Focus Hours
Focus hours are uninterrupted stretches of time in your day to get your most important work done. However, meetings and interruptions prevent most of us from having adequate time to focus.

Time to focus increases productivity, improves decision-making, and boosts creativity.
Healthy focus hours

Proactively schedule blocks of time on your calendar to focus
Schedule focus blocks during periods when you perform at your peak
Schedule focus time with intention by dedicating the time to specific tasks
Take a few 15-minute breaks during the day to restore your ability to focus
Break down work into time intervals and use a timer to stay on track
Eliminate as many distractions as possible during a focus session

• Work in a quiet and private location
• Put away your phone
• Turn off extra screens
• Shut down email, Skype, and other collaboration apps
• Close unnecessary application windows on your desktop
• Consider wearing headphones as a focus time signal

Mini behavioral science lesson

Multitasking is a myth

Research shows that multitasking damages productivity - it slows you down, causes mistakes, impairs decision-making, and impedes creative thought.
Humans have a limited capacity for simultaneous thought. This applies to nearly everyone, and studies show that people who think they are good at multitasking generally have a lower capacity for simultaneous thought.

Why You Shouldn’t Multitask >

Remove barriers

Agree on your focus time needs with your manager

Common objection: I can’t block time on my calendar to focus on my work without interruptions because that’s not part of our team culture.
Recommended solution: Have a conversation with your manager. Explain that you need time to focus on your most demanding work to be more productive. Acknowledge that both meetings and focus time are important to your job and agree on your optimal mix. Then schedule your time accordingly and spread the word to your teammates to set boundaries.

Hidden Brain Podcast: Deep Work, Cal Newport >
How do I turn behaviors into habits?
“Typically, doing just four to five things differently can enable people to claw back 18% to 24% of their collaborative time.”

Rob Cross, Professor of Global Leadership, Babson College

1Reclaiming Your Day Research

How to make it a habit

Goal set

- Diagnose your problem using MyAnalytics data
- Define a measurable goal using a specific MyAnalytics metric
  - Select a time period to monitor your change
  - Pick a behavior to turn into habit
  - Write down why this habit is important and how it will make you a better teammate

Plan

- Identify barriers to change and take actions to remove them
- Use the MyAnalytics share feature to share your data along with your plan with a manager or teammate(s)

Practice

- Use the MyAnalytics Outlook Add-in for daily support
- Keep track of your progress by checking your data weekly in the MyAnalytics Dashboard
  - Ask a teammate to develop the new habit with you—consider making it a friendly competition

Celebrate

- When you achieve your goal, use the MyAnalytics share feature to share your data and success with your manager or team
  - Keep practicing the behavior!
  - If you were not successful, try another behavior

The Power of Habit Resources

When ________, I will ________, because ________

it provides me with ________

REWARD
Here are some examples
Multitasking impairs our performance because when we process tasks in parallel, our brains are actually switching our attention from one activity to another. When switching, our brains struggle to cleanly discard the first task and move on to the next one. Constant switching creates “attention residue” and prevents us from following a train of thought long enough to generate innovative ideas.

Sources: How to Have a Good Day, by Caroline Webb, Why You Shouldn’t Multitask and How Can I Use More of My Brain?

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**Specific example**

Over the next two weeks, add four hours of focus hours per week.

**Goal set**

**Plan**

**Practice**

**Celebrate**

**Idea**

When I plan my week, I will book focus time in advance because it provides me with the ability to avoid after-hours work.

**Outlook Add-in**

Stay on track (book focus time next week to get work done).

**MyAnalytics Dashboard**

21.5

Company average 33.3 hrs

**Share**

Productivity in Peril: Higher and Higher Rates of Technology Multitasking
Batch process emails 2 to 3 times per day

Processing emails constantly throughout the day subjects us to lower productivity and increased stress. It takes us longer than we think to fully return to a task after an interruption. Research shows that it takes 23 minutes to get back on task after an interruption and 16 minutes when the interruption is specifically email.

Source: Worker Interrupted: The Cost of Task Switching

**Goal set**

Over the next two weeks, I will batch process emails at 11 AM and 4 PM.

**Idea**

When I check my emails, I will batch process emails 2 to 3 times per day because it provides me with a way to reduce my stress level.

**Specific example**

When I check my emails, I will batch process emails 2 to 3 times per day because it provides me with a way to reduce my stress level.

**MyAnalytics Dashboard**

Goal is to see 2 or 3 blocks of activity
MyAnalytics features to support change
MyAnalytics feature
Book focus time
Outlook Add-in

1. Select the **Book focus time** card in the Outlook Add-in

   - Stay on track. Book focus time next week to get work done.

2. Set your intention to focus on your top priorities

   - Whether big or small, complete your tasks by booking focus time.
   - What’s important next week?

3. Select the best 2-hour block available

   - Whether big or small, complete your tasks by booking focus time.
   - Create a project plan

   - Here are the best 2-hour blocks you have available. Feel free to book multiple.

   - Mon, 10/23
     - 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM
     - 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

4. The block automatically appears in your calendar in green

   - Weekly Customer Review

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For definitions of terms and metrics, please visit: [MyAnalytics](https://www.example.com)
MyAnalytics feature

Unread mails & important people

Outlook Add-in

1. Select the Keep your Important people list up to date card

2. Choose people to add

3. Stay on top of your relationships by selecting the unread mails card

The Outlook Add-in suggests important people based on your collaboration from previous weeks. To add people you don’t see here, go to My Network in your MyAnalytics Dashboard. From there, you can search for people, view your entire list, and remove people from your list.

For definitions of terms and metrics, please visit: MyAnalytics
Focus on people who are not starred as important in your closest orbit—should they be added to your list, or are they people with whom you should spend less time? Also focus on people who are in your farthest orbit—do you need to reconnect and/or are you neglecting some of your priorities?

Use My network to identify ways to optimize time with important people

Select an important person in your map to see collaboration details.

If Meeting time is high, think about ways to divide and conquer your shared meetings. If your Read percent is low, you may be neglecting important priorities. If your Response time is long, you may be acting as a bottleneck. If very short, you may be distracted by emails from this person.

1:1 meetings are important to monitor if this person is your manager or a direct report—1:1s are correlated with high engagement and performance.

For definitions of terms and metrics, please visit: MyAnalytics
MyAnalytics feature

My meetings

Use My meetings data to identify meetings you can decline

Dashboard

1

Click here to see the list of meetings you have attended, including meeting name, organizer, duration, and date.

2

Click here to see the meetings you have attended that fall into the meeting habits categories. Helps you identify opportunities to decline meetings and improve habits.

3

Shows how many hours you spend in common meeting habit categories often considered low quality. Helps you identify your biggest meeting pain points.

For definitions of terms and metrics, please visit: MyAnalytics
Taking it to the **next level**
**Time blocking**

Our single-tasking brains work best when we batch tasks into different types of similar work.

- Plan priorities for the day in the morning instead of starting your day with email.
- Batch process emails at set times to avoid being distracted by emails throughout your day.
- Schedule meetings in blocks whenever possible to avoid time fragmentation.
- Be disciplined about taking breaks during the day to recharge.
- When blocking focus time, schedule during times when you have high energy and avoid times that are typically meeting heavy.
- At the end of the day, reflect on your achievements and preview tomorrow's calendar.

**Be flexible!**

Rework your time blocks throughout the day as circumstances change.

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**Bonus read:**

Could time blocking replace your to-do list?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 8AM    | Plan    |           |          |        |
| 9AM    | Batch   |           |          |        |
| 10AM   | Meetings|           |          |        |
| 11AM   |         |           |          |        |
| 12PM   | Break   |           |          |        |
| 1PM    |         |           |          |        |
| 2PM    |         |           |          |        |
| 3PM    |         |           |          |        |
| 4PM    |         |           |          |        |
| 5PM    |         |           |          |        |
| 6PM    | Reflect |           |          |        |
Time blocking

Use MyAnalytics to help you identify blocks.

**My Email** shows the number of emails read and sent during the week by time of day. It can help you identify the best times to batch process email and monitor your progress.

**My Focus** shows your daily ratio of meetings to focus time. It can help you identify the optimal blocks on your calendar for meetings and focus time.

**Bonus read:**
*How to be Healthier, Happier and More Productive: It's All in the Timing*