

Succeeding in Academia – Time Management Skills

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Today

- Importance of time management
- Productivity and what it means
- Typical time management strategies
- Overview of “Deep Work” book/tools
- Deep and shallow work definitions
- Creating defined goals and practicing deep work
- Prioritize downtime and reduce digital distractions
- Takeaways....



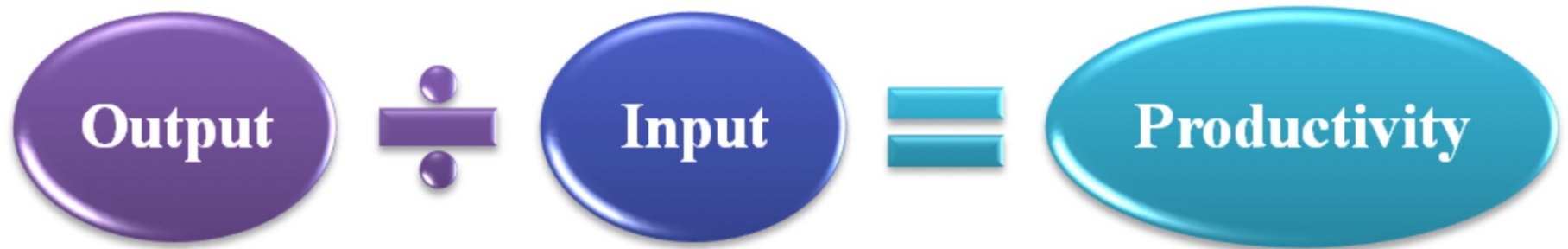
Why Time Management?

- Enhances productivity
- Improves ability to manage multiple demands
 - For faculty, Extension client calls/meetings, outreach/Extension programming, research/writing, teaching, etc.
 - For graduate students, classes, RA/TA assignments, thesis/dissertation research, etc.
- Maintains work-life balance
- Improves physical and mental health



What is productivity?

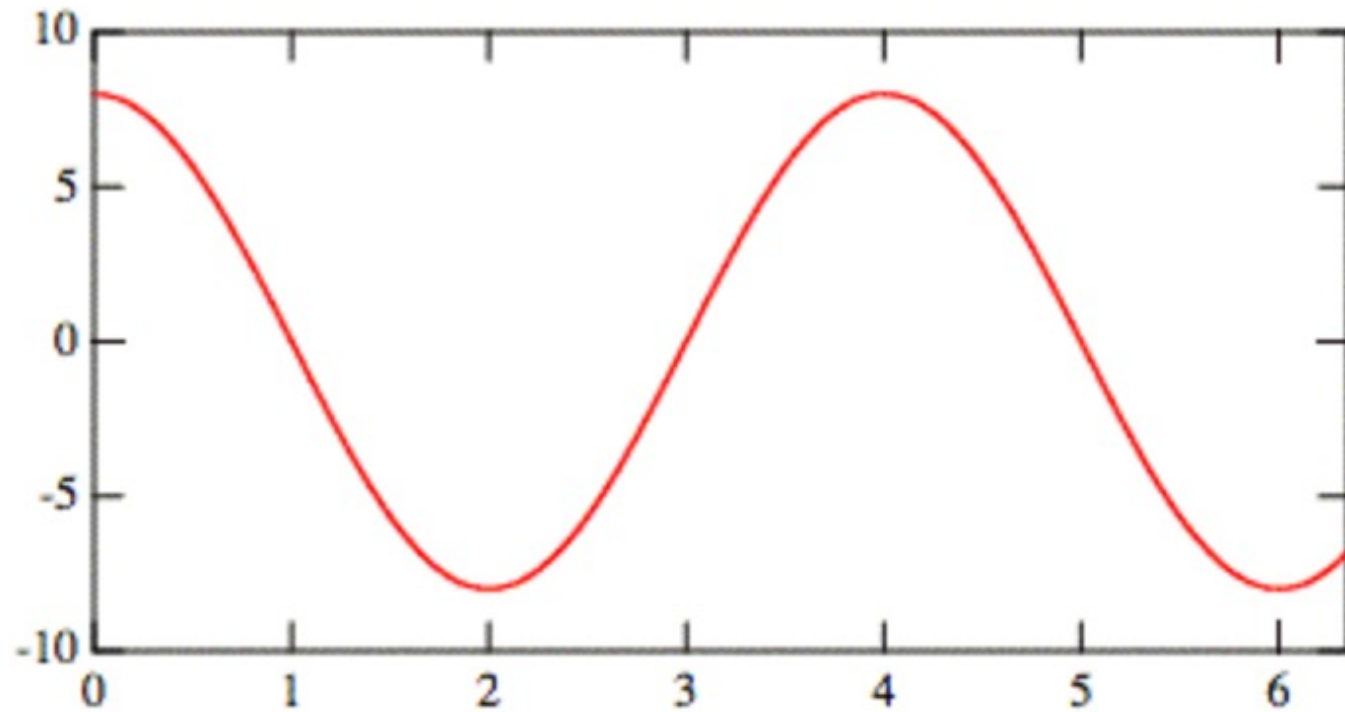
What is **Productivity**?



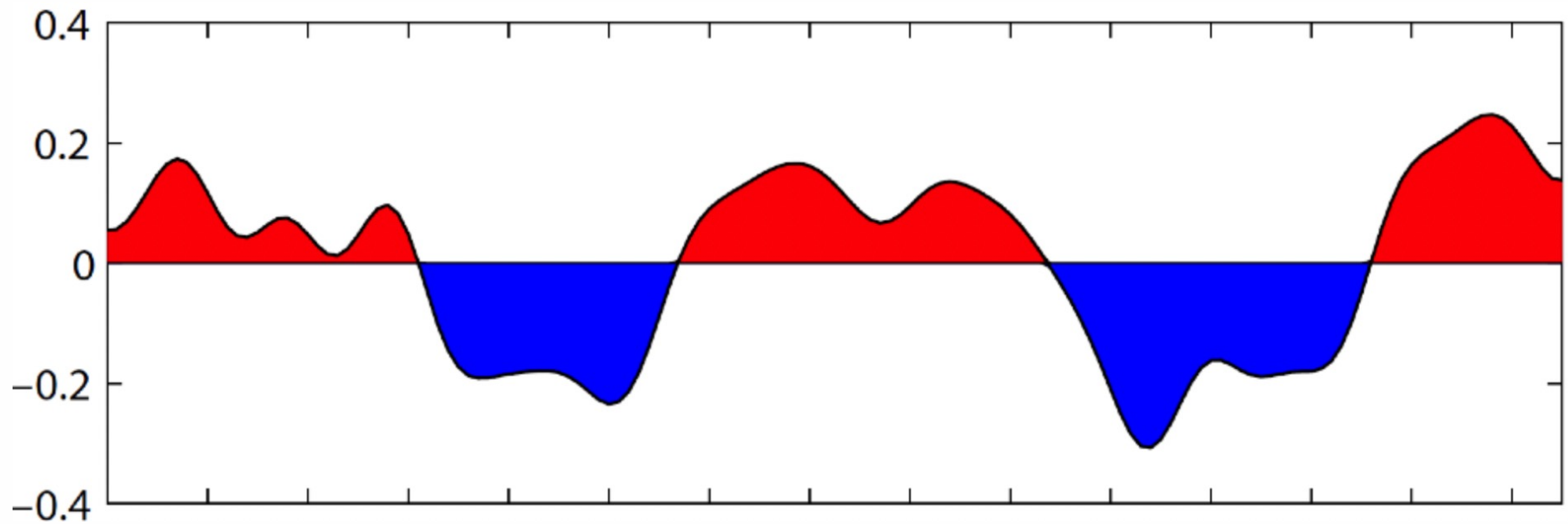
In knowledge work, **our input is our time.....**



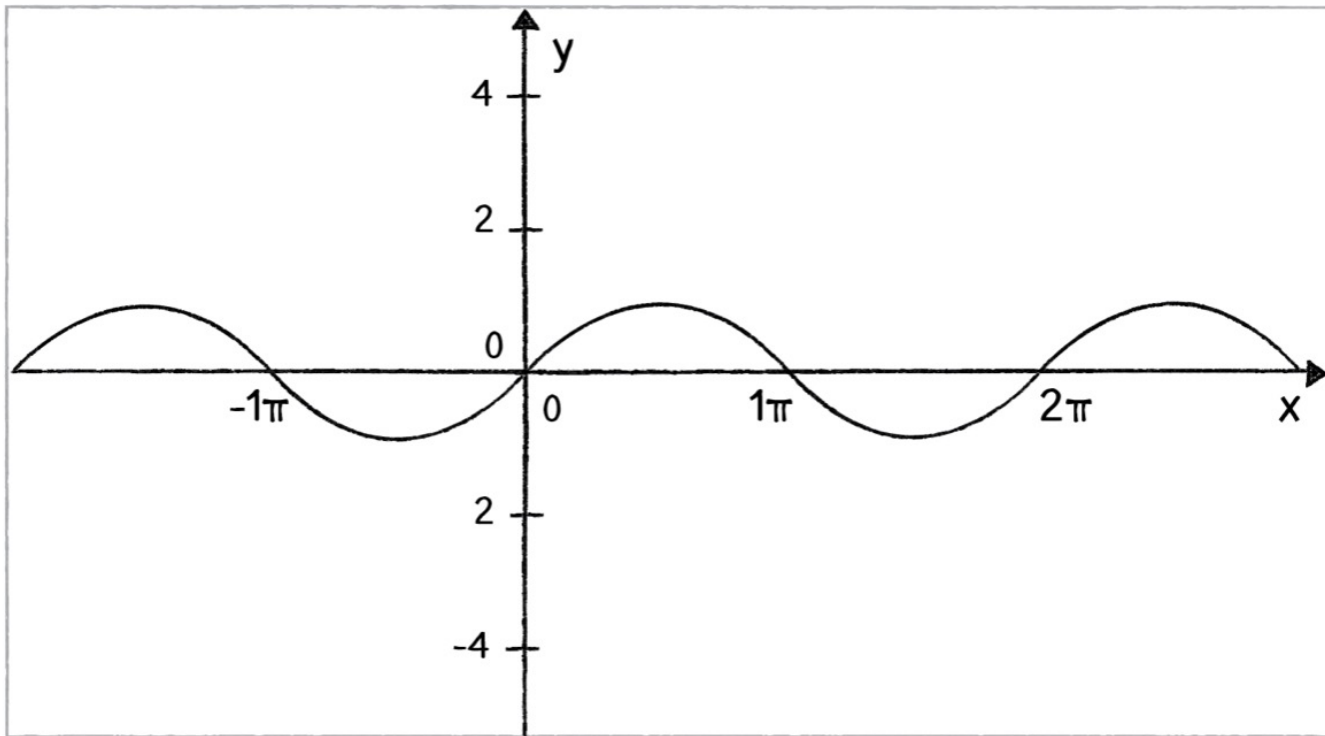
Productivity reality...



Or maybe



The goal perhaps...



Productivity

- Distractions “procrastination enablers” are the enemy of productivity...
 - Social media, phone calls, meetings, texts, email.....
- Setting boundaries (with your time) will...
 - Increase productivity
 - Enable you to achieve your goals
 - Reduce stress and anxiety



Time Management Suggestions

- Prioritize work time
- Create a schedule
- Set up deadlines
- Overcome procrastination
- Deal with stress wisely
- Avoid multitasking
- Start early
- Take regular breaks
- Learn to say “No”
- Delegate



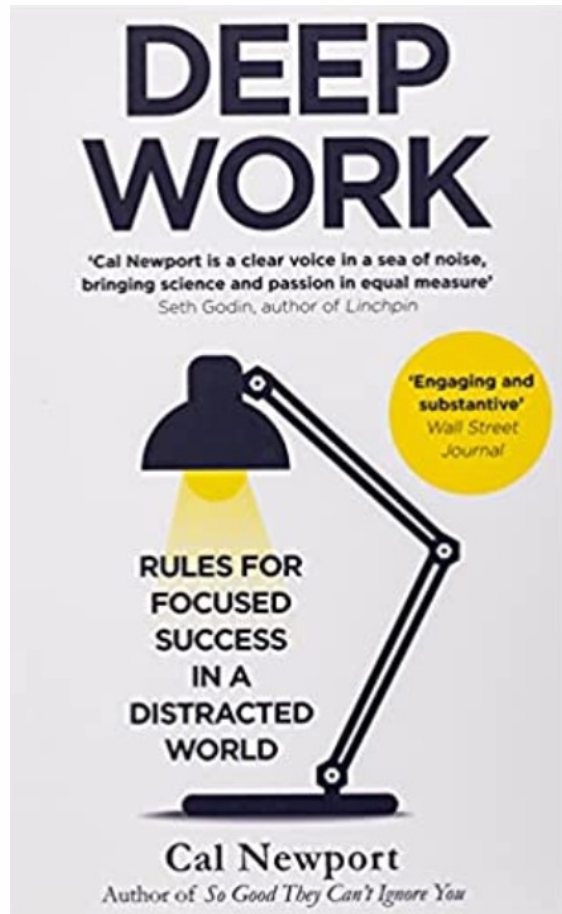
Source: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-ways-improve-your-time-management-skills.html>

Tips to Boost Your Productivity

- Create a daily plan
- Set a time limit for each task
- Use an organizer
- Know your deadlines
- Time box your activities
- Have a clock nearby
- Set reminders
- Focus
- Block out distractions
- Track your time spent
- Don't worry about unimportant details
- Batch similar tasks together
- Eliminate time wasters
- Cut off when you need to
- Leave buffer time in between

Source: What Is Time Management: 15 Must-Learn Skills at <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-ways-improve-your-time-management-skills.html>





Practical Guide to Focused Work

- Answers to why our productivity may fluctuate over time
- Importance of setting boundaries, respecting the importance/value of our time
- Actively managing time to improve productivity
- Prioritizing activities/tasks to achieve goals, focus on the most important
- Specific set of “tools” to use



What is Deep Work?

- Deep Work
 - Deep work is a professional activity done in a state of distraction-free concentration that pushes your cognitive capabilities to the limit
 - These efforts create new value, improve your skills, and are hard to replicate
- Shallow Work
 - Non-cognitively demanding, logistical-style tasks, often performed while distracted
 - These efforts tend to not create value and are easy to replicate
 - These are markers of busyness, not productivity
 - Attention traps
 - Emails, travel planning, social media, online news, chats, etc....



Author's Philosophy

- “The ability to perform deep work is become increasingly rare at exactly the same time that it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy”
- “The few who cultivate this skill, and then make it the core of their working life, will thrive....”
- “To master the art of deep work...you must take back control of your time and attention from the many diversions that attempt to steal them”
- “Efforts to deepen your focus will struggle if you don't wean your mind from a *dependence on distraction*”





Embrace Boredom

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Start with Defined Goals

- Defined goals
 - Steps to achieve
 - Measure of success

Or

- Project based plan
 - Steps to take
 - Measure of completion



• Or at least.....

To do list:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Learn to Practice Deep Work

Choose your deep work strategy

- Monastic, bimodal, rhythmic, and journalistic styles
 - See handout for definitions
- Dependent on work type, travel schedules, etc.
- Academic work blends with rhythmic or bimodal
 - Block off several hours each day (or each week) for deep work (max 4 daily), remaining hours for shallow/other work



Practice Deep Work Cont.

- Build a deep work routine
 - Practice intention
 - Choose a space that is conducive to long periods of focus
 - Determine the amount of time to devote to a task before starting
 - Choose structure for your time. What does it look like, how will you measure success?
 - Phone off or on? Can you have a snack?
 - Measurements such as number of pages read, words written, etc.
 - Favorite beverage available, type of music, etc.
 - Always have everything you need before starting



Practice Deep Work Cont.

- Execute a *grand gesture* if you feel constrained, stuck, unmotivated, etc.
 - Change your place of work such as home, library, coffee shop, etc.
 - Alerts your mind to the importance of the task at hand



Operate like a billion-dollar company...

- Focus on the wildly important
 - Direct all efforts to the most important goals or tasks at hand
 - Ignore any distractions that don't serve your long-term goals
 - Place your list of important goals in a visible place
- Keep a compelling scoreboard
 - Track the hours you spend in deep work mode and display visibly to maintain motivation
- Create a cadence of accountability
 - Keep your word to yourself by committing to daily or weekly progress reviews
 - Assess why you may be falling short of your goals
 - If you are exceeding them, perhaps push yourself further
 - Track all your completed tasks





Prioritize Downtime

- Regular rest improves the outcomes of deep work
- The "power of pause"
 - Great ideas or solutions in the shower, walking,
 - Walk away for greater clarity
 - We need rest...walking, cooking, gathering with family, friends, etc.
- We can only do so much deep work
 - Four hours daily....
 - Implement a shut down ritual
 - Clearly signal work is done for the day
 - Run through your to do list for the next day
 - Review tasks completed today



Enhance Your Ability to do Deep Work

Mental tactics that can be used to improve our concentration

- Make focus your default mode
 - Schedule internet time in advance and avoid it otherwise
 - “offline” is the default
 - Set up blocks of time to attend to email
- Add the “pressure” of time
 - Impose time limits to increase concentration and efficiency
- Make space for deep thinking
 - Productive meditation
 - Contemplate and work through challenging problems
 - While walking, running, dishes, showering....
- Practice memory games
 - Improves memory and ability to “figure things out”



Reduce Digital Distractions

- Choose your digital toolset wisely
 - Adopt only tools where the positive impacts (core factors of success) outweigh the negative
 - Identify most important goals
 - List 2-3 activities required to reach each goal
 - Assess each tool used to weigh positives/negatives
 - Eliminate tools that do not have significant positives
- Stop using social media (or “choose wisely”)
 - Twitter example, can be a great waste of time, or very useful
 - Consider a 30-day social media ban, evaluate after 30 days
- Find replacements for internet entertainment
 - Seek out non-internet-based “high quality” leisure activities to maximize your down time
 - Eliminate the “addictive pull” of entertainment sites



Reduce Shallow Work Time

- Schedule your day methodically, “intentional with time”
 - Plan each part of your day in advance, ok if it doesn’t go exactly as planned
 - Divide your day into blocks and assign a task to each
 - If you underestimate time needed, add in “overflow blocks”
- Assign shallow and deep grades to tasks/activities
 - Determine where you should focus your time
- Limit your workday, fixed-schedule productivity
 - Limit your workday, 8-hour day is sufficient
 - Scarcity mindset, spend time wisely....
- Make yourself scarce or “inaccessible”
 - “Email is the quintessential shallow activity and particularly insidious”
 - Use a process centric approach to reduce back and forth
 - Not all email is worth responding to

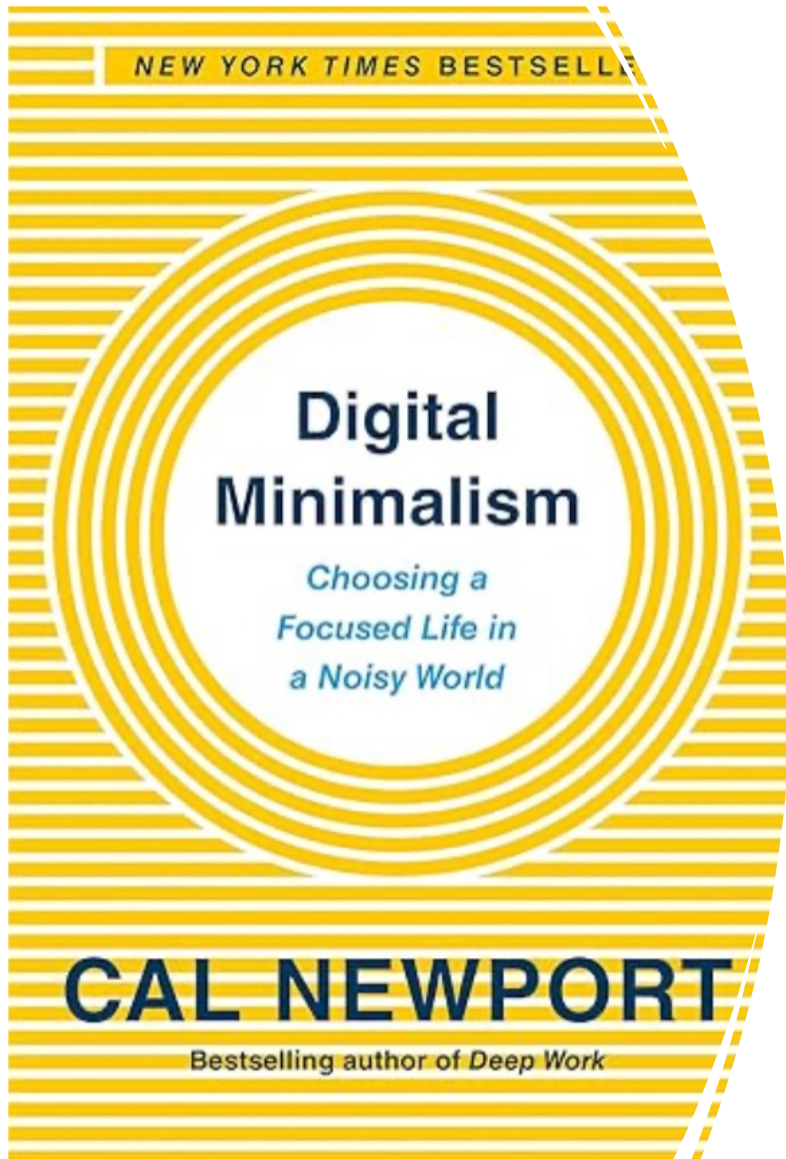




Takeaway's

- Set up a schedule for the following week each Friday
 - Blocks for deep work, shallow work, meals, exercise, etc.
 - Revisit the schedule each morning
 - Address those activities/tasks that are most important first
- Turn off your phone and email during a deep work block
- Track your deep work hours
- Track your accomplishments/completed activities
- As you think of items you need to look up on the internet, write them down and then address them all at once during your internet block
 - Grocery list of searches
- End your workday at a set time each day, don't "take work home"
 - Family, friends, hobbies....





Other Resources

- “Digital Minimalism” by Cal Newport (2019)
- YouTube video on Deep Work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUQjHs_Jlt4
- The complete guide to “Deep Work”: <https://blog.doist.com/deep-work/>

Next

- April 24: Presenting research at academic conferences



Questions?

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