

PLANNING THE WRITING TIME WITH THE POMODORO-TECHNIQUE

This method of working with time schedules actively helps increasing your productivity because you usually try harder to reach the set goal within the time frame. The breaks are essential to successfully using this technique.

When time is short, it appears to be necessary to cut the breaks. This strategy then only leads to unconscious breaks, like drifting off with thoughts, looking out the window or checking emails again. To counteract this phenomenon the Italian Francesco Cirillo developed the so called "Pomodoro-technique" in the 1980s. It got its name from the tomato shaped egg timer.

Cirillo's idea could hardly be any easier: he segmented his work into units of 25 minutes, simply because his timer could not go longer. During those work units, he would work highly concentrated on a single working step and was able to block out any unwanted breaks or other time-consuming activities, like answering the phone or small talk. After every working unit there would be a short break and after four working units there would be a longer break.

Usually it is easy to integrate this method of time management into an everyday routine. It promotes concentrated working and helps structuring the specific tasks.

Preparation

- Egg timer or smart phone
- Weekly plan, To-do-list or time table (with tasks sorted by priority and the time needed for each task)
- Pen, paper or document with a single task

Instruction

- Choose a task you would like to work on (and finish).
- Set your timer to 25 minutes.
- Work on your chosen task and be concentrated (try not to be distracted by anything and quickly note down anything that bothers you).
- When the time is up mark your paper or document with an X to know where you can continue working if needed.
- Take a break for 3 to 5 minutes: relax, take a walk or do some quick exercises.
- Perform the Pomodoro four times.
- After 4 Pomodori (roughly 2 hours), take a long break of 15 to 30 minutes. All thoughts are allowed here, leave your working space.

Need an example or an exercise?

Have a look at the table on the backside of this handout to get an impression on what working with the Pomodoro-technique could look like.

Table 1: Example for four Pomodori

Unit 1	Goal 1: Writing the introduction: topic and goal	(25 minutes)
Break 1	<i>Get up and walk around</i>	(5 minutes)
Unit 2	Goal 2: Writing the introduction: Methodology and approach	(25 minutes)
Break 2	<i>Have tea</i>	(5 minutes)
Unit 3	Goal 3: Continue reading text basis for chapter two	(25 minutes)
Break 3	<i>Listen to a relaxing song</i>	(5 minutes)
Unit 4	Goal 4: Excerpt text basis for chapter two	(25 minutes)
Long break	<i>Go for coffee with the colleagues</i>	(30 minutes)

Use the given table as an example to try the technique yourself. You can work like this:

1. Think about how many Pomodoro units you would like to do.
2. Think about a reward and write it down in the last empty space of the table.
3. Write down a goal for the next Pomodoro unit.
4. Set your timer and work on your task.
5. Take a short break when the timer goes off.
6. Continue from step 3 until you reached the desired amount of Pomodoro units.
7. Enjoy your reward!