



## The Digital Nomad's Handbook to Increasing Productivity

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How many times have you found yourself checking a notification from Instagram and then ended up scrolling through your newsfeed for what feels like maybe ten minutes but turns out to be half an hour when you were supposed to be working? Probably more than you would like to admit.

There are many times throughout the day that we may find ourselves wasting precious time or putting off important tasks. As a digital nomad, it's essential to increase your productivity. Not only will you complete tasks faster and more efficiently, but you will save time, feel less stressed, and have more control over your life.

Some people have this idea that living as a digital nomad means being on vacation 24/7. Those experienced in the digital nomad lifestyle know that is far from true. While there may be more vacation days than the typical 9-5 office job, digital nomads must find ways to stay motivated and learn self-discipline to get their work done.

In this guide, you'll learn the most effective methods for increasing your productivity while living as a digital nomad. It is crucial to keep in mind that productivity looks different for everyone.

So, we caution you to take this guide for what it is - a guide. It is not a rule book.

You have to find what works best for you, your work, and your lifestyle.

**With that being said, let's get productive!**

# Start Your Day Off Right

The first hour after you wake up sets the mood for the rest of your day. Just like most of us, you've probably woken up, hit snooze once or twice, then picked up your phone and started checking notifications and getting lost down the rabbit hole of social media and emails. The next thing you know, you've wasted the most important part of your day and you find yourself feeling sluggish and unmotivated for the remainder of it.

You probably already know what we are going to suggest right about now.

Create a morning routine so you can begin every day with a productive and structured mindset.

To start, wake up at the same time every day. Having a sporadic sleep schedule invites fatigue to follow you through the day. This doesn't mean that you have to wake up at the break of dawn every morning.

Depending on whether you're a morning person or a night owl, pick a time that works for you. Set your alarm for when you feel well-rested and ready to face the day.

It's imperative that you create a morning routine that works for you. Not everyone wakes up and jumps out of bed immediately, ready to start the day. You might need some time to sip your coffee and get that caffeine running through your veins before you begin working. No matter what kind of "morning" person you are, be realistic about your habits when it comes to making a routine.

If you are someone who likes to stay up until 2 AM and needs an hour of quiet time before you even think about jumping in the shower, don't schedule a morning routine where you wake up at 7 AM and plan to fit in a full workout and hearty breakfast all before 9 AM.

You're just setting yourself up for failure.

Try a few morning routines and see what works for you. Spend four days to a week with one routine before deciding whether you'd like to switch it up.

With a structured morning, you set yourself up for a productive day.

# The Power of a Master Schedule

Once you've set your morning routine, it's time to create a master schedule. Creating a master schedule means scheduling daily activities at or around the same time every day. Consider a master schedule to be the skeleton of your workweek.

In your master schedule, set times for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, along with breaks throughout the day. Scheduling these times will save you from skipping meals if you're too invested in your work or from eating when you're bored.

**Pro Tip: Set a daily alarm on your phone to keep you on schedule.**

A master schedule is more than just daily meals, though. It's also a way to schedule your week. Set certain days aside to complete specific tasks such as laundry, cleaning your space, going grocery shopping, or whatever else you need to fit into your weekly schedule.

When you have built the skeleton of your routine, you can then fill it in with variable daily tasks. In the morning, create a to-do list for the day so you can visualize everything you would like to accomplish that day.

Whether it's solely work-related tasks or a mixture of work and personal goals, it's helpful to visualize and prioritize what you need to do. And let's be honest, there's nothing more satisfying than crossing something off a to-do list.

## Why Have a Routine?

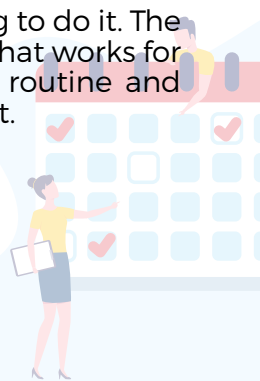
If you couldn't tell, we're pretty gung-ho about having a routine. So, why are these habits so crucial to being productive?

Well, it's because they take the guesswork out of what you're going to do that day. When you have a set routine, you know what to expect; therefore, you spend less time worrying about when or what you'll eat for lunch and more time focusing on more critical tasks.

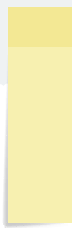
## Hold Yourself Accountable

It's easy to write down a routine and say that you're going to do it. The hard part is practicing it. This is where finding a routine that works for you and your lifestyle comes in. When you enjoy your routine and don't wake up dreading it, you're more likely to stick to it.

It's up to you to create your routine and implement it.



7:30 - 8:00	Wake up and Drink Coffee
8:00-8:30	Read
8:30-9:30	Workout
9:30-10:30	Shower/Breakfast
10:30-12:00	Work
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-4:00	Work
4:00-5:00	Study
5:00-7:00	Explore the City/Relax/Chores
7:00-8:30	Dinner
8:30-9:30	Yoga
9:30-10:30	Read
10:30-11:00	Bedtime Routine



# The Time Blocking Method

For those who enjoy a more rigid structure when it comes to being productive and creating a routine, time blocking may be just what you need.

The time blocking method consists of taking your to-do list, scheduling what time you will complete each task, and how long you expect it to take you. This method is excellent for visualizing your day or week.

If you've created a master schedule, you can add your daily activities to your time blocking template and then fill in the empty slots with items from your to-do list.

It's best practice to fill out your time blocking sheet every couple of days and stay flexible. It's almost impossible to time block an entire week at a time because new tasks will undoubtedly come up or take you longer than expected.

While time blocking seems pretty strict on paper, you need to leave some flexibility there.

## Creating a Time Blocked Schedule

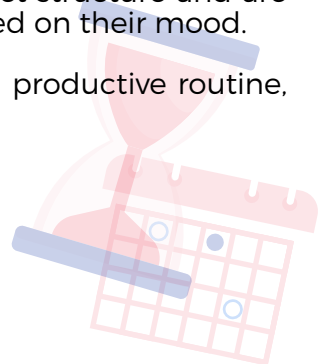
There are several apps, both free and for purchase, that you can use to create your time blocked schedule. However, if you have some extra time, you can simply create it using a spreadsheet program.

Color coding is beneficial, especially if you thrive when visualizing tasks. You can then see just how much time you plan to spend working, learning, taking time for yourself, or whatever else you add to your schedule. You can then adjust your schedule to maximize your goals.

## It Isn't for Everyone

While time blocking has become more popular over the years, it is not for everyone. For some people, time blocking can be too intense, especially if they feel anxious when they are not able to finish a task in the allotted time. Others may not like the strict structure and are more "go with the flow" and complete tasks based on their mood.

Keep in mind that when it comes to creating a productive routine, you have to find something that works for you!



# Find a Designated Workspace

When it finally comes time to sit down and get work done, you should have a designated workspace. As a digital nomad, how are you supposed to keep a consistent workspace? It isn't like you can have a home office setup.

There are a few ways to keep some consistency in your workspace.

## Why is a Designated Workspace Helpful?

Consistency is vital when it comes to productivity.

When you sit down at your designated workspace, you put yourself in the mindset to work and be productive. You know that when you are sitting there it's your job to work and do nothing else. Think of it as going to the office, but more comfortable.

Your designated workspace should be solely for work. It isn't for you to scroll on your phone, watch Netflix, eat lunch, or anything else. This helps you to decrease distractions and increase productivity.

## Finding Your Workspace

### *In Your Home*

If you are renting an apartment or home in the country where you are living, it's much easier to have a designated workspace. Maybe you have a desk where you can work or a kitchen table where you can set up. No matter where you choose to work, make sure it is comfortable and somewhere you can concentrate.

Pro Tip: Don't work from your bed. As tempting as it is to sit or lay down in the most comfortable spot in your house, it invites laziness. Separate where you sleep and relax from where you work.

### *In the Community*

Many popular destinations among digital nomads have a handful of coworking spaces. When you first arrive at your destination, find the one that fits best with your work style. If possible, try to sit at the same desk or table each time you go to work there. This will decrease the distraction of having a new point of view every time you work.

Select a couple of cafes in your area where you enjoy working. Not every digital nomad likes to stay home or wants to spend money on a membership for a coworking space.



Cafes are a great alternative! Keep a regular route of the cafes where you work to decrease distractions and the wondering where you will work from today.

Keep in mind that working from a cafe poses its own challenges. From customers continually coming and going, music playing, loud conversations, and no available outlets, digital nomads should be prepared to block out the rest of the world. This is where a great pair of noise-canceling headphones may come in handy.

## Reduce Distractions

No matter where you choose where your designated workspace will be, it's imperative that it has minimal distractions. If you find yourself gazing out a window for minutes on end or people constantly coming up to you, adapt your workspace. It may take some time to find the perfect balance between comfort and productive space, but it is possible!



# Being Productive When It Matters Most

You've set yourself up to be as productive as possible by creating a routine, maybe time-blocking your day, and designating specific workspaces. Now it's time to be productive when it really counts - the moment you sit down in front of your computer.

## To-Do List Motivation

Before you get to work, create a to-do list on a piece of paper or sticky note on your computer screen so you know exactly what you would like to accomplish during the workday. This list should only include tasks related to your business, clients, or anything else that ensures you'll have money in your bank account.

Having a separate to-do list with only work-related tasks will help you concentrate on what you need to do within the next few hours instead of thinking about the other personal tasks you've set for yourself that day.

## Get in the Right Headspace

Amplifying your productivity means getting in the right headspace. Your attention should be focused solely on the tasks at hand and not wandering off to what you're going to eat for dinner or which country you should visit next. Turn your focus on the work that you have at hand. Close your eyes and visualize the documents you have to work on. Recall conversations and emails with your clients. The only thing you should be thinking about right now is work.

One way to do this is to clear your workspace from items that may distract you. When you have a clean and clear workspace, it will be easier to concentrate on what you're doing rather than thinking about how you should really dust off your desk lamp.

This also applies to your computer screen—close all windows, applications, and tabs that you will not use to complete your tasks. Log out of Facebook and close the tab because you know the moment you see a notification pop up, you're going to be inclined to check it.

## Turn Off Notifications

In the age of very active social media, clogged email inboxes, and constant texts from friends and family, notifications are the culprit of distraction. When you sit down to work, leave your phone in another room or set it to "Do Not Disturb," so you aren't distracted by your screen constantly lighting up.

This also includes turning off any notifications you may get on your computer. Close your email inbox so you aren't continually checking new emails, especially if they are promotions that will lead you to fall down the rabbit hole of online shopping. If you're expecting an email from a client or colleague, set a time limit for how often you check your inbox, so you don't miss it.

We have a sense of urgency when it comes to checking our phone for notifications. Many feel that if we leave our phone for five minutes, we'll miss something significant and life-changing. In 99% of these cases, you aren't missing anything. Maybe a like or two on your latest Instagram post. These meaningless notifications can most definitely wait.

### **Complete Your Most Difficult Task First**

Procrastination is the mortal enemy of productivity.

How many times have you found yourself completing little tasks that take up a minimal amount of time to put off finishing a job that requires a bit more dedication and attention? By the time you're ready to work on it, you're tired and unfocused.

To ensure that you give this difficult task your full attention and effort, do it first. Get it over with!

Once it's finished, the rest of your work will seem easy. You'll feel a burden lift from your shoulders. Instead of worrying and thinking about how you have to accomplish this task, you'll free your mind to focus on the work you have for the rest of the day.



# The Pomodoro Technique

Created by author and developer Francesco Cirillo in the 1990s, the Pomodoro Technique is great for increasing focus and productivity.

With the Pomodoro Technique, you'll work in 25-minute sprints. During this time, you're focused solely on the task at hand. Turn off your notifications and limit any distractions. For these 25 minutes, you should be hyper-focused on what you are working on.

After your sprint, you'll take a 5-minute break. During this break, you can refill your coffee, check your phone or email, or stretch a bit.

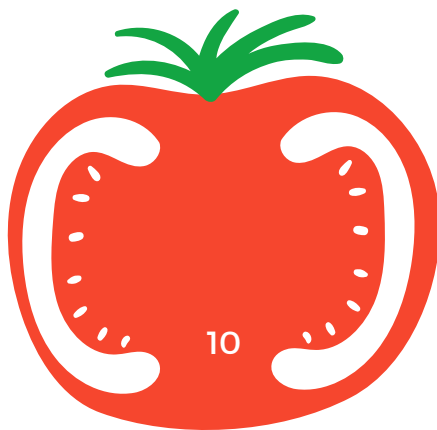
Then you'll sit back down and complete another 25 minutes of work. After your fourth sprint, you can take a longer break, but no longer than 30 minutes. Then it's back to work!

When you're really in the zone and hear your timer signaling the end to your sprint, you don't have to stop. You can keep going if you're really focused. Just take a 5-minute break when you've completed your task and then start again.

All you'll need is to set a timer on your phone or your computer and a designated workspace. Over time, this technique will improve your focus and concentration when it comes to working and completing tasks.

There are a couple of things you can do if you're interrupted during one of your sprints. If you can get rid of the distraction in less than two minutes, you can get back to work. This means picking up a phone call and promising to call them back later in the day.

If the interruption lasts for longer than a couple of minutes, you'll have to stop your sprint and start again once your distraction has ended. This also includes getting caught up in checking emails and notifications, so be honest with yourself about where you're spending your time.



# Organization is Key

Think of how much time you're wasting trying to find an email in a cluttered inbox or a file that you forgot the name of or the folder you saved it in. When it comes to increasing your productivity, being organized is the ultimate key. No matter how many schedules and routines you try or designated workspaces you've created, if you aren't organized, you'll spend most of your time trying to locate items or inefficiently using your time.

## The Virtual Filing Cabinet

As a digital nomad, you'll rarely find paper files coming across your desk. Instead, everything is virtual. While this is environmentally friendly and practical, it also means that you have to be extra organized. A computer holds thousands upon thousands of files! How do you locate the right one if you don't have an organized system?

The first thing about finding an organization process for your files is to understand how it works. If you have the luxury of working alone and don't have to share Google Drive or DropBox with someone, you can set up your own organization process. While it may be entirely out of this world and a mystery to everyone else, as long as you understand your system, it works!

However, it is a good idea to stay consistent when organizing your files. Create a system for naming files and folders. Utilize subfolders, dates, and different organizational settings on your computer to display files such as "Most Recent," "Alphabetical," or by "Date Added."

## Keep It in the Cloud

A digital nomad's best friend is the Cloud.

When you can store all of your files on a cloud-based platform, you can access them from anywhere. This is perfect if you're lying on the beach without your computer but have to answer an email that requires information from one of your files. You can just access the file from your phone!

The worst thing that could ever happen to a digital nomad is the loss of your computer. If you spill coffee on it, it's stolen, or it just randomly dies on you, you'll have peace of mind knowing that all of your files are still accessible.

This is also useful if you're working in a team or with a partner on a project. Instead of emailing your colleague asking them to send you a file, you'll already have access to it through your shared cloud-based platform.

### Create Streamlined Processes

A key component to running a successful business is to have optimized and streamlined processes in almost every aspect.

Whether it's sending out an email newsletter to your audience, posting blogs to your website, pitching new clients, or whatever it is you do, you must have a reliable system.

When you create processes, you use your time more efficiently and increase productivity. Now, it will take some time to develop and perfect the procedures you want to put in place. Be patient, and don't be discouraged by the trial and error process. Having a step-by-step guide, checklist, or even automation, if necessary, can help you complete tasks much faster.



# Top Productivity Tools and Apps

You can only do so much on your own to increase productivity. It's a good idea to call in some reinforcements so you can experience ultimate productivity. Whether you work with a remote team or on your own freelance business, these tools are helpful for just about every digital nomad under the sun.

## Google Drive

[Google Drive](#) is one of the most accessible, straightforward cloud-based platforms you can use. Connected with your Gmail account, you can upload and create files that are accessible from anywhere. Collaboration has never been easier as you can work on one document at the same time as your colleague and see their edits in real-time.

From documents to spreadsheets to surveys, Google Drive offers pretty much everything a freelancer could ever need to run their business.

## Clockify

When you need to track the amount of time you spend on a project, [Clockify](#) is the best free tool to use. You can either download the desktop app or use the website to track your time. It also allows you to organize your tracked time by project and client.

## Boomerang

How many times have you forgotten to follow up on an email or forgot to send one because it was either too early or late in the day? [Boomerang](#) is a useful email tracker, reminder, and scheduling tool for Gmail.

This tool is fantastic if you are in the business of cold emailing potential clients. With the email tracking tool, you can receive read receipts to see if your prospect has opened and read your email. It will even tell you at what time and how many times they opened it.

When it comes to sending a follow-up email, rather than waiting a few days, you can write it along with your cold email and schedule it to be sent out later. There's no more worrying about making time to write and send the email two or three days later.

Boomerang will also remind you to reply to an email if you haven't already. There have been many times that we have opened an email, said we would respond to it later, and never did.

[www.boomeranggmail.com](http://www.boomeranggmail.com)

When that happens, Boomerang will put it at the top of your inbox as a reminder.

## Grammarly

Grammar is hard. However, writing concise and grammatically correct emails, documents, and social media posts is essential. When you find a spelling mistake in an important email, especially if it's a pitch or cold email, you're more likely to disregard the credibility of the sender.

With [Grammarly](#), you can kiss intense proofreading goodbye! This application will instantly tell you if a word is spelled wrong, if you're missing an article, or where you should add a comma to anything you write online.

There are two versions of the program; free and premium. Most freelancers, unless you're a content creator or writer, can get away with using the free version. This will save you so much time and give you more confidence when writing emails or anything else.

## LastPass

Cybersecurity is ingrained in us since the rise of hackers and cybercrime, which means creating unique and unbreakable passwords to our accounts has never been so important. With so many different passwords and variations, it's almost impossible to keep track of them all.

That's where [LastPass](#) comes in. With one master password, you will be able to access all of your accounts without compromising security and trying to remember the correct password. Say goodbye to the time you waste resetting your password because you forgot it.

LastPass also allows you to create temporary passwords to share with people who need to access an account. This means you'll never share a personal password with anyone again!

## Freedom

Remember when we talked about turning off notifications while you sit down to get work done? [Freedom](#) makes it easy to halt all notifications on both your phone and computer, set time restrictions on specific apps and sites, and even block access to entire websites.



You will no longer be distracted by your Facebook or Instagram newsfeed, breaking headline news, emails, or texts. You'll now have the freedom to increase productivity and work efficiently.

## Trello

When building processes and getting organized with projects, deadlines, and whatever else you work with, [Trello](#) is the perfect free program to optimize productivity. You'll have the opportunity to create seamless processes for yourself or a team of people.

This app is perfect for those who need to visualize steps of a process or project and see those steps in motion. Move and arrange cards as needed. Leave comments, notes, and communicate with team members: upload files, set deadlines, and more with this awesome productivity tool.

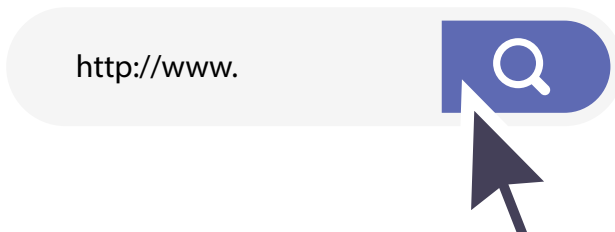
## Asana

If you love making to-do lists, then [Asana](#) is going to blow your mind. This task manager app allows you to create to-do lists with deadlines and comments for yourself and other people if you work with a team.

Not only does this help keep everyone on track with what needs to be done, but it's also incredibly organized and easy to use.

## Explore the Web

There are thousands of productivity tools out there for you to try and use. From free to paid software, you'll be sure to find some that work for you. Many of these apps offer integration with each other so you can have everything in sync. It's all about trial and error and finding the one that helps you best increase productivity.



# Take Time for Yourself

People weren't meant to work every waking moment.

While you probably really enjoy what you do for a living, it's important to take a step back and turn your focus on something else. Partake in a hobby you enjoy, watch a movie, read a book, exercise, take a mini-vacation. Do something that makes you happy.

When you do things that make you happy outside of work, you'll feel less stressed and more fulfilled. You'll also feel like you have greater control over your life. Feeling less stressed and more in power allows you to become more productive because you can divide your focus between multiple aspects of your life.

Compartmentalizing emotions and focus are essential when increasing productivity. For example, when you are sitting in a park enjoying the sunset after a long day of work, it's important to focus on what is happening around you rather than the tasks you have to accomplish tomorrow.

Taking time for yourself means taking a mental break from your work and living in the moment.



## Find What Works For You

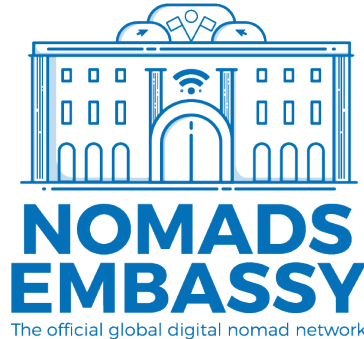
This is not a one-size-fits-all guide about increasing productivity.

It isn't our goal for you to follow every piece of advice we've provided. Instead, we want you to gather enough information and methods to increase productivity and find the one that works best for you.

Not everyone is going to enjoy time blocking their schedules. Not everyone is going to find designated workspaces because they can get in a focused headspace just about anywhere as long as they wear their headphones.

Finding ways to increase productivity is all about trial and error. It's based on the type of person you are, the work you do, and your preferences. Try different methods, programs, and techniques. Don't feel discouraged when some don't work. You're merely weeding through and narrowing down what does and does not help you.

We hope that you walk away from this guide with the tools you need to find your own productive habits and use them to their full potential.



For more ideas and methods to increase productivity, join [Nomads Embassy: The Official Global Digital Nomad Network](#) to connect with fellow freelancers around the world.

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