

Notes from the book 'Deep Work' (My fav on productivity). 1. Remove all distractions before commencing any deep work, hide in a cave if you must 2. Be consistent with your work 3. Don't Multi-task (it doesn't work) 4. It's not meant to be easy but do it anyway.

January 20, 2018 | 931 upvotes | by [Joeycrackem](#)

Time for you lads to begin some Deep Work

Deep work is perhaps the most important skill one can develop in terms of productivity. Cal Newport the author of the book 'Deep Work', defines it as

“The ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task”.

We are living in a world in which we are bombarded with distractions. An instant-gratification frenzy that will destroy you slowly if you let it. People with the skill to focus on a singular task without becoming distracted are becoming rare to find in the new economy. These people are fast becoming the most valued employees and members of society due to this skill.

Here are 4 rules for Deep Work:

Rule 1: There are no distractions during Deep Work

Distractions are the bane of all good work. Those who engage in the fine art of deep work understand the distractions are the greatest enemy. If you want to get good work done you must first find a place that is immune to distractions. A study base that is impregnable.

J.K Rowling is said to have rented a hotel when she was writing the final Harry Potter book. Isaac Newton remained in solitude in his house for months whilst developing differential calculus. Study many of our acclaimed 'geniuses' and you will see that they all dedicated a significant amount of time to deep work.

Rule 2: Deep Work is deliberate

Deep work is deliberate and is not based on whims. It isn't based on how you 'feel', but is scheduled. Engaging in deep work is committing to greatness, greatness abhors inconsistency. It doesn't matter if it's raining or snowing or hot outside, you do the work. It doesn't matter if you are tired, you do the work.

As Steven Pressfield stated in his book 'The War of Art', you should assume the role of a professional. You should 'turn pro'. You wouldn't skip your day job just because you didn't feel like going, deep work is more important to you than any one job. You must respect it and keep showing up.

Rule 3: No multi-tasking during Deep Work

Multi-tasking is a myth and the favourite tactic of the amateur. Studies have shown that when we multi-task our brains switch from one task to another. This switching ultimately sacrifices the quality of the work being done as the brain has limited resources. Each time you switch tasks it's akin to your brain

having to start fresh. Lots of energy gets wasted in trying to get back into the flow. Avoid multi-tasking and choose to go deep, choose to dedicate your whole mind to the pursuit of one goal at any given time.

Rule 4: Deep Work is challenging

Deep work is not easy, it's not a breeze. Deep work is challenging and pushes you to the limits. Deep work is not being in the 'flow' state (popularised by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi). The flow state is almost always enjoyable, it's when you are in the zone and your skill set and challenge requirements perfectly synchronise.

Deep work has you working on a task that is just slightly above your skillset. Deep work has you slogging it out in the trenches. It is almost never easy or particularly enjoyable whilst you are doing it.

Deep work shares more similarities with the term 'deliberate practice' coined by Anders Ericsson in his book 'Peak', 'Flow' is Kobe Bryant hauling ass on the basketball field, every play seeming effortless. Deliberate practice is the strenuous training that is involved to be able to play at that level, training that far exceeds the difficulty of any one game.

Examples of Deep Work

- Deep work is your training, it's sitting down for hours trying to understand a mathematics proof.
- Attempting to write a sophisticated C++ program.
- Deep work is writing your book and trying to put the pieces together.
- Deep work is building the funnel for your new business and trying to optimise every page.

Deep work will make you itch at times, the shit is uncomfortable and taxing, however, when you are finished you will be unstoppable.

[Animated Video Summary](#)

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Comments

Jonlife • 46 points • 20 January, 2018 03:29 PM*

Cutting out distractions was huge for me. And yep, multi tasking is simply a way for people who are horrible at focusing to get away with getting nothing done. Notice every genius or smart person.... Was alone... In solitude... For long periods of time. That naggy girlfriend, parent, siblings, friends... Cut em off, or your work will suffer. So many people worry that they need to keep appeasing their friends or family, but when you really want to get something done... This is what it takes.

dongpal • 13 points • 20 January, 2018 05:13 PM

Do I need to be alone to be succesful?

Jonlife • 72 points • 20 January, 2018 05:21 PM*

You need to be focused. Which for most people, the only way to do that is to be alone. DaVinci, Tesla, every mathematical genius I've ever known. They're completely content spending countless hours/days/years in solitude. Some are even married, but their wives don't dare fuck with them on some "you never spend enough time with me..." bullshit. They know their role in the marriage. But sadly women are no longer doing that. They're going straight to the "I don't love you anymore, give me half, the courts will ensure I get half, and I've been fucking the pool boy for the last 5 years and I'm pregnant with his seed... And it's all your fault... Because you never loved me the way TV and social media said you should... And I'm cutting my hair and coloring it purple... Blah blah blah..."

Your_Coke_Dealer • 6 points • 23 January, 2018 03:14 AM

It helps tremendously.

For example, a lot of people in university will study in groups. Don't do this if you actually intend to study. You'll either distract each other or help each other take shortcuts that hurt in the long run. And as soon as the lowest common denominator (the laziest friend) says 'fuck it' and quits, everyone else who was looking for an excuse to feel better about quitting will soon follow.

xenongamer4351 • 3 points • 23 January, 2018 11:30 AM

Holy shit this.

I did the study group bullshit my freshman and sophomore year and did fucking terrible had like a 2.5 GPA. Cut myself out and studied solo my last two years and raised it a little under a 3.5.

I have no idea how or why anyone could advocate a study group. Short of every single person being exactly on the same page in terms of their goals and focus, it isn't going to work.

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 3 points • 21 January, 2018 11:11 AM

Of course not. It depends on your aptitudes, what you enjoy and what you develop(ed).

For example, if you're an outgoing person that loves socializing, are good at reading people and are not afraid nor dislike making people a little uncomfortable (not too high agreeableness, low neuroticism and high extraversion on the big five personality scale), then one of the jobs you'd be most succesful at would be a salesman. And good god nearly every business can use a good salesman.

But nobody can answer what you need to do for you to be succesful; so many things factor into this, not least among all luck. Though you can maximize your opportunities in various ways and one way is to

deeply try to understand what you want to get out of work and what you're willing to sacrifice for it.

Nobody knows you better than you. And maybe you don't know you quite as well as you could and this requires some exploration. You also (like everyone) don't really know what most jobs require so it requires experimentation.

CHAD_J_THUNDERCOCK • 1 point • 27 January, 2018 01:11 PM

Depends on the person. But don't neglect your Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Junted • 9 points • 20 January, 2018 08:35 PM

The do not disturb button on the iPhone and always placing it out of sight has been a really effective practice i've been doing.

destraht • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 07:27 PM

I'm not sure if this is too tangential but I'm getting over a flu and I just forced myself outside to walk around and then I went to a cafe to try and catch up on some work and to acclimate around people. These young women were chatting "you know, like and like and really, I'm serious..." and it was making my head spin like hell. There were hipster guys with that grown out trimmed beard and I will admit that they make me feel a bit violent when I look at them. I haven't really been understanding all of the hate on beards until just now. My facial hair is grown out a bit but not hipster trimmed and I look more like a depressed writer than a hipster (I hope). Now I'm back at home and feeling like I have my own mind again (and also not feeling like I'm going to vomit from listening to fake woman drama problems). In two days I plan to quickly leave to Eastern Europe again. There I can enjoy working in a cafe without everyone around me having a narcissistic spaz attack. It will be so nice, thanks for listening.

aspdrm • 15 points • 20 January, 2018 09:45 PM

Lol dude. You worry about others too much. Hit the sidebar.

destraht • 3 points • 20 January, 2018 10:41 PM

Here in Northern California I find people's presence to be highly annoying, distracting and toxic. So I end up being much more recluse here than I am in other places. I think that in three years in Ukraine, Moldova and Poland that I only told some women to be quite 3-4 times for extremely obnoxious behavior but in my home culture this behavior is considered normal. Also all of those times they realized that they were being rude dumbasses and so they piped down, stopped neurotically giggling, etc. Over there I have very fond memories of being around people and also being able to focus for long periods of time without being annoyingly distracted by the equivalent of a pharmaceutical disclaimer in my ear. Then I look up and see the kinds of soy boy bearded hipsters that I'm always hearing people rail against around here and I realized "Oh ya, that is why everyone despises them so much". They just look punchable. The main point being about "deep work" of this main post is that I can't fucking do it around these people so I'm not around them. That isn't ideal though and I much prefer EE eye candy once in a while and normal fucking humanity. I guess that more than a fair amount of these people are on Big Pharma drugs and that this is part of the reason that they are so fucking nuts and distasteful. The statistics suggest that many of them are on drugs.

aspdrm • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 11:09 PM

You need some drugs too, cause you sound fucking autistic. Maybe yourself is to blame. Either adapt to your environment and stop blaming everybody else, or leave and go elsewhere. No matter what, your behavior is toxic to yourself so go fix that. A-fucking-sap!

destraht • 2 points • 20 January, 2018 11:19 PM

I needed to be home for some time and I've been gone about 80% of the last ten years. One day when some old people are dead I'll never return to this degenerate liberal shit hole. Yes and thanks I need to leave and I should be able to purchase a ticket on Monday or Tuesday once I know some things. I live out of a big bag and I've lived on three other continents over these last ten years. I just leave behind whatever doesn't fit into my bag. Done deal.

Asianhopz • 1 point • 22 January, 2018 04:51 AM

lol shithole. What do you do that you need solitude for?

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 56 points • 20 January, 2018 11:18 AM

I've started doing this, after also finishing the war of art by steven pressfield, though I apply the pomodori technique of committing 25 minutes to work and 5 minutes to break, and putting a check to reward my brain (I also added a victory pose to get a physiological/emotional response from myself as I am conditioning myself into this away from addiction). I noticed myself hungry for that work success a couple of times in a similar way I craved my addiction or chocolate.

I get into deep work about half of my work days, where I set the checkmark and immediately continue work entranced by the subject/task.

If somebody distracts me, calls, etcetera, I schedule them in at a different time.

The best development is maybe that I also sit down to work when I have no idea how to tackle it or approach a problem. I start writing and laying out my ideas, which if I wasn't inspired, are always bad ideas.

Having gotten the motor running, 10 minutes later, the good ideas come and I'm off running.

techless • 18 points • 20 January, 2018 01:57 PM

What do you work on if you don't mind me asking? I've found it sometimes hard to stop at 25min when I'm in the zone and coding or writing.

Red_Faust • 9 points • 20 January, 2018 05:22 PM

When using time blocks, you don't have to stop at 25 min if you desire to keep working. This is my case most of the time.

Any productivity system, such as these, or GTD, shall be adapted to your specific situation, and to whatever you are most comfortable with (while being very productive, of course ;)

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 6 points • 21 January, 2018 11:05 AM

The work is actually designing, coding and (creative) writing. I find it hardest for coding to leave my desk.

I don't always stop at 25 min. If I'm in the zone, I only walk up, set a check mark and continue my work. I'm also just thinking about the work in the 2 second walk to and from my checkmark list, which hangs on my door.

My primary purpose is to condition this method into myself, so if my work slightly suffers that's an acceptable cost right now.

I consider the 5 minutes to have a couple of purposes:
to be a vent against overworking

to be a moment to consider if I'm going down a rabbit hole that isn't efficient at all
to relax any physical discomfort or tenseness
to have time to get a drink / food if needed, toilet breaks
to have room to do more than required when I'm feeling extra energetic (since the time is earmarked as rest, doing work in that time is a bonus)

I find that the re-orientation is most valuable. About 1/5th of the time I've started to go in a direction that isn't efficient/productive at all and in the past it would have been 2 hours or more until I figured out I was spending my time on things that aren't on the top of my priority list.

I have the same thing with coding. Sometimes I try to solve an error where it is faster to just rewrite a function from scratch. Without those small breaks, I'm more like a bull that keeps trying to hit the bullfighter by aiming for the flapping fabric.

NutNFancyFetish • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 02:53 PM

Have you read any of pressfield's historical novels? They are very good.

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 4 points • 21 January, 2018 11:06 AM

Thank you, added to reading list now.

Joeycrackem[S] • 4 points • 20 January, 2018 10:16 PM

You are killing it brother. Consistency is key with deep work.

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 1 point • 21 January, 2018 11:06 AM

You are too kind to reinforce these good habits in me. Thank you!

GalcomMadwell • 1 points • 24 January, 2018 07:23 PM **[recovered]**

I tried the pomodoro technique for a long time but I found that it just didn't work for me. The small breaks just let to distraction, especially after several rounds. I find an all or nothing approach works best, and I batch my work into two hour chunks and then rest after by walking, cleaning, whatever.

Kinbaku_enthusiast • 1 point • 25 January, 2018 03:12 PM

Honestly if I could, I'd prefer that. This is just what works best for me.

Though I typically complete 4 pomodori's in a row, which is similar to your 2 hours.

[deleted] • 17 points • 20 January, 2018 12:21 PM

Interesting and pertinent.

I've always had a lot of energy but struggled to channel it effectively. TRP has helped improve interpersonal relationships, the next step for me is crushing my career and the only way to do this is to develop the ability to focus.

For example, I'm supposed to be editing my book but instead I'm writing this comment. Better find me a cave...

brinkleybuzz • 17 points • 20 January, 2018 05:50 PM

We need to put down our smartphones, hide the video games and set aside focused time to build and fix things. Using our hands to do real work is one of the most therapeutic things men can do.

megadump44 • 8 points • 20 January, 2018 09:50 PM

I just got some noise cancelling headphones and they are phenomenal. When I put them on, I just know to get shit done. Couldn't recommend them enough if you are easily distracted by ambient sounds like myself

[deleted] • 10 points • 20 January, 2018 04:04 PM

My patents always sAy I need better multitasking skills. I KNEW IT DIDNT WORK. Well for important shit obviously. I can cook dinner and wash/fold clothes

red_matrix[] • 13 points • 20 January, 2018 05:52 PM

Multitasking is for women, they claim they can do it best lol

ExaltedR3V3NG3 • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 09:12 PM

But they make each task way worse than doing them on their own. Leave multitasking to computers.

PaulAJK • 3 points • 20 January, 2018 10:01 PM

I'm pretty sure that's actually true, I've seen some studies on it. it probably evolved as a way of looking after infants while doing something else.

HandsomeCub • 1 point • 22 January, 2018 08:23 AM

Male mice that could reproduce were created from female mice by only modulating testosterone. If women evolved to have a trait its likely going to show up in men too in some form.

[deleted] • 1 point • 20 January, 2018 06:24 PM

When ever I girl says that to me I say "awesome then you do it."

Patzer1470 • 5 points • 21 January, 2018 01:25 AM

the requirement that one "improve their ability to multitask" is a falsehood that's been perpetuated by the hollywood portrayal of the million-dollar wall street man--who is seemingly everywhere at once, with equal time to devote to all facets of life.

However, this is a farce. That millionaire investment banker autistically analyzes projections and numbers for hours upon hours upon hours at a time, in an almost inhuman way. That is what makes greatness. Raw singular attention. This is applicable not only to work, or "business," but all facets, relationships included.

Joeycrackem[S] • 1 point • 20 January, 2018 10:17 PM

Yeah they have done some studies to show that it's bullshit.

meaningintragedy • 4 points • 21 January, 2018 04:19 AM

Thanks for the post. I've been procrastinating for so long and this is a good wake up slap.

I need to get a separate desk for work asap. I currently use my battlestation's desk which is very distracting me all the time.

[deleted] • 4 points • 21 January, 2018 07:56 PM

This is something I struggle with living up north. My goal is to become an airshow pilot. This is one hell of a goal, but I am determined to make it happen. So I bought a small airplane to gain the hours I need to get a commercial pilot cert. unfortunately, I don't have the cash for a nice heated hangar....so it remains outside and completely covered up. It takes about 1-1.5 hours just to get to the point of starting the engine. (Removing covers, preheat the engine--made a preheater out of an ammo can and a camping stove for 100 bucks, better that

than buy one for around 500! Takes another hour to cover the thing back up and tie it down when im done.) Up where I live, it gets fucking cold. Let me tell you, doing maintenance to that airplane out in a field...when it is -25°F or lower is not motivationally inspiring. But I try to push myself. Sometimes I fail, sometimes I succede. But it all revolves around that deep work mentality.

Fulp_Piction • 7 points • 21 January, 2018 07:12 PM

Another key point from the book: The best deep workers can only work deeply for about 4 hours a day, under half of a work day. For a beginner you're looking at 1-2 hours of solid, quality concentration per day while you build it up.

Don't burn yourself out. 2 hours of quality work a day is more than you think, and if you can keep between that and 4 hours/day (judging by the authors accounts in the book) you will go places. Use your 2 hours wisely.

[deleted] • 3 points • 20 January, 2018 05:40 PM

So it is not true that the mind can only focus intensely for 50 minutes until it has to take a 5 min break?

Marsupian • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 09:06 PM

Focus probably decreases but I doubt it's an on/off type of response and I doubt it's always at 50mins.

[deleted] • 1 point • 20 January, 2018 09:20 PM

But within deep work, arent small breaks actually helpful? like once every 2 hour or so you take a 5 minute break?

InstigatingDrunk • 1 point • 20 January, 2018 11:37 PM

Your brain is a muscle. Don't try to over extend otherwise you burn out.. you build it up over time

arrayay • 2 points • 22 January, 2018 01:58 AM

Brain is made of fat and water mostly.

universalabundance1 • 3 points • 20 January, 2018 08:33 PM

I love posts like this. Now this shit can really help bros here attain some SMV.

CreatedItJust2Saythi • 3 points • 20 January, 2018 11:41 PM

Examples of Deep Work

Let me give you some other good examples: learning to type or to sight-sing staff. They take months, even years of seemingly blind, fruitless, useless, wasted hours of practice; but that permanent feeling of fruitlessness or uselessness is just false, a lie, since every second of practice led you to the final, fluent, skillful ability

Greek-God-Brody • 3 points • 23 January, 2018 08:02 AM*

This book's on my short reading list. Been battling distractions for a while.

Some measures I've implemented:

Use the Pomodoro technique (25-5)

Make a rule to only check my emails twice per day (11am & 7PM). This helped me a lot since I was a compulsive email junkie checker.

Make a rule to only scroll through Social Media (Fb, Insta) 2 times per day (during my lunch break, and some time during evening; also toilet breaks are accepted).

Quit watching / reading the News completely. Read weekly editions, like The Economist. It will serve you much better. I for example, am interested in the topic of Deep Learning. I've signed up to a weekly email newsletter which distills the most important things you need to know and the essentials of what's happening in the industry. The last one is extremely important. Don't check Social Media when you first wake up. This will set your days dragged into other people's agenda, instead of being on your own path and purpose.

frankreyes • 2 points • 20 January, 2018 09:38 PM

I've been interested on buying a motorhome/RV/trailer for some time now. It always felt an awesome idea to have a moving cave-with-wheels, where I could go to have a personal space of my own with all my books that I don't have the time to read. time that I don't have because I'm usually too busy reading reddit and facebook. I'll think about it. Thanks for posting this book.

xFLASHYx • 2 points • 21 January, 2018 07:59 AM

Would listening to music through headphones while doing 'Deep Work' be a distraction? Does it pose as something that has a negative effect on the task at hand?

mrpCamper • 4 points • 22 January, 2018 09:37 PM

I find that classical music helps but anything with words in it doesn't.

HandsomeCub • 2 points • 22 January, 2018 08:07 AM

I feel it would be. Music may go well with light busy work and day dreaming, but it seems extremely bad to learn any new concept or struggle to do the impossible. Personally, i consciously decide to stop any music if im NOT focused entirely on it and enjoying it. Otherwise, i get in the habit of tuning it out and hating it afterward anyway. Its extra noise in your brain.

xFLASHYx • 1 point • 22 January, 2018 08:14 AM

This makes sense and also I feel the same. Thanks for your reply.

PreOrgasmGroanLness • 2 points • 21 January, 2018 01:08 PM

There's just one mistake in the OP, and that is

Deep work is not being in the 'flow' state

No. Deep work does not *need* to be flow state, but flow can happen within deep work.

VikkBlack • 2 points • 22 January, 2018 12:21 AM

I remember that time. I failed math and needed a test. It was close and I needed a lot of practice, but I never really studied and was lazy. I went to a McCafe. It was hard at first but I got into it, solved equations, had success and I felt a magical feeling of relaxedness. I was very free and did not give a fuck about anything.

Happened another time. Spend a long time at home studying, went for a walk and felt incredible. I focused my whole mind on studies and so it cleared all the bullshit I had in my mind, that is the true bliss folks. Do everything to achieve the flow.

GoGetting • 2 points • 23 January, 2018 05:00 PM

Not multitasking is totally correct.

Multitasking is like using tasks to procrastinate against each other.

Focus, focus, focus. The only "multitasking" for a man is "I've finished this, what's next?".

Tmatt61 • 6 points • 20 January, 2018 12:12 PM

Great advice. The 4 hour work week by Tim Ferris describes data diets and having 2 mission critical tasks to work on during the day.

TheAmphibiaRapist • 7 points • 20 January, 2018 01:30 PM

Can you expand on this? Haven't read the book

red_matrix[] • 5 points • 20 January, 2018 05:52 PM

He has a podcast that talks about this stuff as well. Not bad to listen to if you have a long commute.

TheAmphibiaRapist • 8 points • 20 January, 2018 08:06 PM

Yea but I'm just asking you to explain your Tim ferris jargon for now

newls • 3 points • 21 January, 2018 10:48 AM

Basically our news and media today is all like LOOK AT OUR CONTENT RIGHT NOW!!! with inflammatory article titles designed to enrage, invoke, and most importantly, distract you so you click on their ads.

They will brazenly cross any moral boundaries so long as they get those content views and ad clicks.

Cutting news and media out will make you more balanced, more open to discussion, and happier.

He also recommends delegating news-getting to other people. If you have a quick chat with someone, ask them what was in the news today.

The point is, you'll be surprised at how little of it actually affects your life, and you'll stop wanting to ask.

[deleted] • 3 points • 21 January, 2018 08:10 PM

Cutting news and media out will make you look at society in a whole new way. Seriously..the shit people talk about/are worried about is like listening to retards talk. Last time I turned on a tv, there was some bullshit "housewife news" talkshow on. The big news of the day? How to pick clothes that make you look skinnier. Yup, I immediately remember why I stopped paying for cable/netflix/any other bullshit!

Edit: I vividly remember a commercial in which there was some problem with a house. Husband says, "ill fix it!" Wife says, "no." Husband says, "ok....ill call the chad over and pay him to fix it". I'm paraphrasing here...but you get the point.

CHAD_J_THUNDERCOCK • 1 point • 27 January, 2018 01:18 PM

Absolutely BUT there are a FEW news sources that focus entirely on productive + positive news about important news and trends. It is OK to use them (find and follow them on twitter, then view twitter once a day).

Eclectique • 1 point • 20 January, 2018 04:14 PM

enjoyed the post so I liked and subscribed the linked video. thanks

tolerantman • 1 point • 23 January, 2018 02:22 PM

He has a great blog, <http://calnewport.com/blog/>

Check it out

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