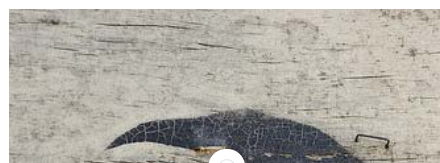


March 22, 2010 by William Briggs | Leadership in be clear, churchill, don't give up, don't waste words, enest hemingway, f. scott fitzgerald, for sale: baby shoes, hemingway, increase productivity, jefferson, make a scehdule, never used, productivity, quit, rumsfeld, work standing up, world war 1

7 Productivity Tips From Ernest Hemingway





Ernest Hemingway may go down in the history books as a hard-drinking, big-fishing, Nobel-Prize-winning writer, but he was also a productivity guru. Throughout his career he often gave advice to young writers and openly talked about his work habits and writing style. Even if you aren't a writer Hemingway's tips and tricks can help you increase your productivity.

Follows is a list of productivity tips that come from Hemingway himself...and they aren't just for writers.

1. Don't Waste Words and Be Clear: Hemingway is famous for getting to the point and killing unneeded adjectives. When he was challenged to write a six word story, he wrote "For sale: baby shoes, never used." Clearly, he knew how to be economical with his words. If you want to get things done you need to exercise the same verbal restraint. Meetings, email exchanges, and conversations often spill into the late afternoon because people employ too many words. Keeping it short, simple, and clear will save time, cut down on confusion, and get everyone back to work.

2. Make a Schedule: Everyday Hemingway would wake up at 7am and try to write between 500 to a 1,000 words. The rest of his day he devoted to a combination of fishing, hunting, and drinking. Give yourself a schedule. As [Jeanette Winterson, another writer, says](#), “Turn up for work. Discipline allows creative freedom. No discipline equals no freedom.” Routines and schedules give leaders the ability to be creative and consistent.

3. Quit While You're Ahead: Hemingway said “The best way [to write] is always to stop when you are going good and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day...you will never be stuck.” If you do one task well and you know what to do next, it might help to pause and tackle it the next day. Getting something done every day will increase your confidence and keep momentum going.

4. Keep Your Mouth Shut: According to Hemingway, it's bad form for a writer to talk about his work. [He said discussing writing takes off](#) “whatever butterflies have on their wings and the arrangement of hawk's feathers if you show it or talk about it.” Don't discuss your project or new idea until you are certain it is clear and well thought out. Talking about a new proposal or plan too soon can give your competition time to coalesce against your idea. Productivity will suffer if you spend more time talking about your idea than actually moving it forward.

5. Don't Give Up: Hemingway once told F. Scott Fitzgerald, “I write one page of masterpiece to ninety one pages of shit. I try to put the shit in the wastebasket.” You

need to be able to be critical of the work that you do complete. Not everything you do will be perfect. Increased productivity will help you make a lot of progress, but you need to approach it with a critical eye. Don't get frustrated and give up because you feel you are doing a bad job. Keep producing and moving forward. Eventually you will do one thing very well.

6. Work Standing Up: Hemingway wrote standing up because of a minor leg injury he got in World War I. But, his vertical habit isn't that odd. Thomas Jefferson, Winston Churchill, and Donald Rumsfeld, [among other popular figures](#) chose to stand up while they work. Standing while working can increase productivity by fighting fatigue, the allure of napping, and minor distractions. According to the New York Times, it can also [help you lose weight](#).

7. Lastly, Hemingway said, “Never mistake motion for action”: Leaders have to remember that productivity is about action and getting things done—not running around in circles.


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William Briggs

18 thoughts on “7 Productivity Tips From Ernest Hemingway”

1. Pingback: I would rather learn from one bird how to sing than to teach 10,000 stars how not to dance

2.  **Bethany** says:
April 26, 2010 at 12:04 pm

This is a fantastic list! I love Hemingway and that you were able to come up with a seamless collection of his thoughts.

I just did a recap of what I thought of his book The Sun Also Rises. See it here:


<http://www.dirksendabbles.com/2010/04/written-artwork-sun-also-rises.html>

3.  **Liz Fletcher** says:
September 10, 2010 at 5:01 am

Motivated, skilled and empowered people achieve more – it’s about working smarter, not necessarily harder. Invest in yourself, in your people, in their success and they will invest in

the success of the business. Invest in team building, people development and sales training and you will see results that lead to an overall positive change within the culture of your business.


Check out [Team Building Events](#) at Leap now!

4. Pingback: [one year off](#)
5. Pingback: [The Time Suck | AlanePearce.com](#)
6.  **Dave Crenshaw** says:
[May 23, 2011 at 2:15 am](#)

Good read. I basically like this list “Never mistake motion for action”. Many feel that in order to be truly efficient in their work day, they have to be constantly busy–too busy–constantly moving from one thing to another. They try not to waste a single moment in their day. However, instead of being more productive, these chronically busy people waste a lot of time. The reality? Productivity is more about rhythm than perpetual motion.


To improve your work quality, watch this video to learn why at <http://davecrenshaw.com/too-busy-improve-your-productivity-rhythm/>

7. Pingback: [A Writing Paradise: Ernest Hemingway's Early Life | Freelance Blog Writing](#)


8.  **JColling** says:
February 25, 2012 at 12:11 pm

These tips are awesome and can be related to almost every aspect of life. I especially like the idea of quitting while your ahead. I will try to apply that in my own life now.

9. Pingback: It was THIS big... | Blackwatertown
10. Pingback: Quora
11. Pingback: How I write « R J Burgess
12. Pingback: Writing Tip: How Not To Be Lazy | CarrTalks
13. Pingback: Weekly Productivity Links, 'The history of productivity' edition « RescueTime Blog

14.  **Alex Geru** says:
January 11, 2013 at 11:10 am

This is a good way of Hemingway raise the productivity. I will surely try this.

15. Pingback: Week Seven: Beneath of the Planet of the Alcotts | The Little Women Project
16. Pingback: Holiday Reading | Jennifer Sertl
17. Pingback: It Was A Dark and Stormy Night... | Unraveling In Suburbia
18.  **Blair** says:
July 23, 2014 at 1:47 pm

Hemingway was different from everybody else.

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