

The Most Underrated Productivity Technique Is Also the Simplest

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There are only two steps



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It's not humanly possible to read every piece of productivity advice that exists, but I think I've come close. And at one point or another, I've tried most of that advice for myself, no matter how unpleasant or out-there it seemed. There was a time when I took cold showers because I heard it would help me combat procrastination. (It did not.)

Eventually, there came a moment when I realized that studying all these time-management hacks and calendar systems and multistep strategies was only stalling me from the real work of actually getting things done. I already knew the most powerful productivity technique. It was just a matter of using it.

There are only two steps:

1. Physically get in your work position.
2. Do one small thing.

That's it. That's the whole thing.

It's simple, but it isn't easy. Oftentimes, we do everything in our power to avoid that first step. We grab another cup of coffee, go for a walk, read a book, run errands. Before I wrote this piece, I meticulously rearranged my bookshelf. I tried to escape. The voice inside my head told me to turn on Netflix.

But instead, I sat down at my desk. I put my phone away and closed my internet browser. And I started working on the one small thing that I scheduled for the day. Then, like magic, I was working.

The real secret of this technique is that you must do it again tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after that. Build up momentum and keep it. Author Will Durant may have said it best when he wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

It's the Non-Zero Day principle: Just do one thing every day that will help you move toward your goal. As Reddit user ryans01 wrote in a post that inspired the movement, "Didn't do anything all fucking day and it's 11:58 PM? Write one sentence. One push up. Read one page of that chapter. One. Because one is non zero."

We can talk about the newest productivity systems all day, but doing so won't get the real work done. At some point, you have to sit in your chair and just get started.