

SIMPLE TIME-SAVERS

SICK OF RUNNING OUT OF TIME WHEN YOU'RE ONLY HALFWAY THROUGH YOUR TO-DO LIST? MAXIMISE YOUR DAY WITH THESE EASY SECOND-STRETCHING TIPS

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IMAGE TRUNK ARCHIVE

Whether it's an afternoon spent watching *Sex And The City* re-runs or a lunch-break spent trawling the Facebook profile of an ex, time-sapping activities can be fun when we accept them at face value. But then there are the other kinds of time-bandits, the kind that creep up unawares and snaffle vital seconds without us even realising it. Researchers estimate that we waste around two hours every day on needless distractions, and that we are sidetracked every 11 minutes at work. That's time we could be spending doing something useful. "It's possible to save a minimum of at least one hour per day by better managing your time and cutting out silly needless distractions," says life coach Jayne Morris (jaynemorris.com). Here, our experts reveal the biggest time-thieves – and how to beat them to get the most out of your 24/7.





AT WORK

THE TIME TRAP You may think you're being super efficient writing a to-do list each day, but when that list gets added to throughout the day, it becomes increasingly difficult to get through half the tasks you intended each day.

THE SOLUTION Prioritise the most important tasks. "Having a clear plan of action for the day is important," says Dr Annie Crookes, psychology lecturer at Heriot Watt University, Dubai. "When a new task is sprung on you, clarify the deadline and importance and mark it as such. Some tasks may genuinely need to be done immediately and take precedence over your to-do list, but most others will not. Categorising new tasks according to priority will make you feel like you have 'dealt' with these new requests and give you some breathing space to continue your tasks."

THE TIME TRAP Many of us struggle to stay on top of emails. "They can consume your entire day if you allow them to," says Jayne.

THE SOLUTION Turn off your notifications. "If you have an alert activated to notify you when you have a new mail, take it off so that you do not get continuously side tracked by incoming messages," advises Jayne. "Consider doing this with your phone too when you're devoting attention to completing priority tasks. Set up rules to filter your messages into specific folders so that only mails sent directly to you appear in your inbox."

THE TIME TRAP According to a recent survey of company bosses, three out of four meetings are a massive waste of time.

THE SOLUTION Set a stopwatch. If you can't duck out of a meeting altogether, you can ensure you streamline them by sticking closely to the agenda. "Try to suggest meetings are time-limited," says Dr Crookes. "Meetings with larger groups of people should be chaired and managed to ensure discussions are succinct, relevant and meaningful. If decisions are required during a meeting then this should be the focus, and if there is no chair then take it upon yourself to keep the group focused on a solution."

THE TIME TRAP You're about to get stuck-in to your to-do list for the day when a colleague arrives with a work emergency they urgently need your help with. No sooner have you said 'yes' than the rest of your day is spent sorting out their mess, while your in-tray goes untouched. Sound familiar?

THE SOLUTION "If you find you're always being interrupted by other people's requests for support or assistance learn how to say no, without causing offence," says Jayne. "Instead of instantly over-committing yourself to doing too much, buy yourself some time to think about your response by answering their question with another question. Try: 'I'd like to help you but right now I need to do x, can you come back to me later if you still need me?' By doing this you position yourself as being prepared to help, but set a boundary for the other person to respect that you are already busy," says Jayne.

AT HOME

THE TIME TRAP Whether its sentimentality or laziness keeping you from doing a clear out, clutter can be a serious time-trap when it comes to finding the things we need. "De-cluttering at home can save an incredible amount of time that otherwise gets wasted with searching around for things," says Jayne.

THE SOLUTION Have a seasonal clear-out. "The key to de-cluttering is to get rid of anything that has no purpose in your life, unfinished projects that have been hanging around for years and items that are no longer needed, used or loved," says Jayne. Start with your wardrobe. "Many of us only wear 20 per cent of what we have! The other 80 per cent simply takes up space. Clear out your wardrobe so that you can easily find your day-to-day clothes. This will save time each morning and help you choose what you really want to wear."

THE TIME TRAP By trying to do everything at once, you're not doing anything properly, says Jayne, and as such, you're wasting your time. "Multitasking is an illusion. We can really only ever do or be one thing at a time," she says.

THE SOLUTION "Asking for help can be extremely challenging to many people," says Jayne. "It's important to delegate all chores in the home fairly between family members so that everybody feels that they are contributing. This helps prevent resentment and avoids the scenario of one person trying to be everything to everyone."

AT THE MALL

THE TIME TRAP "Shops can be one of the biggest time traps," says Jayne. "Nipping out for a few things only to return hours later laden with items you never intended to buy is a commonly made mistake."

THE SOLUTION Anyone who has ever visited The Dubai Mall will empathise with how easy it is to get side-tracked, but there is an easy way to avoid this – write a list and stick to it. "It's easy to get distracted by special sales and promotions and buy more than we need," says Jayne. "Before you buy anything that isn't on your shopping list ask yourself: 'Do I really need it? Will I really use it? Do I really love it? This will help you avoid making impulse purchases.'" ■

