

Productivity Principle: Batching Buckets

Inspired by the book Getting Things Done by David Allen

The Situation → Your to-do list is massive.

"Everything you've told yourself you ought to do, your mind thinks you should do right now. This produces an all-pervasive stress factor whose source can't be pin-pointed." – David Allen, author of Getting Things Done

Why You Should Care:

The longer your to-do list gets, the more anxiety you'll feel. Getting through your to-do list starts to seem impossible, and you procrastinate on your to-do list as long as possible. Essential items go undone, and anxiety builds.

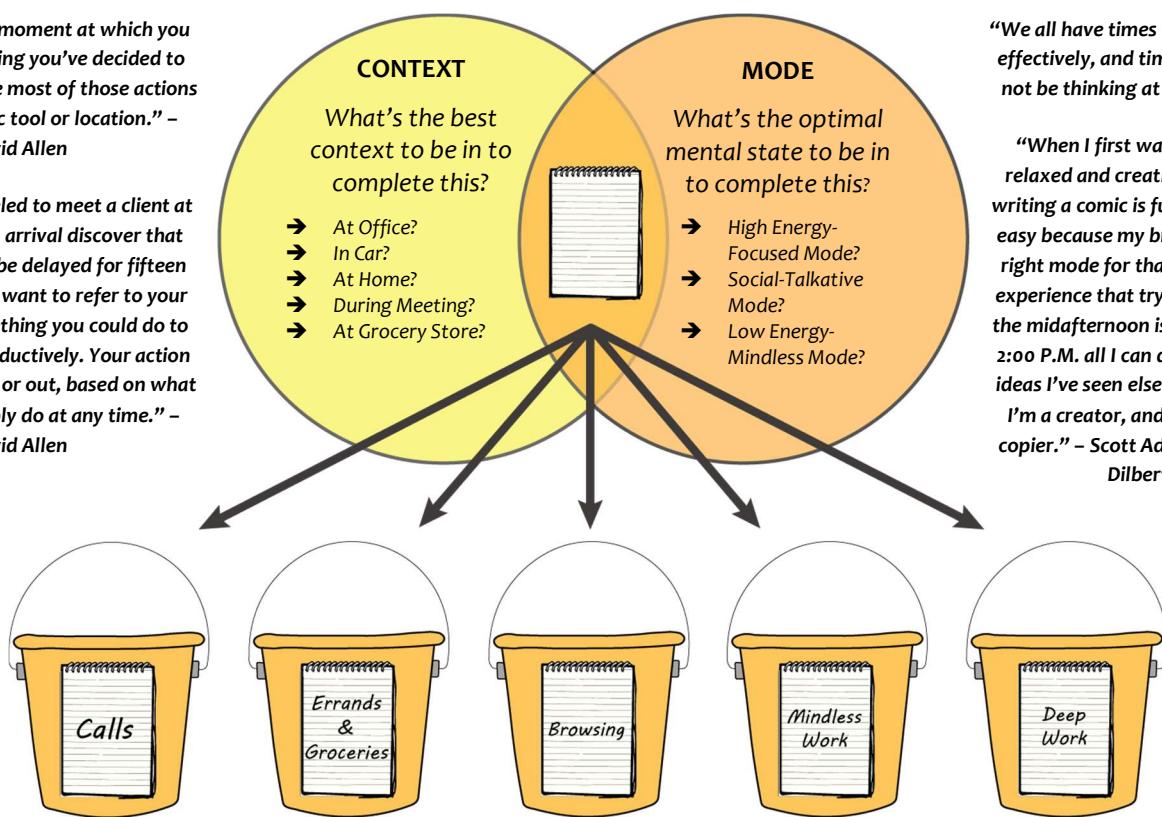
"If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging." – Will Rogers

What You Can Do About It:

Start capturing action items on separate batch lists (aka batch buckets), and empty those buckets in the right CONTEXT/ MODE. Doing so is an efficient use of your time, and it prevents your to-do list from getting out of control.

"There is never a moment at which you could do everything you've decided to do, simply because most of those actions require a specific tool or location." – David Allen

"If you have traveled to meet a client at her office and on arrival discover that the meeting will be delayed for fifteen minutes, you will want to refer to your Calls list for something you could do to use your time productively. Your action lists should fold in or out, based on what you could possibly do at any time." – David Allen



"We all have times when we think more effectively, and times when we should not be thinking at all." - Daniel Cohen

"When I first wake up, my brain is relaxed and creative. The thought of writing a comic is fun, and it's relatively easy because my brain is in exactly the right mode for that task. I know from experience that trying to be creative in the midafternoon is a waste of time. By 2:00 P.M. all I can do is regurgitate the ideas I've seen elsewhere. At 6:00 A.M. I'm a creator, and by 2:00 P.M. I'm a copier." – Scott Adams, Creator of the Dilbert Comic

"You should have as many in-trays as you need and as few as you can get by with." – David Allen

If I need to call a client, friend, or colleague, I put the task on my calls list and make the phone call during my commute time (when I can't do much else). Context: car. Mode: social/talkative.

If I need to write a blog post, I'll put that task on my deep work list and complete that task in a deep work mode after my morning coffee when my energy and focus are highest. Context: quiet space. Mode: high energy and focus.

What contexts (locations or tools) frequently constraint your actions (car, meeting, store, etc.)?

_____, _____, _____, _____.

What time of the day do you most experience the following modes?

Focused work mode: ____ - ____ AM/PM | Mindless work mode: ____ - ____ AM/PM

Social/Talkative mode: ____ - ____ AM/PM | Anything-but-work mode: ____ - ____ AM/PM

What 3-5 lists can you make based on the contexts and modes listed above and direct actions to throughout the day?