



EAT THAT FROG

21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get more Done in Less Time

BY BRIAN TRACY



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Ideas Come Alive



The Big “So What”

Almost everyone today has too much to do and too little time. Built on 30 years of time-management study, [this book presents 21 tips to help you stop procrastinating and get more work done](#). It's a practical action guide for anyone who feels overwhelmed, or wants to be more effective in planning, prioritising and achieving more results in less time.



Introduction

The key to success is not to try to do everything, but to focus fully on the most vital tasks, take action, and complete them well.

- The analogy of eating frogs comes from Mark Twain, who says that if you can start your morning by eating a live frog, you'd have tackled the worst thing that can happen that day.
 - o Your frog is your most crucial task—what you're most likely to defer, yet can create the biggest impact on your outcomes.
 - o There are 2 rules to frog-eating. Eat the ugliest frog first, and don't look at it for too long before eating it.
- Rather than dwell on theory or concepts, Tracy zooms in on actionable tips that you can apply instantly.
 - o It's vital that you take action immediately, as that's the only way to get results.
 - o Each time you complete a vital task, it releases endorphins which make you feel great. By developing a “positive addiction”

KEY QUOTES

“Every idea in this book is focused on increasing your overall levels of productivity, performance, and outcome and on making you more valuable in whatever you do.”

“The ability to concentrate single-mindedly on your most important task, to do it well and to finish it completely, is the key to great success, achievement, respect, status and happiness in life.”

to this feeling of starting and completing important tasks, you're forming a crucial success habit.

- To form any new habit (including the habit of eating frogs), you need the **3Ds of New Habit Formation**: Make a decision to build the habit of completing tasks, have the discipline to keep applying the ideas in this book, and have the determination to persevere until the habits become an integral part of who you are.
- To fast-track your progress, create a clear mental picture of yourself as someone who habitually completes important things, fast and strong.

21 Ways to Eat that Frog

1. Set The Table

To identify your frog, you first need *clarity* on what you truly want. Clarity helps you to overcome procrastination and take concrete action, and it's probably the most critical productivity ingredient. One secret is to **think on paper**. People with clear, written goals can accomplish 5-10 times as much as others. **Use these 7 steps to set and achieve goals:**

-  Decide specifically what you want.
-  Write it down. Think on paper and make it tangible.
-  Set a deadline for the goal, with sub-deadlines as needed.
-  List down everything you may need to do to achieve your goal.
-  Break things down into individual tasks, and arrange them in priority and sequence to form a plan.
-  Take action immediately. No amount of thinking can outdo action.
-  Do something everyday, however big or small, to move yourself toward your major goal. Don't miss even 1 day.



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KEY QUOTES

"When you train yourself...to overcome procrastination and get your most important tasks completed quickly, you will move yourself onto the fast track in your life and career and step on the accelerator."

"The number one reason why some people get more work done faster is because they are absolutely clear about their goals and objectives, and they don't deviate from them."

"An average plan vigorously executed is far better than a brilliant plan on which nothing is done."

"Once you start moving, keep moving. Don't stop."



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KEY QUOTES

“The very act of thinking and planning unlocks your mental powers, triggers your creativity, and increases your mental and physical energies.”

“Start with the end in mind and work backward.”

“Stead, visible progress propels you forward and helps you to overcome procrastination.”

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Start by listing 10 goals for the next year, writing them in present tense as if the year has passed and they're a reality, e.g. "I weigh X pounds". Select 1 goal that will create the biggest positive impact, write it down separately and apply the steps above to take action daily.

2. Plan Every Day In Advance

The 10/90 Rule says that the first 10% of time used to plan your work can save you 90% of the execution time once you start. **One minute of planning can save you 10 mins of execution time, and help you improve your “return on energy”.** By setting aside 10-12 mins for planning, you can save 2 hours on execution the next day.

 Every night, **list down** all the items you must complete the next day. Allow your subconscious mind to work on the list while you sleep, so you can wake up with new ideas on how to achieve them.

 Use **different lists**, including a *master list* (of all the possible tasks you must do at some point), a *monthly list* (for the month ahead), a *weekly list* (for the week ahead), and a *daily list* (for the next day).

 **Tick off the items** as you complete them, to motivate and energize yourself on your progress.

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From today, plan out each day, week and month in advance. Work from prioritised lists, starting with what you must do in the next 24 hours.

3. Apply The 80/20 Rule To Everything

Many people focus on their number of tasks and amount of activity, rather than the importance of the tasks or the achievements.

The Pareto's Principle, or 80/20 Rule, says that 20% of your activities will account for 80% of your results.



Find the **1 top task** that's worth the other tasks combined—this is the frog you must eat first. Often, this is also the most difficult and complex task you'll tend to procrastinate on.



The crux of time management is to control your **sequence of events**, or what you do next. Resist the temptation to clear the small tasks first; instead, **start your day by asking, "Is this task in the top 20% or bottom 80% of my activities?"**, and **focus only on the most vital tasks first**. Completing an important job need not take more time than an unimportant one, but it'll yield greater satisfaction.

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List down all your key goals, responsibilities, projects and activities. Identify the top 10-20% and always work on them first.

4. Consider the Consequences

Successful people are able to look 10 or 20 years into the future, and make decisions today that are consistent with their desired long-term future, including making short-term sacrifices. **When considering whether to do or not do something, ask yourself if it has any consequences for your long-term vision.**

You can never have enough time to do everything. Rather than set deadlines for everything and feel stressed for missing most of them, **focus on the most important task, and give it 20% extra time, so you can do it really well.** Use these **3 questions** to find your focus:

- Which are my activities with the highest-value?
- What can I and only I do that if done well will make a real difference? [This question originated from Peter Drucker.]
- What's the most valuable use of my time right now?



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KEY QUOTES

"The hardest part of any important task is getting started on it in the first place."

"Time management is really life management, personally management."

"The mark of the superior thinker is his or her ability to accurately predict the consequences of doing or not doing something."

"Long-term thinking improves short-term decision making."



KEY QUOTES

“Creative procrastination is the act of thoughtfully and deliberately deciding upon the exact things you are not going to do right now, if ever.”

“Everyone procrastinates. The difference between high performers and low performers is largely determined by what they choose to procrastinate on.”

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Keep asking: What’s the one thing which, if I did really well, could create the biggest positive impact in my work and life? Apply this question to find the best thing to do every hour, starting right now.

5. Apply Creative Procrastination



Since you can’t do everything, choose to **procrastinate on low-value activities by giving them less or no time, so you free up time and priority for what’s truly valuable**, e.g. giving up TV time for family time or exercise.

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Ask yourself, “If I weren’t already doing this, would I have started doing it today?” Select 1 activity from each area of your life to eliminate or put aside until your more important goals are achieved.

6. Use the ABCDE Method



Use this technique for setting your daily priorities. Start by listing everything you must do the next day. Rate each item A, B, C, D, or E.

★ **“A items”** are those with the most serious consequences if left undone, and only you can do them. If you have more than one A-task, prioritize them further with A1, A2, etc. **A1 is the ugliest frog to eat first.**

● **“B items”** are things you should do, but with only minor consequences. Always finish A items before starting on B items.

↻ **“C items”** are nice to do, but have no consequences if left undone.



“**D items**” are what you can delegate, to free up time for A items.



“**E items**” are what you can eliminate totally with no consequence.

The key is to stay disciplined—start immediately on A1 and don't get distracted until it's completely finished.

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Go through your work list now and apply the ABCDE method. Start working on A1 immediately until it's done. Do this daily for 1 whole month, until it becomes a habit.

7. Focus On Key Result Areas

Most jobs can be broken down into 5-7 key result areas. A key result area is (a) what you're fully responsible for, (b) won't be done if you don't do it, (c) is under your control, and (d) produces an output that impacts others' work. For example, key result areas in management are: planning, organizing, staffing, delegating, supervising, measuring and reporting. Those for sales are: prospecting, building trust, identifying needs, persuading effectively, answering objections, closing the sale, and getting resales/referrals.



Identify your **key result areas** with your boss and team, so there's a clear list of vital outputs and responsibilities to focus on.



Then, **rate yourself** for each area on a scale of 1-10. You're only as strong as your weakest link, and tend to procrastinate in your areas of weakness.



Identify **areas for improvement** by asking: What's 1 skill which, if I become excellent at, will create the biggest positive impact on my career (or life)?

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Define your key result areas, grade them, and identify the 1 skill that'd help you most in your work. Discuss this list with your boss, staff and coworkers.



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KEY QUOTES

“The starting point of high performance is for you to identify the key result areas of your work.”

“Your weakest key result area sets the height at which you can use all your other skills and abilities.”

8. Apply The Law Of Three



Use the “**quick list method**” to identify the 3 core tasks that make up 90% of the value you contribute to your business or organization.

 In just 30 seconds, write down the **3 most important goals** of your life—the answers that come to you immediately are often the most accurate ones.

 Typically, the **3 most important areas** to people are: career, family/relationships and health/fitness. Define one goal in each of these areas, grade yourself and identify where you need improvement.

Remember that **the aim of time management is to free up more time for what truly matters to you**. Thus, when you're at work, be truly at work, giving it 100% of your focus and effort. Each minute wasted in idle chit-chat at the office is a minute lost for you and your family. **The key to achieving work-life balance is to deliberately complete your work efficiently and effectively, so you can spend quality time at home and with your loved ones.**

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Ask yourself: “If I could do only 1 thing all day, what's the 1 task that will bring the most value to my career?” Identify your 3 most important work tasks, and the 3 most important goals in each area of your life. Prioritize them and work on them every single day.

9. Prepare Thoroughly Before You Begin



When you're fully prepared, you overcome procrastination and achieve much better results.

 Set up your work area comfortably, and **clear your workspace** so you only have your most important task in front of you;

 Prepare all the **information, tools and materials** you may need, and lay them out neatly and in sequence in front of you; and



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KEY QUOTES

“You must never lose sight of the fact that the reason for working efficiently is so that you can enjoy a higher quality of life at home with your family.”

“When you are fully prepared, you are like a cocked gun or an archer with an arrow pulled back taut in the bow.”



Manage your **body language**—sit up straight and feel like a high-performing individual. Tell yourself, “let’s get to work!”, and don’t stop until you’ve completed the task.

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Clean up your workspace so you feel positive, productive and effective each time you settle down to work.



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10. Take It One Step at a Time



To facilitate crossing of the Sahara Desert, the French marked the track (which was perpetually covered by sand) with oil drums every 5km. Just by following the next visible oil barrel at any one time, you can cross all 500 miles of the desert. Likewise, **you can eat your biggest frog bite by bite, focusing on taking one action step at a time.**

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Choose any task or goal you’ve been procrastinating on. List down the steps and just start instantly by completing 1 item on the list. Then do one more, and the next...

“Your job is to go as far as you can see. You will then see far enough to go further.”

11. Upgrade Your Key Skills



When you feel inadequate or lack confidence in something, you’re more likely to procrastinate on it. **Continually upgrade your skills in your key result areas—this keeps you up-to-date, and provides the confidence and energy to get things done effectively.** Build your mental muscles, using these 3 steps to master any field:



Read about your field at least 1 hour daily.



Take every available course and seminar available on the key skills.



Convert your travelling time to learning time by listening to audio programs.

“Feeling weak or deficient in a single area is enough to discourage you from starting the job at all.”

“Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field.”

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Identify the key skills and competencies that you need to become a leader in your field. Resolve to be a master of your craft: set a goal, make a plan, and start developing yourself in those areas.

12. Leverage Your Special Talents



All of us have unique talents and abilities—your job is to find out what they are, and hone them so you can become truly outstanding. Your skills are valuable assets—even if you lose all your money, you can earn it back with the right skills. **To identify your talents, consider what you love to do and earns you the most praises or compliments from others.**

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Ask yourself: What do I love most about my work? What has contributed most to my success? If I could have any job, what would I do? To unlock your potential, focus on the areas that you love and have special talents in.

13. Identify Your Key Constraints



In any task or goal, there will always be limiting factors. Sometimes, a small constraint (e.g. a wrong perception or missing process) can create huge bottlenecks.

-  Only 20% of your constraints in work/life are external. 80% are **internal** to you (e.g. your beliefs, habits, disciplines, skills). Start by taking full responsibility for your results. Looking into yourself, and ask: What in me is holding me back? What's determining how fast I can achieve my goals?
-  **Once you've correctly identified your most critical constraint, focus fully on eliminating it.** When you start your day by removing a key constraint, it'll energize and empower you.



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KEY QUOTES

"Become a lifelong student of your craft."

"Your job is to identify your special areas of uniqueness and then to commit yourself to becoming very, very good in those areas."

"Often, alleviating a key constraint or limiting factor is the most important frog you could eat at that moment."



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KEY QUOTES

"You must choose your own frogs and then make yourself eat them in their order of importance."

"One of the most important requirements for being happy and productive is for you to guard and nurture your energy levels at all times."

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Look at your most important goal. Identify 1 key constraint using the questions above, and take any action instantly to remove it.

14. Apply Pressure On Yourself



Only about 2% of people are leaders who push themselves to get things done, rather than wait for others to do things for them.

 Set **artificial deadlines** for yourself, e.g. imagine you are leaving for long a holiday tomorrow and must finish all your critical tasks today.

 Aim to be a role model, and set the bar as the leader in your field. **Make it a game** to push yourself to go the extra mile, and beat your own records or deadlines.

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Define the steps for every major job/ project, set deadlines for yourself and make it a game to race against your own clock.

15. Maximize Your Personal Powers



Our performance and productivity depends on our level of physical, mental, and emotional energies. When we're tired after working for long hours, or lack rest, it's like trying to see through a mental fog or walk through sludge.

 Analyse your energy levels, identify your **peak periods** (e.g. early in the morning, in the afternoon), and do your most important tasks at these times. When you're tired, use the time to rest rather than work unproductively.

 Rest and **recharge regularly**. Go to bed early 5 nights a week, and make a conscious effort to, say, skip TV for an extra hour of rest. Take 1 full day off every week when you totally put

aside work, and allow your brain to rest. Take regular vacations, including short weekend trips and longer two-week trips to reenergize yourself.

 Take care of your **physical health**: Eat well, and exercise 200 minutes each week.

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Analyse your energy levels. Identify what you should (a) do more of, (b) do less of, (c) start doing, and (d) stop doing. Select 1 activity that can improve your health/energy, and repeat it until it becomes a habit.

16. Motivate Yourself Into Action

How you interpret things and talk to yourself affect how you feel, and whether you're motivated or demotivated, energized or de-energized.

 Be an **optimist**: (a) Look for the good in any situation, (b) find valuable lessons in setbacks, (c) seek solutions to problem, and (d) constantly think and talk about your goals.

 Don't complain about your problems. Instead, **speak to yourself positively** until you believe those statements (e.g. "I can do it!", "I love myself!").

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Take control and responsibility of your mind. Focus on solutions, improvements and what you want (not problems, failures or what you don't want).

17. Stop the Technological Time-Drain

Use technology as a tool to effectively communicate and connect anytime, anywhere. However, don't become enslaved by it.

 Constant communication is unnecessary, and can be addictive and overwhelming. For example, only a small portion of your emails require your immediate attention. If you missed a truly



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KEY QUOTES

"To keep yourself motivated, you must resolve to become a complete optimist."

"Technology can be your best friend or your worst enemy."

"Sometimes, to get more done of higher value, you have to stop doing things of lower value."

vital email or message, the sender will contact you again. **Reduce incessant, low-value communication**, to free up time for high-value work.

-  To stay calm, clearheaded, and in your peak condition, learn to **detach regularly** from technology and communication devices, especially on your off-day or vacations.

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Create “zones of silence” daily, e.g. switch off all communication devices and technology for 1 hour in the mornings & afternoons. Stay away from technology for 1 day each week to clear your mind.

18. Breakdown the Task

When a task seems too big and insurmountable, we tend to procrastinate. Psychologically, it’s easier to get started on a small task than take on a huge project. Moreover, completing a task gives you a sense of satisfaction that energizes you to take on the next task, then the next, until the job is completed. **Break the task down, so you can conquer it bit by bit:**

-  The “**salami slice**” approach: Slice the job up (like slicing a roll of salami), and tackle it one slice at a time.
-  The “**Swiss cheese**” approach: Set aside a fixed amount of time to work on the project, with the goal of punching a hole in the task. Then, take a break and do something else before returning to punch another hole.

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Use either of the methods above to tackle a big task you’ve been procrastinating on. Do it now!

19. Create Large Chunks of Time

Most important, high-value activities (e.g. sales calls, executive planning) require chunks of unbroken time to complete.



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KEY QUOTES

“Very few things are so important that they cannot wait.”

“The bigger the frog you eat, the greater the surge of personal power and energy you experience.”

“Your job in time management is to deliberately and creatively organize the concentrated time periods you need to get your key jobs done well and on schedule.”



Use a time-planner to plan for your day in advance. Find ways to consolidate 30/60/90 minute blocks of time, when you can focus on your most important tasks with no distraction. **Schedule the time blocks** in your planner as appointments with yourself.



When you're **travelling** for business, use the time on the plane to plan ahead and/or get work done. You'd be amazed at how much you can complete during that window of uninterrupted time. Make every minute count!

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Be creative in how you free up chunks of concentrated time. Plan in advance and use this time to work continuously without distraction.

20. Develop a Sense of Urgency



To be highly productive, you must set aside the time to think, plan, and set priorities, then get to work steadily, briskly and with urgency.



When you habitually work on your most important tasks with speed and focus, you're more likely to "**get in the zone**" or get "in flow". In this state, you function at a higher plane with clarity, creativity, and competence, feel energized and achieve effortlessly.



When you're regularly in the zone and working toward your most important goals, you overcome inertia and create **momentum**. You take less energy to keep going and complete your goal.

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Identify an area where you tend to procrastinate. Resolve to take fast and prompt action, until the sense of urgency becomes a habit.



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KEY QUOTES

"A sense of urgency feels very much like racing against yourself."

"A fast tempo seems to go hand in hand with all great success."

21. Single-Handle Every Task



Single handling basically means that, **once you begin a task, you keep working on it (without distraction or deviation) until it's done.**

▶▶▶ Constantly **starting-and-stopping** a task can take you as much as 500% of the time, since you must re-orientate yourself, overcome inertia and regain momentum each time.



By learning to focus on your most valuable task and persevering single-mindedly until it's complete, you're moulding yourself for success, by cultivating **self-discipline and control**. When you can master yourself, you can conquer any task.

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Challenge yourself today. Select your most important task or project, start working on it and do not stop until it's completed.



Other Details in the Book to Look out For

This is a succinct, easy-to-read book that breaks down what it means to eat your frog and get more done in less time. Tracy ends the book with a recap of the 21 rules/principles. By applying them until they're a part of you, you can enjoy great results and success, as well as a sense of personal power and satisfaction. The key is to start taking action immediately.

For more details, please visit www.briantracy.com.



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KEY QUOTES

"Your ability to select your most important task, to begin it, and then to concentrate on it single-mindedly until it is complete is the key to high levels of performance and personal productivity."

"Self-discipline, self-mastery, and self-control are the basic building blocks of character and high-performance."

"Do something. Do anything, but get started."

About the Author



Brian Tracy (born 1944) is a Canadian-born American motivational public speaker and self-development author. He is the author of over 70 books that have been translated into dozens of languages. Tracy is the Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, which specializes in counselling on leadership, selling, self-esteem, goals, strategy, creativity and success psychology.

Prior to founding his company, Brian served as the Chief Operating Officer of a development company, and had careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication, importation, distribution and management consulting.

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