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Productivity Column: It Took Me Four Pomodoros to Write This

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PEGA-SIS Blog

Take Flight

4 DAYS AGO
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Productivity Column: It Took Me Four Pomodoros to Write This

By Geraldine Kalim, JD, MLIS

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One of my past positions before becoming a librarian involved exclusive telework. I was thrilled to wear leggings every day, to be able to walk my dog at lunchtime, and to not waste time on what I viewed as daily trivialities like hair, makeup, and commuting. I felt like I was my most efficient self while teleworking. There are so many upsides, but we all now know that telework is not without its downsides. The separation from our physical workspaces and from our colleagues can leave us feeling unmoored. Now that it is summer, you may feel like you have the “whole summer” ahead of you to get that syllabus ready or finish that draft. Then, all of a sudden, Labor Day sneaks up on you. I have a suggestion to make teleworking over the summer more manageable, enjoyable, and productive—25 minutes at a time.

The Pomodoro Technique

One reason that telework can seem appealing (pre-pandemic) is that one imagines they could be doing so many things around the house while also dutifully working at their day jobs. Take it from me—this is a slippery slope! Pomodoro (<https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>) helps you keep these inclinations in check. Every 25 minutes, you get a five-minute break, which is a perfect amount of time to move the laundry to the dryer and get another cup of coffee. You could use your five minutes to make a phone call, check your (actual) mailbox, or empty the dishwasher. Sometimes I use my five-minute breaks to do a mindfulness session in an app on my phone, and sometimes I use it to check in with my “co-workers” (we are all familiar now with the idea that when someone says this, they mean their partner, their pets, or maybe a plant).

Pomodoro was invented in the 1980s by Francesco Cirillo and was named after those cute little tomato kitchen timers. Now in 2020, there are some modern variations (<https://medium.com/@kalie.allebach>) 6/23/20, 1:03 PM

[/best-productivity-app-pomodoro-focus-habit-tracker-to-do-list-goal-setting-note-taking-ios-mac-4cd8f09daf7d](#)) of Pomodoro to choose from. I personally just use the timer on my phone, but there

are more sophisticated options. If you search “pomodoro” in an app store, many free and paid options come up that are aesthetically pleasing and have many more bells and whistles than the standard iPhone timer.

Some days, I have such few gaps, or such brief gaps, between meetings, webinars, conference sessions, and other scheduled events, that Pomodoro would not be much help to me. I use the time between meetings to check emails, return Slack messages, or get a snack. Other days, I may have a whole morning or afternoon of unscheduled time. These are the days that Pomodoro really helps me shine. Pomodoro helps me with writing—it helped me write this piece. In a 25-minute window, I can address several emails in my inbox or several tabs in my browser, start an agenda for an upcoming meeting, and do some calendaring. Sometimes if my alarm goes off, but I am really into something, or in the middle of an email, I will go rogue and just set another timer, or just turn the timer off completely. You do you!

It seems like the original intent of Pomodoro was to choose one task that you work on for the entire 25 minutes. I do this often, but sometimes I use the 25-minute interval to do something I borrowed from Gretchen Rubin, the “[power hour \(https://gretchenrubin.com/2014/02/my-new-habit-for-tackling-nagging-tasks-power-hour\)](https://gretchenrubin.com/2014/02/my-new-habit-for-tackling-nagging-tasks-power-hour).” Her idea is that you schedule an hour of your life and see how much you can get done against the clock—cleaning your house, tackling your inbox, making dreaded phone calls, or just knocking out as many to-do list items as you can. I love combining the power hour mentality with a Pomodoro, especially early in the morning. Productivity begets productivity.

Do you have a time management or productivity technology review? If so, we would love to hear about it in an upcoming PEGA-SIS Newsletter. Email your piece to Geraldine Kalim at gkalim@uga.edu (<mailto:gkalim@uga.edu>).

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