

How to Record Your Time and Activity

Where does your time go at work? The best way to find out is to start logging your time and activity. In a short time you learn a lot. Here's how it works:

Set up your log. Use a mobile time tracking app, a spreadsheet, a note-taking program on your computer or device, or pen and paper. Choose a method you are comfortable with so you'll stick with it.

Start logging. Every time you perform any activity during the day, record it. Note what you did and how long it took. Include every activity, whether it was a major or minor work task, a video conference, or getting a cup of coffee.

Add details. Record your energy level or state of mind during an activity (tired, stressed, frustrated, distracted, energetic, focused). Include interruptions and distractions, and whether the task was high or low value in terms of your professional and personal goals.

After a few days of activity and time logging, the results may surprise you. You may realize you spend more time chatting with coworkers or surfing the internet than you realized. You might find that your most productive hours are first thing in the morning, or discover that you are spending too much time on activities that are keeping you from achieving your goals. Awareness will improve how you manage your time.



Keep learning to keep your wits about you.

Listen well to others, whether in a meeting or just conversing. Try doing things differently — study your work system to learn how you might be more efficient and creative. Read up on your trade or to advance your training. New ideas build knowledge, the key to good work and personal fulfillment. And learning activities may be a factor in delaying dementia, although more research is needed.

Developing Patience

Some people seem born patient. Others feel impatient several times a day. You may sense it building before you express it. Once spoken, it can have negative consequences for the people in your life.

Learn to recognize your personal signs of escalating impatience: frustration, muscle tension, clenching teeth, anxiety, irritability, rushing and shallow breathing. They signal it's time to step back and change your reaction.

Stop the cycle. Reacting to situations with anger and frustration may provide emotional instant gratification that is ultimately self-defeating. Accept those feelings for what they are, but practice responding in more positive ways.

Tune up self-talk. Impatience often results from the negative loop playing inside your head, which tells you "I don't like this," or "This isn't going my way." Slow down and tune into your inner voice during moments when you're impatient; then find a way to manage that discomfort more successfully.

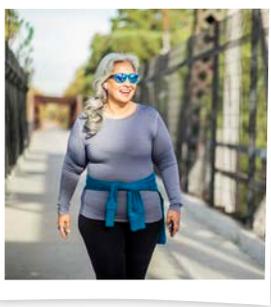
Take a break. When you're feeling agitated, try to move away, mentally or physically. Take a walk, do relaxation stretches, call a friend, or spend time in quiet reflection. Once you are calm, return to the situation with a fresh outlook.

You can improve your emotional outlook by building good health: regular exercise, good nutrition and adequate sleep. You will have more patience when you are well rested and feeling your best.



*"Patience is bitter, but
its fruit is sweet."
- Aristotle*

Too Much Sitting



According to recent research, you are probably engaged in 1 of the most potentially damaging health behaviors affecting Americans — sitting. Staying parked in your seat for extended periods raises the risk of many serious conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer. It also contributes to chronic problems such as back pain, arthritis and varicose veins.

The fix? Move more throughout the day. Try:

- ✓ **Fidgeting.** Studies show that people who can't sit still — who tap their fingers, jiggle their feet, stretch their arms and squirm in their seats, for example — have lower mortality rates than those who sit still. Change positions and move your body in your chair periodically.
- ✓ **Getting up.** One study found that blood flow to leg arteries was reduced by more than half after 6 hours of sitting, but just 10 minutes of walking brought it back to normal. Stand up and walk around for at least a few minutes out of every hour — more frequently if possible.
- ✓ **Moving while you work.** Walk while you talk on the phone and stand up as you sort papers or update your calendar. Set your phone alarm to remind you to get up and stretch once an hour.

It's important to get regular exercise. The CDC recommends 150 minutes weekly of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking. Add movement to your day whenever you can. And make it a habit to just stand up.

Oh, My Aching Back

The back is an amazing construction, but it needs you to keep it strong. You can reduce your risk of back pain with these lifestyle changes.

- 1 **Exercise.** Low-impact activities such as walking and swimming help strengthen the back muscles. However, people with low back pain often find some forms of exercise too painful. Check with your health care provider.
- 2 **Adopt daily stretching.** It can reduce painful low back stiffness from everyday activities.
- 3 **Maintain a healthy weight** to keep stress and strain off your back.

Collaboration at Work

Work brings together all kinds of people and personalities. And it's that combination of ideas, backgrounds, ages, opinions and skills that brings creativity and innovation to projects.

When people connect and work well together, they also tend to enjoy their work more; they become more upbeat and productive. Of course, working together smoothly often calls for patience and a generous spirit of collaboration, especially when working remotely.

A good collaborator at work:

- Stays open-minded and non-judgmental when faced with different opinions.
- Treats everyone equally and respects differences.
- Takes responsibility for missteps and corrects them.
- Knows how to disagree and manage conflict constructively.
- Listens well to understand others.



To build your collaboration skills:

- Concentrate on what's being said, and what's not said, so you can ask relevant questions and exchange ideas confidently.
- Soften your critique: Focus on the flaws of a concept or end product, not on the person supplying it.
- Make sure your coworkers can depend on you.
- Encourage coworkers to slow down or take a break to avoid conflict.
- Support your coworkers, acknowledge their efforts and celebrate their achievements.

When people recognize why their work matters within a group, they tend to work with more enthusiasm and cooperation.

- 4 **Build strength.** To have a strong back, the front and sides of your body need to be strong and flexible. Exercises such as yoga and Pilates that strengthen your core muscles (those around the trunk and pelvis) can help prevent back injury and strain. Your health care provider can advise you about specific strengthening exercises based on your back condition.



When to seek help: Back pain that continues for more than a few days or that keeps you from regular activities needs medical attention. Physical therapy and interventions are available to help resolve, manage and even prevent back pain, so you can get back to top performance sooner.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **4 Rs for Restoring Health**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V6tools.