

The 30-minute Method of Working on Multiple Projects (one at a time)

by: Steve Snelling

Here is a brief description of the “30 Minute Method” to work on multiple projects & tasks (but one at a time), during a busy work day. [Note: *This is not the same as multi-tasking.*] Basically, you use a digital watch or your smart phone (counting down backwards for 30 minutes, with an alarm), or just use a wall clock and start & stop on the half-hour marks – to focus for a solid, un-interrupted 30 minutes on a detailed task on a single project. And on the next 30-minute session, you focus on an important task on another project or activity.

During each 30-minute session, you let your phone go directly to Voice Mail, you don’t answer or send any e-mails, and you don’t go to any meetings, or have any visitors at your desk or office (unless they are helping with the detailed task during the focused 30-minute work session).

You can do two 30-minute sessions back-to-back on a single project or task (but only occasionally). Between the 30-minute sessions, spaced out during a busy day, do something else that is more relaxing – like answering or sending e-mail, or typing up meeting notes, or organizing electronic files, etc.

If possible, take 5-minute “micro-breaks” (get up from your desk and walk around or get coffee, or just flex your fingers silently while you stretch your legs) every 30 minutes – particularly important if you are doing intense keyboarding or studying data or reports.

If during a day you can find time to do four or five intense, 30-minute work sessions (during an 8-9 hr. day) – you can do a surprising amount of work each day and stay up on almost every project, if you do a 30-minute session on different projects that are currently active, each day (or every other day). Start by only trying to do two or three 30-minute, intense sessions a day – then work more in each day as you are able.

You can significantly increase your daily output, using this simple technique. It also helps with scheduling for critical deadlines, so fewer deadlines will be rushed (or missed).