



TIME Sprint: 20 to 90 minutes of obsessed focus on one planned activity.

All you need to do to establish a daily routine of obsessed, planned sprints, is follow the three TIME Sprinting guidelines:

1. **Sprint:** Work obsessively on one planned task only for 20 to 90 minutes with a visual stopwatch on, counting up. If you reach 90 minutes, take a break.
2. **Relay:** Perform four TIME Sprints in a row with up to six-minute breaks in between. Each four-sprint-in-a-row sequence is a relay.
3. **Block distraction by keeping a distraction capture list:** If you feel a distraction, don't switch tasks. Keep a notepad handy and write down the distraction. Return to sprinting on your chosen task.

Sometimes people have questions when they get into sprinting. Here are responses to the 10 most common questions.

1. **How many sprints should I complete in one day?** Plan a maximum of four relays a day, or 16 sprints. (Often, you can get more done in five hours or so of sprinting than many people get done in 12 hours without sprinting.) You can't, however, press turbo all day, all the time. Most people benefit from healthy amounts of non-sprint time.
2. **What about a day full of meetings, how do I sprint then?** Some days aren't right for sprinting. Meetings, classes, meals, conferences and events...some activities don't lend themselves to sprinting. In fact, if you have a lot of meetings, try to schedule them all back-to-back. That might help you sprint all morning on a different day without meetings interrupting your TIME Sprints.
3. **Got any tips for stopwatches?** First, don't use your phone. Phones often trigger distraction tendencies. Get a stopwatch of any sort. Second, put your stopwatch within eyeshot, but not directly in your sightline (e.g., under your monitor). If you see it tick, tick, ticking away, it'll draw focus from your brain. Have it available but put it in a spot where you'll need to glance aside to see it.
4. **I got distracted, during a sprint. Should I restart it?** If you're distracted for more than two minutes, reset your sprint. If you're significantly distracted twice for any length of time during a sprint, reset it.
5. **Can I finish a sprint if I haven't completed my activity?** Yes. It's okay to stop a sprint mid-activity. In fact, you're more likely to remember an unfinished activity, which is called the Zeigarnik Effect, and you're more likely to finish an incomplete activity, which is called the Ovsiankina Effect. In other words, sure.
6. **What messes people up who are trying to sprint?** Sprinting challenges usually have to do with not following the three guidelines for sprinting (e.g., using a stopwatch versus a timer, didn't write down distractions), and not following the 9 Habits of The Productivity Code. If you don't adopt the 9 Habits, you may not have the factors in place to get in the zone.
7. **Should I sprint every time I want to focus?** When being creative, some people like to sprint, and some don't. Sometimes being creative means concentration. In this case, sprint. If your mind needs to wander, don't sprint. You might find yourself in the zone anyway, but if a stopwatch doesn't feel right during an activity, don't use one.
8. **What if I need to be available to my team or to clients?** If you're in management, you may need to be available when people need you. Often you need to talk to people five minutes here and five minutes there. You may be in a service role where you need to be monitoring your email and talking on the phone. If you must, put a stopwatch on but still leave yourself available to others. Many people in these kinds of job, however, can find 20, 60, or 90 minutes where it's okay for them to be completely unavailable. If so, follow all the sprinting guidelines and don't allow yourself to be distracted for this time.
9. **My schedule is so scattered, I can't see how I could fit in a relay.** If you can only work an hour or two here and there, only have 45 minutes for proactive work, or generally have a scattered schedule, don't worry about relays. Just put the stopwatch on and sprint, even if you don't have 20 minutes. Putting the stopwatch on will help you avoid distractions.
10. **What's the best thing to do with my breaks?** In between sprints or relays, take brisk walks. Change your environment. Refresh. Hydrate. Check messages if you must, but tell yourself to respond later unless something is truly time sensitive. If it's not urgent, respond later. If not, keep working on your relay.