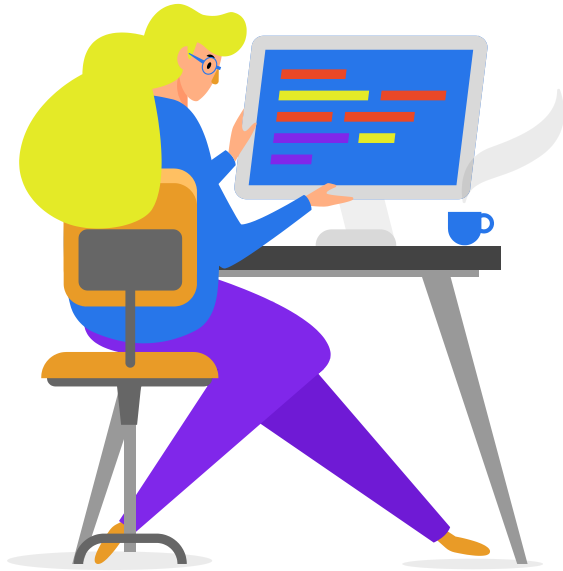# Smart Solutions Productivity Tips

From MCMLA 23 Attendees

Microsoft To Do List is a good tool to organize tasks by projects and ability to add due dates.
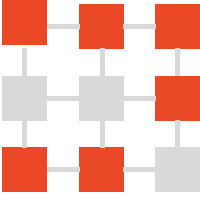
Gwen Wilson
Mayo Clinic Libraries

Schedule focus time on your calendar to avoid disruptions while working on a project.

Caitlyn Towne-Anderson
Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions

If you are dreading a task, assign a short time - 5-10 minutes - that you promise yourself to work on it.

You can either gain momentum to keep going or decide to come back to it another day.

Either way, you've gotten some work done on a challenging project!

E. Bailey Sterling
NNLM Region 3

I use my electronic calendars to as reminders to check on recurring and future events, deadlines, and potential contacts.

I mark them as "private" so I still get reminders including check set-up meetings, do tasks, or teach a class.

I add contact and a little background information so I don't have to hunt through the previous year's calendar and messages.
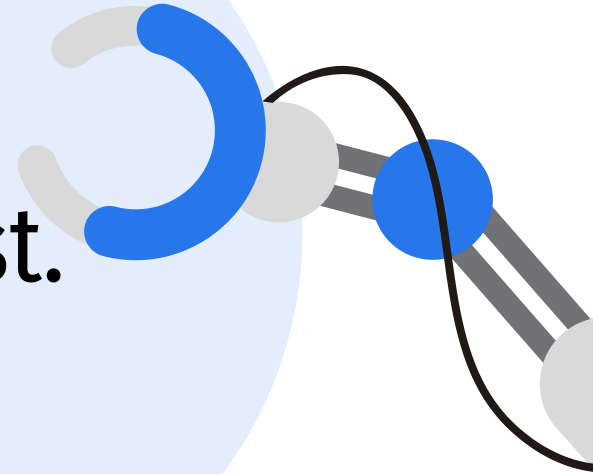
Jeanne Burke
Creighton University
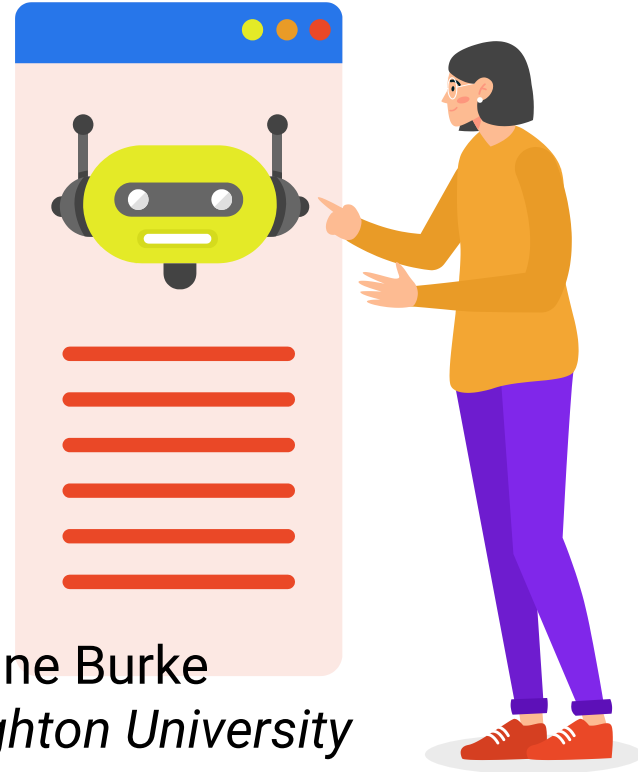
Make a list of the top 3-5 tasks for the day and work the list.

Remember: first things first. Second things never.

Rebecca Graves
University of Missouri

Set a daily goal of X number of focus sessions. Upon meeting that goal, reward yourself with something you really enjoy.

I shoot for three focus sessions at 30 minutes each and then take a lap to see some of my favorite artwork on campus or look at cute dogs on Instagram.

Ninety minutes is not a ton of time, but makes a big difference in my progress toward short- and long-range goals.
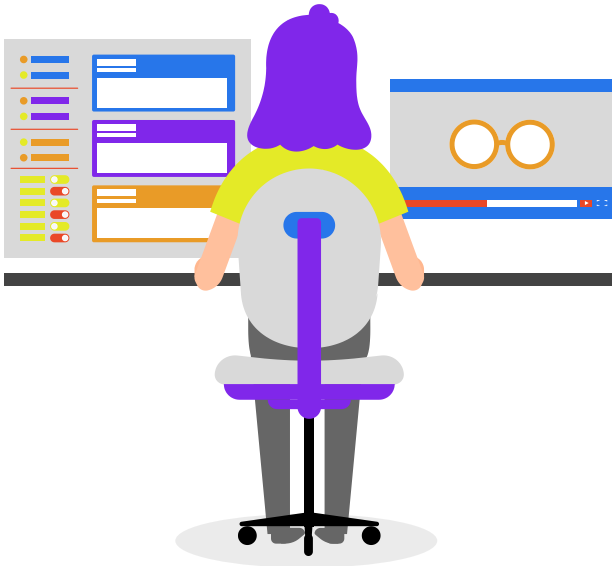
Emily Glenn
University of Nebraska Medical Center

Check-lists and post-its.

Keeps me on track and helps me balance multiple projects in a timely manner.

Bonus is checking things off my lists and seeing a visual representation of my progress.

Abbey Griffith
Kansas City University

I use **Padlet** in a grid format to keep track of projects and can move then around based on need and status.

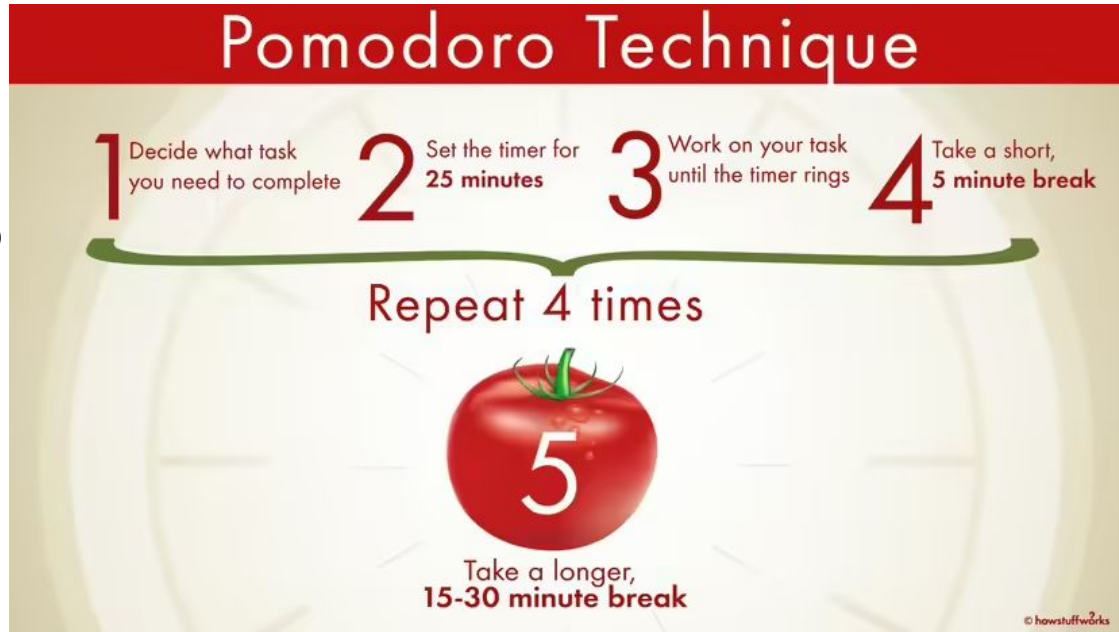Angela Spencer
Saint Louis University

**Learn the basics of Excel.
Being able to create a small spreadsheet and show a graph is very powerful to display others what your library is doing.
So many people are very visual and "sees" graphs more than a column of numbers.**

Peggy Mullaly-Quijas
Retired , UMKC

The Pomodoro technique works well for me!

Pomodoro Technique

1 Decide what task you need to complete

2 Set the timer for **25 minutes**

3 Work on your task until the timer rings

4 Take a short, **5 minute break**

Repeat 4 times

5

Take a longer, **15-30 minute break**
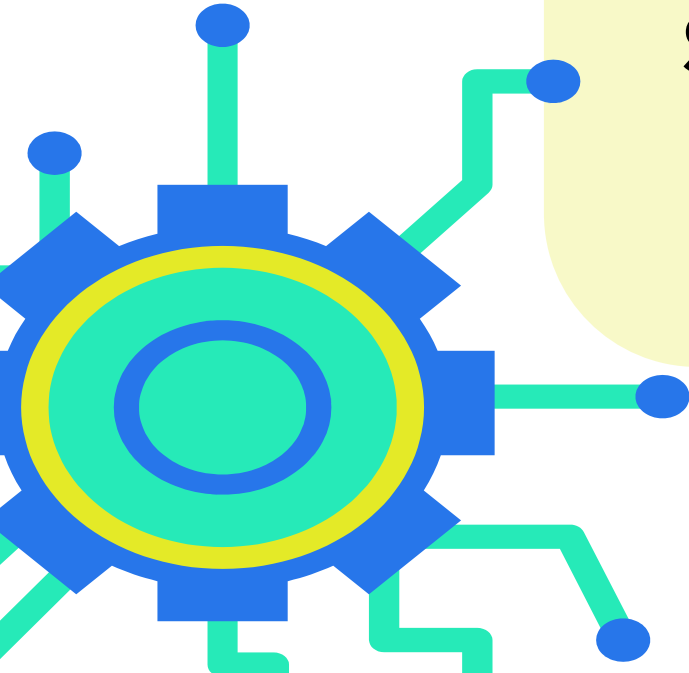
© howstuffworks

Nena Schvaneveldt
University of Utah

Document effective processes, make those documents findable, and stick to them when the issue arises again.

Brian Leaf
NNLM Region 3, UNTHSC
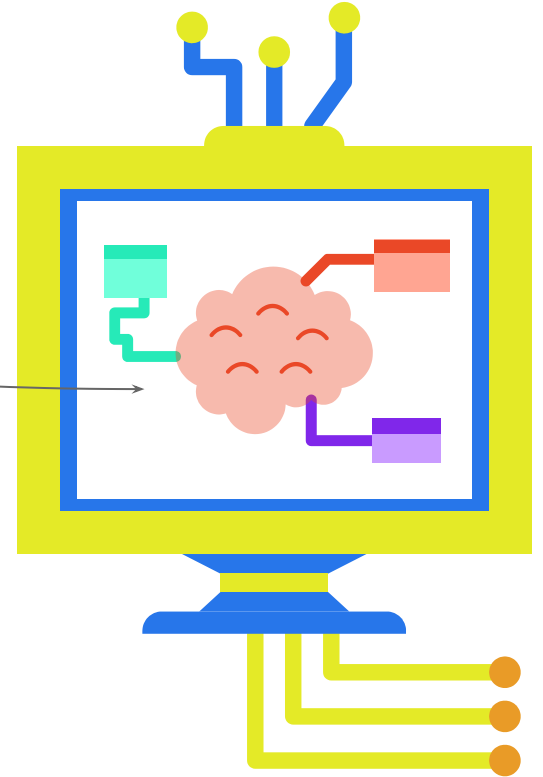
I like to block out time on my calendar for working on specific projects so that I can stay on track.

Ashley Bassett
*Intermountain Healthcare*

Use a website blocker plugin/extension.

For Firefox I use Block Site.

Elizabeth Frakes
University of Utah

It keeps you from looking at selected sites during work hours. You can set hours for when things are blocked.

Helps me stay focused and not distracted on news sites or other fun sites.

Change your working environment at least one day a week: turn off the lights, work from home, work from an isolated spot on campus.
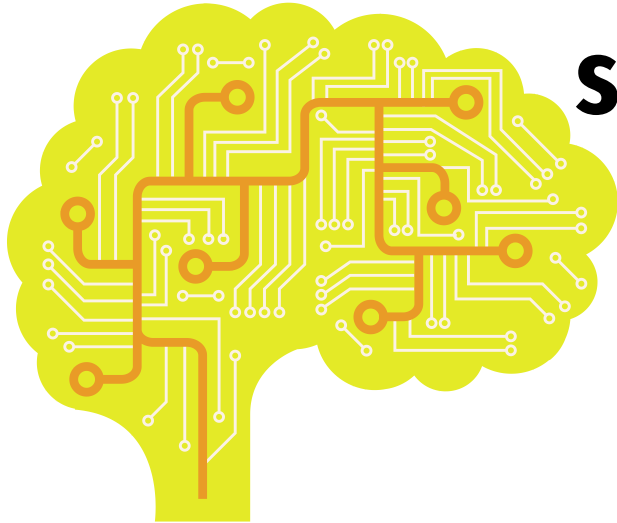
Deborah Divis
Creighton University
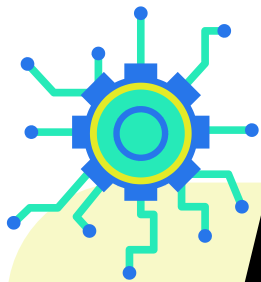
At the end of every month I create a **bulleted list** of work I did that month. This makes is much easier for me to draft my self-evaluation at the end of the year.
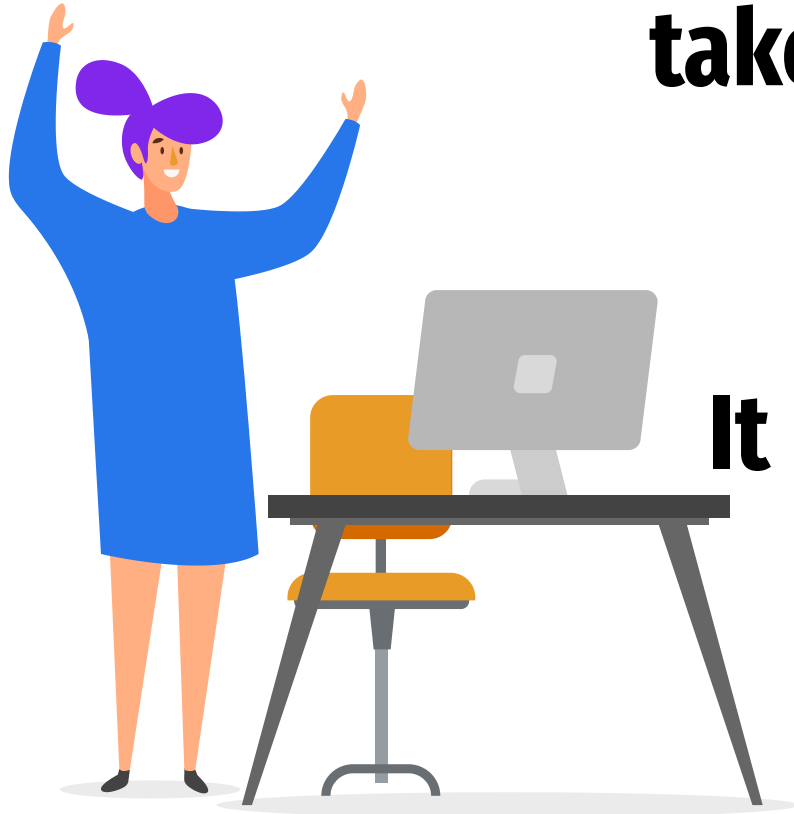
Melissa De Santis
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Create a task list and check off items as you complete them.
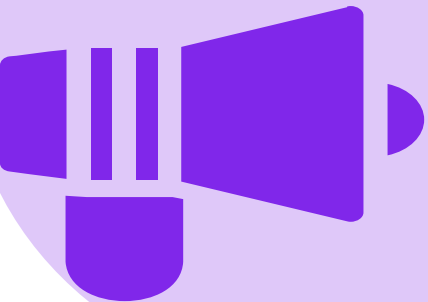
Sarah Villere
Emporia State University

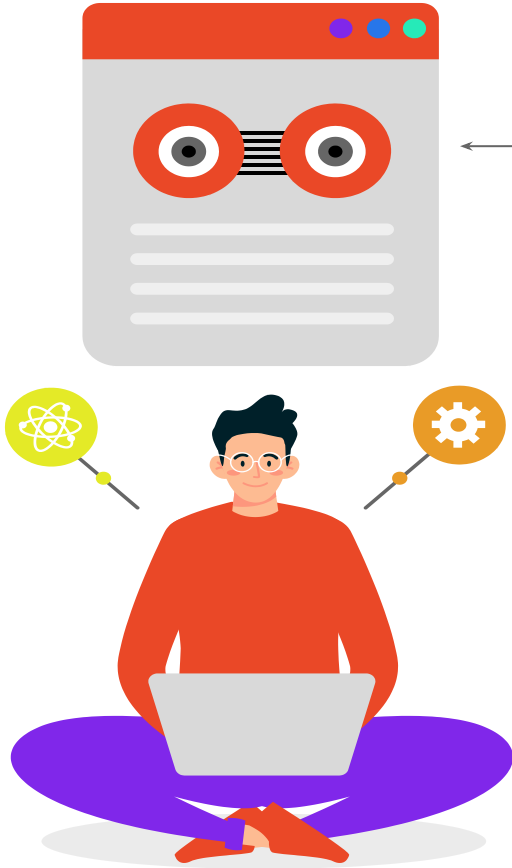Work for an hour and then take 10 break to browse your phone.

It helps to keep you focus.

Brenda Linares
University of Missouri Kansas City

Set a fixed amount of time to read & respond to emails for the day -maybe 20 min each morning, or at the end of the workday, and don't deviate from that block of time.
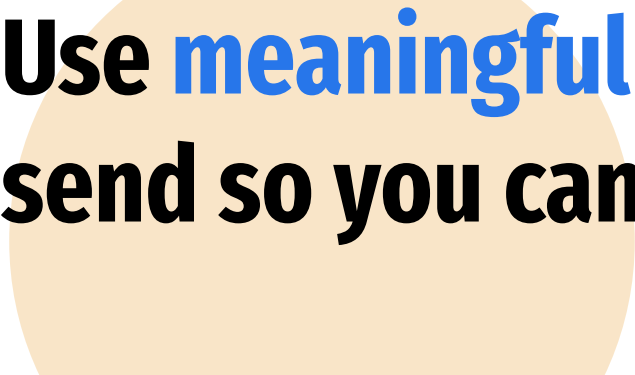
Shawn Steidinger
University of Utah

I listen to **epic** soundtrack music w/ my headphones on (in my office) when I need to focus.

Monica Benavides
Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions

Use meaningful subject lines on emails you send so you can determine the content at a glance.

When you get an email from someone else, change the subject line to describe the content.
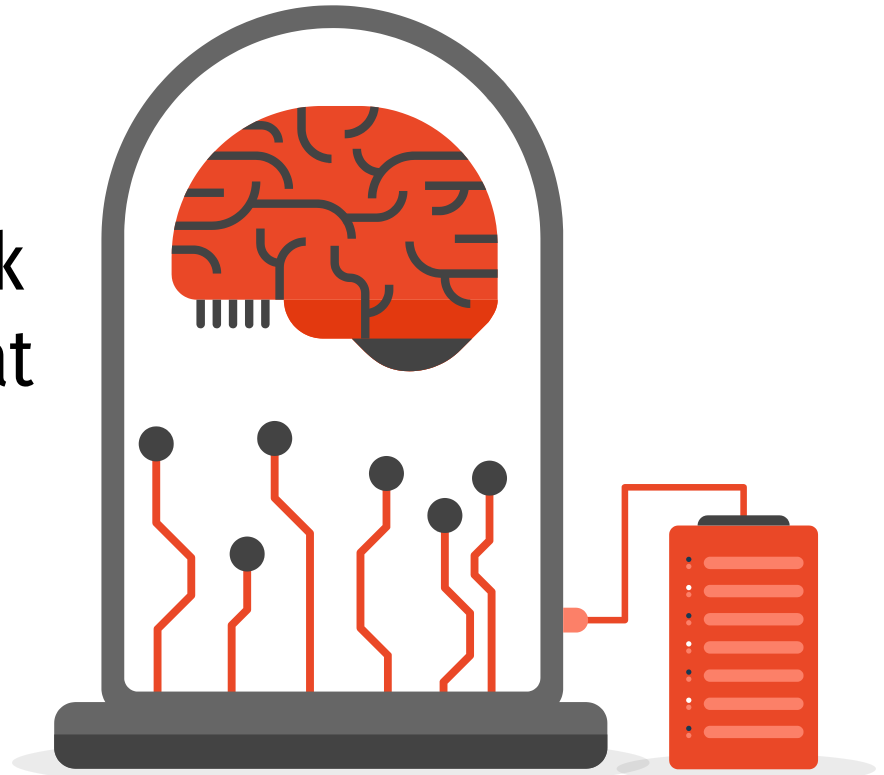
E. Diane Johnson
University of Missouri-Columbia

I sometimes take my work out to the main study area and co-work alongside students.

Knowing they are hard at work helps motivate me to start that challenging project I've been putting off, and the energy in the room helps me stay on task.

Sarah Winston
Rockhurst University

Create a shadow calendar on your work calendar and schedule your tasks there.

Heather Brown
University of Nebraska Medical Center

Don't let your inbox pile up-

Have **subfolders** and don't leave anything in your main inbox that doesn't require action from you.

Rose Fredrick
Creighton University

Write your tasks down on individual post-it notes;

when you complete something, tear down the note and toss it in the trash.

Liz Kellermeyer
National Jewish Health

I maximize my calendar by booking my to-do list.

Whenever I add something to my to do list that has a deadline, I also book it into a slot on my calendar a week or two before the deadline.

On Fridays, I review my to-do list and book time slots (just an hour or two) in the next week for the top two or three items on the list so I have time devoted to make progress on them.
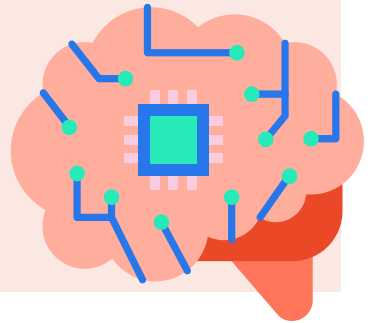
Holly Hubenschmidt
Webster University

Focus on one thing at a time.

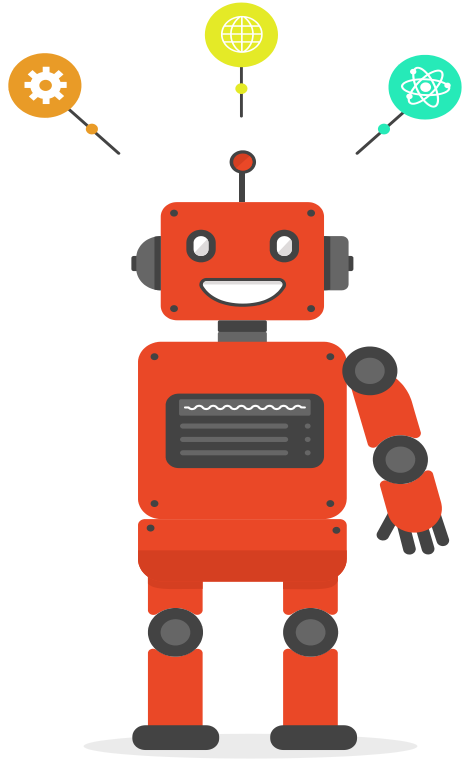Carole Durst
National Jewish Health

I have not been really good about it lately, but **bullet journaling** is something that has helped with organization and accountability both personally and professionally.

So do as I say, not as I do! LOL

Ruby Nugent
National Jewish Health

Put notifications on silent while working on a project.

I have ADD, so putting earbuds in and listening to music, occupies the part of my brain that gets bored and antsy so that I can concentrate and finish my projects.

Accountability to someone at work is also a must.

Diane Aldrich
Rocky Vista University

Setting small goals each day and using a **pomodoro timer** to keep me on task and make sure I take **restorative breaks**.

Kristi Torp
National Library of Medicine
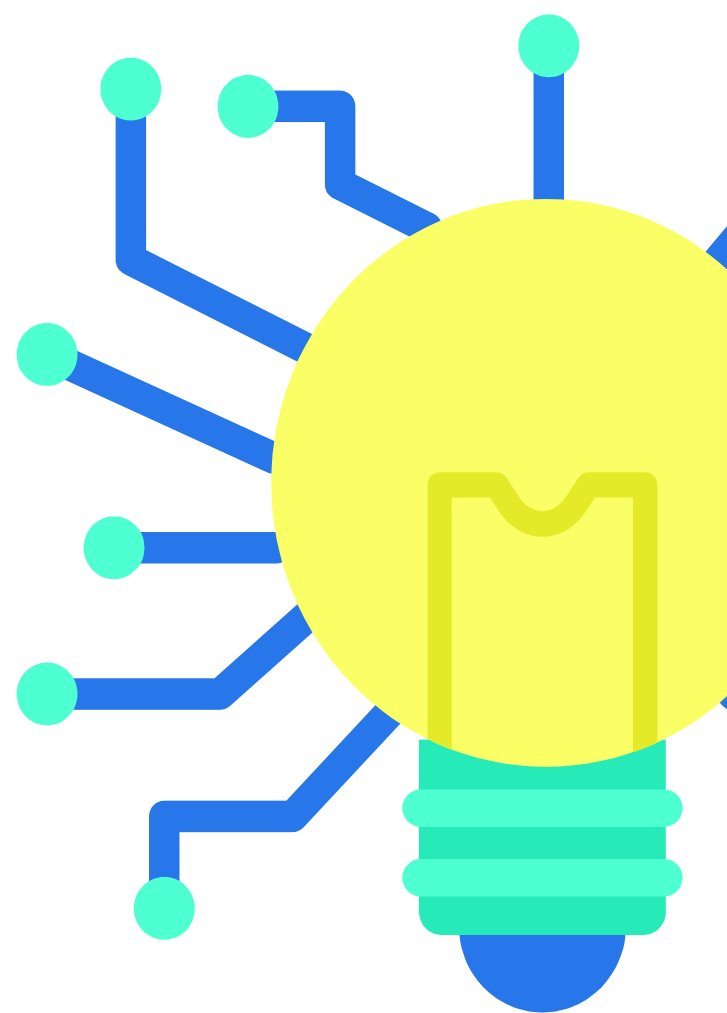
Kanban board

to organize my daily to do schedule

Marlowe Bogino
Rowan University

pomodoro timer method

to help me focus when I have projects to work on

Schedule time on your calendar for everything - checking email, scheduling emails, going over group chats, etc.

Then **TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS** so you are not distracted during other scheduled times.

If the dings and the bubbles trigger you to check things, like they do me, this is a way to stop you from getting distracted from the task at hand.
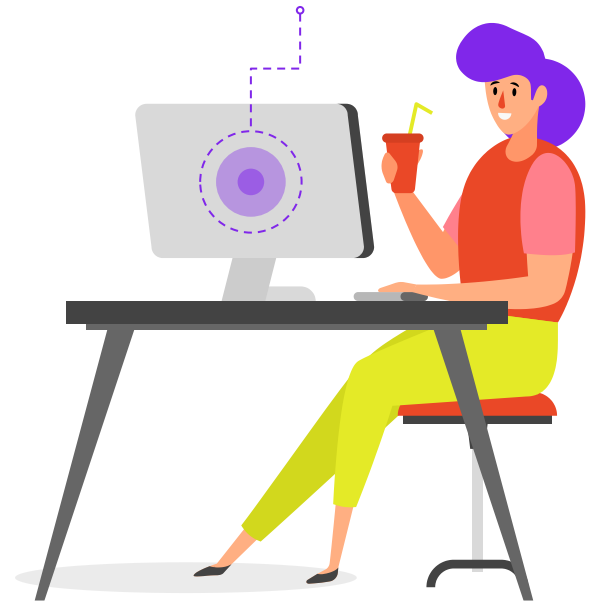
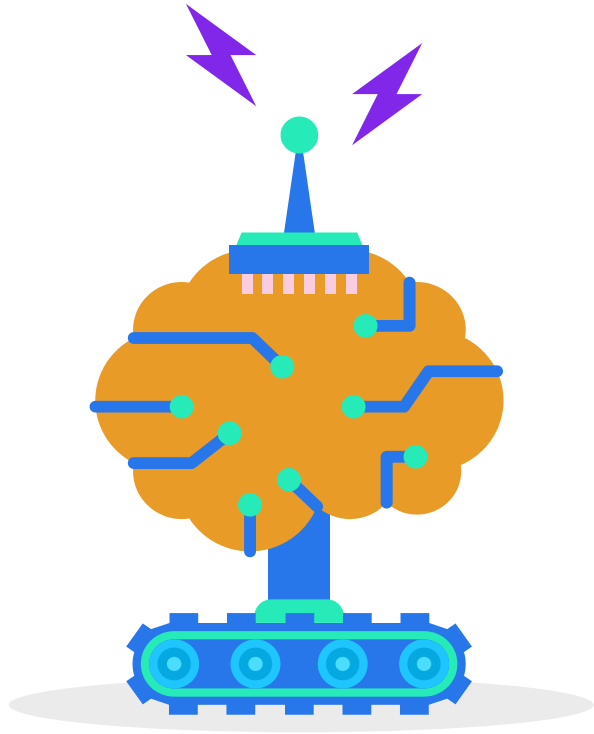Jennifer Brady
Creighton University

I use **Inbox Zero**, where you immediately decide what to do with each email.

Either you delete non-essential ones, you send them to the person they're meant to, or you respond to it.

Hannah Pollard
*University of Colorado Anschutz*

Mark one to two hour blocks of time on your calendar for specific tasks.

If something comes up during that time and you aren't able to accomplish the task, just move the block of time to a later date!

Emily Vardell
Emporia State University

Give your coworker your phone to lock up in a drawer. That phone is so distracting!

Or if you are trying to get something done, turn off the wifi to keep you from surfing the internet.
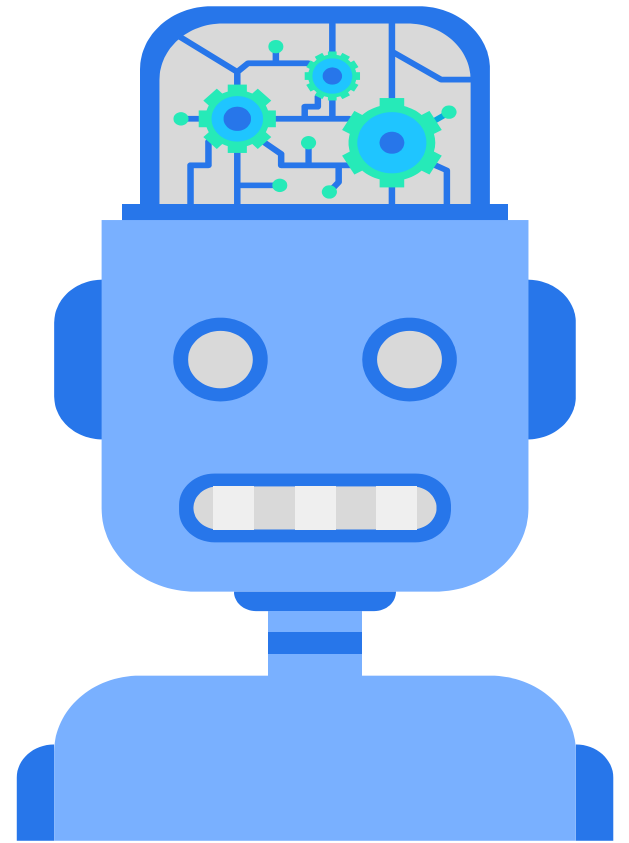
Margarita Shawcross
University of Northern Colorado

Get more exposure to sunlight!

Go outside briefly in the morning, drink your coffee outdoors or take a quick walk. It really helps me get ready for work faster.

Katelyn Angell
CUNY School of Medicine

Set a timer for 20 minutes.

Work diligently and try to "beat the timer" to complete 1 task. Only work on that 1 task.
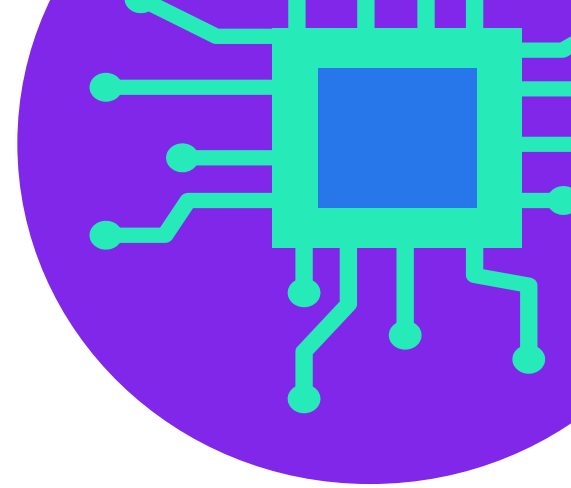
If you didn't complete the task, or if it is a long term project, take 5 minutes for a brain break or to work on something else, then come back and work another 20 minutes.

Kim Harp
University of Nebraska Medical Center

Lots of people already do this but I **schedule routine tasks** into my calendar so that I will be certain to have time to complete them.

For tasks that I do quarterly, I schedule a reminder to schedule the task for next quarter.

Ellie Svoboda
Strauss Health Sciences Library

At the beginning of each week (or month) **block out time** to work on projects and/or writing.

Lydia Howes
University of Utah