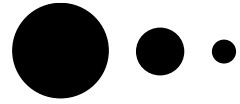


THE GROWTH MARATHON

— One Stride At a Time —



00:25



POMODORO TECHNIQUE ON STEROIDS



• ● ● **THE GROWTH MARATHON** ● ●

— **One Stride At a Time** —

Contents

Introduction 1

Understanding the basic Pomodoro technique 1

4 reasons to enhance the basic Pomodoro technique 1

Pomodoro technique on steroids 2

Conclusion 3

Introduction

In today's hyper-connected world, maintaining focus has become increasingly challenging. Some discipline is required to stay focused on what is important. I will not touch on what is important here, but rather on a technique that can assist us in staying disciplined. Effective time management is crucial to avoid feeling overwhelmed (and eventually procrastinating tasks), mental fatigue from extended work sessions with no breaks etc.

Enter the Pomodoro Technique, a time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. Apparently it is called Pomodoro (Italian word for tomato) because Cirillo used a tomato-shaped kitchen timer to measure his work intervals when he was a varsity student.

Quite a simple yet efficient technique. I have used it for a few years whenever I need to get some work going. I recently learned this tool can be supercharged and brought to a new level.

Let's explore how to take the Pomodoro Technique to the next level for maximum focus and productivity.

Understanding the basic Pomodoro technique

Before jumping into its enhanced form, let's briefly have a look at what the traditional Pomodoro technique involves:

1. Choose a task to work on
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes (this is one "Pomodoro")
3. Work on the task for the duration of a Pomodoro
4. Take a short break (5 mins typically)
5. Repeat. (After 4 Pomodoros you can take a slightly longer break of 20 – 30mins)

According to Cirillo, this technique leverages our natural attention spans and the principle of regular breaks to maintain high productivity.

4 reasons to enhance the basic Pomodoro technique

The basic technique is effective, I can attest to that, but there are four reasons why it is important to upgrade the technique.

1. Increased digital distractions

- The technique was developed in the 1980s, before this era of constant digital connectivity (Instagram, WhatsApp etc.). Due to the frequency of distractions in this day and age, a more robust approach is required to maintain focus.

2. Personal variation in focus levels

- Some individuals may have longer, or shorter optimal focus periods compared to the prescribed 25mins, hence necessitating a more personalized approach.

3. Complex task requirements

- An upgraded technique should accommodate varying task complexities and durations.

4. Incorporating latest productivity research

- New research in productivity, time management, neuroscience and psychology has emerged since the technique's inception, requiring a revamp of the technique.

Pomodoro technique on steroids

Let me provide rough guidelines on how to deal with distractions during a Pomodoro session, then we can hop into the enhanced Pomodoro technique. You can do the following:

1. Use the "Parking Lot" method; keep a notepad nearby to jot down any intrusive thoughts and continue with your work. You can return to those notes later.
2. If you are using it in a work setting, plan your Pomodoro sessions ahead and book them in your calendar for your colleagues to know when not to be disturbed.
3. If working alone, disconnect from digital devices that might cause distractions throughout the duration of your Pomodoros.

The enhanced Pomodoro is as follows:

1. Personalize your Pomodoro length

Experiment with different time blocks (e.g. 25mins when learning, 50mins when doing creative tasks, 15mins when doing less engaging tasks) and stick to what works best for you when performing different tasks.

2. Have a pre-Pomodoro ritual

This is similar to the motivational ritual James Clear refers to in Atomic Habit ([check here](#)). This ritual can be anything, as long as your brain can associate it to you switching on. Before starting to write, I set my timer on my Garmin watch, put my phone out of reach and put it on silent mode, open the relevant apps I typically use for research and writing, and when I press the start button on my watch, its gentle vibration concludes the ritual and I'm good to go.

3. Incorporate mindfulness

Start each Pomodoro with a 60-second mindfulness exercise. This can significantly improve your focus and reduce mind-wandering (you can refer to article by [Bennike et al. 2017](#)).

4. Optimize your environment

Use noise cancelling headphones (I use Anker Soundcores, they are affordable and do a reasonable job), play focus-enhancing music (there are some nice ones on Spotify) or use apps to create an auditory

environment that suits you (I think there are a few that exist, like Noisli or Brain.fm, but my Spotify playlist does the trick for me).

5. Track and analyze your progress

I track how much time I spend on tasks with Pomodoro by adding a marble to a jar for every 60mins covered and reviewing the work I've done. You can use time tracking software if you are more into that style of tracking (I haven't used any yet, but I've heard of toggl and RescueTime that can track your Pomodoros and analyze your productivity patterns)

Conclusion

There you have it, the Pomodoro technique on steroids. If you would like to try it out, then I encourage you to do the following:

- Download a Pomodoro timer and commit to testing this technique for a week or two (all five steps). Ensure you personalize it.
- Keep a "productivity journal" to track your Pomodoros, noting what works best for you for different types of tasks.
- Share your experience with us in the comment section or on social media once you are done.