

Personal Productivity

What is a Routine?

1. Identify the Task. Let's say you want to build an exercise routine.
2. Identify the Time and/or Trigger. For example, perhaps you normally exercise right after work.
3. Identify the Sub-Tasks. For you, perhaps your routine involves going to the gym, getting changed, stretching, doing 45 minutes on the treadmill, performing three reps of weights, and doing a lap around the pool to finish things off. Then, you shower and go home.

Remember, a routine shouldn't be set in stone. Once you establish a routine, it can be modified at any point in time, depending on what works for you. With our exercise example, you could easily decide to exercise before work or even at lunch and still use the basic task and sub-tasks.

Professional Routines

Here are some routines that many people find helpful in maximizing their time in the office:

- Instead of checking e-mail, news, and Web sites throughout the day, set aside one or several periods (for example, morning, noon, and at the end of the day). Then, batch and sequence your activities (for example, e-mail, news, and industry journals). You can batch many types of tasks in this way for maximum efficiency.
- Set up a system for maintaining your task tracking system. This can be as simple as five minutes in the morning to update the day's list, five minutes at noon to update what you have done already, and five minutes at day's end to evaluate today and create a starting list for tomorrow.
- In the morning, perform your tasks in an organized, routine manner. You can also lay out your clothes and prepare your lunch the night before for maximum efficiency.

Scheduling Tasks

- Instead of being overwhelmed by a large project, deconstruct it into smaller, bite-sized projects.
- Delegate effectively by matching up individual strengths with project tasks.
- Be strict with deadlines, but be flexible enough to accommodate individual situations.
- Always have a backup plan!
- Allow for extra time when dealing with external parties.