

Getting Things Done is a 2001 book by David Allen. It describes a comprehensive time management method that focuses on moving plan tasks and projects out of your mind by recording them and breaking them down into smaller work items.

A 3 Minute Summary of the 15 Core Lessons

#1 5 Steps to Success

This book's "Getting Things Done", or GTD method follows five steps that can help you apply order to the chaotic system of your mind. The first of these steps is to capture or collect whatever has your attention. This involves consciously focusing on what has your attention and bring it to the forefront of your thoughts so you can decide what to do with it instead of letting it run rampant.

#2 Clarify

The next step in the five-step process is "clarify". This means that you examine each item that has your attention individually and process what it needs on a personal level and in relation to your goals. This may mean coming to terms with different distractions that you hadn't noticed before, but which sucked up lots of your free time.

#3 Organize

This third step will have you organize the recently clarified things which have your attention and placing them where they belong. This often involves organizing your thoughts and things into different attention buckets where you can keep certain distractions or ideas in particular places. For instance, keep all thoughts of your hobbies into a distractions bucket and don't dip into there when it's work time.

#4 Reflect

The next step is reflection. It's one thing to place the various items and ideas which have your attention into their organized buckets. It's another thing to keep them organized over the long-term. This requires frequent reflection and review so you can always replace different items back into the correct spots if they get out or you lose focus.

#5 Engage

Finally, the last step is to engage after you've organized your distractions away and are left with only the tasks you need to complete. After your distractions are removed, it will ideally be a simple matter to begin your work.

#6 The Collection Bucket Needs to Be Outside Your Mind

Allen says that our brains are not very good at remembering things. This includes both distractions and work goals. For that reason, your collection bucket for the things you need to remember should be an external thing outside your mind. This can be something like a note on your laptop or a physical piece of paper.

#7 Make "Next Actions"

Allen suggests that you should always come up with a next action list for all projects you

undertake. This will avoid forcing you to think of the moment, which can cause stagnation or distraction. Having a next action list will always tell you what you need to do next for your day or goals, making it harder to be distracted or slow down your productivity.

#8 Weekly Reviews Are Great

While it's important to frequently review your thoughts and ideas, doing it every day can become tiresome and repetitive. A weekly review is the best frequency since it's often enough to catch anything that looked from your attention but it's not so frequent that it will distract you or take up lots of time each day.

#9 Capture/Collect Everything

When first using the GTD method, you might be tempted to only write down or collect the major things in your life. This is a mistake. You should always capture or collect everything you think about or want to do no matter how minor or minuscule. Lots of minor things can even feel overwhelming if you don't place them into the correct bucket beforehand.

#10 The 2-Minute Rule

Allen is a big proponent of this rule, which is a common bit of wisdom that says that any task which can be done in two minutes should be done immediately. This is a great productivity trick and it ensures that you'll at least do something productive each day. Two minutes is the ideal time limit because it's fast enough that you can get it done quickly and with a minimum of effort. The momentum of completing a task may carry you on to harder objectives.

#11 Keep a Separate "Someday" List

It's a good idea to keep a long-term list of all of the things that don't require your immediate attention. These are great because you can store future goals or tasks in a separate bucket from your immediate objectives and you'll be more likely to start them and revisit them as opposed to storing them in your brain, where they are liable to be forgotten.

#12 The Brain is Best For Creation

Allen contests that the brain is best thought of as a machine for innovation and creation rather than memorizing facts and tasks. That's why using external buckets or storage devices is critical if you want your brain to work at its maximum capabilities.

#13 Make Your Filing Systems Easy

Storing all of your tasks or files can be difficult if you don't take the time to make your organization buckets or storage centers suitable. Spend a little time at the beginning of this entire process to make sure your filing systems are up-to-date, and you have an easy way to retrieve information when you need it.

#14 Create a Trigger List

This list should remind you of the tasks that you forgot to write down, but you still need

to get done. This is great for recurring things like birthdays or vehicle maintenance and repair, and it can help you keep your buckets organized and comprehensive.

#15 Life and Work Blend

Many people try to balance their work and life hours, but the truth is that both tend to bleed or blend into one another. Trying to separate and balance your work hours and life hours is usually inefficient and unenjoyable. You should instead accept the new reality of constant possible interruptions and work with an organized system to prevent yourself from being overwhelmed.

Top 10 Quotes from Getting Things Done

1. "If you don't pay appropriate attention to what has your attention, it will take more of your attention than it deserves."
2. "You don't actually do a project; you can only do action steps related to it. When enough of the right action steps have been taken, some situation will have been created that matches your initial picture of the outcome closely enough that you can call it "done."
3. "Your ability to generate power is directly proportional to your ability to relax."
4. "You can fool everyone else, but you can't fool your own mind."
5. "Use your mind to think about things, rather than think of them. You want to be adding value as you think about projects and people, not simply reminding yourself they exist."
6. "Anything that causes you to overreact or underreact can control you, and often does."
7. "Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought. —Henri Bergson"
8. "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small, manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one. —Mark Twain"
9. "It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires a great deal of strength to decide what to do. —Elbert Hubbard"
10. "Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win. —Jonathan Kozol"