



Summary of Extreme Productivity by Robert C. Pozen

Written by Alyssa Burnette

How to make the most of your time.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Make the Most of Your Time Through Prioritization.....	6
Procrastination is the Enemy of Productivity	8
If a Task is Worth Doing, It's Worth Doing Badly.....	10
Final Summary	12



**DO YOU WANT THIS BOOK
AS AN 20-MINUTE AUDIOBOOK?**



**Get the key insights of non-fiction books
in minutes instead of hours. Listen to
our free audiobooks while you workout
or on your commute to work.**



**DOWNLOAD
OUR FREE APP**



Introduction

Do you not have enough time? Or are you making poor use of the time that you have? That might sound like a somewhat harsh question, but it's one the author believes we should consider if we want to unlock extreme productivity. And as crazy as it sounds, everybody has the ability to be extremely productive! You don't have to be Superman or have an endless amount of time at your disposal. Instead, you just have to know how to hack your brain and make the best use of the time that you have. And over the course of this summary, we'll explore Robert C. Pozen's top tips for doing exactly that.



GET THE FREE AUDIOBOOK IN OUR APP: [QUICKREAD.COM/APP](https://quickread.com/app)

Make the Most of Your Time Through Prioritization

Do you ever feel like your to-do lists have to-do lists? Or like you're drowning under all the planners, organizers, and productivity accessories you buy? You buy them under the assumption that if you can just have the right tools in your tool belt, you'll be able to take control of your life and maximize your productivity. Unfortunately, however, you've probably already noticed that it doesn't work that way. Because all of those tools are exactly that: tools. They're helpful things for you to use in the same way that a tire gauge can help you fix a tire. But, just like a tire gauge, they don't have the power to jump up and magically fix your life for you. Your planner will never check off the items on your to-do list while you sleep. No, sadly, these tools will only work for you if you put in the effort yourself. But that's often easier said than done.

In the digital age, our attention spans are shorter than ever and we have more interruptions than ever. Staying on track with a singular task can feel impossible. The same is true with self-incentivizing. Sure, you could tell yourself, "Get this done and then you can have a cupcake," but we all know that you could just eat a cupcake right now whether you get that task done or not. So, how can you do it? How can you make a plan, stick to it, and truly accomplish your goals? The author believes that prioritizing your tasks is the first key to unlocking your best, healthiest, and most productive life. Forgetting to plan ahead is easy; with the hectic pace of our modern life, it seems like the next week-- or year's!-- workload is upon you in the time it takes to blink. But if you want to stay on top of your schedule instead of letting it roll over you, Pozen believes that planning ahead is crucial.

So, how can you plan effectively? One great strategy is to organize and categorize the types of things you're planning for. For example, there is a world of difference between planning for next week's board meeting and planning a change of career. That's why the author recommends categorizing your plans in terms of "aims," "objectives," and "targets." You can think of "aims" as broad, big issues that have to do with your career. For example, if

you wanted to expand your business and open a new, second branch, this would be an aim and you would likely be strategizing that aim over a period of several years. Therefore, an aim is very different from an objective, which might take anywhere from a few months to a couple of years to accomplish. A good example of an objective might be starting an internship at your company. Lastly, targets are smaller tasks that have to do with the here and now. Targets typically take under two months to accomplish, so they're more immediate goals like completing your paperwork or designing an ad campaign. And because your targets and objectives are more likely to be the stuff of your everyday life, it's important that you remember to stay on top of them and schedule them appropriately.



GET THE FREE AUDIOBOOK IN OUR APP: [QUICKREAD.COM/APP](https://www.quickread.com/app)

Procrastination is the Enemy of Productivity

Chances are, you know that phrase is true because you've had an intimate experience with its harsh reality. We've all procrastinated at one time or another because it's just so easy to put something off when you're just not feeling it. It's so easy to say, "Just one more episode and then I'll start working..." or "I'll wake up early and do it tomorrow!" (And if you haven't told yourself that last lie before, here's a top tip: your brain is absolutely lying to you when it tries to convince you that you'll wake up early and do it tomorrow! Take it from my bitter experience: you absolutely will not do it early tomorrow. Do it now). Procrastination is one of those things that we know we shouldn't do... but we often do it anyway. Maybe it's because you just really, really hate the task you have to do. Maybe you're in denial about how long it will take you to accomplish that task or about how much time you've wasted already. But the truth is, no matter what your reasons are, procrastination is always the enemy of productivity.

So, how can you beat it? The author recommends that you start by tackling the emotions that drive procrastination. So, let's examine one of the most common-- and least-talked about-- feelings that fuels procrastination. To put this into context with an example, I want you to think back through your life experiences that have nothing to do with work. For example, have you ever ordered a package and eagerly awaited its arrival only to find that your excitement fades when it finally arrives? This emotional experience might feel perplexing, but it's actually pretty easy to explain! Because sometimes you're more excited about having something to look forward to than you are about the physical product you've purchased! The same is often true of projects as well. Whether you've gotten a new promotion at work or you're excited to spearhead a new project, we often start out really excited and find that our excitement dwindles as time goes on. (It usually starts fading once we reach the actual "work" part of the project!) By contrast, maybe you're really anxious about a project and you've been nervous about it for awhile. But once you sit down to work on it, that excitement or anxiety is gone. In its place is your sheer boredom or annoyance with the reality of what you have to do.

Once the excitement or anxiety is gone, it's easy to tire of the project, look for ways to avoid it, and chase the next emotional high. It's therefore unsurprising that this cycle is a huge factor in the development and maintenance of our relationship with procrastination. But now that we know this is what happens, let's find a way to counteract it. The author's research shows that we can actually trick our brains into hacking our happy hormones and enabling us to stay motivated. How does it work? Well, it all starts with a choice. It's no secret that human beings love choices. In fact, allowing your toddler to make small decisions is one of the most common parenting tips around! Even choosing something as simple as what color dress you want to wear today can make a toddler feel proud and powerful. And the same is true for adults! We often connect personal and professional satisfaction with a sense of being in control, so making choices is a fast way to hack our motivation.

For example, if you have a mountain of work to do, try making choices that will help you break that mountain down into small, manageable chunks. For example, let's say that you have to read a 50-page document and then design a powerpoint presentation that reflects the information you've read. If you consider that task in its entirety, it sounds overwhelming! It will take hours! It's enough to make you give up and start binge-watching your favorite show on Netflix. But what if you broke that big task down into smaller increments and addressed each one at a time? You can start by reframing your task in your mind and thinking, "I have to read this document first." If you can do this in a relaxing workspace, preferably with a delicious coffee or tea for a dash of yummy motivation, then it's easier to focus on one task at a time. And once you've accomplished that task, reward yourself with a little break or a cupcake and move on to the next one!



GET THE FREE AUDIOBOOK IN OUR APP: [QUICKREAD.COM/APP](https://www.quickread.com/app)

If a Task is Worth Doing, It's Worth Doing Badly

You've probably never heard that phrase before, right? If anything, you might be used to hearing the opposite: that every task should be done to the best of your ability. That's the phrase that's usually drilled into our heads over the years. But it might surprise you to learn that nothing could be further from the truth! That's because this phrase is often counter-productive. Rather than encouraging us to do our best, this phrase typically engenders crippling perfectionism that causes us to waste time and get lost in waves of anxiety. So, that's why the key lesson for this chapter is "if a task is worth doing, it's worth doing badly." Put simply: don't sweat the small stuff.

This is a good rule of thumb to implement in your daily life because it can help you to save time and relax. If you apply this mentality in conjunction with the previous chapter on prioritizing your to-do list, you can avoid the common pitfall of wasting time on small tasks that drain your energy and resources. For example, thanks to my busy schedule, I often struggle to reply to messages. It doesn't matter if they're important emails or texts from friends, all messages tend to pile up in my inbox and get ignored for days because I simply don't have the time to go through them during a typical day. But because I get anxious looking at my ever-growing list of notifications-- (there's something especially stressful about those little red pop-ups telling me I have 73 un-opened messages)-- I usually put, "Answer messages" at the top of my to-do list. This means that when I look back at my to-do list and prepare to start checking things off, "Answer messages" looks like it's the most important thing for me to do. But that might not necessarily be the case! Going through every single message and crafting a personal reply to each one can take me hours; I could easily waste a whole day just working through my inbox. But my messages might not be the most important or most time-sensitive thing I need to do. So, if my priorities are off kilter and I tackle messages first, I might fall behind on more important things. I might neglect the project that needs to be completed in 48 hours while I'm answering messages that aren't time-sensitive at all.

The same is probably true for you! So, in this case, it would be better for me to quickly scan my inbox and answer a few of the most important messages quickly before moving on to the next task. Each reply might not be as personal or as detailed as I might like, but if it gets the job done well enough and crosses it off my to-do list, I need to be okay with that and move on! And that's why the author recommends implementing the OHIO Principle to help you prioritize your most important tasks. OHIO stands for "Only Handle It Once" because that practice saves you a lot of time! Here's how it works in practice: let's say that a friend has asked you to read over a draft of their novel and provide personalized feedback. Because they're your friend and you'd like to help, you might be tempted to say, "Of course!" But in reality, what's likely to happen?

The most realistic scenario is that you'll agree to review their book and then forget all about it. Once that notification has been opened, their email will simply fade into the recesses of your inbox and out of your mind altogether. Weeks will pass before something jogs your memory and then you'll frantically scroll through your inbox, trying to remember when they sent it, what on earth the book was called, or anything that might help you track down the email. If you do find and review it, you'll likely do so in a coffee-fueled haze that isn't really your best effort. But if you used the OHIO method, you would immediately look at your friend's email, consider whether you have time to review their book, and email them back with a decision. As you can see from these examples, avoiding perfectionism and only handling it once can help you hack any to-do list!



GET THE FREE AUDIOBOOK IN OUR APP: [QUICKREAD.COM/APP](https://www.quickread.com/app)

Final Summary

Everybody would like to be more productive. But as we drown in the clutter of our busy days, it's easy to feel as though productivity is some secret formula that only superheroes possess. As a result, we often resign ourselves to a life of stress and drudgery, assuming that we'll spend forever struggling to catch up. But as the author's top tips illustrate, anybody can maximize their productivity! All it takes is a few simple life hacks to shake up your thinking!

Just start by categorizing your to-do lists into aims, objectives, and targets. From there, remember that procrastination is the enemy of productivity and re-structure your time accordingly. And lastly, don't sweat the small stuff! Every task doesn't have to be done perfectly and you can always use the OHIO method to help you handle anything once and cross it off your to-do list.



GET THE FREE AUDIOBOOK IN OUR APP: [QUICKREAD.COM/APP](https://www.quickread.com/app)



**DO YOU WANT THIS BOOK
AS AN 20-MINUTE AUDIOBOOK?**



**Get the key insights of non-fiction books
in minutes instead of hours. Listen to
our free audiobooks while you workout
or on your commute to work.**



**DOWNLOAD
OUR FREE APP**

