



# 9 PRODUCTIVITY MISTAKES

YOU'RE MAKING IN THE FIRST 10 MINUTES OF YOUR WORK DAY

Think about how you spend the first 10 minutes of your work day. Do you make a coffee? Watch a YouTube video? Catch up with the news? Although it feels like no time at all, how you spend the first 10 minutes can make or break the rest of your day.

So, what mistakes should you be avoiding?

1

## DRINKING COFFEE BETWEEN 8 AND 10AM

According to a study by the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, drinking a coffee to kickstart your day is a bad idea because it interferes with the time when the stress hormone cortisol is peaking in your body, which raises your stress levels.<sup>1</sup>

### PRO TIP

Only drink coffee between **10am** and noon, or **2pm** and **5pm**, when your cortisol levels are lowest.



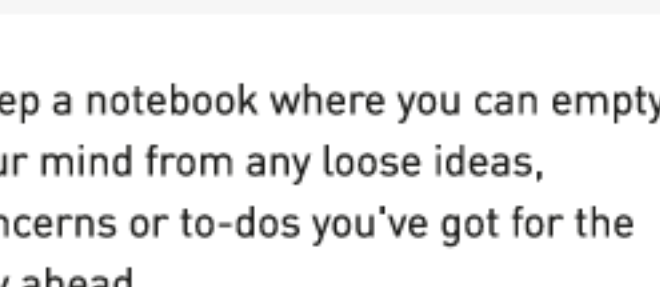
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## NOT EMPTYING YOUR BRAIN BEFORE STARTING ON YOUR TASKS

Productivity expert David Allen says that carrying too much information in your head makes you think you are in control, even when you're not.<sup>3</sup>

### PRO TIP

Keep a notebook where you can empty your mind from any loose ideas, concerns or to-dos you've got for the day ahead.



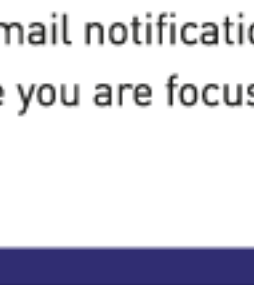
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## CHECKING YOUR WORK EMAILS FIRST THING

New York University professor Adam Alter says that it takes you 25 minutes to get into the zone of maximum productivity after checking your emails, so don't let them affect the time when you should be organizing your day.<sup>4</sup>

### PRO TIP

Keep your email closed for the first 30 minutes of your working day. Switch off email notifications on your phone while you are focusing on work.



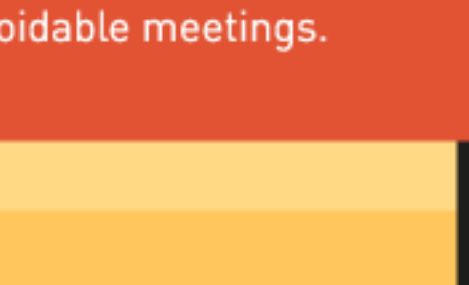
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## GOING STRAIGHT INTO A MEETING

Research shows that we're spending an average 23 hours a week in meetings, so you need to protect this crucial time of the day rather than wasting it in yet another meeting.<sup>5</sup>

### PRO TIP

Block out "meeting-free" time at the start of every day in your calendar, accepting only the most unavoidable meetings.



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## SITTING DOWN IN YOUR CHAIR

Studies by Harvard & Columbia Universities have found that standing rather than sitting can help you gain more control and power over your situation.<sup>9</sup>

### PRO TIP

Go for a short walk or use a standing desk for the first 10 minutes of your day.



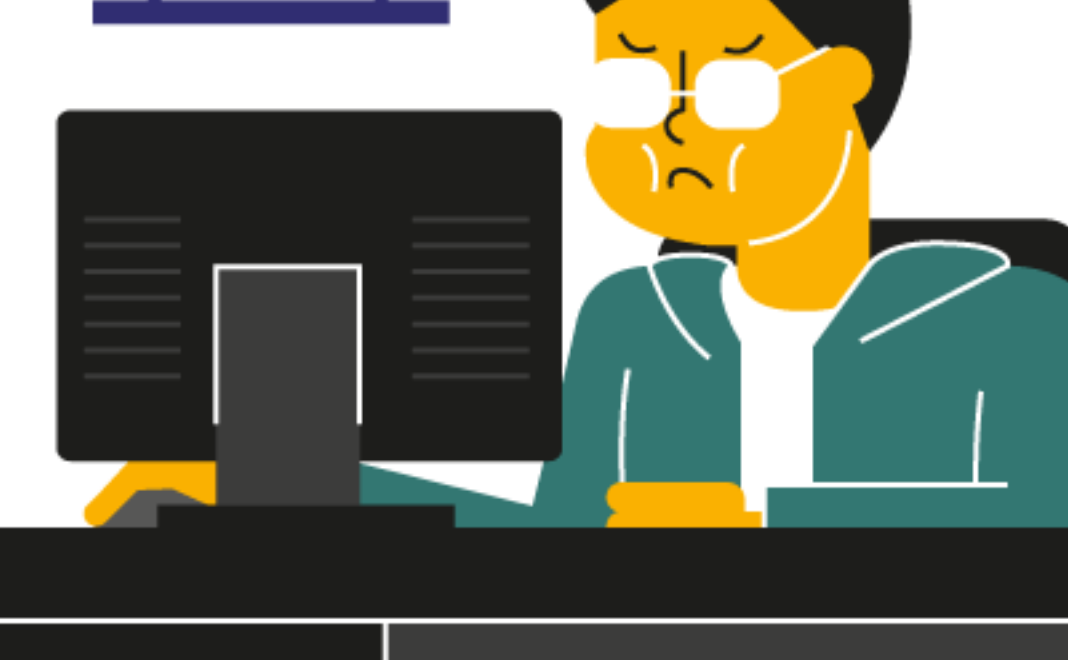
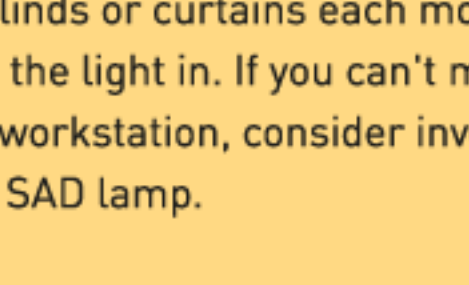
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## WORKING AWAY FROM NATURAL LIGHT

A study in the Journal Of Clinical Sleep Medicine said that exposure to light early in the morning is particularly beneficial for your mood, alertness and metabolism.<sup>11</sup>

### PRO TIP

If your desk is near a window, open the blinds or curtains each morning to let the light in. If you can't move your workstation, consider investing in an SAD lamp.



7

## SETTING SELF-IMPOSED DEADLINES FOR YOUR DAILY TASKS

A study by the Association for Psychological Science found that you need to share your deadlines with others for them to be effective.<sup>12</sup>

### PRO TIP

Try using a tool like **any.do** or **IDoneThis** to share your task list, deadlines and progress with your team on a daily basis.



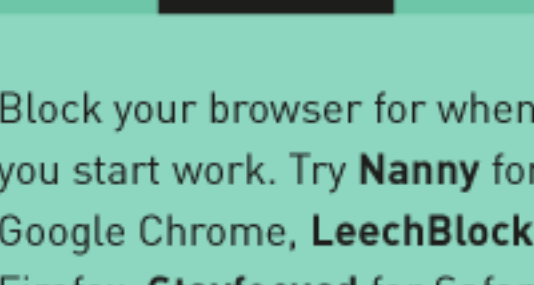
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## OPENING UP A WEB BROWSER

In a survey by Webtrate, 36% of workers said they lost an hour a day to checking personal emails and social media, so don't start the day by setting a bad habit.<sup>15</sup>

### PRO TIP

Block your browser for when you start work. Try **Nanny** for Google Chrome, **LeechBlock** for Firefox, **Stayfocus** for Safari or **FocalFilter** for Microsoft Edge and Internet Explorer.



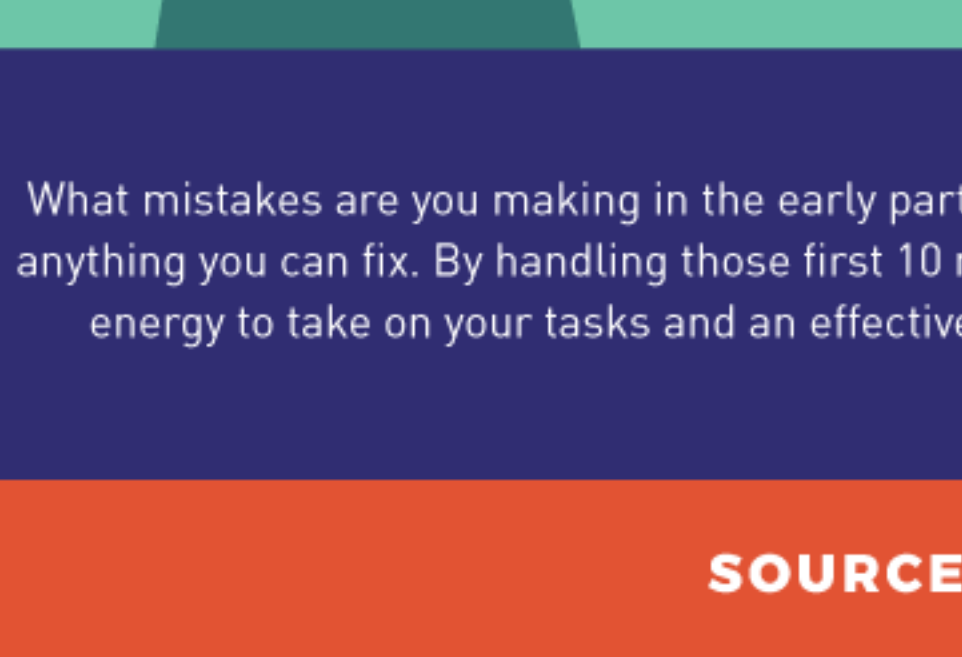
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## STARTING SEVERAL TASKS AT ONCE

A study published in Experimental Economics measured the impact of multitasking on productivity and found it to be 'significantly negative', with multitaskers performing worse in tasks than those working sequentially.<sup>14</sup>

### PRO TIP

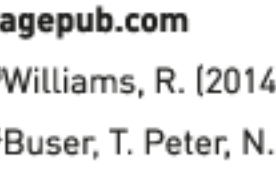
Plan your day ahead for maximum productivity by allocating 40-minute blocks for single tasks, with 20-minute blocks in between to work on miscellaneous tasks.



What mistakes are you making in the early part of your working day? See if there's anything you can fix. By handling those first 10 minutes effectively, you'll have more energy to take on your tasks and an effective plan in place to get them done.

## SOURCES

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