



Leave Work an Hour Earlier Every Day!

No matter how long your to-do list, experts say these tips will help you get it all done that much more quickly. BY LAUREN BRADSHAW

Does this scenario sound familiar? Your friends are out tossing back cocktails while you're stuck at work, making buddies with your building's late-night cleaning crew. To help, we turned to time-management pros for advice on how to spend less time on the job and not piss your boss

off in the process. (Odds are she does this stuff too—or she *should!*). Oh, and lesson one: Read this on your lunch break.

• **Every morning at work, do your most important task first.** And decide the night before what that is, says Julie Morgenstern, author of *Never*

Check E-mail in the Morning. “Not only will it save you the time you’d spend mulling over your to-do list, not knowing where to start, but the relief and energy you’ll get from tackling your biggest project first will boost your productivity the rest of the day,” she says.

• **Prepare for a meeting like a good party guest.** “Think of it this way: Instead of bringing a bottle of wine, your duty is to show up on time, and come with something you

can contribute,” says Merlin Mann of 43folders.com, a website dedicated to personal productivity. Speak early and focus on solutions and actions. Save chat about the news for lunch hour. And if you really want to go the extra mile, offer to help plan the agenda. “When you’re the person who never wastes other people’s time,” adds Mann, “you’ll be surprised by how reluctant they’ll become to waste yours.”

• **Beware of the “nibblers.”** Call them interrupters, call them distracters, call them whatever—but don’t let them nosh away at your day! When your chatty coworker stops by to rehash her weekend, tell her, “I’m on deadline right now, but let’s grab coffee later,” suggests Jan Yager, Ph.D., author of *Work Less, Do More*. Or if your needy friend (or, sorry, even your mom) dials in for her regular afternoon gossip fix, “you don’t have to pick up,” says Morgenstern. “But if you do, ask her, ‘Can we talk when I’m not at the office?’” Anyone who wants you to get ahead at work *and* have a life will understand.

• **Stay organized.** To avoid wasting 20 minutes figuring out where that spreadsheet ran off to, Yager recommends keeping

How to Say No on the Job (and Not Look Like a Jerk)

OK, maybe you can't say no to your boss. But if you are the go-to girl for everyone in the office, the key to setting boundaries is to stay calm and be polite, says Morgenstern. When your colleague asks for a favor, say, 'I'm sorry. I won't have time to help this time, but I can see if someone else is available.' And avoid being overly apologetic. Think of it this way: If you're saying yes to everybody at work, who are you saying no to? Your husband? Your friends? Yourself?

your “hot” file—the thing you reference the most—out on your desk; everything else should be put away. And taking a few minutes to tidy up every time you finish a big project will save you from the tsunami pileup effects of delaying too long. If you need to, “buddy up with a coworker and spend 15 minutes ‘crash cleaning’ on a set basis,” Yager says. “In the process of getting organized, you might even build a relationship with a colleague.”

• **Find out where your lost time is going.** For many women, that’s the Internet, says Morgenstern. “It isn’t
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realistic for most of us to stay offline at work, but if you log on to look at *everything*, it's like going to the mall with no purpose. That's dangerous!" Same goes for checking e-mail. All that dinging can be distracting. Mann recommends turning your notifier off and checking at set times, since rapid-fire replying only causes you to lose focus, something that is critical to handling big projects and managing your time better. As for personal errands, if you have to run out, keep your eye on the time, and try not to get distracted (by, say, 40-percent-off sales).

• **Use the 80-20 rule.** Think about how often you've spent an

extra hour "finessing" a presentation or a lesson plan that was... already finished! "That constant striving for perfection can spin into a paralyzing trap that halts proj-

“When you never waste people’s time, you’ll be surprised by how reluctant they’ll be to waste yours.”

ects,” warns Morgenstern. She suggests applying the 80-20 rule: Only 20 percent of your tasks need to be completely perfect; the other 80 percent can be “good enough.” Sure, you don't want to look like

you're slacking—but the truth is, Morgenstern says, “many of my clients have actually discovered that once they stopped obsessing over everything they're responsible for, their version of 'good' turned out to be their boss's version of 'great.'”

• **Plan to leave early.**

If you're constantly working late, set a goal to scoot out 30 minutes sooner than you leave now. When you have a deadline, you're less likely to waste time; Morgenstern calls the technique “crunching your container.” And if you need a nudge getting out the door, make a plan with a buddy for after work so you're more likely to call it a day. There's a reason they call it *happy* hour.

The #1 Way to Leave Work on Time



See you tomorrow, to-do list.

Show up on time! When you get a late start, you've already set off a domino effect of running behind on your tasks before you've even walked in the door, say experts. And whatever you do, adds Morgenstern, don't give in to “just one more task” syndrome at the end of the day. That tendency to try to cross a few “little” things off your to-do list just as you're about to leave work can trap you there for hours, she says. Do it in the morning!

SAVE ME MONEY!

BY CARMEN WONG ULRICH



What else can I use coupons for besides groceries?

—M.M., 31, LOS ANGELES

I rarely pay for *anything* these days—from a Geek Squad visit to a handbag—without looking for a coupon on the Internet first.

• At redplum.com, I just found \$25 off my local cleaning service. At coupon.com, I find deals on office supplies, flowers, even magazines. Fatwallet.com has cash-back offers from places like Bloomingdale's and Orbitz, as well as discount codes—like my recent score: 20 percent off Kiehl's cosmetics. Then there's groupon.com, where you get deals in your area on everything from spa services to skydiving through the power of group buying.

• The biggest of these coupon sites is thedealmap.com, which compiles more than 300,000 deals from other websites. You type in your zip code and select a category, and it does the bargain hunting for you.



Carmen Wong Ulrich is a personal finance expert and the author of *Generation Debt: Take Control of Your Money*.

Have a question for Carmen? E-mail her at money@glamour.com.

work quickie Clock out, woman: Working overtime has been linked to a 60% higher risk of heart problems.