Tips, Tricks, & Tools for
EFFICIENCY

Emily C. Harris, MLIS
Augusta University Libraries

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Seriously, tell me what it means to you!

efficient *adjective*

ef·fi·cient (i-ˈfi-shənt ◀》)

Synonyms of *efficient* ›

1   : productive of desired effects

especially : capable of producing desired results with little or no waste (as of time or materials)

   | an *efficient* worker
   | *efficient* machinery

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary

EFFICIENCY AUDIT

Take 5 minutes to reflect on a recent "good day" where you felt efficient and another day that felt more chaotic.

What habits, routines, or systems made that possible?

PITALLS OF INEFFICIENCY

COGNITIVE LOAD

The amount of information your working memory
we can process at a given time. (Sweller, 1988)

MULTI TASKING

Ability to split your attention into multiple tasks at
once.

PROCRASTINATION

Delaying or avoiding a task while understanding
that there could be negative consequences.

"WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER"

AT WORK

Routines, systems, structure to minimize decisions and increase efficiency.

AT HOME

Apply the same principles to home life!

Batch errands, pre-plan meals, standardize routines

METHODS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

TIMEBOXING / TIME CHUNKING

Time management strategy to keep a task from consuming more than its fair share of your time.

- Set an allotted time to work on a task, then evaluate your progress afterward.
- Hard versus Soft Timeboxing
- Example: dedicate 60 minutes to updating your syllabus

Set a timer for Timebox intervals.

Source: Asana, Timeboxing 101

Consider combining Timeboxing with the Pomodoro Technique using the Pomofocus Timer

METHODS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

TASK BATHCING

Productivity strategy that involves gathering similar / related tasks and completing them all at once (perhaps in the same Timebox!)

- Allows you to maximize your focus on one type of task
- Less switching between task types = more focus time
- Similar to Timeboxing, but focuses task type
- **Examples:** Organize emails at certain intervals and not as they come in; run all errands on Saturday morning and not throughout the weekend.

Turn task batching into part of your routine (set reminders for routine tasks)

Source: Asana, Syracuse University

METHODS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

CREATE (GOOD) DEFAULT HABITS & ROUTINES

Tactic to create good default habits to avoid repeated decisions.

- Allows you to minimize routine decisions by eliminating decision points.
- Preserves mental energy for other tasks
- Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs were known for wearing the same outfit every day to reduce the number of decisions they had to make each day.
- Examples: Standard weekday breakfast; pre-made checklists

Source: Related to the Nudge Theory and Choice Architecture

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned nudge is the setting of defaults, which are pre-set courses of action that take effect if nothing is specified by the decision-maker. This type of nudge, which works with a human tendency for inaction, appears to be particularly successful, as people may stick with a choice for many years.

— Dee Gill, 2018

METHODS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

2 MINUTE RULE

If a task takes less than 2 minutes, do it now.

- It would likely take longer than 2 minutes to revisit that task, consider it again, and do it later.
- Helps clear small items quickly instead of letting them accumulate to a large list of small tasks later.
- Examples: Adding a meeting to your calendar; Adding an item to your running grocery list.

This can also lead to new habits. "Fold the laundry" becomes "fold one pair of socks." This just might give you the momentum to go ahead and fold it all / stop procrastinating on laundry.

Source: Getting Things Done, Atomic Habits Except (James Clear)

METHODS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

DIGITAL DECLUTTERING

Clean up your digital workspace to optimize use of digital applications and reduce the visual clutter you see on screen.

- A cleaner digital environment means less visual clutter, resulting in a fewer inputs (which can lead to decision fatigue).
- A more organized workspace results in faster retrieval.
- Organize files in ways that align with how you use them (i.e. subfolders inside your teaching folder).
- Helpful file naming conventions (ex: Curriculum Committee Meeting_11.20.25)
- This project can take a little time up front if you are not already in the habit, but will pay off in time saved going forward.

Source: Webit, All Tech

EFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

Using an inefficiency you identified in our first activity, identify **one** efficiency tactic you could utilize and **one** specific action you can take to improve efficiency.

Example: Dedicate 60 minutes (timeboxing) to grading final papers (using the Pomodoro timer).

"Never waste any time [that] you can spend sleeping."

— Frank H. Knight (1885-1972)
    Economist

Pomodoro Timer
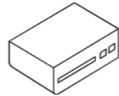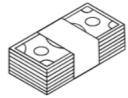
Trello (can't use AU email address)

Microsoft OneNote (already on your computer)

Apple / iPhone Reminders

Outlook Email Folders

Google Keep

What tools do you use?

TIPS &
TRICKS
SUMMARY

Block recurring calendar times (admin, email, **routine** tasks)

Automate **recurring** tasks (bill pay, weekly reminders)

Use **templates** (agendas, emails, feedback forms)

Limit **inputs** (unsubscribe / unfollow, Do Not Disturb)

Maintain a **today / not today** outlook (utilize weekly to do lists)