

How to Stay Motivated

Staying motivated can be a real struggle. Sometimes the task at hand is too difficult or too **tedious** to maintain your interest. Sometimes you **get sidetracked**. Sometimes you feel **crushed** by the **sheer** number of your responsibilities, and it seems easier to give up or ignore them.

How can we **optimize** our behavior in order to get the job done? Here are a few things that can **grease the wheels**.

Create a Constructive Environment

If your space isn't **conducive** to work, you're **apt to** become **scatter-brained**. Consider the following questions when arranging your workspace:

- Do you have good lighting?
- Is it noisy?
- Do your surroundings remind you of all the other things that need to be accomplished?

Vocabulary

tedious = boring, monotonous (no variation or interest)

get sidetracked = get distracted by something that is not in line with your main goal

crushed = completely destroyed by pressure

sheer = only, without considering anything else (the number itself is great enough to make things difficult, regardless of the difficulty of the actual responsibilities)

optimize = make something the best it can be

grease the wheels = make things run more smoothly

apt to = have a natural tendency to

scatter-brained = distracted, thinking about many different things

- Is it too **cluttered**?
- Do you have everything needed to do your work **at hand**?
- Are you inspired or distracted by decorations like photos, motivational images or quotes, plants, etc.?

Making your workspace a **cocoon** of productivity will help you **get down to business**.

Change Your Routine

Ask yourself: do you feel **burnt out**?

Perhaps you're **in a rut**, and that's what is slowing you down. If this is the case, try changing your habits.

Maybe working at a different time of day, or from a different location, will be **a breath of fresh air**. Other things you can **vary** include your meals or background music. A **change of pace** might **spark** some new ideas.

Vocabulary

cluttered = having too many objects occupying a space

at hand = available, close to you

cocoon = small, enclosed space

get down to business = begin doing something seriously

in a rut = stuck in the same routine

vary = change, do differently

change of pace = a shift in your normal routine

spark = cause to appear, create

Make a List

This is a **time-honored** trick for approaching multiple tasks. A **slew** of chores **rattling around** in your head always seems less **daunting** and more manageable when outlined on paper. And the best part of making a list is the satisfaction when you can **cross off** an item.

Small Tasks

When writing your to-do list, break large jobs down into small, **bite-sized** parts. For instance, if your goal is to write a book, don't consider that a single task. That can be intimidating – and you'll never finish it in a day.

Instead, tell yourself, "Today, all I need to do is write one dialogue." Because that task is more achievable, you're more likely to **dive in** and finish.

Vocabulary

time-honored = respected because it has been useful for a long time

slew = a large number

rattling around = moving around and making lots of noise

cross off = draw a line through some words to eliminate them

bite-sized = small enough to be manageable

Set Up a Rewards System

Everybody likes to be **compensated** for their work, and you can reward yourself, too. Choose something you enjoy, and then set a reasonable goal to reach before you can have it. For example, “If I study for an hour, then I can relax with one episode of my favorite television show.” Setting a limit to your **leisure** makes you less likely to **binge** on it – and you can enjoy your reward guilt-free once the work is done.

Take Care of Yourself

Your body is a machine, and in order for it to function at its **peak**, you must keep it **well oiled**. How can you do this? Easy: eat healthy food, exercise regularly, sleep enough, and don’t **push yourself** too hard. All of these factors improve your physical self, which improves your mental **acuity** and helps you feel **on top of your game**— and this can **supercharge** your productivity.

Vocabulary

compensated = receiving something in exchange for your work/effort

leisure = relaxation, entertainment, what you do for fun

binge = consume too much

peak = highest point

well-oiled = saying something is a “well-oiled machine” means it operates very well and very efficiently

push yourself = pressure yourself to accomplish more

acuity = ability to think and perceive clearly and accurately

on top of your game = performing at your best

supercharge = greatly increase the power of

Comprehension Questions

- 1. The article recommends designing your workspace...**
 - a. from a very minimalist perspective
 - b. in a way that helps you be productive
 - c. with inspirational images
- 2. According to the text, established routines...**
 - a. are the best way to be consistently productive
 - b. make you more creative
 - c. might cause you to get stuck
- 3. When you make a list...**
 - a. it makes the number of tasks seem greater
 - b. it helps the tasks seem achievable
 - c. it gives you a concrete reminder
- 4. If you want to write a book, you should...**
 - a. ask for help in organizing the project
 - b. focus on getting small parts of it done
 - c. make it the first task you work on every day
- 5. One important aspect to the "reward" is that it should...**
 - a. be something you can do with other people
 - b. be totally different from the task
 - c. have a specific limit
- 6. The final tip says you should NOT...**
 - a. pressure yourself to do too much
 - b. eat while working
 - c. sleep too much

Discover New Words

Choose the best definition for the vocabulary word in **bold**.

1. If your space isn't **conducive** to work, you're apt to become scatter-brained.
 - a. comfortable, enjoyable
 - b. helping, contributing
 - c. reserved, protected

2. Ask yourself: do you feel **burnt out**? Perhaps you're in a rut, and that's what is slowing you down.
 - a. angry or upset about your responsibilities
 - b. completely exhausted by too much work
 - c. excluded by your coworkers

3. Maybe working at a different time of day, or from a different location, will be a **breath of fresh air**.
 - a. healthy for you, physically and mentally
 - b. necessary for survival
 - c. something new/different, and pleasant

4. A slew of chores rattling around in your head always seems less **daunting** and more manageable when outlined on paper.
 - a. boring, completely lacking fun
 - b. clear, obvious to anybody
 - c. intimidating, causes fear or apprehension

5. Because that task is more achievable, you're more likely to **dive in** and finish.
 - a. perform excellently
 - b. start enthusiastically
 - c. understand easily

Check your answers before continuing to the next quiz.

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three words are not used.

apt	cluttered	dive into	sheer	supercharged
burnt out	conducive	peak	sidetracked	tedious
change of pace	daunting	rut	slew	vary

1. The needs of our clients _____ - we've helped everyone from independent artists to small businesses.
2. Before we _____ this project, let's make sure everyone understands their roles.
3. Customers are having a hard time finding things in the store because the shelves are so _____.
4. Hey everyone - let's try to stick to the meeting agenda and not get _____.
5. I took pages and pages of notes by hand, and now I have the _____ job of typing them all up.
6. There's a _____ of requirements you have to meet in order to be a pilot.
7. If you criticize his work, he's _____ to take offense.
8. My dad quit his 25-year career in advertising, saying he needed a _____.
9. She's been working two jobs for the past year, so she's feeling rather _____.
10. The prospect of reading a 700-page novel might be _____, but the story's actually quite interesting.
11. At its _____, the factory produced 100,000 pairs of shoes per year.
12. If there are too many kids in the classroom, then the environment is not _____ to learning.

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. c
6. a

Discover New Words

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. c
5. b

Vocabulary Quiz

1. vary
2. dive into
3. cluttered
4. sidetracked
5. tedious
6. slew
7. apt
8. change of pace
9. burnt out
10. daunting
11. peak
12. conducive