

Allow your mind to fully switch off during work breaks

Why do it?



When your to-do list stretches from here to infinity (and beyond), it's easy to use work breaks as another opportunity to get stuff done — from responding to emails on your phone in the lunch line to making a doctor's appointment while you grab coffee. But [research suggests](#) that trying to cram a different cognitive task into your breaks can actually make you more fatigued and less productive. To truly refresh, give your mind a real break.

How to do it:

1. Build breaks into your day.

You are taking breaks, right? You might think you can power through the day without stopping, but that's typically less efficient than pausing to recharge and then strategically attacking your work.

If you have trouble taking breaks, try setting calendar reminders or scheduling 10-minute meetings with yourself — in both the morning and afternoon.

2. When you're on a break, switch off your work brain and do something relaxing.

- **Do:** Take a walk, stretch, close your eyes and daydream or take a few deep breaths, chat with colleagues about life outside of work, or anything else that you enjoy or that doesn't take much mental effort.
- **Don't:** Catch up on emails, read the news, make appointments, run errands, or anything else that feels like a mental chore.

3. If you can, go outside.

Even if it's just a walk around the block, fresh air and a change of scenery can help clear your head.

4. Notice how you feel and perform for the rest of the day — and adjust your breaks as needed.

If you don't feel more focused and refreshed, try adding more or longer breaks into your routine. Or, consider whether it's time to take a whole day off.

More on staying productive at work:

- [What to do when it's hard to focus](#) [How to plan out your work](#)
- [Assess how your habits help \(or hurt\) your workplace well-being](#)