

# Procrastinating on Prioritization?

*by Robyn Krise, Staff Associate*

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In today's world, we are constantly "connected", and new information is available 24/7. Technology is advancing exponentially fast, and it can be difficult to keep up. With such rapid change, the skill of prioritization is more important than ever. Effective prioritization helps protect against mental burnout. Here are some tips to consider for your own prioritization practice.

## **Don't Get Stuck in the Mud**

To keep yourself in a good flow state and reduce decision fatigue<sup>[1]</sup>, you must plan ahead. If you open your laptop in the morning and are immediately faced with a decision such as, "Should I answer those emails or make that phone call first?", it may not seem like a big deal in the beginning, but doing that all day, every day will eventually leave you feeling like you are running through mud. To remedy this feeling, we implement routines. Routines give you the power to get things done without deciding WHAT to get done by making those decisions ahead of time. Make a general outline for tomorrow before you call it quits for today.

## **18 Minutes a Day Keeps the Procrastination Away**

Now, you may be thinking "that sounds great, but what if the unexpected happens?". There are ways of introducing convenient pockets of time to handle these very situations. Here's the breakdown for a common 8-hour workday. Take 5 minutes at the beginning of the day to handle those annoying unforeseen pop-up tasks, then 1 minute for each hour of the day to check in with yourself, reassess, adjust, and most importantly breathe. Then finally, 5 minutes at the end of the day to roughly plan for tomorrow. Do not get too tied up with the planning because the more time you spend planning every detail, the less work you are actually accomplishing.

## *An Alternate Tomato-Based Approach*

The Pomodoro Technique<sup>[2]</sup>, the Italian word for tomato, was called as such when Francesco Cirillo coined the technique after using a tomato-shaped kitchen timer to help him improve his studying. Following this technique, you can break your day down even further by working in 25-minute intervals followed by 5-minute breaks to get up to stretch and give your eyes and brain a moment to reset and really ask yourself if you got done what you wanted/expected to in that amount of time. Readjust your outline at the next hour and check in if you're moving at a different rate than you originally allotted for. To fit that into all the other numbers of the day, it would look like this: starting at 8 am, begin with 5 minutes of tackling pop-up tasks and then work for 25 minutes. Now it is 8:30 am; take another 5 minutes for yourself then finish the hour working. At 9 am, take 1 minute to make sure you are on track and make any necessary adjustments. And the cycle continues. To summarize: 1 minute for assess, 24 minutes for working, 5 minutes for break, 25 minutes for working, and 5 minutes for break.

### **Eat Your Frog First**

Another method to consider is to eat your frog first. In this method, your frog is the one big thing you need to do for the day. If you get the looming unsavory tasks completed first, then as the day goes on, things get more and more pleasurable and easy by comparison. This sounds easier said than done, but if you follow the ROUTINE described previously, you will not even have to think about it because you knew it was coming since yesterday.

Many people, including myself, consider themselves to be effective multi-taskers, but the fact of the matter is, nearly no one is. Over 97.5%<sup>[3]</sup> of people do better work when focusing on one task at a time. The other 2.5% probably aren't reading this article. Happy prioritizing!

[1] <https://www.healthline.com/health/decision-fatigue#takeaway>

[2] <https://todoist.com/productivity-methods/pomodoro-technique>

[3] <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/science-clear-multitasking-doesnt-work/>

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