

# The Longest Day: Improve Your Time Management

By making just a few adjustments to your daily routine, you can free up valuable time to generate new business, tap into your creative energy, and get more accomplished in every area of your life.

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There are 1,440 minutes in a day. Are you using them as wisely as you could be?

1. **Don't trust your memory.** Ever had a great idea in the shower and then couldn't remember it later? Write down every task, goal, and good idea. This frees up precious mental energy so you won't have to keep all these things in your head. Keep a small notebook close by at all times and review it every day to be sure you're acting on all those great ideas.
2. **Make a manageable task list.** Avoid putting big projects on your to-do list. Instead, break your complex projects into specific, actionable tasks. Say you have a list of to-do items on your desk: "Call client about dropping price on condo," "Schedule performance reviews with associates," and "Improve marketing efforts." Which one do you think you'll put off? A better bet for that last task would be to "Write new intro letter to area residents and mail 300 to gauge effectiveness." Now that's a to-do item!
3. **Tune out interruptions.** Nothing robs you of energy and productivity more than a constant series of interruptions. When you're working, turn off your alerts on new e-mail, don't check voice mail, and say no to any other disruptions.
4. **Differentiate the urgent from the important.** Just because something screams for attention doesn't mean it's important. Assess whether an "emergency" truly merits the time you'll need to give it. Imagine you're in your office putting together a new marketing program when a flustered associate bursts in to tell you about a problem with a listing. Most people would drop everything and deal with the panicked salesperson. But is this problem really urgent? It might be better to politely tell your associate that you can help as soon as you're finished with your current project.
5. **Try New things.** To make big leaps in your career, you need to try new things. Use some of your valuable minutes each day to try daring, big-picture ideas—and make change happen.
6. **Do One Task at a Time.** Study after study has demonstrated that multitasking is a myth, at least when it comes to juggling complex activities like speaking on the phone and typing an e-mail. It often means doing several things badly at once. If you're on the phone with one client while reviewing an MLS listing for another client, chances are you're not handling either task well.
7. **Get up 45 minutes earlier.** You probably find that your ambitious plans for the day are derailed as soon as you get into your office—with phone calls, e-mail messages, and colleagues competing for your time. So get up a little earlier and start your workday with a few victories under your belt. This will free up almost a full day of productivity each month.

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**Sources:** *Getting Things Done* (Penguin, 2002) by David Allen; *Time Management from the Inside Out* (Holt Paperbacks, 2004) by Julie Morgenstern; and *The 4-Hour Workweek* (Crown, 2007) by Timothy Ferriss.

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