 10 minutes?" I needed objective validation, a Time Tutor, and I found one in a kitchen timer shaped like a pomodoro (the Italian for tomato) – in other words, I found my "Pomodoro".

I didn't win the bet straight off. In fact, it took time and a great deal of effort, but in the end I succeeded.

In that first small step, I found something intriguing in the Pomodoro mechanism. With this new tool, I devoted myself to improving my study process and later my work process. I tried to understand and solve more and more complex problems, to the point of considering the dynamics of team work. Gradually I put together the Pomodoro Technique, which I describe in this document.

After years of teaching the Pomodoro Technique in classes open to the public and in team mentoring, general interest has grown. More and more people are asking what it is and how to apply it, so there's a need for me to explain the Technique as I conceived it. My hope is that it can help others reach their goals for personal improvement, and that I can further develop my original idea.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my friend and mentor, Giovanni Caputo, for having accompanied me yet again in this adventure.

Thanks also go to everyone who applied the Pomodoro Technique, either individually or as a group, helping disseminate the concept and encouraging me to write this paper: Piergiuliano Bossi, Claudia Sandu, Meihua Su, Federico De Felici, Alessandra del Vecchio and Jill Connelly, to name a few.

Thanks to all those who learned the Pomodoro Technique through my workshops; their feedback enabled me to observe it and improve it. In particular: Andrea Narduzzi, Bruno Bossola, Giannandrea Castaldi, Roberto Crivelli, Ernesto Di Blasio, Alberto Quario, Loris Ugolini, Silvano Trea, Alberico Gualfetti, Marco Dani, Luigi Mengoni, Leonardo Marinangeli, Nicola Canalini.

Lastly, thanks to the second generation of Pomodoro users, those who learned it indirectly through my notes or by working in teams where the Technique has been consolidated. I've written this paper especially for them: Matteo Vaccari (and the people at ESSAP), Simone Genini, Carlo Bottiglieri, Gabriele Lana (and the people at Milano XPUG), Alejandro Barrionuevo, and Stefano Castelvetti (among others).

Introduction

For many people, time is an enemy. The anxiety triggered by “the ticking clock”, in particular when a deadline is involved, leads to ineffective work and study behaviour which in turn elicits the tendency to procrastinate. The Pomodoro Technique was created with the aim of using time as a valuable ally to accomplish what we want to do the way we want to do it, and to empower us to continually improve our work or study processes. This paper presents the Pomodoro Technique as defined in 1992 by the author, and as taught to individuals since 1998 and to teams since 1999.

The Context section delineates the problem linked to time, the goals of the Pomodoro Technique and its basic assumptions. Material and Method describes the Pomodoro Technique, and shows how to apply it by reaching incremental objectives. The Results section provides a series of observations based on the experience of people who have tried the Technique. The Conclusions section identifies a number of factors that explain how the Technique achieves its goals. This document presents a general version of the Pomodoro Technique. The text entitled *Applying the Pomodoro Technique in Teams* details how the Technique can be used in work groups.

