

Top 15 Productivity Tools

15 tools to help you be more productive, stop procrastinating and start living the life of your dreams.



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The following is a list of the top 15 productivity apps I've found. These tools can help you be more productive, stop procrastinating and start living the life of your dreams. These tools will not replace hard work and a drive to succeed but they can make your life easier. The tools can help motivate you, block distracting websites and help you keep on top of your To-do lists. Start with one or two apps and learn how to use them to your full advantage.

If you find yourself still struggling you may need to look deeper at what is keeping you from your big dreams. Are you pursuing the right dreams, are you scared of success or do you need more support?

You can find more information on being productive, focussed and happy on my blog at CarolynAndersonMD.com.

Top 15 Productivity Tools

1. Be Accountable to an Accountability Partner

An accountability partner is the most old-fashioned idea and not a cool game or app but it might be one of the most effective. If you choose an accountability partner as a productivity tool you need to set up a regular schedule of checking in with them. Chances are you will avoid talking to them if you have been struggling or procrastinating lately.

Ideally your accountability partner is someone outside your company but who still understands your particular line of work. If you have someone in your company you may not be completely honest as you don't want to admit any short comings to a business associate who could use it against you.

Your partner may be a good person to fill this role if they understand your line of work and are supportive of your big goals. It may be hard to have this person as your accountability partner because they could be overly harsh or enabling. Another issue you may run into is that when you find yourself having problems at work or struggling with procrastination the resulting overtime or reduced income will directly affect this person.

You'll notice that with many of the programs listed below there are ways you can get around them if you try hard enough. An accountability partner in conjunction with some of the tools may be the combination you need to become highly productive.

2. Effortlessly Track Your Time with Rescue Time

Rescue Time is a program runs silently on your computer and tracks your time on various applications and websites. The associated website sends you a weekly report that details how much time you spent working and your overall productivity.

You can fine-tune the settings and rate certain websites and applications as highly productive or unproductive and organize items into different categories.

Those quick checks on Facebook and your favorite news sites add up to a considerable amount of time and seeing the amount in a weekly combined total can help you break your bad habit.

You can download the program for free at [Rescue Time](#). There is also a [Pro version](#) that allows you to track your time in even greater detail and can email you if you are meeting or breaking your productivity goals.

3. Schedule Your Social Media Marketing with Hootsuite

While Social Media is often used as an example of people not being productive, many entrepreneurs need to be on social media to make connections and promote their businesses. Programs that block you from using social media don't know the difference between personal and professional use of these sites and could stop you from being able to respond immediately to customers and peers.

[Hootsuite](#) allows you to schedule posts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook weeks in advance so you don't have to stop working to post regular updates. You should still check in at regular intervals to respond to people but you want to limit the time spent during your productive work hours. [Hootsuite](#) also allows you measure how many people click on your links and in the Pro version you can assign tasks to others on your team.

4. Force Yourself to Write with *Write or Die*

This app is ideal for writing blogs, books and projects. You set it up so you have a word goal and a time limit. If you get distracted and stop typing for a pre-set amount of time there are consequences. In the Gentle mode you'll get a pop-up reminder and in the normal mode you'll hear an annoying sound that doesn't stop until you start writing again. In the most intense mode, Kamikaze, the program will start deleting your writing if you stop writing for too long.

This program isn't meant for editing but rather to force you to actually put words on paper. You can edit later but for now you can just get the main ideas down. If you want to verify a fact or double check something, make a quick note and keep writing.

You can use the program on the [Write or Die](#) website for no cost or you can spend approximately \$10 to download it as a desktop program or an iPad program. The paid programs let you track your progress over time and you'll find yourself able to let your writing flow faster as you get used to overcoming your internal editor.

5. Block Time-Wasting Websites

The problem with working on the internet is that there are so many distractions. Many people have trouble making time to exercise but at least when they get to the gym they are 99% likely to exercise. When your work involves internet access it can be hard to stop yourself from randomly surfing and wasting away hours.

There are several free programs that can help you block distracting websites. You can customize it so you can add websites that you frequently visit and set up time limits.

These tools will help you avoid certain websites but as chronic procrastinators know you can always find some new way to procrastinate. Use these applications as a tool and a reminder but make sure to also examine your original source of procrastination.

Various Website Blocking Programs

Google Chrome Users- StayFocusd

- [StayFocusd](#) gives you a set amount of time you're allowed to waste then starts to block sites. You can set it up so that in order to change the settings you have to perform a challenge such as perfectly retyping a paragraph without making any mistakes.

Nanny for Google Chrome

- This [program](#) allows you to block websites from certain periods in the day or restrict the total amount of time you can spend on a website per day. For example you may find it useful to block YouTube from 9am to 5pm.

Firefox Users- Leechblock

- [Leechblock](#) is highly customizable program that lets you block certain websites during a set time period, time limit or a combination of both. For example you can set it up where you are only allowed 5 minutes an hour on a website during work hours. You can also set up blocks of websites and give yourself an overall time limit for all the websites in the set.

The program does allow you to visit blocked sites by entering a password but it will still serve as a reminder. You can also set up a custom message encouraging yourself to get back to work.

Mac Users- Self Control

- In this [program](#) you set up a time period where you cannot access certain sites. There is no way to cancel the program even if you restart the computer.

PC Users- Focal Filter

- [Focal Filter](#) works on the main four internet browsers and lets you block a list of sites for a set period of time. You can shut down the program by restarting the computer but the hassle of doing so is usually enough to motivate you to keep working for a bit longer.

6. Place a Bet with Stickk.com

The [Stickk website](#) urges you to put your money where your mouth is. If you have a project, thesis, or weight loss goal looming you can make a bet that you will finish your goal on time. If you accomplish your goal you keep your money, otherwise it goes to a friend, charity or anti-charity. The anti-charity feature provides remarkable motivation because if you fail your money goes to a charity that goes against your political, religious or moral beliefs.

Having something tangible on the line encourages you to be productive. This website also forces you to have a deadline which helps you avoid procrastinating. You can self-report your results or appoint a friend as a referee to ensure you don't lie to keep your money.

This concept was a collaboration between Yale professors and students and they've found that committing money can increase your chance of actually finishing by three times. The website includes forums where you can chat with other people are trying to achieve similar goals.

7. Don't Break the Chain

Jerry Seinfeld had a system for coming up with material for his stand-up comedy consistently. Every day he would write jokes and then place an X on the calendar for that day. After doing this for several weeks he had a long chain of Xs and he knew that if he stopped for a day he would break his chain. It's easy to allow yourself to skip a day if there are no consequences but knowing that you would have to start the entire chain over again can be that extra motivation to practice consistently.

This system can be used to help you write a book, go to bed at a certain time or practice a skill. It should be a specific goal that can be done daily. If you commit to writing 100 words a day it isn't an overwhelming task and you'll often find that once you get started you'll write more than your goal.

You can use this system with a traditional calendar, an online calendar or an app. [Commit](#) is a \$2.99 iPhone app that lets you set up multiple goals and will ask you at a set time if you've completed the daily action. It will keep track of your longest chain for you but does not count the number of missed days. If you miss more than one day it only shows one missed spot. It does allow you to edit the chain but only for the previous day.

The website [Chains](#) lets you set up multiple goals to track. The chains have different customizations available that relate to your goals like learning to play guitar, running daily, losing weight and writing. It allows you skip certain days of the week that is useful for things like exercising where you need a rest day. It also presents an overview of your goals and has forums where you can connect with others who are trying to achieve similar goals. There is a [.99 cent app available for iphones](#). It doesn't have reminders built in but it does allow you to edit multiple days.

8. Create a Master To-Do list with Wunderlist

Wunderlist is one of the best tools to keep up with your to-do lists. You can easily add tasks and dates just by typing in something like "Finish Thesis in #3m" and it will set the deadline for 3 months in the future. You can add notes to each item, prioritize items with a star and set up email or phone notifications. You can look at items due within the next day, week or items without deadlines.

You can access it online, on any desktop or smart phone. You can synchronize the lists across from platforms so you always have your to-do list with you. It lets you print your tasks, email them or share with a colleague or partner. If you send an email to the program it will automatically add the tasks to your lists.

[Wunderlist](#) has a slight learning curve but once you learn the shortcuts you can easily stay on top of your to-do lists.

9. Stay On Top of Your Inbox

If we're not careful, email can take up an enormous amount of our time. Besides the number of messages, we often have a temptation to constantly check our emails which can break up our work flow.

Blocking our email isn't an option for most of us but I do encourage you set up times to check your emails and respond. If you're checking your email when you don't have time to properly respond you end up reading messages twice and wasting valuable time.

Gmail is one of the best email services out there which lets you filter your messages. You can send newsletters to a Read Later folder that you can go through when I have time. You can star articles to

make sure they get replied to and can easily find messages with the search function.

You may also be interested in reading [10 Tips to Keep Sane in the Digital Age](#) on my blog for further suggestions on managing your email.

10. Listen to Self-Help Books on the Go with Audible

I am a big fan of personal development books and usually read at least one a week. When I am commuting I turn my car into a mobile university. I listen to audio books, personal development CDs and business and surgical podcasts. This way I am gaining some knowledge and bettering myself as I travel.

In whatever field you are in, it's important to take time for constantly improving yourself and learning as much as you can. Take advantage of your time while commuting or exercising to continue your personal development.

I usually use [Audible](#) for most of my books and download the books onto my smart-phone to listen to on the go.

Many people find self-help books useless but the key is that you have to pick relevant ones and apply the lessons to your life. To [get the most out of self-help books](#) you can follow the [six tips](#) on my blog.

11. Record Notes, Emails and Text with Your Voice

Almost all of us can talk faster than we type. There are several programs out there that will transcribe your speech into text. The technology keeps getting better and can help you quickly send emails and messages on the go.

This is also useful when you come up with a business or blog idea on the go. You can speak your thoughts into your smart phone and save the idea for later.

On an iPhone you can use [Voice Assistant](#) for less than \$5.

12. Keep Up With What Really Matters with MindBloom

While many people may not consider MindBloom a productivity app, it reminds you to take care of yourself which is an essential part of being productive. You can invite your friends or connect with like-minded people for further inspiration.

[Mindbloom](#) is an interactive game where you must nurture a tree that has branches representing various aspects of our life. You can choose branches to represent overall categories of Finances, Career, Creativity, Health, Relationships and Spirituality. You grow your tree by completing actions such as exercising regularly, taking a meditation break, scheduling a date night, or writing in your gratitude journal.

You can add images, quotes and music to inspire you to complete your tasks. These get put into a slideshow and you get rewarded for watching it. Many people create vision boards of how they'd like their life to look in the future but once it's created it isn't used anymore. This website continually reminds you of your goals and why you're working towards them.

You can download an [accompanying iPhone app](#) that will remind you of your scheduled tasks. If you set it to remind you to eat a healthy mid-day snack it can be accompanied by a song you select and a gallery of images showing healthy food choices.

13. Save Webpages and Information in Evernote

Evernote is an application that you can use to store notes, pictures, documents, web pages and anything else you can think of. By having everything in the same place you can easily access it and Evernote lets you search through all your items. It can even search for text within photos.

[Evernote](#) lets you clip parts of webpages and save them. This ensures you don't lose the information if the website becomes inactive and you can easily run a search in Evernote to find the information again.

Evernote runs on most computers and [smart phones](#) which allows you to synchronize your information and always have it available.

Most of the features are available for free but you can also upgrade to the premium ad-free version for \$45 a year which lets you upload larger files and scan pdfs.

14. Time Yourself with 30/30 Timer App

There is something about timing yourself that makes you more productive. When you see the minutes ticking away you are more aware of your task and motivated to finish it within the timeline. It can also be effective to see what tasks are taking way longer than you estimated and help you better plan realistic to-do lists.

Some people use the [Pomodero](#) technique but I have found it too constricting and I didn't always have tasks that fit in the suggested time slots. With Pomodero you work for 25 minutes then take a quick break. After four 25 minute tasks you take a longer break.

You can use a virtual timer or a kitchen timer but I really like the [30/30 Timer app](#) you can use on an iPhone or iPad. With it you set up a list of tasks and assign a time length to them. After that time length has passed it will remind you to go to the next task. You can set up lists for different things like your daily activities or for things like exercise intervals. Once you finish a task it moves it to the bottom and you can easily move tasks around. The app allows you to add time while working but does not keep track of these extra moments.

15. Keep on Top of Recurring Tasks with When

[When](#) is an iPhone app that helps you keep track of recurring tasks. If you've ever wondered when the last time you called your grandma was, visited the dentist or changed the oil on your car this app is for you. You can easily add tasks and choose a timeframe. After the specified number or days, weeks or months you'll get a notification. All your tasks are ordered by their deadline and you can use it to see what you should be doing next.

This app works great for items that don't need a specific deadline but should be kept up with. It makes it easy to see what tasks should be done soon and just being able to cross off a task can be enough motivation to keep up the task.

I use this app for household chores. I used to get frustrated looking at the house and wondering how it had gotten messy again so quickly. With this app I realized it had been several days or weeks since I completed tasks like mopping or organizing. Now I use the list to keep on top of these tasks and it's so motivating to be able to cross them off.

Conclusion

Thank you for reading this list of productivity tools. I encourage you test at least one of them out today and start working towards a happier and more productive life.

For more tips on being productive, happy and focussed you can read my blog at CarolynAndersonMD.com.

If you've found this guide useful or if you have suggestions for other tools, I'd love to hear them. You can contact me at info@CarolynAndersonMD.com or at [Facebook.com/carolynandersonmd](https://www.facebook.com/carolynandersonmd) or at <https://twitter.com/drCarolyna>.



About the Author: Dr. Carolyn Anderson helps people see better literally and figuratively. As a practicing surgeon she helps restore sight to her patients and as a wellness and productivity expert she helps people see and realize a vision for their greatest life.

Most of these tools are completely free. Some of the paid apps have affiliate programs and if you choose to buy them I may receive a small commission. I believe in all these tools and if you use them and apply them they can help you become more productive