



Planning Your Writing Time with the Tomato Technique

This method of working in time intervals actively helps increase your productivity because you usually try harder to reach the set goal within the interval. The breaks are essential to successfully using this technique.

When time is short, people often tend to skip breaks. However, this strategy often leads to taking breaks unconsciously, like wandering thoughts, looking out the window or checking emails again. To counteract this phenomenon, Francesco Cirillo from Italy developed the tomato technique in the 1980s. It got its name from Cirillo's egg timer in the shape of a tomato.

Cirillo's idea was very simple: To objectively check his work performance and motivation, he set his egg timer for a short time interval. During this interval, he tried to work highly concentrated on one single work step and to block out any unwanted interruptions or other time wasters. To recover and to regenerate his concentration, he would take a short break after every work interval and a long break after four work intervals (cf. Cirillo, *The Pomodoro Technique*®, p. V).

Most of the time, it is easy to integrate this method of time management into your work routine. It promotes focusing working and helps structuring specific tasks.

Preparation

- Egg timer, smart phone or website
- Weekly plan, to-do-list or schedule (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 and focus on your chosen task (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 pick up with your work if needed.
- Take a break for 3 to 5 minutes: relax or do some quick exercises.
- Do the tomato interval four times.
- After 4 tomato intervals (approx. 2 hours), take a long break of 15 to 30 minutes. All of your (work-unrelated) thoughts are allowed here. Leave your workspace.

(cf. Cirillo, *The Pomodoro Technique*® - proudly developed by Francesco Cirillo | Cirillo Consulting GmbH)

Need an example or exercise?

Have a look at table 1 to get an impression on what working with the tomato technique can look like.

Table 1: Example of Four Tomato Intervals

Unit	Goal	Time
Unit 1	Goal 1: Write the introduction: topic and goal of paper	25 minutes
Break 1	Get up and stretch	5 minutes
Unit 2	Goal 2: Write the introduction: Methodology and approach	25 minutes
Break 2	Have tea	5 minutes
Unit 3	Goal 3: Continue reading literature for chapter two	25 minutes
Break 3	Listen to a relaxing song	5 minutes
Unit 4	Goal 4: Excerpt literature for chapter two	25 minutes
Long break	Go for coffee with my colleague whom I've told "Four tomato intervals to go!" 120 minutes ago.	30 minutes

Alternative

Use the table below as an example to try the technique yourself. You can work like this: Think about how many tomato intervals you would like to do.

1. Think about a reward and write it down in the last table row.
2. Write down a goal for the next tomato interval.
3. Set your timer and work on your task.
4. Take a short break when the timer goes off.

5. Continue from step 3 until you reached the desired amount of tomato intervals.
6. Enjoy your reward!

Table 2: My Own Four Tomato Intervals

Unit	Goal	Time
Unit 1	Goal 1:	25 minutes
Break 1		5 minutes
Unit 2	Goal 2:	25 minutes
Break 2		5 minutes
Unit 3	Goal 3:	25 minutes
Break 3		5 minutes
Unit 4	Goal 4:	25 minutes
Long break		30 minutes
Reward		

Sources:

Cirillo, Francesco. *The Pomodoro Technique® - proudly developed by Francesco Cirillo | Cirillo Consulting GmbH*. 2020 / 2011, [Pomodoro Technique](#).

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