

Schools can be crazy busy places. The most common response you hear when you ask someone who works in a school, how they are, is busy! However, there is a fine line between being busy and being productive. Here are six tips from international best-selling author Tim Ferriss.

## Establish Your Morning Routine

Research shows how you start the day has an enormous effect on your productivity. If you start the day calmly, you are in a better position to focus and get the right things done. A hectic start to the day, where you are frantic and constantly feeling that you are playing 'catch up' puts us behind the 8 ball from the very outset. At times the hectic start can be unavoidable. Sometimes things go 'pear' shaped and are beyond our control. However, if EVERY school morning is frantic then it is time to have a look at what you can do to streamline and ensure a smoother start to the day. Establishing a routine helps us feel in control and non-reactive. This reduces anxiety and makes us more productive.

## Focus on being productive instead of busy

Tim Ferriss

Consider....

- What can be prepared the evening before (eg lunch, outfit, bag packed etc)?
- Do you put your keys, wallet etc in the same place or is your morning spent searching?
- Have you allowed enough time to actually get ready or have you under-estimated?
- Do you need to get up 15 minutes earlier?

## Manage Your Mood

Research shows that you are most productive when you are happy and that people procrastinate more when they are in a bad mood. Monitoring and managing our mood through our self-talk can be just as important as managing our work.

## Don't Let Checking Email in the Morning Dominate Your Day

Whilst checking your email in the morning can avoid surprises, it is important NOT to let the emails dominate and hijack your priorities. Productivity comes from using our available TIME and ENERGY wisely. By checking email in the morning you are setting yourself up to be reactive. An email comes in and suddenly you are giving your focus, attention and time to someone else's goals, not yours. Plan your day and prioritise and do not let your objectives be hijacked by whoever randomly decides to enter your inbox.

## Before Trying To Do It Faster, Ask Whether It Should Be Done At All

Ferriss says, *"Doing something well does not make it important. One of the common problems with a lot of time-management or productivity advice; they focus on how to do things quickly."* It is important to first decide if the task needs to be done at all.

## Eliminate Distractions

*"Focus is a function, first and foremost, of limiting the number of options you give yourself for procrastinating. Focus is not a magical ability. It's put yourself in a padded room, with the problem that you need to work on and shut the door. That's it. The degree to which you can replicate that, and systematize it, is the extent to which you will have focus."* Technology provides many tantalizing distractions and invites us to procrastinate.

## Establish A System

Great systems work because they make things automatic and don't tax your limited supply of willpower. To set up your personal system apply the 80/20 principle. Identify the handful of activities that make the most difference to success in your role. Allocate your prime time (when you are at your best and free of distractions) to those activities and make that your routine.

## Define Your Goals The Night Before

Establish a closing ritual. Know when to stop working. Try to end each work day the same way. Tidy your desk. Back up your computer. Make a list of what you need to do tomorrow. Identify your one or two most important to-dos for the next day, before ending today.

## Key points

How you start your day has an enormous impact on your productivity.

You are most productive when you are happy and you are more likely to procrastinate when you are in a bad mood.

Beware that checking emails in the morning is reactive and can hijack your priorities.

Focus is about limiting the opportunities you have to procrastinate.

Systems make things automatic and reduce the need for willpower.

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