



How to Eliminate Distractions that Detract from Your Day

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Distractions get in the way every day, keeping you from being as productive as you might like. These distractions come in many forms, from ringing doorbells and telephones, to emails and voicemails. It can be a real challenge to stay focused!

How do you go about disregarding all these disturbances to get any work done? It can be tough, but there are ways to reduce the interruptions.

Here are some strategies you can use to control your distractions:

1. **Telephone distractions.** Unless you're expecting an important call, turn off your ringers and direct your calls to voicemail. ***Then only check your voicemail once or twice a day.***
 - Return the calls you must, but if you can reply via email, that's even better. When you send an email reply, you can keep the conversation succinct.
2. **Email interruptions.** Unsubscribe from email lists you don't need and ***set up separate email accounts for business and pleasure.*** This way, when you're trying to work, you don't find yourself bombarded with jokes, videos, party invites, or Facebook messages.
 - Reduce the frequency emails are delivered to your inbox or set your email so you only receive emails when you go in and manually retrieve them in batches.
3. **The World Wide Web time drain.** If you don't need the internet for your work, stay away from it. You'll save yourself a lot of wasted time.

- **Fully close web browsers** so you eliminate the temptation to surf online.
4. **Co-workers.** If you find that co-workers annoy you, **try wearing headphones** while you work to give the illusion you can't hear them. It might sound silly, but it eliminates being subjected to endless babble.
- Another option is to post a *Do Not Disturb* sign outside of your workspace. Hopefully, your co-workers will know that you mean business and honor it.
5. **Work space clutter.** Get rid of any visual clutter - it's distracting and kills productivity. Seeing unfinished projects or pending work can cause unnecessary stress. This stress can have negative results, like making you unable to focus on the task at hand.
- Put everything you don't need for your current project into a drawer or box out of sight if you have to. You can always sort it out carefully when you're less busy.
 - The same should be said for computer clutter. **Eliminate unneeded computer programs and icons** to make your computer more efficient. The quicker you're able to find the file you need, the faster you'll be able to get back on track.
6. **Work-at-home distractions.** If you work from home, make sure friends and family respect the fact that you're truly working just like anyone who goes into an office. Some people may have a difficult time understanding this concept, but they'll comply if you explain it.
- **Avoid doing household chores during your work time.** Train your mind to think about these tasks when your work is finished.

When distractions do arise, whether at home or at the office, make notes and deal with them at an appropriate time at the end of the day. If someone pops by to chat, **stand up** to let them know your chatting time is limited. Don't allow them to sit or get cozy.

Of course, you still need to set aside time to handle these distractions. You don't want to be so restrictive on yourself that you burn out. After all, everyone benefits from a little guilt-free downtime! It's okay to let your mind wander, browse the web, or do whatever appeals to you, just make sure it doesn't creep into your work time.

Follow these tips every day to make effective use of your time and energy. When you eliminate distractions, you'll find that you can get more done in half the time!