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Blocks a Day



10.4k



10.4k

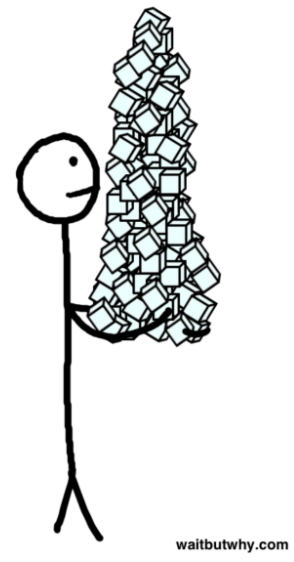




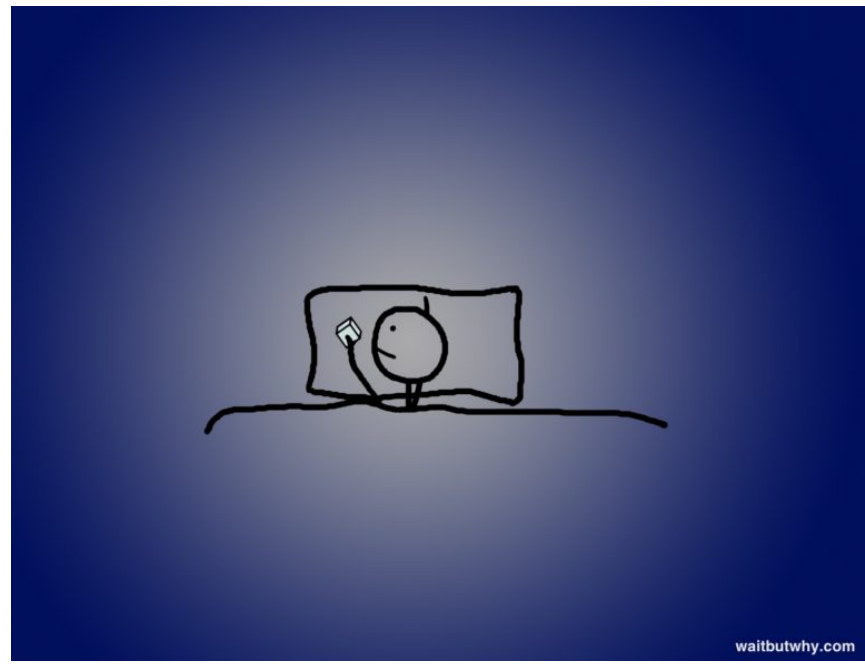
ber 21, 2016 By Tim Urban

people sleep about seven or eight hours a night. That leaves 16 or 17 hours awake each day. Or 1,000 minutes.

hink about those 1,000 minutes as 100 10-minute blocks. That’s what you wake up with every day.

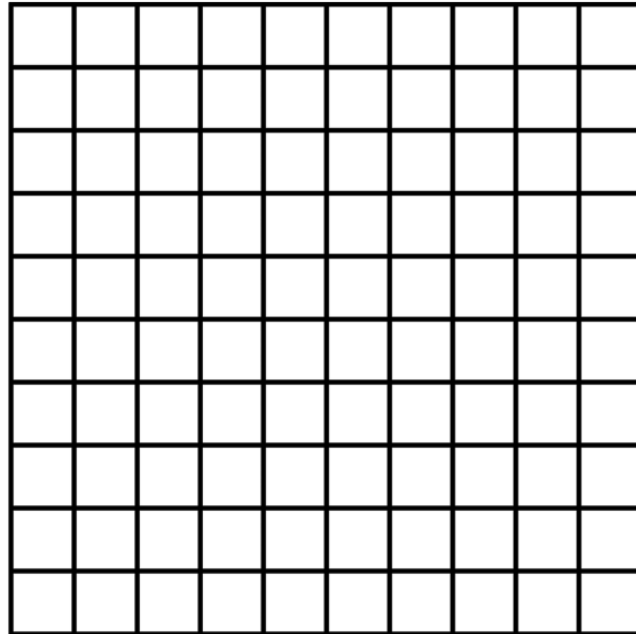


Throughout the day, you spend 10 minutes of your life on each block, until you eventually run out of blocks and it’s time to go to sleep.



It's always good to step back and think about how we're using those 100 blocks we get each day. How many of them are put towards making your future better, and how many of them are just there to be enjoyed? How many of them are spent with other people, and how many are for time by yourself? How many are used to create something, and how many are used to consume something? How many of the blocks are focused on your body, how many on your mind, and how many on neither one in particular? Which are your favorite blocks of the day, and which are your least favorite?

Imagine these blocks laid out on a grid. What if you had to label each one with a purpose?



You'd have to think about everything you might spend your time doing in the context of its worth in blocks. Cooking dinner requires three blocks, while ordering in requires zero—is cooking dinner worth three blocks to you? Is 10 minutes of meditation a day important enough to dedicate a block to it? Reading 20 minutes a night allows you to read 15 additional books a year—is that worth two blocks? If your favorite recreation is playing video games, you'd have to consider the value you place on fun before deciding how many blocks it warrants. Getting a drink with a friend after work takes up about 10 blocks. How often do you want to use 10 blocks for that purpose, and on which friends? Which blocks should be treated as non-negotiable in their labeled purpose and which should be more flexible? Which blocks should be left blank, with no assigned purpose at all?



Now imagine a similar grid, but one where each block is labeled exactly how you spent it yesterday.

The question to ask is: How are the two grids different from each other, and why?

Tip: the above grid is printable if you click on it.

If you're into Wait But Why, sign up for the [Wait But Why email list](#) and we'll send you the new posts right when they come out. It's a very unannoying list, don't worry.

If you'd like to support Wait But Why, [here's our Patreon page](#).

While we're all in this mood:

[Your whole life on a grid.](#)

[A stark reminder.](#)

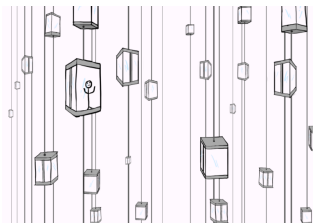
And if you're sitting down with a printed grid, [this](#) might be a good post to read first.

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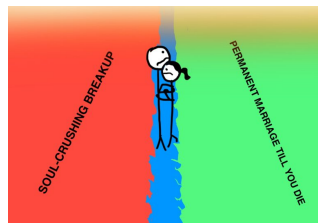
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Name

[The_Busy_Monk](#) • a month ago

The simple concrete nature of "the blocks" is empowering! When I started asking myself what is #best instead of what would be #good [nice and ok]...#GameChanger. And all this change seemingly quickly was some traumatic events. "One block used to type this" #SpiritualWarriorship #DifficultTimesAreRipeTimes

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

[Hira Abid](#) • 2 months ago

Interesting article worth reading!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

[민은주](#) • 2 months ago

I got to know you through ted. I was really impressed. I can not read English well, but I'll read it hard. Thank you.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



[Keith](#) • 2 months ago

I love this! Breaking things down to such minute blocks gives you no choice but to own every minute you waste. In terms of meeting a friend for drinks, that might also steal a few blocks from the following day, too.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Addie Lee • 3 months ago

Love this, printing this DL and def going to explore using it and how it affects my life.. thanks

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Rinor Morina • 4 months ago

watch free movies online - <https://popcorn24.net>

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Brendan Joe • 5 months ago

I really loved this post and decided to turn it into a web app for everyone to use:

<https://144blocks.com/>

It still needs a lot of work on the design (especially the mobile version) but I would love any feedback, both negative and positive, if you get a chance to use it.

Thanks!

37 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

CuriousMind ➔ **Brendan Joe** • 2 months ago

Tried it out, loved it! Hope an app version comes out soon!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Cleverclogs ➔ **Brendan Joe** • 4 months ago

Exactly what I was thinking when reading this. Nice work.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Magus Verma ➔ **Brendan Joe** • 4 months ago

good work man, neat tool to track

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Brendan Joe ➔ **Magus Verma** • 4 months ago

Thanks, appreciate it!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jonathan Norman • 5 months ago

Honestly, I first read an article of this format. For me it was a shock! I just adore different theories, but you did something cool !!! And after all, I just searched for the information necessary for my [uk essays](#) project. I want even more of these articles. Added your site to bookmarks!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Martha Hampson • 5 months ago

This is such a great way of looking at it, but also very clearly does not apply to anyone with small children. In that case, you start the day with an unpredictable number of blocks and have no control over how any of them are spent, except you know that at least twenty are going to be used for cleaning various fluids (poo, vomit, coffee...) off various surfaces (the floor, your trousers, the baby).

9 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jennifer Ward ➔ **Martha Hampson** • 3 months ago

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but you're the one who chose to have kids. Obviously this is how you enjoy spending your day.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Club • 6 months ago

Interesting. Yes, I think that we need to spend our time profitably. Also I heard that a lot of sleep is very harmful to the body and mind so we can get a few extra blocks;))

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Ray Watson • 6 months ago

100 Blocks a day V New Post Every Sometime ? Something doesn't add up.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Samuel Barker • 6 months ago

Existential fear increases

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Steiner on Failure • 6 months ago

So what Tim is trying to get across that most of you missed is that we all have TONS of time - 1,000 minutes a day. It takes a minute to drink a glass of water (if that). So you could potentially drink 1,000 glasses of water a day...so why don't the vast majority of people spend 8 minutes of their 1,000 to drink those 8 glasses of water daily we all should?

If you consider 10 minutes to be a significant chunk of time (reading Tim's article didn't even take 2

if you consider 10 minutes to be a significant chunk of time (reading this article didn't even take 2 minutes...) - think of what you could accomplish if you spent a bit of time, maybe 1-2 blocks daily, to plan your 100 blocks for the next day?!

It's an awesome concept.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Basbousa • 7 months ago

Hi, if you guys are interested in this system, I turned it into an app, would love that you check it out <https://play.google.com/sto...>

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Summeer Bajpai → Basbousa • 5 months ago

Started using it...will give feedback soon

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Ann → Basbousa • 6 months ago

This is great!!! You don't happen to have an iOS version, do you?

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Basbousa → Ann • 6 months ago

No not at the moment, I'm very sorry. But I appreciate your interest, and hopefully I will be able to port it to iOS. Thank you :D

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Jonathan Ball → Basbousa • 6 months ago

I also vote for an iOS app version

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Ann → Basbousa • 6 months ago

Thanks for your quick response! I'll look forward to a possible iOS version, it's a really great app idea :)

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Pat Bateman • 8 months ago

Stupidest shit ever.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Dr. Whom → Pat Bateman • 3 months ago

So don't read it. Obviously you're not a procrastinator, unless you're a procrastinator in denial.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Arton • 9 months ago

Thanks for the great post. I recently completed my study and I am procrastinating applying for proper jobs. I am trying various ways to stop procrastination. I have a colouring planner and a folder for writing my goals, to push myself to do more and more tasks everyday. I am going to try the 100 blocks idea and add it to my folder. I think 10 minute blocks are very helpful because I personally get bored very quickly so with 10 minutes blocks of work I will have lots of breaks with much less guilt and I will manage to get some work done in between the breaks. I will gradually reduce the blocks for breaks and increase the blocks for work.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Léandre Thibodeau • 10 months ago

Personally, I use a 3 points per day system. Every time that I do something that I consider important for me, I give myself one point (for instance, go to the gym, see a good friend, go to work). If I have my 3 points each day, I can consider that I am doing the right things.

12 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Matthus Gougeus → Léandre Thibodeau • 10 months ago

Why 3 ?

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Vlad Drule → Matthus Gougeus • 9 months ago

If I remember well , it's called the rule of 3 by Steve Jobs

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Dr.Professor • a year ago

breaking my life into 10 minute chunks like that and trying to figure out the purpose of them all and how many im willing to dedicate to one task and all the little things mentioned here would send me on a one way trip to anxiety city. sorry, but i think i'll pass.

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Catherine Sultana → Dr.Professor • 6 months ago

So maybe your blocks get to be bigger/longer duration and lines between are dotted...more flexibility,

less priorities. ...?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

gawkf → Dr.Professer • a year ago

Heya fellow "ostrich-head-in-ground-rather-than-take-action" friend (~▽)~
Its indeed too cumbersome, who cares if it turns out effective :p
(The sarcasm is on me too :/)

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

CantYouSee • a year ago

I wonder if people who need this to visualize their time are the same people who rationalize that they have money in the bank if there are still checks left in their checkbook?

^ | v • Reply • Share >

hawk- windesk → CantYouSee • a year ago

you could use /r/headspace or get a bettr beneficial winn <https://v.gd/9Q3No9>
failing that - jus use spuootify and search for sleep.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Thomas White • a year ago

I have heard studies show that executives time is only in 5 min blocks b4 interruption.
For a knowledge worker, 10 minutes looks OK.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

greedierthanyou • a year ago

Can't join you at the level of 10-minute blocks. Too busy enjoying life!

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

inspireants • a year ago

You could also use some of your blocks to develop some ideas to solve some problems.
<https://inspireants.com>

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Christian Kakhia • a year ago

In order to manage my day, to serve whatever purpose I seek to fulfill, being aware of time is not an additional tool to get what I want or what I am after. The importance is in knowing the answer to the question what are we after. Once that is cleared out, it is safe to say everything falls into place. "Time fits our best explanations". In addition, the idea that divisibility into more 'manageable' proportions is at most subjective and has no ground in other people's experiences, at least when it comes in written form. More troubling is the fact that this post considers all 1000 minutes alike and equal.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Coenraad Loubser • a year ago

How many are spent just to break even??? I.e. working to pay off your car just so you can get to work and back, and your flat just so you can live near enough a job, and sitting in traffic? How many of those are spent clicking away pop-ups that nobody likes, or re-copying empty PDF's? How many are spent not caring about any of this?

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

inspireants → Coenraad Loubser • a year ago

You could also use some of your blocks to develop some ideas to solve some problems.
<https://inspireants.com> .

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Zaher Khoury • a year ago

please man write something worthy about personal development..

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Catherine Dong • a year ago

Me: What a good idea this is, we can get more organized with our time!
Me to me: Let's just spend *one more block* reading another WBW post!

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Applecorped • a year ago


This is an OCD wet dream


10 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Catherine Dong → Applecorped • a year ago

I disagree...it's much more of a nightmare. Causes some crazy obsessions involving how precise the ten-minute chunks are, as well as making sure that it's *precisely* one hundred of them.


1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

 **Still Out of Service** → Applecorped • a year ago
I am limited to one up vote, sorry Applecore
^ | v • Reply • Share ›


 **trallala345** • 2 years ago
IDK, this is a bit too much for me. I don't mind being concious of how I live my life, but 10-minute chunks? I am usually happy if I get something meaningful done each month. If I start worrying about how I waste 10 minutes waiting for the bus, I will drive myself crazy. If I need to think deeply of is 20 more minutes of sleep or reading a bit more valuable, I will use up half the time for thinking about it. Which is probably my main issue with this concept: I would spend a block-comparable amount of time assigning value to blocks.

Also: how on earth does ordering food not take up at least one block? Even if you have a favourite dish at a takeout place, you still call, get the delivery etc. What magic brings that time down to zero?


9 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Brandon** → trallala345 • a year ago
Because you order food while sitting on the toilet. So you use your one block on the toilet - which you'll need anyhow - in a more efficient way. So in fact you need no block for ordering food.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Brent Summers** • 2 years ago
If anyone wants to do this digitally I built an app that lets you drag different activity squares over each block with how you want to spend that time. <http://100blocks.artofcleve...>

20 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **themisanthrope** • 2 years ago
I did a similar study of my time a while back using hours spent on [whatever] by hourly wage, e. g., spending two hours of time on saving one hour's worth of money. Probably not the first to do that, and probably not the first to do nothing much with it.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

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462 comments • 2 years ago

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Tikhung — This has already been answered (thanks Kristen!), but seriously, just write. Write whatever the hell you is on your mind about the world you want ...

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 **Pem Zhipeng Xie**
i spent 20 blocks to fill the blocks of thday


Like · Reply ·  12 · 45w


 **Julian Hartley Sloman**
Tomorrow it'll take less - because practice 😊

Like · Reply ·  1 · 39w

 **Pem Zhipeng Xie**
Julian Hartley Sloman maybe, I tried aTimelogger before and failed everytime.

Like · Reply · 39w

 **Michael Gutierrez**
Can some one make an app that keeps track of time like this? Please!

Like · Reply ·  7 · 50w

 **Sarah Elwy**



"basbousa" on google store does that 😊 try it 😊

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Nicola Liu

ios app: "blockytime"

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Larry Wilson

It's called a watch

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Brendan Joe

I really loved this idea and decided to turn it into a web app for everyone to use. Check it out here:

<https://144blocks.com/>

The design still needs a lot of work (especially the mobile version) but if anyone gets a chance to use it I would love any feedback, both negative and positive, so I can continue to improve on it!

Thanks!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 2](#) · 20w



Scott Tee

Why do you require people to sign up? Also, played around with it (always interested in stuff other programmers develop) and found it's a pain in the backside trying to select blocks. Felt like I had to select one block at a time, then realised I could select multiple blocks. Tried clicking what it had done, but it didn't do anything. Clicked add block which i assumed would add another block i.e. make it 145 blocks but it instead applied the activity that I had done to 1 block at the start of what what I selected. I couldn't quite figure out how to use it and rage quit! Pretty cool of you to construct it from having read it on here though. Hats off to you for creating it 😊 How long have you been a software developer for?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 20w



Brendan Joe

Hi Scott Tee - thank you so much for your input and all the feedback, I really appreciate it!
In regards to your questions/concerns above:

I require people to sign up because it's the initial way I built the prototype and haven't changed it yet. I would love to implement a feature in the future that allows people to begin using it immediately without having to sign up, and then have the data saved should they choose to sign up but I keep prioritizing other features/ bug fixes before this.

I agree that the block selection process can be confusing... I sometimes forget how confusing it can be ... [See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 19w



Linda Rogers-Langeheine

I have a checklist of the most important things I want to do daily, like meditation, yoga, strength training, reading, etc. That way I don't forget. For working, I like the Pomodoro technique: 25 minutes of focussed work and 5 minutes of relaxation.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 8](#) · 43w



Nacho Alfonso García

You start to point out what you usually do on a normal day and suddenly realize that even wasting time in almost half of the blocks, there is still another half to fill. It's really helpful

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 6](#) · 39w



Ravindra Karandikar

WE MUST DEDICATE 1 BLOCK FOR ANY WORK FOR GOOD CAUSE - JUST BECAUSE YOUR HEART SAYS SO--BUT DOES NOT HAVE EFFORT TO RETURN CALCULATION BEHIND IT

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 2](#) · 48w



Nidhi D. Tyagi

great share tim, I believe this is the best time management grid I have ever seen..very very useful. keep sharing the nice stuff.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 1](#) · 38w



Juan Felipe Ramirez

"Q" is the best time management grid I have ever seen..very very useful. keep sharing the nice stuff.



"Getting a drink with a friend after work takes up about 10 blocks."

Is not just 10 blocks. Getting drunk actually takes up a lot of blocks. The alcohol actually reduces your mental faculties. If you do it at night it also affects the energy levels you wake up with the da afterwards.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 30w



Bob Werner

I'm getting into multi year time management. It's fun to do the long term block math. For instance a shower generally takes one block. If you you shower every other day instead of daily you'll spend around 2,000 fewer hours in your life showering. That's one working year. Do you really want to spend a working year of your very limited life showering? What about eating? I recently started IF eating of one meal per day instead of three, saving about one hour per day or 20,000 hours per average life. That's 10 working years. Plus IF is estimated to add 3 years to your life. About 8 working years. So by shower half as much and eating one time per day you can free up 19 working years. What will you do with your 19 working years.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 30w



Johnny Smoked

Honestly, I first read an article of this format. For me it was a shock! I just adore different theories, but you did something cool !!! And after all, I just searched for the information necessary for my <https://papercheap.co.uk> project. I want even more of these articles. Added your site to bookmarks!

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