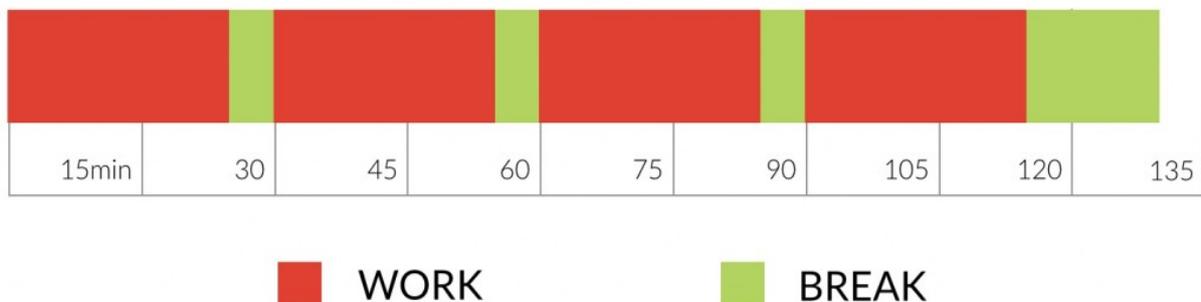


The Pomodoro Technique

Writing this at the beginning of January 2016, I thought it might be useful to see if I could adopt a new technique to help me with my resolution to be more productive and use my time better. Yes, there are lots of different techniques, to-do lists of all varieties, zero in-boxes, more exercise, better eating, etc, but I thought I would try out the Pomodoro technique.

So, what is the Pomodoro technique? It was originally developed in the 1980s by Francesco Cirillo. In summary, it uses a timer to divide your time into 25 minute sessions called 'pomodoro', or italian for tomato. After each session, you take a five minute break. After four 25 minute sessions, you take a longer break of 20 to 30 minutes.

ONE POMODORO CYCLE



One Pomodoro Cycle

Research has shown that being tied to your desk for hours without a break can be detrimental to your health, so not only does this technique increase productivity, it can also benefit your health if you move around at each break.

In addition to the health benefit commented on above, there are other benefits:

1. Using it to break tasks down into shorter, highly focussed work sessions helps you to manage your time more effectively, and makes large projects seem less overwhelming;
2. It encourages you to minimise distractions and discourages multi-tasking and procrastination;
3. Regular short breaks improve concentration, which also increases productivity levels;
4. Frequent short breaks also give your mind a chance to assimilate information, allowing for more 'light bulb' moments and creativity;
5. Taking time to rest and recharge throughout the day also allows you to pace yourself, helping you feel less tired in the afternoon;
6. It is simple and easy to implement, and does not require much 'specialist' equipment.

As with all things, there are some cons:

- 1 This technique might not suit everyone. The short breaks might prove



- 2 distracting, especially if the work is really flowing;
- 2 You may work in an environment where there are frequent distractions and interruptions from colleagues or customers;
- 3 The apparent inflexibility of the technique may have a negative impact on productivity.

To use the Pomodoro technique, follow these five simple steps:

- 1 Check your schedule, look at your to-do list or action programme, and estimate how long each task should take you, in terms of Pomodori (i.e. 25 minute sessions). Timetable the tasks so that they fit in with your schedule. Don't forget to include both the 5 minute breaks and the longer breaks;
- 2 Set the timer (this can be anything from a kitchen timer [as in Cirillo's original tomato shaped one] to an on-line one, or one from App stores. Make your commitment to only work on the task at hand, minimise interruptions (shutting office door, turning off phone/email, etc);
- 3 Work on the task and only the designated task. Devote all your attention to it and do not allow yourself to get distracted. Jot any occurring thoughts down in a notepad to look at later. If you complete your task early, use the remaining time to do any short tasks needed;
- 4 Take a short break. Get away from your desk, stretch your legs, get a drink, etc. Don't do anything which requires much thought;
- 5 Continue your work sessions and after the fourth pomodoro, take a longer break. In the longer break, again, do not do anything work related. read a book, go for a walk, have a snack, etc.

It is worthwhile experimenting with the length of the pomodoro and also how many to have before a longer break. This can also change between morning and afternoon, but it will only work well if you adapt the timings to suit you.

So, only time will tell how successful the technique is for you. Suffice it to say, I have got this post written using it!