Guidelines and Mindsets for Efficient Productivity
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Section 1: Guidelines

I. The mind is for *doing*, not *memorizing*.
- Prepare system for *capturing* every idea or to-do item, anywhere, anytime.
- When *capturing*, use past-tense verbs, e.g. "*Went though* emails from yesterday," "*Have Read* book for literature class"
- If something needs to be memorized, used spaced repetition or memory techniques, e.g. Method of Loci.
- If a task is not clearly specified, recall and confirm what needs to be done, and make sure you know the requirements.
- Organize captured tasks into projects, with clear defer/due dates[1] and tags.
- Organize captured events into calendars, where due dates are all-day events, and overriding events are prefixed with "OVR: *event name.*"

III. Reduce mental overhead for managing the system.
- Capturing to-do items and accessing them should both be simple and automatic.
- Organizing to-do items must be simple. The system must be malleable and easy to use.
- Employ *minimalism* when designing the system, and choose only the most necessary guidelines.
- If using a digital device, use the least possible number of programs/services. Use cloud syncing to simplify multi-device access.

IV. Distinguish between tasks that are "*Maintenance*" and "*Development*" tasks.
- *Maintenance* tasks are to-do items that do not require thinking, and takes less time, e.g. "Took out the trash," "Went though my emails" "Texted friend I won't be coming"
- *Development* tasks are items that require creativity, critical thinking, or takes a lot of time, e.g. "Finish literature commentary essay," "Brainstorm ideas for science project"
- Maintenance tasks can be done in bulk with entertainment, e.g. music, podcasts, television. Development tasks *must* be done without any form of entertainment. You think you're more productive with music, but you're objectively not.
- Development tasks are easily influenced by location and time. Doing a specific task (e.g. writing essays) at a specific location (e.g. at a cafe) will habitify this, and reduce the motivation required to start a task, and also increase efficiency and productivity.

V. Prepare and use the correct tools.
- Any tool required must be present with their backups. Remember: "One is none, Two is one." Always make sure to have a backup tool.
- You must master your tools as if they were part of your body. You must be able to rely on them anytime, anywhere, to be available and work as you predicted.
- **For Digital Devices:**
  - Filing:
    - Do *not* clutter your desktop with files you are working on now. Looking at these files while doing other tasks will distract you, and make finding files harder.
    - Develop a file system hierarchy. Habitify saving new files at appropriate locations.
    - Organized misplaces files regularly. See II.

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[1] Do *not* use fake due dates. Due dates are absolute deadlines. For tasks on the table for today, use tags.

- Files must be accessible through any device, even one that is not your own. Use cloud services (e.g. Google Drive, iCloud Drive) to sync files across devices.
- Backup files using *online* and *off-site* backup software, or sync them using cloud services.
  - Using:
    - Automate repetitive tasks. Learn keyboard shortcuts and habitify them for every program you use. Write scripts and bind them to keyboard shortcuts, gestures, or voice commands.
    - Use a program that allows you to search and (i) open a file, (ii) open an application, and (iii) open bookmarks, with a click or a type (e.g. Spotlight, Alfred)
    - Learn touch-typing. You must be able to look at the screen while typing, to the point where the keyboard disappears from your mind—what you think simply appears on the screen.
  - Smartphone-specific:
    - Turn off all notifications during development tasks. But make sure emergency calls are not silenced (using e.g. VIP passthrough) to ensure peace of mind.
    - Uninstall an app if it constantly distracts as a last resort. Mercilessly delete SNS/Messaging apps if they are bothersome. But do make sure they are easily accessible.
    - Use a smartphone as a *capture* device, and sync it with a computer.
    - Always have a backup battery, headphones, and smartphone.
  - Other Recommendations (2018):
    - Use a laptop computer for a main device, not a tablet or a phone.
    - Use a Mac laptop, with iCloud drive.
    - App recommendations: Omnifocus, Things 3, Scapple, Apple Notes, Keynote, Preview, PDFExpert, BetterTouchTool, Alfred, Timing.
- **For Real Life Tools:**
  - Tools:
    - Always have a (i) pen (ii) eraser (iii) mechanical pencil with enough leads and (iv) yellow highlighter.
    - Prepare required items at bulk so they are not a hinderance when doing tasks. (Buy, e.g., clear folders, A4 paper, printer ink, pens in bulk, online)
    - Always have staplers. Small ones that fit in pencil cases are available.
    - Use post-its for anything you like. But always have them handy.
  - Filing:
    - Prepare a acordian-style multi-tab folder that is labeled clearly.
    - Use a smaller folder that holds documents related to tasks that need to be done *now*. Take this everywhere.
    - Designate locations for these folders so they need not be searched.

VI. Habit formation
- Habits are foundations of all advanced productivity. Constantly review your good and bad habits to guide them to better yourself
- Actions form habits, not mindsets. To form a habit, repeatedly perform the same action with the same cue and context.
- Skipping two days (or sessions) are the formation of a new habit. Skip a single day maximum.
- Have patience. Most habits will take 10 weeks to form.
- Do not feel guilt for failure. Getting back on track is part of the process.

Section 2: Mindset

I. Structure
- More structure means less discipline and less unproductive thoughts.
- Everything that is repetitive must be structured. Morning/Evening routines must be (reasonably) unbreakable and must be a high priority.
- To train yourself to maintain structure, use habit-forming techniques and force action regardless of internal state.
- Positive actions have *simple-access*, and negative actions have *deterrents*. Structure your phone so that you have your task manager predominant in the dock, with Youtube tucked away in a folder.

II. Discipline
- Discomfort: "Learn to front-load your pain." Nothing can be done if the initial pain to get started is not overcome.
- Read and reference: "Self-Discipline in 10 days: How to Go From Thinking to Doing."
- Control: Remove inefficient systems and guidelines mercilessly. Do not be afraid to refuse appointments and responsibilities. Ask for extensions and exceptions as much as is reasonable.

III. Value
- Enjoyment: "Effort beats talent. But Enjoyment beats effort." Make yourself like what you are doing. Search your own reason for enjoyment.
- Discipline: Remember that discipline is difficult, but its results are valuable. But if the results do not seem valuable, do not waste mental effort.

III. Refusal
- Do not use the status quo as evidence for choice. Always look for a better system, a better idea.
- (Reiterating) Refuse appointments if they are not valuable. Use energy wisely, and be strategic with time.

IV. Focus
- Maximize efficiency by focusing. Do only *one development* task per time period, and do not switch tasks. (Three *time blocks* per day of about 3 hours, each focusing on a single development task, is a good rule-of-thumb)
- Remove distractions and mental overhead by advice from Section 1: Guidelines; touch-typing, keyboard shortcuts, bulk-buying, removing notifications. One must be able to fully focus on a task for the full amount of the *time block*.
- When finishing a time block, recall if you were fully focused on the one single task. Track time if necessary. (use apps like Timing)

V. Emotional Stability
- One's mental state influences productivity, especially creativity, wildly, even if it does not seem like it. One cannot focus fully if one is emotional or sleep-deprived.
- Sleep and exercise. See infographic: "Sleep is Awesome!"
- Maintain bodily hygiene. An uncomfortable body is distracting.

Discipline and Productivity for Freedom and Meaning.