

A User's Guide for a Planner? What Gives?

I know that these planners can be a bit intimidating. They represent a different way to understand your time and depart from the more time-based planners we're used to. I hope this how-to guide helps make the transition easier.

I recommend having a printed copy of both planners available for reference as you're reading this.

How To Use The Weekly Productivity Planner

Start by circling the week in the monthly calendar and by filling in your events for the week so you have a good idea of what you're looking at event-wise.

Now start listing your projects without worrying about when you need to do them. **The point is to get it out of your head as quickly as possible.**

I know that looks like a lot of lines, but it's 32 projects, which really amounts to **4 a day** with some change leftover. I figure most people will plan 5 a day for their workdays, but really, if you need more lines than this, **you've either got way too much going on or you're making your projects too detailed from a weekly perspective.**

After you've listed them all out, fill in the due dates for the projects that have them. It doesn't matter whether it's an external due date, i.e. your boss saying get it

done by Friday, or internal due date, i.e. your goal is to have it completed by Friday.

Now we're at the fun part. Start scheduling when you want to work on the projects. If a project has a due date, consider whether you want to just do it on that day or whether you want to work on it a few days in advance of its due date. You know yourself and your projects better than I do, but if you're going to cram a big project in one day, I recommend you don't have any other projects planned for that day. That is, unless *you like* being a stressed-out trainwreck for the day.

Another thing to consider: **If you have an all-day event, don't schedule projects that you can't do while at that event!** All too often, people forget that an all or half-day event prevents them from getting other projects done, and they'll plan away a full day anyway. The result: frustration, rescheduling, late nights, self-medication, etc.

A way you might want to account for events is to line through the Project Slots for that day. If it's an all-day event where you'll be occupied and unable to complete any projects (death by powerpoint, maybe?), cross out the whole day. If it's a half-day event, cross out two or three blocks. If it's only an hour or so, cross out one - even that one hour will limit your productivity, as you'll be planning around it anyway.

As you schedule a project in, mark a box off on the day(s) you scheduled the project. So, if it's scheduled for Tuesday and Friday, that's one slot apiece that comes off of Tuesday and Friday.

The key thing is to remember how you work - if you work intensely Monday and Tuesday but need a slower day on Wednesday, load up Monday and Tuesday with your [projects that require more productive energy](#) and keep Wednesday with fewer projects and/or ones that don't require all you've got to complete.

Additionally, if the weekends are especially creative days for you, load up your creative projects for the weekend and use the rest of the week to get done all of the other projects so you can play all you want during the weekend.

You can use the "Completed Tasks" blocks daily or as part of your weekly review. It's just there to give you a rough view of the your productivity.

Using the **Weekly Productivity Planner** hopefully won't take any longer than 30 minutes. But completing it makes using the **Daily Productivity Planner** a snap...

How To Use The Daily Productivity Planner

Have your **Weekly Productivity Planner** in hand if you've filled it out. Circle the day of the week in the calendar and start filling in your events from the Weekly Productivity Planner.

The *Projects in Focus* block lists the five projects you want to work on for the day. Just jot them down in whatever order you choose - the little numbers on the left aren't meant for priority, they're meant to give the

project a handy code that you can refer to for the rest of the sheet.

Then fill in the *Supporting Tasks* block. If you already have a pretty good handle on what it takes to get a certain project done, then you may not really need to go into too much detail. However, some projects can use some splitting up, so do that here.

While you're still in this block, take a second to think about what type of energy you need to complete your tasks. If they require a lot of productive energy, mark the red box so you know you need to do them during blocks of time in which you're at your productive peak.

Alternative Use Tip: You may not be keen on [thinking about your day based on your productive energy](#) - for you, the blocks may mean importance or something else that makes sense for you in your context. Just assign a value to the colors and use them consistently and you'll be fine.

Do not use the *Emergent Tasks* block for planning! This block is reserved for tasks that pop up during the day and are separate from the planned ones, as the emergent tasks are often more time sensitive and you don't want them to get mixed into the fray.

As you plan your tasks, mark off the blocks in the Planned Tasks row. Again, this just gives you a rough view of your work for the day. As you complete your tasks, mark off the box in the completed tasks row. It's motivating to know that you're getting stuff done!

PRODUCTIVE *flourishing*

Use your the *Daily Schedule* block to plan the hard times for your tasks. Start by filling in times in the angle bracket on the left - your day may not start at 8 or 9 or you may wake up late. Then fill in the column of blocks, representing your productive energy during those time blocks.

Hopefully, events with a low productivity value won't be during blocks of time when you have a lot of productive energy. It's always frustrating when that happens, and try to schedule low productivity events during low productivity periods, if possible. Nonetheless, record your events, as that'll give the hard structure for the day.

Now plan your tasks by putting the colored tasks in their respective boxes. Red tasks go in red blocks, yellow tasks in yellow, etc.

Alternative Use Tip: If having your tasks allocated to time is too much work or not representative as to how you actually work, then go by the feel of it. When you're at your peak, work on your high energy tasks - if you're feeling a little mentally sluggish, work on lower energy tasks - or exercise, go for a walk, take a nap, or play music. This block is optional.