

# Sheridans

## how to be **more productive**

Organise yourself to get more out of your day.

Tricks and techniques to find more time, to do what you have to do, and more.

- 1 Take charge of your mornings**  
Most people spend the first hour of each work day “warming up” – chatting with colleagues, having breakfast, browsing on-line, shuffling paper, getting organised and so on. Instead, **give yourself 10 minutes to settle in, and then get going.** Or better yet, show up to work at least half an hour earlier than everyone else. According to experts, you will get three times as much done when you are free of interruptions.
- 2 Be ritualistic**  
**Establish routines** – say, having a cup of tea when you start work – helps you get into focus mode faster. Following a regular pattern signals to your brain that it’s time to buckle down.
- 3 Tackle your dreaded “must-do” first**  
**Dealing with it right away** will give you a sense of accomplishment.
- 4 Complete similar tasks in batches**  
Different activities (like writing letters or returning calls) engage different parts of the brain, and **switching back and forth between these “channels” zaps energy.** A US study found that when you toggle like this, your brain may take 50% more time to perform each task.
- 5 Use your body clock**  
Figure out what **your most alert moments** are (most people peak in the morning), and do tasks that require deep thinking at those times. Take care of less taxing tasks when you’re losing steam.
- 6 Set mini deadlines**  
If you give yourself a specific time to finish a project, you’ll **pace yourself better** and work faster than if it’s open-ended. So decide what you must get done by lunch, or knowing that you’ve got a commitment in an hour, plan to complete something beforehand.
- 7 Learn a few magic words**  
To end a conversation that’s dragging, say, “One last thing....”. To minimise an interruption, try “I want to give this my undivided attention, so let me finish what I’m doing, then I’ll call you.”
- 8 Don’t multi-task**  
It’s **impossible for your brain to focus** on more than one task at a time, so even when you think you’re doing several things at once, you’re actually switching rapidly back and forth between them. And the tasks will take longer to complete than if you’d given each one undivided attention before moving on to the next. Multi-tasking also puts stress on your brain’s memory – retention centre, so you won’t absorb as much information.
- 9 Create a to-do list each night**  
It will help **stop you worrying**...and you won’t have to figure out your schedule in the morning, when you’re feeling pressured.
- 10 Don’t handle a piece of paper more than once**  
As soon as you look at something that’s arrived in your in-tray, **move on it.** Either (a) work on it now, (b) delegate or pass it on, or (c) file it for later if you need more time or information before you can deal with it.
- 11 Set achievable goals**  
Every time you complete a task, your brain releases beta-endorphins – chemicals that increase creativity, focus and motivation. On the other hand, starting a project but not finishing it depletes energy. So **break big jobs into small chunks**, then check each chunk off your list to get the ultimate hit.
- 12 Heed the three Ds**  
Everyone has elements of their routine they can **drop, decrease or delegate.** Think of five for yourself.
- 13 Minimise interruptions**  
US research found that it takes people between 10 and 20 times the duration of a disruption to regain their prior level of concentration. People lose an alarming amount of time each day because of unnecessary interruptions. When you’re trying to get something done, **don’t interrupt yourself** and try to minimise interruptions from others.
- 14 Something to enjoy**  
Plan into your day at least **one work activity that you enjoy.**