TIME + FOCUS HACKS

1. DO THE HARDEST THING FIRST

The term "eat that frog", which is also the title of a [great book on productivity](#) by Brian Tracy, explains how by doing the most important and difficult task on your plate first thing in the morning, the rest of the day will be a cakewalk in comparison.

2. SCHEDULE LESS TIME FOR TASKS THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED

According to Parkinson's law, Work expands to fill the time available for its completion. Meaning if you give yourself a day to complete a one hour task it will take you all day. Therefore you should schedule less time than you need. When you limit the time you spend on tasks you will force yourself to expend more energy over less time so you can get the tasks done faster.

3. INCREASE YOUR MOUSE SPEED

It sounds silly but it will speed up your workflow. Go to your computer preferences and increase your mouse speed to x2 what it is now. It'll take a few minutes to get used to but once you do it'll save you time and get you working faster.

4. TURN OFF ALL NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications hijack your attention away from what you are working on. When you get a facebook notification or email notifications it serves only to interrupt your focus. On your phone, you should have your mail app set to only get you mail when you push the icon, this way you can control when you want to deal with it.

5. BATCH YOUR EMAIL

By turning off email notifications you can let the email build up and check it at predesignated times throughout the day. This compartmentalizes email into a few chunks of time in your day or week.

6. STOP CHECKING YOUR EMAIL FIRST THING

Email is someone else's requests of your time. When you check your email in the morning your prioritized list is just going to go out the window. Need to send emails? Set up inbox pause for gmail which will allow you to send out emails while pausing any new emails from coming in. Pause your inbox before you go to sleep so when you wake up the next day and need to send out emails you don't get distracted by anything unopened.

7. USE TEXT EXPANDER SOFTWARE

Do you find yourself typing in the same info all the time? Your email, address, a standard email reply? This software reduces the time spent repeating the same information over and over again. I use atext which is a Mac software that costs $5 and has saved me countless hours.

8. AUTOMATE YOUR SAVING + INVESTMENTS

Set up automatic deposits from your bank each month into a savings or investment account. Why is this a time hack? Because by taking care of this now and making it automatic you will take years off your working life. Personally I use Betterment to automate my investments for me.

9. QUIT MULTITASKING

Multitasking is the enemy of focus and productivity. Switching your brain from one thing to the other means your not present with either task, makes you more prone to error and affects your memory.

10. HAVE A "MAINTENANCE" DAY

Instead of splitting up maintenance tasks like laundry, groceries, cleaning etc throughout the week - do it all on one day only so you can focus your time better the rest of the week.

11. SET UP FILTERS IN YOUR EMAIL

Re-route any newsletters you're signed up for into an 'Optional folder' so you can look at them when you want and they don't fill up your email unnecessarily.
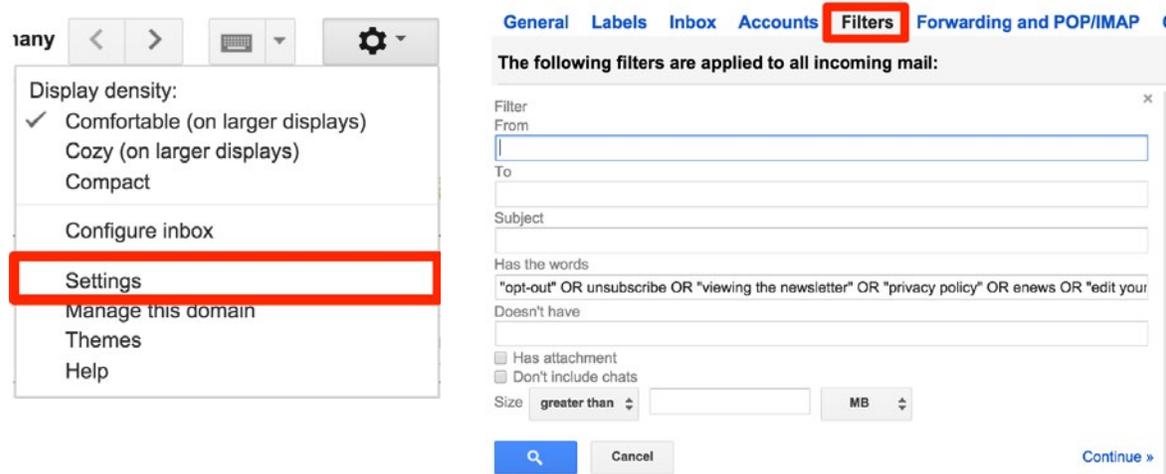
Paste this text into 'Has the words':

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"opt-out" OR unsubscribe OR "viewing the newsletter" OR "privacy
policy" OR enews OR "edit your preferences" OR "email notifications"
OR "update profile" OR smartunsubscribe OR secureunsubscribe OR
yahoogroups OR "manage your account" OR "group-digests" OR "mailing
list" OR "ensure delivery" OR "Manage your subscription" OR "click
here to view" OR "view as web" OR "mailing list"
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12. SLEEP WELL. EAT WELL. EXERCISE

A boring "hack" but it works, if you don't treat yourself and your body well how can you expect it to get you where you need to go?

13. LEARN TO MEDITATE

The art of focus and being able to control your attention is powerful for your productivity. It calms your mind, increases blood flow and makes it easier to get into a 'flow' state. It was very difficult for me to start but it's like a muscle, it builds over time and you'll notice the positive effects the more you do it.

14. KEEP A TIME DIARY

By writing down everything you get do in a day you'll see how much time you're wasting, how long certain tasks take (so you can plan better) and help reclaim lost time. The Self Journal can help you with this.

15. STOP RUNNING ERRANDS

Ever find yourself having to run out in the middle of the day to pick up household items like dishsoap or toilet paper. Stop. It's a waste of time and energy - you're also probably spending more than you could be. Use Amazon Subscribe & Save to have almost everything you need delivered to your door - and pay less than you would at the store.

16. LEARN & MASTER TOUCH TYPING

The average person can type 40 WPM, by learning to touch type you can boost that by 60% - 100% to 65 - 80 WPM.

17. WORK ON YOUR HIGHEST LEVERAGE ACTIVITIES EVERY DAY

According to 80/20 rule, 80% of the results you achieve come from 20% of your efforts. Define what your personal highest leverage activity is and make sure you're doing it everyday.

18. BATCH YOUR APPOINTMENTS AND MEETINGS

Set 1 or 2 days per week for all of your phone calls/meetings/appointments so on the other days you can stay focused and in flow during your highest leverage activities.

19. DETERMINE YOUR MOST PRODUCTIVE HOURS

Most people have a time-frame during the day where they are most productive, once you figure out when this is - you need to time block this and get to work. Don't allow anyone intrude on this time by booking calls or meetings. Turn off your phone and get your work done.

20. DON'T KID YOURSELF

If you can't explain to a friend what you've spent your morning/day working on in a concise manner then you may be kidding yourself. Spending time and putting in hours doesn't mean you're moving anything forward. As you spend your time you need to be asking yourself "how is this pushing me forward?"

22. PRACTICE DAILY GRATITUDE

Write down 3 things you're grateful for every day, this trains your brain to "retain a pattern of scanning the world not for the negative, but for the positive first," making you more positive, energetic, and productive.

23. PLAN YOUR MEALS IN ADVANCE + BATCH PREP

Don't waste brain power on decisions like what to eat for lunch. Plan what you're going to eat in advance and batch prep it on your maintenance day. For example on a Sunday you can grocery shop and prep your meals for the week so you don't get decision fatigue by lunch time.
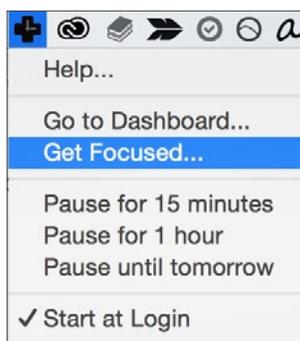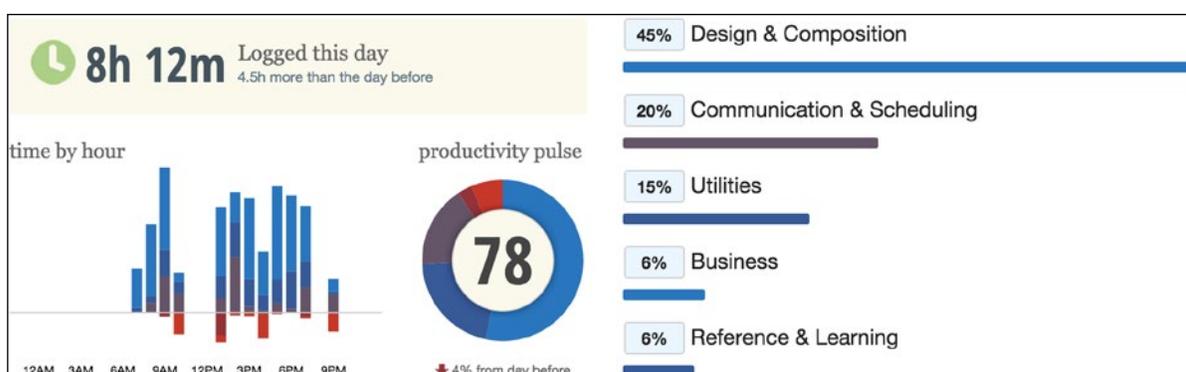
SOFTWARE/APP HACKS:

24. TRACK YOUR TIME WITH RESCUETIME

Wonder where your day goes sometimes? Rescuetime will tell you. This app runs in the background and tracks the time you spend on websites and applications. Understand your daily habits so you can focus and be productive.

This is the type of data you get:

Bonus: Use 'Focus Time' to block any distracting sites for a set amount of time. You won't be able to visit distracting sites like Facebook or Twitter.

25. SKITCH

Skitch makes annotating and marking up effortless. It's a free tool by the same people behind Evernote. I use it alot when working with virtual assistants, developers freelancers etc.

26. MAKE TRACKING EXPENSES EFFORTLESS WITH SHOEBOXED

Use Shoeboxed to scan, track and organize receipts. When you buy something online, simply forward the receipt to a custom email to store it or mail off an envelope of receipts. It's a huge timesaver and I don't have to stress out come tax time.

27. WP CURVE FOR ALL YOUR WORDPRESS NEEDS

Stop wasting time trying to figure out wordpress. For only $79 a month you get 24/7 access to the world's best developers for maintenance, support & small jobs. Now instead of wasting hours trying to figure something out I email them and my task gets done within hours.

28. RECORD YOUR SCREEN WITH JING

A free video-recording app that you can record your screen on. Great tool for working with VA's, limits you to 5 minutes at a time which forces you to be concise.

29. DESIGN WITH CANVA (...EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT A DESIGNER)

An amazing resource for design, seriously, I dare you to make something ugly on there. I use this a lot to create simple web/blog/email images that I used to spend way too long doing in photoshop. Now I set a 7 minute timer per image and it's done.

30. TASK LIST ON TEUXDEUX

Simple and beautiful web app for writing your task list. I have my homepage set to here so I can quickly see what I have to do each day and cross them off as I complete each thing.

31. LEAVE BOOKKEEPING TO THE PROFESSIONALS WITH [BENCH](#)

An online bookkeeping software that keeps track of your bookkeeping for you, it syncs with bank accounts, credit accounts and even your [shoeboxed](#) account. I've been using these guys for about 14 months, come tax-time it is amazing just to have a financial statement with everything broken down emailed to me. It's also real people working on your books so you can talk to them on the phone anytime.

32. SHIELD FROM BLUELIGHT WITH [F.LUX](#)

Blocks out the blue light from your computer screen later on in the evening to stop it affecting your sleep negatively. It works in the background, so you'll set it once and forget it. When the sun starts to go down later in the day, it will dim the blue light from your screen and revert to normal during the day.

33. LISTEN TO NEURO MUSIC WITH [FOCUS@WILL](#)

Distraction is a huge issue for everyone in today's digital world, mainstream music is a distraction because it's designed to connect with you emotionally and intellectually. [Focus@Will](#) is music that is scientifically optimized to boost concentration and focus.

My Favorite channel: Alpha Chill

34. KEEP SECURE WITH [LAST PASS](#)

Simplify your life and stay secure with all your passwords so you only need to remember one. [LastPass](#) also lets you share passwords with people without having to actually give them your password - great when working with freelancers or virtual assistants.

35. KEEP YOUR SCHEDULE WITH [SUNRISE CALENDAR](#)

This simple and beautiful calendar syncs to all major calendar services and between your phone & computer. It also has the quickest and easiest way to schedule meetings on the go with their 'Meet' feature. Even more amazing? It's free!

36. WRITE MORE EFFICIENTLY WITH [BYWORD](#)

Make writing more enjoyable and efficient. Has all the tools you need to write effectively without any distractions. Works and syncs across all devices and you can post directly to evernote/wordpress/tumblr from the app.

37. MAKE SIGNING DOCUMENTS EASY WITH HELLOSIGN

The quickest and easiest way to sign and send contracts online.