

Simplify your Life in Just 15 Minutes a Day



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Clean Off your Desk

Before you leave/finish work for the day, take 15 minutes to clean off your desk, placing everything where it belongs. Refile folders, re-shelve books, take out your rubbish, refill your stapler, clean the crumbs out of your keyboard, organise your papers that you will need for tomorrow in a neat stack and put all your pens and pencils in the holder or drawer. You will be totally amazed at how you feel when you arrive at your desk next day - peaceful and ready to work!

Whittle Down your To-do List

If you are one of those people who has a daily to-do list as long as their arm (and who isn't?) challenge yourself to do less, but accomplish more overall. Having an impossible list of things to do only causes stress, which fractures our attention. Grab a small sticky note and write your Most Important Things (MITs) for the day down. Once you have completed those, you can go to your running list of to-do items that are in a separate area such as a whiteboard (that isn't in front of you), a simple document or a productivity app. But only if you get your MITs done first!

Schedule your Day

Before you finish work for the day, take 15 minutes to make your MIT list for tomorrow. That way, when you arrive the next day, you will be able to start right away without wasting some of the most productive hours.

Zero Out Email

Do you think this isn't possible? It is! If you have a zillion emails that haven't even been opened, how about going rogue and deleting them all? Too scared to do that? That's okay. Archive all of them instead. Then delete some each day (set a timer for 15 minutes) until they are deleted, acted upon or filed in the appropriate file in your email system.



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Clear your Workspace

A cluttered space makes for a cluttered mind - scientifically proven. So before you start working on a project, take 15 minutes to clean the space you will be working in. This could be unloading and reloading the dishwasher, putting things on your desk where they belong or tidying your office. Having a clean area will make concentrating on the one task ahead easier.

Clean Out your Messiest Drawer

Pick the one drawer that makes you curse every time you try to find something in it. Take everything out and wash down the inside. Go through each item and either replace it neatly in the drawer, put it in your donate box or put it in the bin.

Make Appointments

Depending on how many people are in your team or family, you may need to schedule this over a couple of days. Go one by one and set up all appointments (reviews, medical, haircut etc) for the year for each team or family member. Don't forget to add them to your calendar so you don't forget about them later.

Plan Meals

Have the same thing for dinner each night of the week. For example, Monday is spaghetti night, Tuesday is chicken, etc. Sit down as a family and come up with a list of 5 meals you could all enjoy each week for the next 3 months. On the weekends, when you have more time, you can go wild and have whatever. This one simple thing will free up a lot of brain energy that you can use for more important decisions.

Handle Papers Once

This includes post, school papers and other paperwork that needs to be filled out. Don't let the mail pile up. Immediately throw away the junk mail and ads you don't want and then deal with the important stuff right away, or at least at a designated time once a week, so you don't have them hanging over your head.



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Make Time for Peace

Start your day, every day, in a calm, positive frame of mind. Do whatever it is that you enjoy, but don't usually have time for, such as journaling, doing yoga, meditating or just reading a few pages of a book. Or, you may want to just sit quietly and sip your coffee while watching the birds at your bird feeder. Make this your time to reflect and treasure - no housework or checking email allowed.

Bin your Junk Drawer

Your goal is to minimise clutter, so you need to make a clean break from your junk drawer (you may even have more than one!). Get small, inexpensive containers to put small items like paper clips, rubber bands, nails, batteries, etc. in. Then organise your drawer for these utility items so that you can easily find what you need. If you have more paper clips than anyone will ever need, get rid of all but the best ones.

Clear Off your Computer Desktop

You may use your desktop as a shortcut to access files you are currently using. That's fine. But do you ever refile those after you are done with them? That's what I thought! This makes it harder to find what you need, and it slows down your computer. Go to your desktop right now and spend 15 minutes deleting or refiling everything that has built up that you no longer need to have handy.

Start a Donate Box

You will probably make several trips to drop off donations when you declutter your house, but it's a good idea to keep a donate box to add to as you get in the habit of getting rid of clutter. Actually, it gets easier and easier to add to that box or throw out items that have seen better days. When you come across a holey pair of socks, toss them in the bin or use them as dust rags. When you find a whiz-bang kitchen gadget that you've used only once, place it in the box. When the to donate box is full, take it to your favourite charity.



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Simplify your Budget

Even if you have a budget already, it's likely complicated, and therefore, doesn't get used as it should. There's no need to use the Rolls Royce of budgeting programmes or software when a simple spreadsheet will do. Set a timer and then make a new, simplified budget. You can simplify it further by having a catch all area for incidental expenses that don't need to be purchased on a monthly basis, such as gifts and clothes, instead of listing it all out separately. Keeping it simple will make it easier to stick with.

Delete Apps

Grab your phone and tablet and delete all of the apps you had to have, but that you never use. Yes, even if you paid for them. You can do this while you are watching TV or in a queue waiting. I bet you'll never miss them, but if you do, just download them again and then use them.

Automate your Savings

Most employers have a simple form to use for direct depositing money from each paycheck into your savings account, as well as your current account or you can set up a standing order yourself. Allocate the amount that you feel comfortable with, based on your new budget. Ten percent is a good goal to have.

Downsize your Wallet / Purse

Go through your wallet/purse and get rid of all the old receipts and coupons that you no longer need. Organise your money so it's neat. Remove all the savings cards you've collected that every store now seems to have. Either keep those in a safe place or if you don't use them often, just cut them up and throw them out. Consider taking all but one credit card and debit card out of your wallet/purse and store them somewhere safe.



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Have One Place For Mail

If you are like many people, you don't have a designated location for incoming post. Even though by now you have hopefully made all your bills paperless, you probably still get important stuff in the snail mail sometimes. Have you ever missed a one-off payment or forgotten to renew your car insurance because the post was carelessly tossed somewhere? Choose one place where all post goes and tell your family / co-workers about it.

Unsubscribe from Email Lists

We have all signed up to email lists or newsletters that we no longer care about and never open. Go through and unsubscribe from all of them. When another one pops up in your inbox, as you know it will, take the time right then to unsubscribe. This will make your email easier to zero out each day.

Streamline your Wardrobe

Go through your wardrobe and take out anything you haven't worn for 6 months. Or anything that doesn't fit you right or that you don't like the colour of or whatever. Put it all in your donate box. Done!

