

30 Minutes to Greater Success:

Winning Routines to Start & End Your Day



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Introduction

Everyone has routines they follow, but some routines are more successful than others. The star at work has a routine, as does the employee on the verge of being fired. Your slim, fit neighbor has a different routine from your obese friend.

Routines are important, because much of success is the result of small actions over long periods of time. It's not possible to lose 50 pounds or rise from the mailroom to the executive suite in a week. ***Those with more exciting results have more effective routines.*** It can be that simple.

What are a few of your routines?

Think about the segments of your life that are repeated on a daily basis. For most of us, this will include getting ready for work, the first part of work, the last part of work, and our evening routine. You already have a routine for these parts of your life, but have you been thoughtful about them and attempted to construct routines that help to support your goals?

You might think that thirty minutes isn't enough time to accomplish anything worthwhile. ***But the benefit of***

thirty-minute routines over months and years is spectacular. Consistently being on time, prepared, and spending your work time intelligently and productively separates the successful from the average.

If you think you can't spare the time, keep in mind that you're already spending the time and you already have routines. Purposefully constructing routines that make sense is much more effective.

“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.”

- Vince Lombardi

Know Your Goals

The odds of creating the optimal routines for your life will be hampered if you don't know where you're going. A routine for a medical student might not work an office worker. A marathoner wouldn't have the same workout routine as a bodybuilder.

If you aren't clear on your goals, take the time to give it some thought.

Know your goals for these areas:

1. **Health/fitness.** Do you need to lose some weight? Drop your blood pressure? Manage your blood sugar more effectively?
2. **Finances.** Do you have financial goals? Are you primarily interested in reducing your debt? Are you saving for a house?
3. **Career.** What is your ideal job and salary? Do you have the training and knowledge to accomplish that? Can you get there within your current company?

4. **Relationships.** Are you happy your relationship with your significant other? How are things between your other family members and yourself? Are your work relationships going well?

Be sure to include any other areas of life that are important to you. But these 4 areas are frequently a source of stress if they're not under control. Feel free to develop goals in every aspect of your life.

It only makes sense to develop routines around achieving your goals.

Let's consider a few routines around enhancing success in a common working environment.

“Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it.”

- Bruce Lee

Morning Routine

You'll find that if your morning gets off to a good start, the rest of the day tends to go smoothly. It sets the stage to have a good day and perform at your best. ***Most morning routines are haphazardly designed to allow for getting up as late as possible while barely getting to work on time.*** Does this sound like the start of a successful day?

A morning that enhances success:

1. **Get up on time.** Are you routinely late? Others notice, whether you realize it or not. Put your alarm clock on the other side of the room and avoid going back to bed after your feet hit the floor. Ensure you're getting up early enough to comfortably get to work on time.
 - ▶ Give yourself plenty of time to complete your morning routine and set your alarm clock appropriately.

2. **Morning hygiene.** Is your grooming appropriate for your goals? You might be acceptable for your current position but are you acceptable for the position of your dreams? Avoid being the person that shaves every other day or refuses to give up the haircut that went out of style 15 years ago.
 - ▶ Brush your teeth and floss each day. These are important for your appearance and your health.
3. **Review your goals.** This is a great time to remind yourself of the things you're trying to accomplish. How many times have you set a New Year's resolution, only to forget it a week later? Keep your mind focused on the prize by reviewing them each day.
4. **Eat an appropriate breakfast.** What's appropriate is dependent on your objectives. Give it some thought and make wise choices.

5. **Meditate or pray.** Put your mind in a good place before your workday begins. It doesn't need to be anything elaborate, just do what needs to be done to feel confident, focused, and relaxed.

6. **Make sure you have everything you need for work.** Do you have the necessary papers you brought home yesterday? Lunch? Lunch money? Your reading glasses? An umbrella? Do a quick check before heading out the door.

7. **Take one last look in the mirror.** Do you look your best? Did part of your breakfast find its way to your shirt? Do your socks and shoes match? Think of it as a last check before starting your workday.

Most of us have to get ready for work several days a week. Have you ever taken the time to optimize your morning routine? If you haven't, it's highly unlikely that your routine is supporting your objectives.

Morning routines can be the most challenging to alter. You're likely tired, pressed for time, and at least a little disgruntled about going to work. But that's what makes a

morning routine so important. It's an easy way to outperform the person in the next cubicle. You don't have to outrun the bear. You just have to outrun your hiking partner.

Arrive at work a little better prepared, a little more energetic and cheerful, and looking your best. A slight improvement in many areas can be easily achieved and make a huge difference.

Making small changes over time will improve the likelihood of lasting change. Add one thing to your morning routine until it becomes easy to perform. Continue adding tasks until your routine is complete.

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Work Routine – AM

A general work routine is difficult to recommend due to the wide variety of careers. A morning work routine for a manager in an office setting will be different than that for a truck driver.

An appropriate morning routine should enhance your workday and take care of the routine critical tasks.

Gather the information you need in the morning to make more informed decisions about how to best spend your time and energy.

An example of a morning work routine for a manager:

1. **Chat with supervisor.** Ideally, your supervisor will have a routine that includes informing you of the night's happenings.
2. **Greet everyone else on the team.** It's so important to take a few minutes to say hi to everyone that works for you or influences your team's efforts. Everyone likes to feel important. It's also a great way to get the scoop on everything that's going on.

3. **Give your email a quick look.** Most email is varying degrees of worthless noise, but there are often a few that are important. Find these important emails and make a plan to address them.

4. **Check your voicemail.** A few people do still use the phone to communicate. See if anything important is going on.

5. **Update your to-do list.** Alter your to-do list based on your morning communications and messages.
 - ▶ Be sure your list is still prioritized. Many things seem urgent in the morning, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are important. Everything is an emergency to someone, but is it an emergency for you?

6. **Prepare for the morning staff meeting.** The meetings that happen every day are a great way to make a good impression with your peers. Your preparation for these meetings has a huge impact on the way you're perceived. If you're under-prepared or can't answer the important questions, your reputation will suffer.

7. **Get started on your first to-do item.** Getting some real work done early in the day creates momentum for the rest of the day. Your prioritized list is your guide for your time and efforts.

A good morning at work increases the odds of having a good day. **Reflect on your current routine and consider how it can be enhanced.** Spend your morning effectively and the rest of your day is likely to be productive and stress-free.

“The size of your success is measured by the strength of your desire; the size of your dream; and how you handle disappointment along the way.”

- Robert Kiyosaki

Work Routine - PM

Most of us are frantically working until a lull near the end of the workday permits escape. However, how you end your workday has an influence on tomorrow. A late afternoon routine can enhance your effectiveness and success at work. Take advantage of the lull that commonly happens in the afternoon and get ready for tomorrow.

Use your afternoon effectively:

1. **Tie up any loose ends.** Few things weigh on our minds more than unfinished business. Afternoons tend to be a little slower for most of us. Focus on getting things completed, off your desk, and off your mind.
2. **Create a new to-do list.** Your list of critical tasks is always evolving. Before clocking out for the day, create a new list for the following day. Some leftover items from today's list may or may not make it on the new list.

- ▶ Ensure that you're prioritizing your list in a way that makes sense and highlight the 3-5 most important items.
3. **Check-in with your boss.** There's a good chance they'll have a comment or two that will impact your task list.
 - ▶ Maintaining regular communications is important.
 4. **Check-in with your direct reports and co-workers.** Gather as much information as you can without taking too much time. Focus on getting critical information. In time, your employees and peers will learn to provide what you need from them.
 5. **Update your list.** Armed with updated information, your list might require an update. Incorporate any new priorities into your list.
 6. **Clean off your desk.** Coming into a messy workspace in the morning is depressing and unproductive. A little time in the afternoon de-cluttering your desk and filing away papers is an effective way to stay

organized and keep track of your work. Items located at the bottom of piles tend to be forgotten.

- ▶ Schedule 10-15 minutes at the end of each day to tidy up. Getting a fresh start in the morning is priceless.
7. **Check email.** Make one last pass at your email and address anything important. Delete as much as possible.
 8. **Check voicemail.** Ditto for your voicemail. In fact, voicemail items tend to be more important than those communicated by email.
 9. **Say goodbye to everyone.** You're likely to be happier and more fulfilled if you take the time to end the day by saying goodbye. Others appreciate the effort, too. Attempt to say something positive to each person.
 10. **Unplug.** Unless your position requires that you be in constant contact with work, give yourself a break and turn off your cell phone and computer. Everything and everyone will still be there in the morning. Everyone needs a chance to relax and recharge.

11. **Utilize the trip home.** Whether you're on a bus, subway, or in your car, you probably have a significant amount of time at your disposal. You might use it to listen to a book on tape that will further your career. Listening to music that helps you unwind is good, too. Just ensure the time is being used effectively.

It's common to slow down and catch one's breath in the late afternoon. Instead of looking out the window to see if your boss's car is gone, use the time to take care of loose ends and get ready for the next day. Consistently doing things that others won't do is a common theme on the road to success.

A clean desk and a fresh to-do list will work wonders for your mood and productivity.

“Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure.”

- Confucius

General Tips for Successful Routines at Work

While a specific morning and evening work routine won't work for everyone, there are common themes that are important to consider for nearly any career.

1. **Get started quickly.** Avoid getting to work, flopping down at your desk or workstation, and catching your breath. Momentum is challenging to regain once you stop. Knowing what needs to be done before you get to work can make the difference.
2. **Avoid isolating yourself.** Communication is critical to success on the job. The further up the ladder you travel, the more important it becomes. Ensure that communicating with the relevant people is part of your routine.
3. **Avoid distractions.** There are many potential distractions at work. Gossip, email, internet, and general drama can all be distracting. **Avoid**

distractions and focus on your workday. Let everyone else waste their time.

4. **Avoid work that has minimal impact. It's common to confuse being busy with being effective.** Many of us could work half as much and get twice as much done with a little focus and prioritization.
5. **Get a little exercise.** Exercise might require its own routine if you're intent on keeping your success routines to 30 minutes or less. Exercise is obviously beneficial to your health. It's also effective for reducing stress and increasing focus. A little exercise in the morning will energize you for the rest of the day.

Keep these items in mind when creating your work routine. **Start working your routine as soon as you walk in the door.** Get busy on important work and find out what you need to know for the rest of the day.

“You don't have to be a genius or a visionary or even a college graduate to be successful. You just need a framework and a dream.”

- Michael Dell

Evening Routine

Ending your day in a thoughtful and effective way is just as important as starting it well. ***Your evening routine should support your goals and help to set up the following day.*** If you haven't consciously developed your evening routine, you're missing out on a key success tool.

1. **Relax.** Take part in an activity that provides mental relaxation. Reading, watching TV, listening to music, or taking a walk are just a few options. You know what relaxes you. Do it for at least 30 minutes.
2. **Spend time on a hobby.** Success isn't just about your career. Being successful also means having some leisure time to spend on something that you genuinely enjoy. If you've ever dreamt of playing the violin or learning to knit, it's important to schedule the time.
3. **Choose your clothes for the next day.** Avoid running around in the morning searching for clean socks or a shirt that matches your pants. Pick out your clothes while there's still time to do laundry.

- ▶ Dress like your boss, not like your peers.
4. **Learn something that will further your career.**
- Most people reach a certain level at work and then stop learning. How many people do you know that spend even 10 minutes a day getting better at their jobs?
- ▶ You could learn how to be a more effective communicator or how to be more organized. Think about your weaknesses and learn something that will address them. No one else is doing it, which is exactly why you should be.
5. **Review your to-do list.** Give your list a quick glance before going to bed. Add any important tasks that need to be completed tomorrow. You'll wake up knowing exactly what needs to be done.
6. **Review your goals.** Before turning out the light, take a moment to review your goals. ***Sleeping after focusing on your goals is very powerful.*** You're instructing your brain to find solutions that will make your dreams come true.

7. **Go to bed on time.** Ensure you're getting enough sleep to be maximally effective. If you're sleeping significantly longer on the weekends than you are during the week, you're probably not going to bed early enough. Try to level out your sleep schedule. How tired are you in the morning? Going to bed earlier could be your solution.

End your day with a routine that makes having a successful day more likely. ***Consider your goals and responsibilities at work and then develop a routine that supports those endeavors.*** Everyone else will be watching TV while you're laying the foundation to get ahead.

“Success or failure depends more upon attitude than upon capacity. Successful men act as though they have accomplished or are enjoying something. Soon it becomes a reality. Act, look, feel successful, conduct yourself accordingly, and you will be amazed at the positive results.”

- William James

Conclusion

Success and routines go hand-in-hand. Developing routines that are geared toward supporting your success and repeating them daily almost guarantees that success. Any segment of your life that repeats is worthy of a routine. Few of us ever take the time to optimize the processes in our lives.

The period of time before work sets the stage for the rest of the day. A pre-work routine can ensure that you arrive at work on time, motivated, energetic, and looking and feeling your best. Contrast that with the attitude, appearance, and productivity of your peers. You can easily stand out in a positive way.

Your work morning is an optimal time to gather information and strategically apply it to the rest of the day. Handle daily tasks quickly and on time. Communication with your team, boss, and peers is pivotal.

The late afternoon is useful for tying up loose ends, taking care of business that doesn't require a lot of

thought, and preparing for the following day. While most employees spend their afternoon lying low until it's time to leave, you'll be moving further ahead. How much progress would you make over the course of a year?

Reviewing goals, relaxing, and preparing for the next day are the goals of the evening. Now is also a wonderful time to enjoy a hobby. Enjoying your free time is a part of success. Ensure you're spending at least part of your evening on an enjoyable activity.

Ultimately, routines should support your goals. Have a set of goals prior to developing your various routines.

Thirty minutes is a small price to pay for success. You're already spending the time, so spend it in a way that enhances your life!

"Success is not measured by what you accomplish, but by the opposition you have encountered, and the courage with which you have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds."

- Orison Swett Marden