

## Project: Time Audit



I work best with a routine. I have a morning and an evening schedule to make sure I have time for fitness, yoga, meditation, and getting to work or bed on time.

I noticed my morning schedule wasn't really working, though – I was often 10–15 minutes late on my own schedule. So to figure out where those lost minutes were piling up, I decided to do a time audit.

A time audit is like creating a monetary budget – you have your “ideal” schedule/budget, but it may not align quite with reality. Doing this audit helped me match up my ideal schedule with a more practical, actual schedule.

Try doing your own time audit! Kick those time-leeches out of your schedule and make space for something fulfilling!

It's very easy to do! And even if you aren't a routine-type person, I encourage you to do this exercise so you can see where your time is going so you can “cut the fat” and free up time for your goals.

**Step 1 – Pick a “typical” week** to do your audit. My schedule is really just for Monday to Friday, so I picked a week where I didn't have any commitments after work or any medical appointments in the morning.

**Step 2 – Create a **template**** to keep track of your time. This can be as simple as a blank notebook page for each day of the week, or you could make a spreadsheet to help you quickly calculate how much time a task took. For instance, Column A is start time (7:04 am), Column B is end time (7:12 am), Column C is a subtraction formula (=B1-A1, 0:08), and Column D is the name of the activity (Eat breakfast). *[I have a sample template for you on the next page.]*

**Step 3 – Conduct your audit.** Each day for one week, carry a notepad/piece of paper, a pen or pencil, and a watch or use the clock on your cellphone. If you have a routine, you can pre-print your activities and just write down the start/end time. If you don't have a routine, mark down what you did as well. If you're using a spreadsheet, type in your data the following day.

# Time Audit: Sample Template



Project: Time Audit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Time	End Time	Task	Start Time	End Time	Task	Start Time	End Time	Task

**Step 4 – Evaluate your data.** After your week is up, look at the tasks you did and how much time they took. If you’re using a spreadsheet, you can quickly average the time for tasks you repeat each day. Highlight things that took away your time from more important tasks (e.g. checking Facebook when I should have been doing yoga).

**Step 5 – Make a plan.** Most of my time distractions in the morning were computer things that could wait until later. For instance, a friend would comment on my Facebook after I went to bed; it wasn’t important enough to check instead of doing my yoga, but sometimes my curiosity got the better of me and I looked anyway, and then I would spend 10 minutes looking on Facebook without noticing it when I just went to look at one comment! So my new plan is to not look at Facebook, or anything except email, until later in the morning when I can take a break at work.

**Step 6 – Consider doing another time audit in six months.** I think this is a useful exercise, because it gives you an opportunity to recommit to the things you want to cultivate in your life. I want to cultivate a writing practice, a meditation practice, a yoga practice, and a fitness practice. These things are important to me, so I want to carve out dedicated time in my schedule and stick to it. I do not want to cultivate a Facebook practice.

It’s all about **priorities**. Unfortunately, there are only so many hours in a day. You can spend those hours mindlessly, like watching Friends reruns on TBS, or you can use your time wisely on things that are important to you. Some days, yes, you need some time to veg and watch Friends reruns; but make that a **mindful choice** on occasion, not your default. Life is too short – no one ever said on their deathbed “I wish I had watched more Friends reruns!”

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