

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung)

The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro Technique is a time and productivity management method that is based on work in small and highly efficient bursts. It got its name because its originator, Francesco Cirillo from Italy, used a kitchen timer in the shape of a tomato (*pomodoro* in Italian) for his method.

How does it work?

You divide the tasks you have to do into small units of work, each lasting 25 minutes. During this time, you focus solely on the task you have set yourself for that unit and try to get it done. At the end of 25 minutes, you take a five-minute break to rest and consciously think of something other than your task. Then you repeat the process. You should use a timer to mark your units of work and your breaks – either a kitchen timer as in the original method or your phone's alarm function.

The theory is that splitting your tasks into short bursts of work makes it easier to make a start and turns what seems like an enormous mountain into a series of small, manageable chunks. Having only 25 minutes at a time to get on with your task means you have to focus, and the break you get after each chunk acts as a motivator.

The method step by step

Step 1: Define your task – preferably divided into units of 25 minutes each.

Step 2: Set a timer/alarm for 25 minutes from now and switch off/log out of anything that might distract you (such as your phone or email).

Step 3: Work on your task for exactly 25 minutes. Try to focus and stay with what you are doing.

Step 4: Take a five-minute break. Leave your desk and move around a bit. You can rest your eyes by taking a look outside.

After completing 4 Pomodoro units, take a longer break of about 15-30 minutes. Then restart the process from the beginning.

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How does the Pomodoro Technique boost productivity?

- Breaks are important for staying focused. Following the Pomodoro Technique, you will take a five-minute break every 25 minutes and a break of up to half an hour every two hours. This will help you to stay on task for longer than is usually possible.
- The close succession of starting and end points to your work makes you focus on the significant aspects of your task and stops you wasting time.
- The method automatically minimises distractions and things which 'eat up' time. If you only have 25 minutes to complete a part of a task, you won't have time to talk on the phone, go online or let anything else hold you up. This makes you more productive.

The technique also has two healthy side-effects: the frequent breaks stop you getting overtired and are good for your back.

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