



DLC TRAINING FOCUS: EXPLAINING FOCUS TECHNIQUES

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TECHNIQUES TO HELP MANAGE YOUR TIME AND FOCUS

Trying to stay focused on the task at hand can be challenging, especially when we find ourselves easily distracted by things like phones, TVs or finding out the latest gossip from a colleague. Distractions can throw us off our day and cause tasks we were expecting to complete to fall into the next day, the next week, or even the next month.

With 46% of people feeling they don't have things under control for one to two days a week, and 11% feeling they don't have control for three or more days, it's clear that many people could benefit from increasing their focus at work, and the same can be applied to studying.

The best way to improve focus is by establishing a time management system that works well for you. 88% of people don't currently use a system and make do with their calendars, email inbox or a to-do list to get them through the day. Although these can be helpful, they don't limit distractions, increase motivation or help with prioritising tasks.

Many focus techniques have been developed over the years that have successfully helped people manage their time better, prioritise their work, and increase their motivation as well as their ability to focus. This helps people stay on top of their work and/or their studies. Discover more about the seven most popular focus techniques below.

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

The Pomodoro technique was invented by Italian Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. Cirillo used a tomato-shaped timer to try his method, hence the name "Pomodoro" which is the Italian word for tomato.

With this method, you will break down your tasks into time intervals.

Step 1: Decide on a length of time to work or study before having a break. This time requires full concentration, without any interruptions whatsoever. The Pomodoro technique recommends 25 minutes.

Step 2: Set your timer for this length of time. Ideally, you should use a physical timer that isn't on a device in order to limit distractions, but if you would prefer to have the timer on your screen you can use this [link](#).

Step 3: When your time is up, set your timer again but set it to 5 minutes for a break.

Step 4: When your break is up, reset the timer for another 25 minutes, and repeat the cycle.

Step 5: After four rounds take a 20-minute break. This process can be repeated as often as needed.

Advantages

- This technique is an excellent option for people who struggle with distractions (like checking your phone). Having strict boundaries in place for when you can walk away can really help ensure you get some serious work done.

Disadvantages

- The downside to this method is that when the 25 minutes is up you have to take a 5-minute break (without exception), if you're in the flow this could be frustrating. It's therefore useful to determine a time frame that works best for you. If 25 minutes is too short, change it to 50 minutes and when the time is up have a 10-minute break.

TIME BLOCKING TECHNIQUE

Time blocking, a method used by Elon Musk and Bill Gates, is an effective way to get more work done in a certain amount of time.

With this method, you will allocate certain periods of time throughout the day to each task.

Step 1: Planning – determine what tasks you need to get done that day.

Step 2: Identifying – determine which tasks you need to get done that day that are non-negotiable. You can then establish what other tasks you could do that day that may not be as urgent or important.

Step 3: Blocking – assign each task to a specific time period (a time block). This can be in minutes or hours. Set a longer amount of time for tasks with higher priority (your non-negotiable tasks), and schedule them at your most productive time of day. For example, you may be most productive in the mornings, and set your most important task from 9.30am-11am.

Step 4: Acting – Carry out the tasks in the order planned and schedule breaks in between.

Step 5: Reflect – Check how long each task has taken to determine whether you need to schedule more time to certain tasks for the rest of the week.

Advantages

- This technique is a great option for people who need more formal structures in place to get through their work or study periods.
- Because each task is scheduled for specific times throughout the day, there's no room for distractions or procrastination.
- You'll get through more tasks in a shorter space of time by planning and using time blocking.

Disadvantages

- Time blocking requires you to spend time working out when you're most focused, planning topics and allocating them to certain times throughout the day. This can be too time-consuming for some.
- When planning a work day or a study day in advance, we don't often plan the amount of break time in between that we really need. This can lead to lower productivity.

TIME BOXING TECHNIQUE

Time boxing requires you to allocate time periods (time boxes) to your activities, in a similar way to the Pomodoro technique. You work within this time box, and then take a break when the time runs out.

Step 1: Create a list of tasks you would like to complete that day.

Step 2: Allocate a time period (timebox) to each task. Try to estimate how long each of the tasks will take based on past experience.

Step 3: Set your timer for the length of time required for your first task and begin.

Step 4: When your time is up, stop working and take a break. Judge the amount of time you need for your break based on how long you worked for.

Step 5: Review your progress, making sure you have achieved what you wanted to achieve in your first timebox.

Step 6: Set your timer for the next task (for the amount of time you have allocated specifically for that task) and begin. Continue to repeat this process until you have covered every topic on your list.

Advantages

- Time boxing is really beneficial for people who like some structure but don't want to plan against the clock.
- This technique allows you to decide how much time to allocate to each individual task, rather than applying the same amount of time to every task.
- By allocating certain time durations to work, you are less likely to become distracted.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to estimate the right amount of time each task needs. If you don't give yourself enough time you might need to stop working mid-task.

FLOWTIME TECHNIQUE

The Flowtime technique is similar to Timeboxing and the Pomodoro technique. It requires you to allocate time to certain tasks, but you would need to decide at the end of the time period whether you want to end the session or continue.

Step 1: Change Step 1 to: Decide how much time you want to allocate to your first task.

Step 2: Work until the timer stops.

Step 3: When timer is up, decide whether you can focus for longer. If you can, decide how long and set the timer. For example, if you can focus for an extra 15 minutes, set your timer for another 15 minutes.

Step 4: When the timer is up, decide again whether you can maintain your focus or if you need to take a break.

Advantages

- This technique resolves the issue of only working up until a certain point, so you can continue to work if you're in a good flow.

Disadvantages

- Because there is no set time to work, you can run the risk of burnout.

THE 10-MINUTE RULE

If you're a serial procrastinator, this might be the one for you. The 10-minute rule allows you to decide every 10 minutes if you want to continue working.

Step 1: Decide on a task you want to complete.

Step 2: Set a timer for 10 minutes and begin.

Step 3: After the 10 minutes is up, decide whether you would like to continue working or not.

Step 4: Continue to reset your timer for 10-minute periods until you are ready to finish that task for the day, or until you're ready for a break.

Advantages

- This is ideal for serial procrastinators, as concentration is only required for 10 minutes at a time.
- You're less likely to feel overwhelmed as the work time is broken down into small, manageable steps.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to get into the flow of things when you have to stop and reset the timer every 10 minutes.

EAT THE FROG TECHNIQUE

This technique focuses on prioritising tasks in a way that will keep you motivated for the rest of the day.

Step 1: Write down all of the tasks you want to cover that day.

Step 2: Identify the most challenging task of the day. It may be challenging because it will take the longest, it's the most difficult or you simply dislike the task. Then list the remaining tasks you have to complete that day in order of importance. Some may be important, not important but beneficial, or not important and can be left for another day.

Step 3: When you have completed the most challenging task (no matter how long it has taken you) go on to the next task in your list. Because you have dealt with the one you weren't looking forward to first, you'll find it much easier to progress to the next.

Advantages

- This technique is ideal for people who tend to lose motivation quite easily.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to get into the mind frame of working when you know the first thing you have to do is very challenging.
- Because there are no set times with this technique, you may be more easily distracted.

DEEP WORK

Deep work is a popular technique developed by Cal Newport, the author of *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*.

Deep work requires you to avoid distractions and to concentrate for longer periods of time, which will support your learning capabilities and cognitive functions.

Step 1: Step 1: Separate deep work from shallow work. Deep work can include tasks such as researching, writing reports, or developing a strategy. Shallow work can be responding to emails and making calls.

Step 2: Set a certain amount of time to do some deep work. Try to schedule this time in during the parts of the day you feel most energetic and focused. You need to avoid distractions for the entire period of deep work.

Step 3: Leave some time for shallow work and schedule this in for times in the day you are less focused. You can complete shallow tasks while you're less productive and distracted.

Advantages

- This technique focuses on completing important tasks at the time of day you are most productive to help avoid distractions.

Disadvantages

- You can't take frequent breaks, if you find it difficult to focus for longer periods of time this could affect your productivity.

TECHNIQUES TO HELP MANAGE YOUR TIME AND FOCUS

There are benefits and drawbacks to all of these techniques. It's important to determine which technique will suit your personality, your lifestyle, the type of work that you do or the topics you're studying. View our flowchart below to find out which focus technique will work best for you.

FOCUS TECHNIQUES DECISION TREE

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