

A top-down view of a desk setup. In the background, a laptop screen shows a beach scene with turquoise water and a sandy shore. To the right of the laptop is a large, leafy green plant in a white pot. In the foreground, two black camera lenses are visible, one partially overlapping the other. The lenses have 'THE PRESTIGE SERIES' and 'GRAND LABS' printed on them. A silver smartphone is lying on a black mousepad to the right of the lenses. A white keyboard is partially visible in the bottom left corner.

T H E

M E N T A L

F O C U S

C H A L L E N G E

BY PRODUCTIVITY THEORY



Before You Begin: 10-Minute Self-Evaluation

Thanks for signing up for Productivity Theory’s Mental Focus Challenge! Before you jump into Day 1, take a few minutes to evaluate yourself on the following (*Note – It might help to print this page out for future reference*):

<i>How often do you feel distracted at work?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you feel distracted at home?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>When do you give in to distracting, impulsive behavior?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>When do you have control over most distractions in your life?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often would coworkers describe you as focused?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often would friends describe you as focused?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you feel productive at the end of the day?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you think you accomplished absolutely nothing?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often

My goal for this challenge:

Additional notes to myself:



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 1

“I’m facing Niagara Falls - the wind and the mist and the dark and the peregrine falcons - and I’m going to stay focused on the other side.” – Nik Wallenda.

Welcome to the first day of the Mental Focus Challenge! For the next two weeks, you will develop habits that will make you more focused and productive. It’s time for your first challenge!

Challenge of the Day: Focus-Affecting Behaviors

Today’s challenge is about identifying focus-affecting behaviors. You shouldn’t implement anything new into your daily routine. All you have to do is pay attention to your behaviors throughout the day and write down how it affects your focus.

Here are some things to look for:

- How well you slept.
- Times of the day you’re most productive.
- How much coffee you drank.
- What you ate throughout the day.
- Exercise.
- Where you work during the day (office, home, coffee shop, etc.).
- How often you use your phone.
- What you do right before falling asleep.

Don’t change anything about your routine. Today’s challenge isn’t about successfully improving your focus. The goal is simply to become aware of the things you do and how they affect you. Self-awareness is vital for eliminating poor habits and creating new ones that will increase your focus and concentration.

Do you focus better after getting nine hours of sleep? Do you struggle to get work done after drinking coffee? Observe everything you do and write it down so you can reflect on it later.

App of the Day: Evernote (iOS | Android)

If you’re looking for an app to help you with this challenge, then look no further than Evernote. Evernote is a great productivity tool that lets you jot down notes. You can access these notes anywhere and quickly find what you need with Evernote’s great search function. Use Evernote to organize your notes for the Mental Focus Challenge!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 2

“Sleep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together” – Thomas Dekker.

Welcome back to the Mental Focus Challenge! How was your day yesterday? Did you notice how your behaviors affected your focus? Your Evernote app is probably full of interesting notes! You’re probably eager to learn about today’s challenge, so let’s get to it.

A quick search online will show you little hacks that may momentarily improve your concentration. However, there is no life hack that can substitute the only thing that can re-charge your engine and maximize your focus: sleep.

When you sleep, your system flushes out any metabolic byproducts in your brain. These byproducts are essentially toxic junk in between your cells and neurons that interfere with your brain’s ability to function. If you don’t get enough sleep, then your system can’t get rid of this toxic waste. Good luck focusing with all that extra junk in your brain!

And that leads us into today’s challenge. Ready?

Challenge of the Day: Get 7.5 Hours of Sleep

Get at least 7.5 hours of sleep tonight so you are more focused tomorrow. Here are some tips on how to fall asleep.

- No electronics at least an hour before going to bed.
- Keep the temperature around 65 degrees.
- Drink herbal tea or a glass of milk.
- Do yoga or meditate to relax your body and mind.
- Read a book.

App of the Day: Sleep Cycle (iOS | Android)

Sleep Cycle is the only app you need to track your sleep. Simply place your phone on your bed, and Sleep Cycle detects your movements to track your stages of sleep. Set your alarm on Sleep Cycle, and it will wake you up in your lightest stage of sleep — helping you to feel less groggy when you first wake up in the morning. This fantastic app will drastically improve your sleep —which will in turn improve your focus.



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 3

“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.” — Virginia Woolf

It’s Day 3 of the Mental Focus Challenge! How do you feel now that you’re well-rested? Do you find it’s easier to focus? Take note of this in your Evernote app.

This challenge is all about changing certain aspects of your routine to enhance your focus throughout the day. Today, we’re talking about one key thing you may have to alter to reach maximum focus — your diet.

The food you eat can impact your ability to focus. Food provides your brain with fuel in the form of glucose. The longer it takes for your body to break down this glucose, the more focused you will be. This is why sugary snacks and food with high fat give you a short burst of energy before you crash. The glucose breaks down quickly and leaves your brain with an empty fuel tank.

Here are some tips for staying productive by eating throughout the day:

- Snack throughout the day.
- Plan your meals ahead of time so you don’t reach for the quickest, easiest option.
- Choose generally healthier foods.

Challenge of the Day: Adjust Your Diet

Today’s challenge is to shift your food intake toward healthier options. Make sure you avoid sugary foods, carbs and excessive amounts of caffeine. Here are some options to keep in mind:

- Fruit
- Eggs
- Bread
- Fish
- Nuts

Remember to plan for healthier meals, snack throughout the day, and don’t reach for sugary options.

App of the Day: MyFitnessPal ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

The first step towards eating healthier is to track your diet. MyFitnessPal is an app with a large database of foods and their nutritional information. Use this app to track what you’re eating throughout the day. You can analyze what you ate and adjust your diet accordingly.



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 4

“When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a candle in a windless place.” — Bhagavad Gita

Welcome back to the Mental Focus Challenge! How are you feeling now that you’ve changed your diet? Did healthier foods help you focus more?

The challenge today concerns meditation. For those of you who don’t know much about meditation, your perception of it may not be accurate. Many people believe meditation is about clearing your mind, but this isn’t entirely true. Meditation is about focusing your mind on one thing.

By meditating, you’ll train your mind to tune out distractions and focus on one task at a time.

Challenge of the Day: Meditate for 10 Minutes

The challenge today is to meditate for 10 minutes. Spend some time during your lunch break or morning routine for meditation. You only need to meditate for 10 minutes, but you’ll get bonus points for ramping it up to 15 minutes!

There are many different types of meditation. Here is how beginners can learn to meditate:

- Find a quiet place to meditate. Make sure you’re in a comfortable environment.
- Sit down on something comfortable so you are fully relaxed.
- Start breathing deeply. Focus on the pattern of your breath, and on how the rush of air feels as it enters and leaves your body.

This is enough to get you started. By concentrating on your breath, you’ll train yourself to focus on one thing. This will help you any time you’re working on something important.

App of the Day: Pacifica (iOS | Android)

Apps can provide tremendous help for your meditation. Pacifica is a great app that has audio features that guide you through meditation. It’ll play music and sounds of nature that relax you and get you in the right mental state to meditate. Use this to meditate and improve your focus!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 5

“When you are enthusiastic about what you do, you feel this positive energy. It's very simple.” — Paulo Coelho

It's Day 5 of the Mental Focus Challenge! I hope you realized the benefits of meditating yesterday. Do you feel more calm and focused? Keep meditating everyday so you get better! Today we're going to focus on something similar to meditation: Positive energy.

Focused positive energy can increase your productivity by 25%. Positivity creates a more collaborative and work-friendly environment. You'll focus more on the task at hand when you feel positive, not to mention more passionate about the work you're doing.

Challenge of the Day: Block Out Negative Energy

Have you ever worked on something that you didn't want to? I'm sure you frequently checked your phone and avoided the actual task. Negative energy can kill your focus and lead to procrastination.

Today's challenge is to block out all negative thoughts. Focus on positive energy and only let that into your mind. Here are a few ways to block out negativity:

- Momentarily step away from what's causing this negativity.
- Write down everything you're grateful for. Keep this at your desk.
- Think about the positive outcomes of the task at hand.
- Write down your negative thoughts and throw them in the trash.
- Look at pictures of your loved ones.

App of the Day: Happify (iOS | Android)

Happify is the best app for bringing positive energy into your life. In fact, 86% of people who use Happify report feeling better about their lives in just two months!

You can play scientifically developed games that'll make you feel happier, partake in guided meditation and train your brain to overcome negative thoughts. This app tracks your happiness progress and makes sure you're heading in a more positive direction.



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 6

“Clutter is the physical manifestation of unmade decisions fueled by procrastination.” — Christina Scalise

Welcome to Day 6 of the Mental Focus Challenge! Are you more focused now that you have blocked out negative energy? Remember to stay positive if you want to be more focused!

Take a look at your work area. Is it a mess? Are papers from months ago scattered all over your desk? If you answered “yes,” then today’s challenge is for you! It’s time to declutter your work area.

Clutter has a bigger impact on your brain than you may think. When things are left out on your desk, they compete with your work for your attention. Therefore, your focus is similar to when you’re multitasking: Your senses become overloaded and your stress increases, leading to a decrease in your ability to focus.

Challenge of the Day: Clean Your Work Area

Today’s challenge is to clean your work area. Make sure you dispose of any clutter and organize everything so nothing poses an unwanted distraction. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Get rid of files or documents that you no longer need.
- Organize your tasks with colored index cards and put them on a board.
- Have a binder or filing cabinet for anything you need to store.
- Make sure there’s nothing on your desk except for the task you’re working on.

App of the Day: Wunderlist ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

Want to avoid clutter? Wunderlist can certainly help! Wunderlist is a to-do list app that lets you set due dates and reminders.

There’s a good chance you already have reminders and notes scattered around your desk, and that they’re causing clutter — and creating a distraction. Now, you can set these reminders in your phone and get a notification when you need to remember it. Wunderlist will help you declutter your work area and increase your focus!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 7

“Repetition of the same thought or physical action develops into a habit which, repeated frequently enough, becomes an automatic reflex.” — Norman Vincent Peale.

Welcome to Day 7 of the Mental Focus Challenge! How was your cleaning session yesterday? Have you been more focused after cleaning your work area? Does the lack of clutter make you more productive?

Today is the last day of the first week of the Mental Focus Challenge. I hope this past week has taught you more about yourself and what makes you tick. Today’s challenge is all about developing habits that’ll make you more focused and productive.

Unfortunately, these habits can’t be developed overnight. It’ll take hard work and a lot of repetition. This leads us to today’s challenge!

Challenge of the Day: Commit to Two Effective Challenges From This Past Week

A lot was thrown at you for this week’s challenges. Some of them might have worked, and some of them might’ve had no affect on you. That’s fine! Today’s challenge is to pick two challenges from this past week that made you more focused, and commit to them next week.

You should focus on combining both challenges throughout the day. For example, let’s say you were more focused after getting 7.5 hours of sleep and meditating for ten minutes. Today, you should sleep for around eight hours, and then in the middle of the day, you should meditate for fifteen minutes.

By combining two challenges that worked, you will start to create a daily routine that optimizes your focus. Now you’re drastically improving your chances of remaining focused during the entire day!

App of the Day: Google Calendar ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

Since you’re starting to juggle more challenges, you’re going to want to stay organized by planning your day. Google Calendar is a premier calendar app where you can set reminders throughout the day. You’ll get a notification sent to your phone before each one!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 8

“It's as if when I open myself up to every perception, things create their own focus.” — Kristin Cashore

It's Day 11 of the Mental Focus Challenge! How was your first week? Did you discover anything about yourself that affects your focus?

The past week, you've completed the following challenges:

- Pay attention to focus-affecting behaviors.
- Get at least 7.5 hours of sleep.
- Eat healthier foods.
- Meditate for 10 minutes.
- Block out negative energy.
- Clean clutter around your work area.
- Pick two challenges and combine them.

The purpose of these challenges was for you to find out what affects your ability to focus, and what you can do to further enhance your focus. This week's challenge is about improving your focus by repeating challenges that positively affected your concentration.

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

The challenge for Day 7 was to choose two challenges from the previous week that worked the best for you, and combine them. For example, let's say you were more focused when blocking out negative energy and getting rid of clutter. You would combine both of those challenges and do them both in the same day.

You should continue to do this for the rest of this week. Now that you know what helps you focus, it's time to develop habits that trigger your focus at all times. The only way to develop these habits is by repetition. Make sure you're consistent with your challenges every day.

App of the Day: Lumosity ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

Lumosity is an app that'll challenge your brain every day. This app was developed by scientists that created games to challenge your cognitive and neuropsychological skills. University professors use this app to test new areas in cognition. Use Lumosity to give your brain a workout and test its ability to focus!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 9

“Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work in hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.” — Alexander Graham Bell

Welcome to Day 12 of the Mental Focus Challenge! Are you focusing more now that you’re combining challenges that improve your concentration? Are you noticing anything in your routine you can tweak?

Right now, you’re exploring different challenges throughout the day that’ll increase your focus and concentration. You’ve narrowed it down to two specific challenges, and that’s great! But now you have to figure out when and where you should perform these tasks. The rest of this week should be dedicated to completing your challenge combo and finding a routine that works for you.

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

You should continue completing your challenge combo. Slightly alter each challenge to find out what works for you. If 7.5 hours of sleep isn’t enough, try sleeping for 8.5 hours. Keep tweaking your challenges until you find what works.

You should also alter when and where you complete each challenge. These are some changes you can make:

- Try meditating outside early in the morning.
- Eat lunch in the break room instead of at your desk.
- Declutter your bedroom to create a better sleeping environment.

Stay consistent with your challenge combo and keep making changes until you discover what makes you the most focused. The perfect balance of these challenges will make you more concentrated than you’ve ever been.

App of the Day: CogniFit (iOS | Android)

Get to know your brain better by using CogniFit! This app has games and challenges that are personalized to your brain. It’ll also give you personalized results so you can assess your memory, concentration, attention and cognitive abilities. Not only will this app train your brain, but it’ll also teach you more about how your brain works!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 10

“If I train well and stay focused, I’m confident I can deliver when the time comes.” — Ashley Wagner

It’s Day 13 of the Mental Focus Challenge! I hope you’re staying consistent with your challenges. Remember that the end goal is to become more focused, so don’t give up! Let’s get to today’s challenge.

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

You should continue to complete the challenge combo that you chose on Day 7. At this point, you have established two challenges that improve your focus. Keep completing these challenges every day!

Doing the same thing every day can be tiring. The tasks can grow stale and you won’t be motivated to complete them. This will lead to your focus decreasing, and you don’t want that to happen.

If you find yourself becoming bored with the challenges, then you might have to change up your routine. Changing your routine encourages creativity in your brain and helps you discover tools you didn’t know you had. Change can give you that extra boost you need to get through the day.

Here are some ways you can change your routine with these challenges:

- Complete your challenge at a different time of the day.
- Complete your challenge at a different location.
- One day you can focus more on one challenge, and the next day spend more time on the other challenge.
- Complete your challenge with other people.

The smallest alteration of your routine can be enough to revitalize your motivation to complete your challenges.

App of the Day: Fit Brains Trainer (iOS | Android)

Fit Brains Trainer is another app that improves your cognitive skills. You can play science-based games that challenge your memory, focus and speed. These games include identifying objects with by shadow, matching shapes and grouping certain materials. You have about 60 seconds to complete each game. It’s the ultimate mental test that’ll truly challenge your brain!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 11

“Information overload is a symptom of our desire to not focus on what’s important. It is a choice.” — Brian Solis

Welcome back to the Mental Focus Challenge! It’s Day 14, which means you’ve been improving your life for two weeks! Think back to your productivity before you started the Mental Focus Challenge. Are you more focused now than you were before? Remind yourself of where you started so you realize just how much progress you’ve made!

Hopefully, that got you motivated for today’s challenge. So let’s get started!

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

Once again, you should continue to complete your challenge combo. You’re developing productive habits, so it’s important that you stay consistent.

So far, you’ve been completing the same challenges every day, and you might’ve slightly changed your routine. You might be getting used to the challenge, so today try to add more to it. Increasing the difficulty will make the challenge more difficult, but it’ll pay off in the long run.

Here are some things you can do to add on to your challenge:

- Meditate for 30 minutes.
- Cut all unhealthy snacks out of your diet.
- Go to bed earlier and sleep an extra hour.
- Clean your work area every day instead of every few weeks.
- Think about positive thoughts every morning before you start your workday.

These challenges might take more time to complete. That’s fine! Productivity isn’t about how many hours you put into a task. It’s about how effectively you manage your time.

App of the Day: Clockwork Brain (iOS | Android | Microsoft)

The app of the day is another one that’ll challenge your brain. Clockwork Brain contains games that will challenge your memory, attention, reasoning, dexterity and language. These fast-paced puzzle games will give you a mental workout, as you’ll have to think quickly and pay close attention to detail.



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 12

“An eagle can catch a fish in the ocean of impossibility, because he pursues and focuses on only one fish.” — Debasish Mridha

Welcome to Day 15 of the Mental Focus Challenge! You’re almost ready for a fully focused life of productivity. Did you increase your challenge yesterday? How did it go? It might be tough at first, but stick with it and you’ll be more focused later! Remember how difficult the first few challenges were? Now you’re a pro at those!

Let’s get to today’s challenge!

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

It’s highly recommended that you start to increase the difficulty of your challenge. It’ll take you out of your comfort zone, and that’s the only place where you can improve. Either way, it’s more important that you simply continue to complete your challenge combo every day.

Remember the first day when you tracked your behaviors? It’s helpful to write down your progress so you can keep track of how you’re improving. Along with completing your challenge combo, you should also write down your progress. Here are some things you should note:

- How much time am I devoting to each challenge?
- When did I complete the challenge?
- Was I productive right after the challenge? Was I productive a few hours after the challenge?
- Was I focused today and completed everything that I wanted to?
- How can I make the challenges more difficult?
- Was I more productive today than I was yesterday?

Take these notes every day so you can keep track of your productivity!

App of the Day: Elevate ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

You should give your brain a workout every day! Elevate is another great app that does just this. The 2014 App of the Year tests your writing, listening, speaking, reading and math skills with plenty of games. For example, you’ll be asked to find the grammatical error in a sentence, or calculate 20% off of a certain price. Use this app to elevate your cognitive skills!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 13

“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” — Jim Rohn

Welcome to Day 16 of the Mental Focus Challenge! Yesterday, you worked on tracking your progress. Did you notice anything that you hadn't realized before? Keep writing everything down and you'll start to notice certain patterns that either help or hurt you.

At this point in the challenge, you should have a grasp on two changes that increase your productivity. Now, you have to develop these challenges into habits.

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

The challenge of the day is to remain consistent with your challenge combo. However, you should start to think of them as everyday habits.

In order to develop a habit, you need to keep these three R's of habit change in mind:

1. Reminder
2. Routine
3. Reward

You must implement this pattern in order to develop productive habits. If you don't, then the habit will not be psychologically pleasing to you. Soon enough, you'll get rid of the habit and you'll be back to your unproductive ways.

Here's how to develop each one:

- The reminder should be a psychological trigger that tells your brain it's time to perform the habit. If you meditate in the morning, then a shower could be your trigger. Your brain will be ready to focus on meditating.
- The routine is the behavior itself. This is your challenge combo.
- The reward is the outcome of the habit. This completes the habit, and ends it with an enjoyable experience that makes you want to perform the habit again.

Think about the three R's when you're developing your habits.

App of the Day: Brain It On! (iOS | Android)

Brain It On! is a challenging puzzle game that'll give your brain the ultimate workout. Draw shapes and work with physics to complete each puzzle. This game will improve your concentration and attention to detail. Try to solve these puzzles today!



Mental Focus Challenge: Day 14

"It's not always that we need to do more, but rather that we need to focus on less." — Nathan W. Morris

Welcome to Day 17 of the Mental Focus Challenge! Today is the last day of this challenge! Are you more focused now than you were at the beginning of the challenge? Take a few minutes and think about your productivity before this challenge. Think about your progress and how far you've come in such little time. Be proud of yourself and reward yourself!

It's time for today's challenge.

Challenge of the Day: Complete Your Challenge Combo

Every day for the last week, you've been asked to complete your challenge combo. This should be your challenge every day from here on out. The challenge combo that you chose works for you and makes you a more productive person.

You may stumble on different alterations to your challenges as you continue to improve your skills. Face these new challenges head on, because the difficulty will make you better.

Here are some things to keep in mind in your post-MFC life:

- Stay consistent with your habits. Never skip a day. You'll be thankful you didn't!
- Always challenge yourself to improve your productivity.
- Find exactly what works for you. This might take some time, but it's important that you create a routine that optimizes your cognitive skills.
- It's okay to change up your routine! As long as the effect is the same, try something new every once in a while!

A lifetime of productivity now awaits you! Remember: The only thing that can stop you is *you*.

App of the Day: Mind Games ([iOS](#) | [Android](#))

Our last App of the Day is one that'll give your brain a fun challenge. Mind Games is an app with about 16 games that challenges your memory, attention and knowledge. It tests different aspects of each cognitive capability, which will improve everything. Try out Mind Games and put your brain to work!



You Did It! Mental Focus Challenge: COMPLETE!

Congratulations on finishing the Mental Focus Challenge! You experimented with your focus influencers and learned more about what does and doesn't work for you. To get a better idea of how helpful or not helpful this exercise was for you, take 10 minutes to evaluate yourself again:

<i>How often do you feel distracted at work?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you feel distracted at home?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>When do you give in to distracting, impulsive behavior?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>When do you have control over most distractions in your life?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often would coworkers describe you as focused?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often would friends describe you as focused?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you feel productive at the end of the day?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often
<i>How often do you think you accomplished absolutely nothing?</i>	Not very often	Somewhat often	Often	Pretty often	Very often

Did I meet my goal for this challenge?

Additional notes to myself:



That's a wrap!

Your participation in this event is much-appreciated. If you have any positive feedback or constructive criticism about what this challenge could do better, please email:

kaylamatthews@productivitytheory.com

Stay focused!
