

Susan R. Johnson

srj.susanjohnson@gmail.com

thriving
a m i d s t c h a o s

www.thrivingamidstchaos.com

Agenda

- **Projects**
 - The project list
 - Project planning
- **Finding time for project work**
- **Tactical planning, weekly and daily**



PROJECTS

Projects*

***Project = A deliverable (outcome) that requires multiple tasks and multiple days**

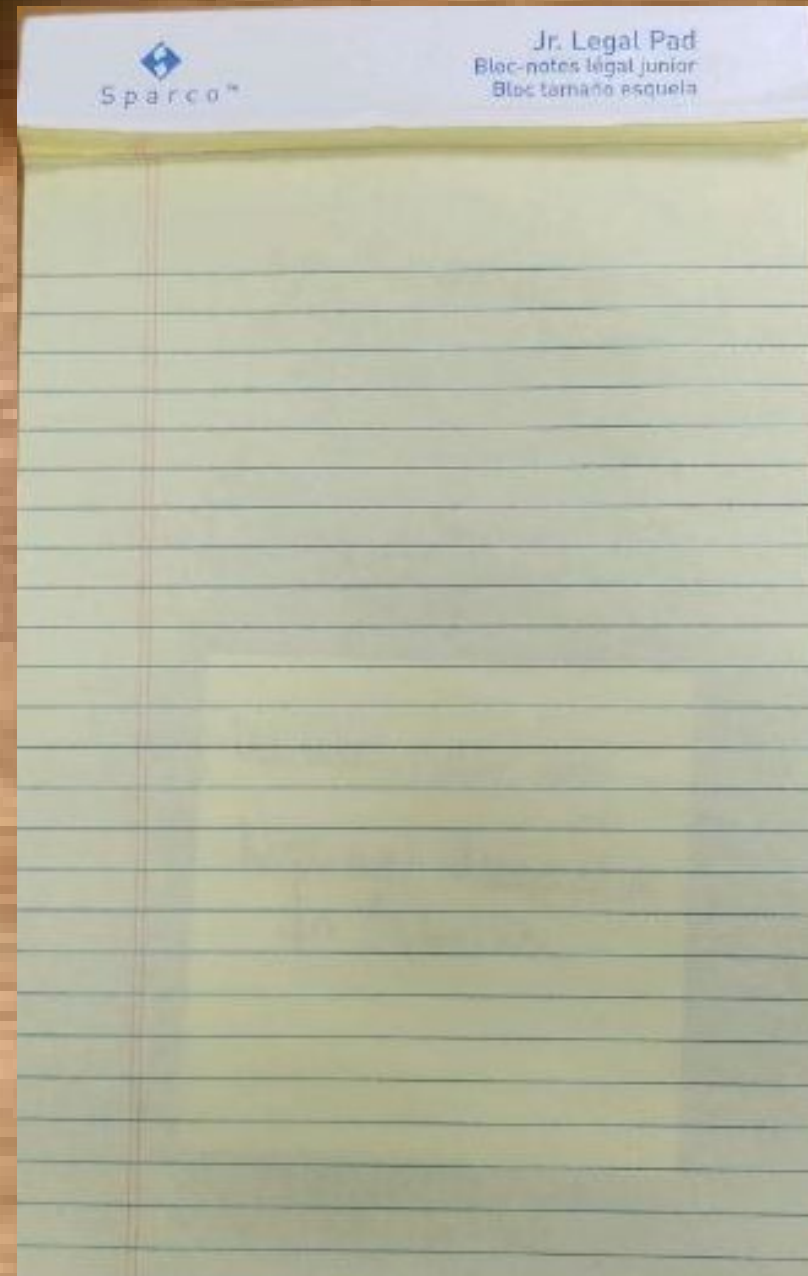
- Write papers, grants, posters, abstracts, chapters
- Prepare lectures & talks
- Create syllabi, course objectives, curriculum plan
- Plan conferences, meetings
- Prepare for a recertification exam
- Learn a new research method
- Hire a research assistant
- Buy new lab equipment
- Decide whether to accept offer to chair a committee

Why focus on Projects?

- Include the most important, impactful work you do
- Often complex, with lots of moving parts
- It's hard to find time to do the work required
- Creative projects (e.g., writing) are usually the most challenging



Jr. Legal Pad
Bloc-notes légal junior
Bloc tamaño escuela



1. make a list

clinical trial results paper

conference speakers

abstract

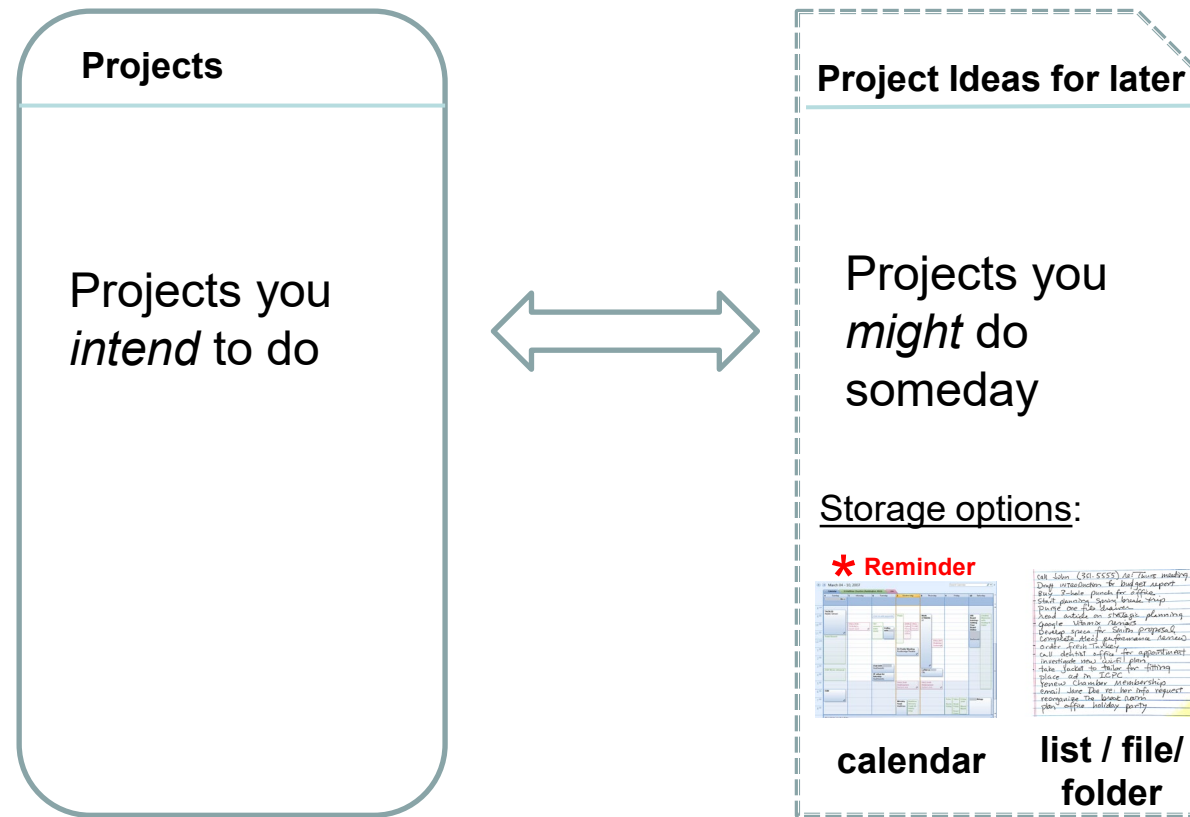
K08

talk for departmental seminar

2. make the list better

- ❖ clinical trial results paper - *revise and resubmit*
- ❖ conference speaker *invitations for July meeting*
- ❖ abstract *for May meeting- DEADLINE April 1*
- ❖ K08 *application for June 15 submission*
- ❖ *Update Hemingway* talk for *March 13* departmental seminar

3. remove things you might want to do later





4. Create a simple plan for each project

- description of the desired outcome
- if started, the current status?
- remaining steps?
- timeframe: due / aiming for?
- obstacles?
- next task

Plan example:

- Project: **Clinical trial results paper revise and resubmit**
- Outcome:
 - Prepare a response & revisions that address the editor's recommendations, and any other reviewer comments our group thinks will improve the paper.
- Status: I have done penultimate response to reviewers, and marked up copy of the manuscript
- Remaining steps:
 - Finish revisions with co-authors for input,
 - Finish updating references,
 - Upload to journal portal
- Timeframe: aiming for the end of February, but there is no journal deadline
- obstacles? I had trouble with the journal submission portal last time: review the instructions
- **Next task**: email the draft response letter and the revised manuscript to co-authors, and request a one week turn around

The relationship between project & task lists:

Project List

PERSONAL

Arrange dinner with Joan & Paul →

WORK

Hire research assistant →

Task List

(related to projects)

☐ Email Joan with dates we are available

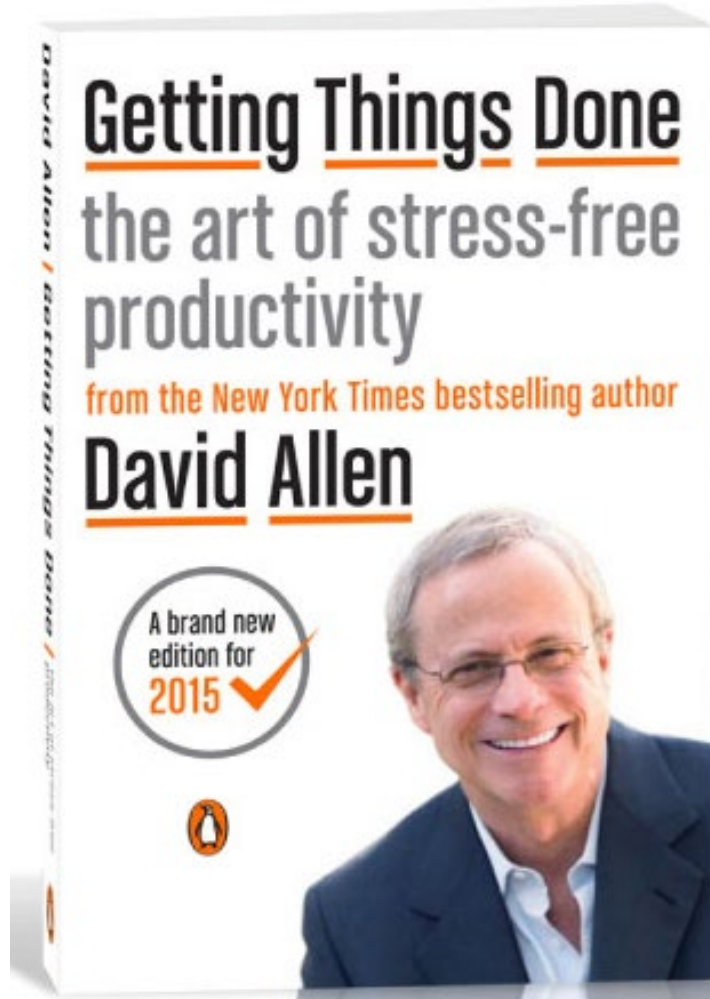
☐ Draft job description

(“single tasks”)

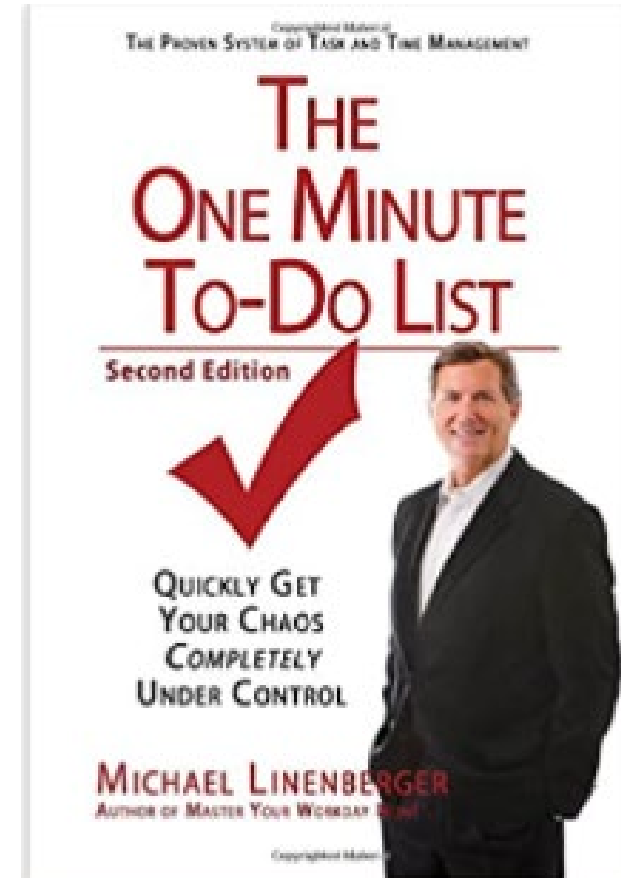
☐ Call for dental appointment

☐ Order book on Amazon

To learn more about project work



To learn more about task lists

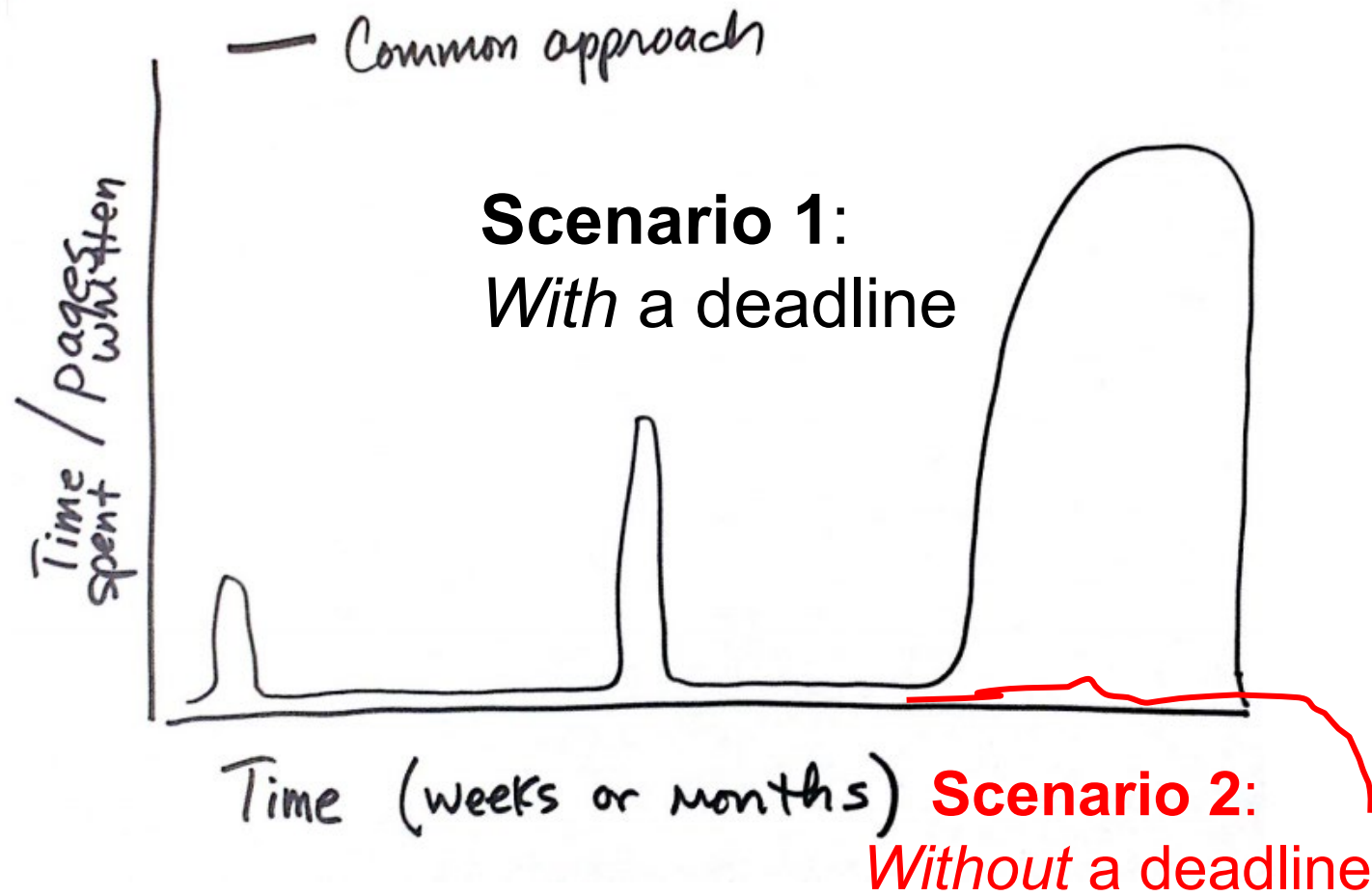


Michael Linenberger. The One Minute To-do List (<https://www.michaellinenberger.com/free1MTD.htm>)

You can request a **free** pdf download of this book at the link above. The method is an effective way to create and manage your to-do (task) list, and can be used either as a stand alone, or as a complement to the GTD next action list method

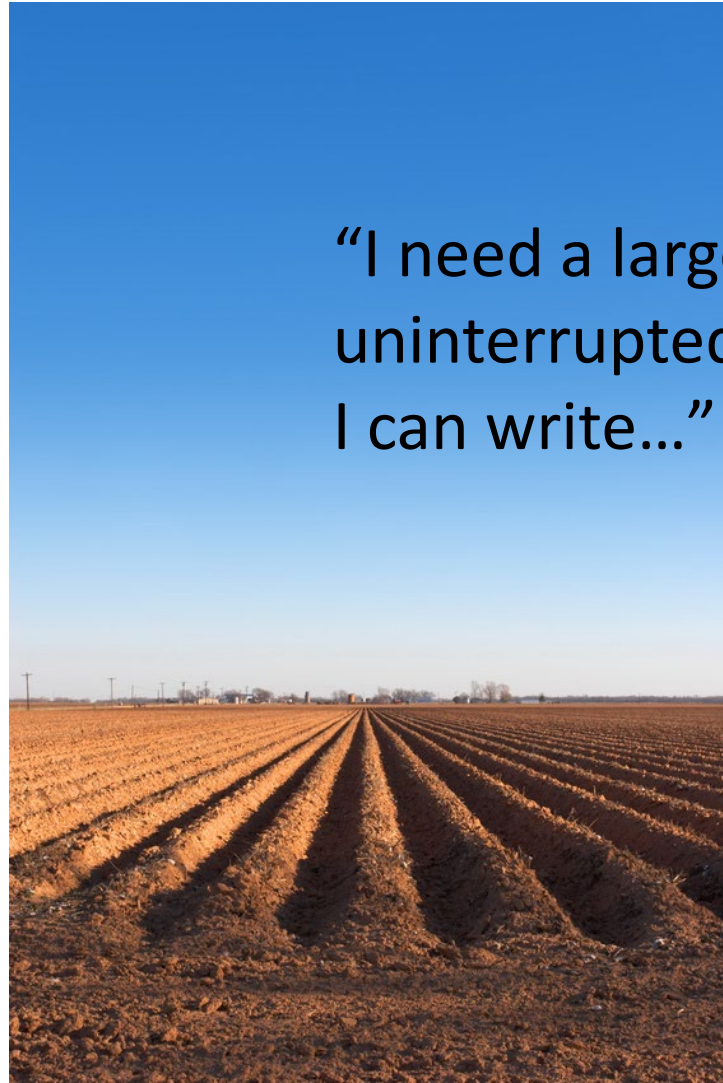


**FINDING TIME FOR PROJECT
WORK, WITH A SPECIAL NOD
TO WRITING**



Myth 1

“I need a large block of uninterrupted time before I can write...”



Myth 2

“ I can only write if I feel motivated...”

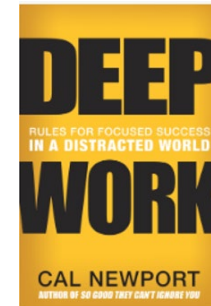


Reality Check



“... if you want to successfully integrate more [writing] into your professional life, you cannot just wait until you find yourself with lots of free time and in the mood to concentrate. **You have to actively fight to incorporate this into your schedule.**”

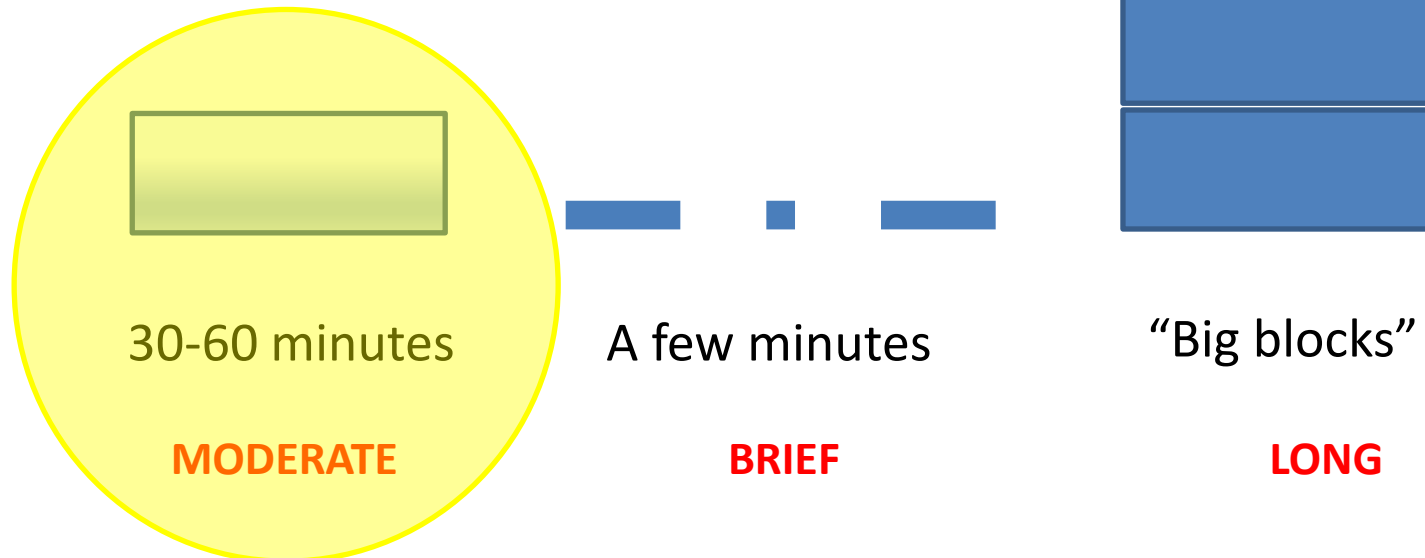
Cal Newport,
Deep Work (2016)



Key Strategy:

Be prepared to work on projects no matter how much time you have

Be prepared to use each of these 3 timeframes:



Time blocking

Mon	
8	
12	
5	
8	

○ **Have a goal for the block & a simple action to get started.**

**** Focused Work ****

○ **Plan a starting task for the next session, then stop**



interruptions



Write down what you are going to do

25 + 5

25 + 5

25 + 5

25 + **15**

Repeat as needed

Manage
interruptions

Francesco Cirillo

<http://www.pomodrotechnique.com/>

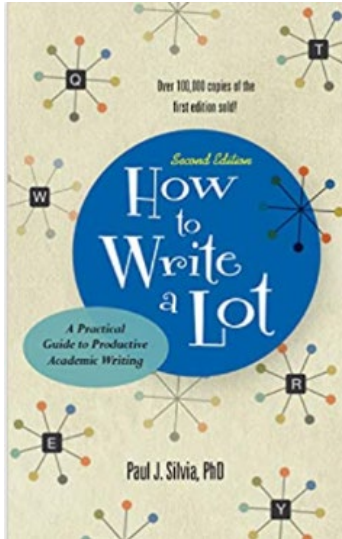
the Pomodoro technique

* Check your play store for a Pomodoro phone app

Summary of how to be prepared for using any length of time for project work:

- 1- Set an intention to work on the project at the beginning of the week and each day.
- 2- Decide what you will do when time is available; have both short tasks and longer ones to choose from
- 3- It possible, schedule some time in advance...
- 4- Front-load when you can

To learn more about developing an academic writing practice

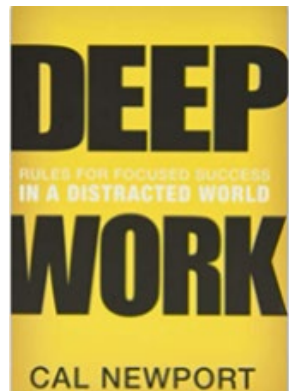
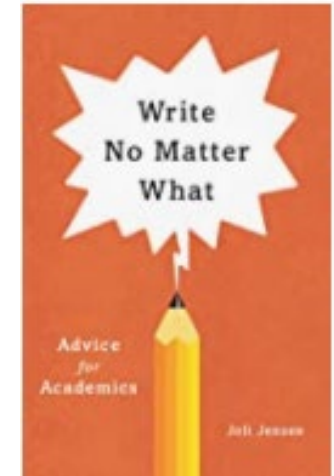


Paul J. Silvia (2018, second edition). *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*.

Silvia is an academic psychologist, and this book is perhaps the most popular in this genre. This second edition reflects the authors new status as a dad with young children (making his advice about finding time to write more realistic). The book has been updated to apply to a wider variety of disciplines, and has a new chapter devoted to **grant and fellowship writing**.

Joli Jensen (2017). *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics*, The University of Chicago Press

Joli Jensen is a communications studies professor) with extensive experience teaching writing to graduate students and faculty members. She sends the same message as Silvia - write nearly every day - but covers some additional reasons for resistance and has different views on some issues. She provides welcome detail on **writing accountability group options, and how to deal with stalled projects**.

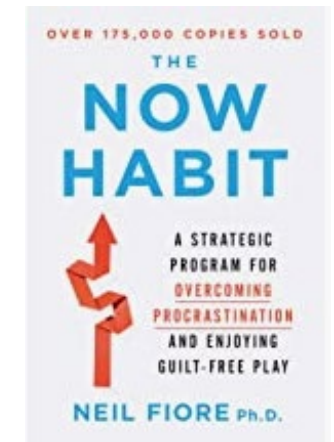


Cal Newport (2016). *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*, 2016

- Detailed strategies for planning time to write, with emphasis on time blocking.
- See also, Study Hacks blog: Cal posts about “deep work” and other productivity topics: <http://calnewport.com/blog/>

Neil Fiore (2007). *The Now Habit*, 2007

- Practical approaches to procrastination originally designed for graduate students have trouble writing their dissertations.





TACTICAL PLANNING ROUTINES FOR THE WEEK AND THE DAY



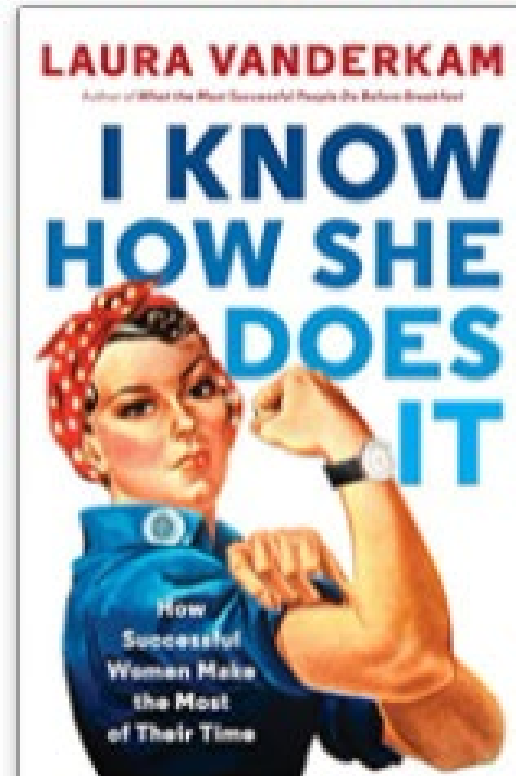
Weekly plan

Plan boundaries for work & personal time

Week of:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday					
0600	<div>Exercise</div>						<div>Calls with family</div>					
0700												
0800							<div>Bike ride</div>					
0900												
1000							<div>laundry</div>					
1100												
1200							<div>Lunch</div>	<div>cleaning</div>				
1300												<div>Friends birthda y party</div>
1400												
1500												
1600	<div>groceries</div>											
1700												
1800			<div>dinner</div>		<div>dinner</div>		<div>Eat out With friends</div>					
1900	<div>dinner</div>	<div>dinner</div>		<div>dinner</div>	<div>dinner</div>							
2000												
2100				<div>Movie</div>								
				<div>PTO night</div>			<div>Day OFF</div>					

To learn more about managing the personal
and professional



**I Know How She Does It:
How Successful Women
Make the Most of Their
Time**

Update and review your current “inventory of work”

- Calendar:
 - 3+ weeks forward
 - What to prepare for & and scheduling glitches.
 - 1 week back!
 - Look for tasks you forgot to record.
- Lists (e.g., task & project lists)
 - Update
 - Prune, and add new items.
 - ID projects / tasks that you want to do this week.

Pick the projects you will focus on

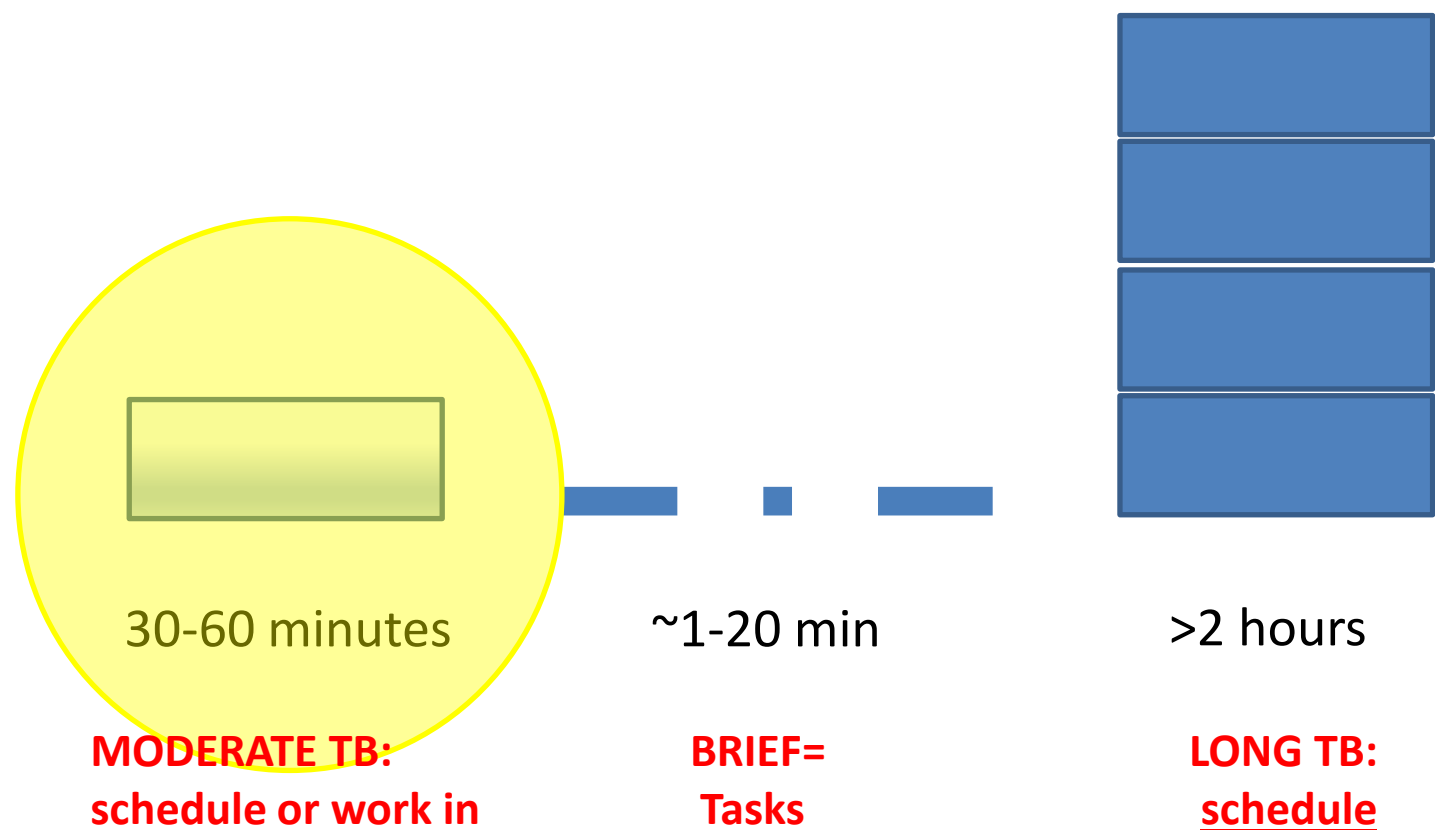
You can only realistically work on a “few”

What does your “gut” tell you?

Refine your initial choices, taking into account factors such as:

- Is there a looming real deadline?
- How close are you to finishing?
- Impact / importance?
- Degree of stress you have about putting it off?

Plan tasks & time blocks for each focus project





Daily plan

Daily Task Plan

MITs

Deadline today

- *
- *

Aim to do

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Tasks to do after MIT's done, in rough priority order

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Daily Time Allocation Plan

8a arrive at work

← Frontload an MIT

9a Clinic

12 p lunch

Email triage
Tasks

2p Writing TB
review article introduction edits

EMR
Patient calls

4p meeting

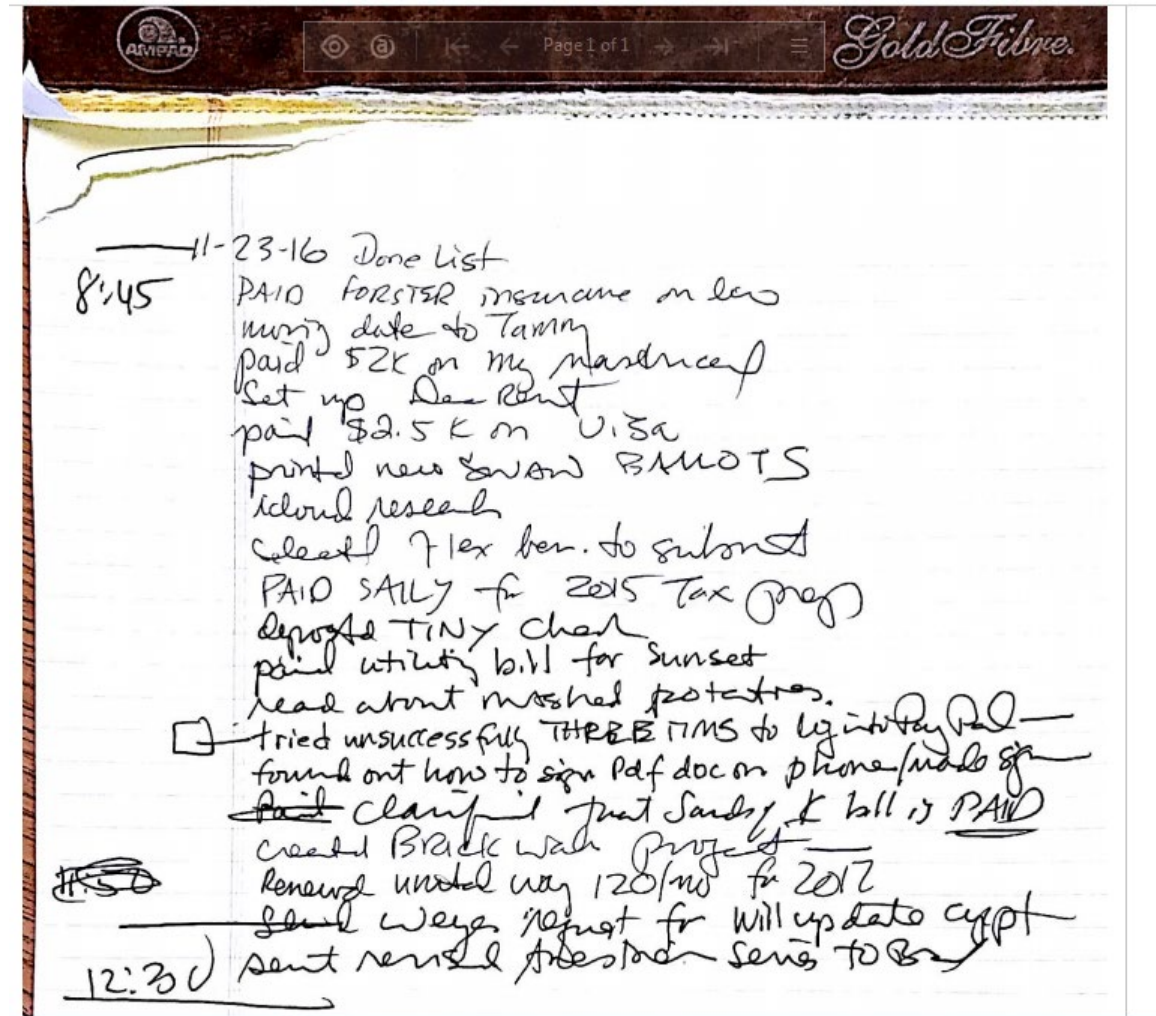
Email

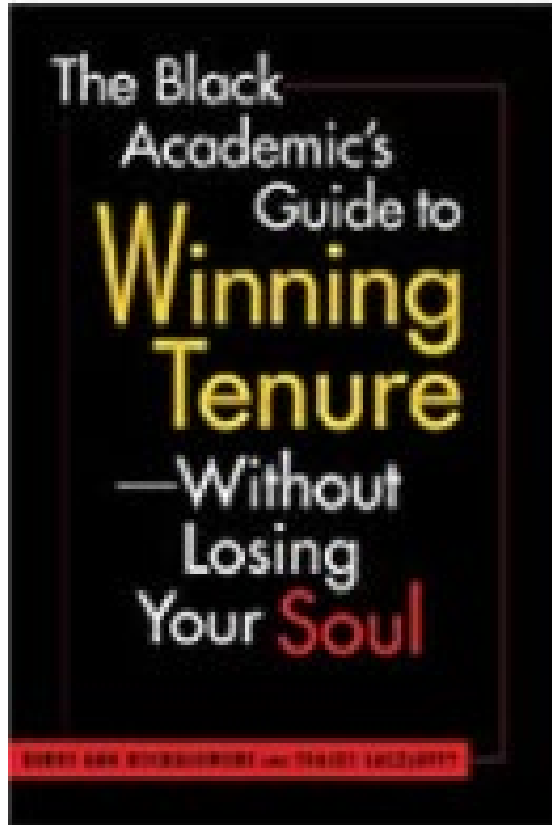
6p STOP for the day

Be prepared to triage,
re-order, or swap
categories based on
how the day goes.

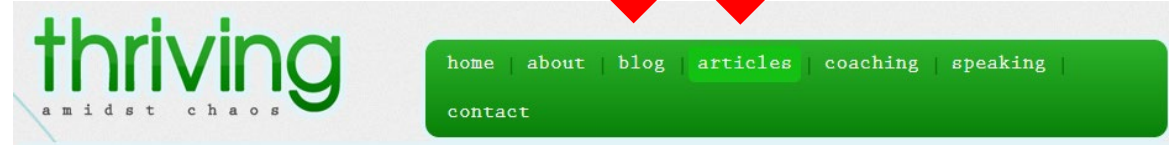
Keep a "Done" list

- A record of everything you do





Kerry Ann Rockqu Shore and Tracey Laszloffy, 2008



I wrote these articles between 2004 and 2009, in a series for the *Academic Physician & Scientist*. Although the examples are aimed at academic physicians and scientists, the ideas and recommendations are for any one in academics.

On the website, select the *Articles* tab to access.

- [Code O: Recovering from overwhelm](#)
- [The basics of organizing your work and time](#)
- [Priorities: How to decide what to do, and when](#)
- [Execution: Getting your work done](#)
- [Getting e-mail under control](#)
- [Becoming a productive academic writer](#)
- [A plan for professional reading](#)
- [Time blocking](#)
- [Interruptions](#)
- [Delegation](#)

Susan R. Johnson

srj.susanjohnson@gmail.com

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