

FREE PDF

Deep Work System **Enhanced** with AI

A practical system for protecting focus, preparing for deep sessions and using AI to reduce friction around the work.

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AI prompts

10

fill-in templates

26

A4 pages

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Plan sessions with a clear outcome and a clean start

Distraction Management Approaches

Reduce interruptions from your environment and your habits

AI Support Patterns for Deep Tasks

Use AI before and after sessions, not as an interruption

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Sustain your focus with sensible rest

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Learn from each week to improve next week

Two-week start plan

A simple sequence for putting the system into practice

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Who this is for

Writers, developers, researchers, analysts and other knowledge workers who need sustained concentration, and anyone who feels busy but produces little high-value output.

How to use it

Schedule the blocks

Put deep work sessions on your calendar first. Protect them like important appointments.

Use AI around the edges

Use AI before sessions for preparation and after sessions for summaries, not as a source of interruptions.

Review weekly

A short weekly review shows what helps your focus and what undermines it.

Please note: results vary by tool version and settings, so review AI output before relying on it.

What Counts as Deep Work

Deep work is focused effort on a demanding task, free from distraction. It is where much of your most valuable output is created.

1 Identify demanding, valuable tasks

Writing, designing, coding, analysis, studying and strategic thinking are typical examples. Choose work that moves important goals forward.

2 Set a clear outcome

Decide what the session must produce, such as “draft two sections”, so you know when you are done.

3 Choose a realistic length

For most people 60 to 90 minutes is a good starting block. Build up gradually rather than forcing long stretches.

4 Decide the rules in advance

Choose where you will work, what you will close and how you will handle interruptions before you begin.

5 Define a stopping point

End each session by noting where you stopped and the first step for next time, so restarting is easy.

PROMPT 1 · SESSION DESIGNER

I want a [N]-minute deep work session on [TASK]. Help me define a specific outcome, a first step, what to prepare beforehand and a clear stopping point.

Tip: Start with just two or three sessions a week and add more only when they feel sustainable.

NOTES

Focus Session Plan

Complete this just before each deep work session. It should take two or three minutes.

SESSION DATE AND TIME

TASK

OUTCOME I WANT specific and finishable

LENGTH e.g. 60 or 90 minutes

WHAT I NEED READY files, notes, tools

WHAT I WILL CLOSE OR SILENCE

WHERE I WILL WORK

MY FIRST STEP

Three Prompts for Session Preparation

Use these before a session. Avoid pasting confidential material into AI tools.

2 Break the task into a session plan

Use it when: You are unsure what to do first.

PROMPT

I have [N] minutes to work on [TASK]. Break it into three steps, tell me which to do first and what a good result looks like by the end of the session.

MY VERSION

3 Prepare the materials

Use it when: You want a smooth start.

PROMPT

I will work on [TASK]. List the documents, data, questions and tools I should gather beforehand so I do not need to stop and search during the session.

MY VERSION

4 Choose the right task

Use it when: You have several deep tasks and one slot.

PROMPT

I have a deep work slot of [N] minutes. Candidate tasks: [LIST]. Recommend which to choose using importance, deadline and how much concentration each needs.

MY VERSION

Pre-Session Checklist

Run through this list in the five minutes before you begin. It reduces the chance of interruptions.

Prepare

- ☐ Outcome is written down
- ☐ Materials are open and ready
- ☐ Water or tea is nearby
- ☐ I know my first step

Silence

- ☐ Phone is on silent and out of reach
- ☐ Email and chat are closed
- ☐ Notifications are paused
- ☐ Do-not-disturb status is set

Protect

- ☐ I told others I am unavailable
- ☐ Door or headphones signal focus
- ☐ A timer is set
- ☐ Breaks are planned

Capture

- ☐ A note is open for stray thoughts
- ☐ I will not check messages mid-session
- ☐ Ideas go on the capture list
- ☐ Urgent matters have a plan

Weekly Deep Work Schedule

Plan your deep work sessions for the week. Be realistic and leave space for meetings and interruptions.

Day	Task	Start	Length	Outcome
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Weekend				

Understanding Your Distractions

Distractions come from outside, such as notifications and colleagues, and from inside, such as boredom and worry. Both can be reduced once you notice them.

1 Track what pulls you away

For two or three days, jot down each time you switch tasks and what triggered it.

2 Separate external from internal

External triggers can often be switched off. Internal ones, such as urges to check something, need a different response.

3 Remove the easiest triggers first

Silence notifications, close unused tabs and put your phone out of sight. These changes cost almost nothing.

4 Create a capture list

When a stray thought arises, write it down and return to work. You can deal with it after the session.

5 Accept some imperfection

You will still get distracted sometimes. Notice it kindly and return to the task without judgment.

PROMPT 5 · DISTRACTION ANALYSIS

Here is my log of interruptions over a few days: [PASTE]. Group them into external and internal triggers, and suggest one practical fix for each of the three most frequent ones.

Tip: Changing your environment is usually easier than relying on willpower.

NOTES

Distraction Audit

Fill this in after two or three days of noticing your interruptions.

MOST COMMON DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS

MOST COMMON PEOPLE INTERRUPTIONS

MOST COMMON INTERNAL URGES e.g. checking messages, snacking

TIMES OF DAY WHEN IT IS WORST

WHAT I CAN REMOVE OR SILENCE

WHAT I WILL DO WHEN I FEEL THE URGE

ONE CHANGE I WILL TEST THIS WEEK

Distraction-Free Environment Checklist

Set up your workspace once, then adjust as you learn what helps.

Digital

- ☐ Notifications turned off
- ☐ Unused tabs and apps closed
- ☐ Website blocker set if useful
- ☐ Full-screen mode for the main task

Physical

- ☐ Desk is clear of clutter
- ☐ Phone is out of sight
- ☐ Comfortable lighting and seating
- ☐ Headphones or quiet space available

Social

- ☐ Colleagues know my focus hours
- ☐ Status message is set
- ☐ A clear signal for do-not-disturb
- ☐ I agreed when I will reply to messages

Mental

- ☐ Capture list is ready
- ☐ Worries are written down
- ☐ Outcome is clear
- ☐ I have a plan for the first step

Three Prompts for Managing Distractions

Use these to design your focus environment and to handle interruptions gracefully.

6 Design a focus routine

Use it when: You want a start-up ritual.

PROMPT

Suggest a short five-minute routine to begin a deep work session at [PLACE] on [TASK]. Include what to close, what to open, one breathing or settling step and a clear first action.

MY VERSION

7 Polite boundary message

Use it when: Colleagues interrupt you often.

PROMPT

Draft a friendly message to my team explaining that I do focused work from [TIME] to [TIME] each day, how to reach me for urgent matters and when I will reply to everything else.

MY VERSION

8 Handle the urge

Use it when: You keep wanting to check something.

PROMPT

Give me five simple responses I can use when I feel the urge to check [MESSAGES/NEWS/SOCIAL] during focused work, such as noting it and delaying for a set time.

MY VERSION

Example: Handling an Interruption

This fictional example shows a calm response to a common interruption during a focus block.

SITUATION

A colleague stops by during a 90-minute writing block to ask a question that is not urgent.

PREPARATION

The writer had set a status message and told the team about focus hours earlier in the week.

RESPONSE

"I'm in a focus block until 11:30. Can I come find you then?"

CAPTURE

The writer jotted the question on the capture list so it would not be forgotten.

RETURN

Took ten seconds to reread the last paragraph, then continued writing.

AFTER THE SESSION

Answered the colleague's question at 11:35 with full attention.

LESSON

A short, friendly boundary plus a specific later time keeps relationships good and focus intact.

WHAT COULD HAVE GONE WRONG

Answering the question immediately would have cost the writer the thread of the paragraph and probably ten to fifteen minutes of recovery time.

WHAT TO TRY YOURSELF

Write one sentence you can say when someone interrupts a focus block, and keep it somewhere visible.

YOUR EXAMPLE

Where AI Helps Deep Work and Where It Does Not

AI can reduce friction around deep work, but it can also become a distraction if you consult it constantly during a session.

1 Use it before to prepare

Ask AI to outline, gather questions or summarize reading before the session, so you start with a clear path.

2 Use it after to organize

After a session, use AI to summarize your notes, list open questions or draft a quick handoff.

3 Keep sessions mostly AI-free

Constant prompting breaks concentration. Save most AI use for the edges of the session.

4 Think first, then ask

Form your own view before asking AI. This keeps your thinking sharp and the final result yours.

5 Verify what matters

Check facts, numbers and quotes independently. AI can sound confident while being wrong.

PROMPT 9 · PRE-SESSION OUTLINE

I am about to work on [TASK]. Create a brief outline with key questions I should address, three points to include and one common mistake to avoid. Do not write the content for me.

Tip: Decide in advance whether AI is allowed during the session, and stick to the rule.

NOTES

Three Prompts to Use Before a Session

These prompts get you started faster without doing the thinking for you.

10 Reading summary

Use it when: You must absorb material before working.

PROMPT

Summarize the text below in five bullets and list three questions it raises that I should think about. Do not add outside information.

[PASTE TEXT]

MY VERSION

11 Question list

Use it when: You want a structured start.

PROMPT

I am working on [PROJECT]. List the ten most important questions I should be able to answer by the end, ordered from foundational to detailed.

MY VERSION

12 Obstacle forecast

Use it when: You want to avoid getting stuck.

PROMPT

I plan to work on [TASK] for [N] minutes. List the three most likely obstacles and a simple way to get past each so I do not stop to look things up.

MY VERSION

Three Prompts to Use After a Session

Use these to capture progress and make the next session easier.

13 Session summary

Use it when: You want a record of what you did.

PROMPT

Here are my rough notes from a deep work session: [PASTE NOTES]. Summarize what I accomplished, what is unfinished and the best first step for next time. Keep it under 100 words.

MY VERSION

14 Open questions

Use it when: You noticed gaps while working.

PROMPT

From these notes, list the open questions and decisions I still need to make, and suggest who or what could answer each.

[PASTE NOTES]

MY VERSION

15 Handoff note

Use it when: Others will continue your work.

PROMPT

Write a short handoff note from these notes: [PASTE]. Include the current status, key decisions, files involved and the next action.

MY VERSION

Example: AI at the Edges of a Session

This fictional example shows a researcher using AI before and after a focus session, but not during.

GOAL

Write the methods section of a report in a 90-minute session.

BEFORE

Asked AI for a checklist of what a methods section should cover. Took five minutes and ignored the suggestions that did not apply.

DURING

Worked with notifications off and AI tools closed, using the checklist as a reference.

AFTER

Pasted rough notes and asked for a summary of what remained. Got a three-item list.

REVIEW

Checked the details against the original sources before relying on anything.

RESULT

Finished most of the section and left a clear first step for the next day.

LESSON

AI worked best as support at the edges, leaving the middle of the session free for real thinking.

YOUR EXAMPLE

Rules for Using AI Around Deep Work

Write your own rules, using this list as a starting point.

Before the session

- ☐ I know what I want from AI
- ☐ I will limit it to ten minutes
- ☐ I will not paste confidential details
- ☐ I close the tool before starting

During the session

- ☐ AI tools stay closed
- ☐ Questions go on the capture list
- ☐ I think before I ask
- ☐ I note things to check later

After the session

- ☐ I summarize what was done
- ☐ I verify key facts independently
- ☐ I save useful prompts
- ☐ I note what to improve

Always

- ☐ I decide what to keep
- ☐ I stay responsible for the result
- ☐ I credit sources properly
- ☐ I use AI to support, not replace, thinking

Managing Energy as Well as Time

Focus depends on energy. Planning deep work for your best hours and protecting rest makes your sessions more productive and sustainable.

1 Learn your daily rhythm

Notice when you are most alert and when you slump. Schedule demanding sessions in your strongest hours.

2 Take short breaks between sessions

A walk, stretch or glass of water helps you reset. Avoid using breaks for more screen scrolling.

3 Protect sleep and meals

Regular sleep and meals support concentration. Treat them as part of your productivity system.

4 Mix intense and light work

Alternate deep sessions with lighter tasks so your attention can recover.

5 End the day deliberately

Close your work with a short shutdown routine, so your mind can rest in the evening.

PROMPT 16 · RECOVERY ROUTINE

Suggest a simple recovery routine for a workday with two [N]-minute deep work sessions. Include break activities, a lunch suggestion and a short shutdown routine. Keep it general and practical.

Tip: If you have health concerns affecting your energy, speak to a qualified professional rather than relying on productivity advice.

NOTES

Recovery Routine Planner

Design the breaks and boundaries that help you return to work with energy.

MY BEST FOCUS HOURS

BREAK ACTIVITIES I ENJOY

WHAT I WILL AVOID DURING BREAKS

LUNCH AND MEAL PLAN

EVENING SHUTDOWN ROUTINE

SLEEP AND WIND-DOWN HABITS

ONE THING I WILL CHANGE THIS WEEK

Rest and Recovery Checklist

Use this checklist daily or weekly to see whether you are protecting your energy.

During the day

- ☐ Took a break between sessions
- ☐ Moved or stretched
- ☐ Drank water
- ☐ Ate a proper lunch

After work

- ☐ Ran a shutdown routine
- ☐ Left work devices alone
- ☐ Did something enjoyable
- ☐ Spent time with people

Across the week

- ☐ Kept at least one lighter day
- ☐ Protected sleep times
- ☐ Had a screen-free hour
- ☐ Spent time outdoors

Adjustments

- ☐ Shortened a session that dragged
- ☐ Moved a task to a better hour
- ☐ Said no to something
- ☐ Planned next week's breaks

Three Prompts for Recovery Planning

These prompts help you design breaks and boundaries. They are general suggestions, not medical advice.

17 Break ideas

Use it when: You use breaks for scrolling.

PROMPT

Give me ten short break ideas that take five to fifteen minutes and do not involve a screen. Group them into movement, rest and social.

MY VERSION

18 Shutdown routine

Use it when: Work spills into your evening.

PROMPT

Write a five-step shutdown routine for the end of the workday that includes reviewing tasks, planning tomorrow and a clear signal that work is over.

MY VERSION

19 Lighter week plan

Use it when: You are worn out after a heavy period.

PROMPT

I have had a heavy workload. Suggest how to plan a lighter week with fewer deep sessions, more breaks and a realistic list of must-do tasks: [TASKS].

MY VERSION

The Weekly Deep Work Review

A fifteen-minute weekly review shows how many sessions you completed, what interrupted you and what to change next week.

1 Count your sessions

Note how many deep sessions you planned and how many you finished, without judging the numbers.

2 Rate the quality

Score each session from 1 to 5 for focus. Look for patterns in time of day, location and task type.

3 Identify the main obstacles

Find the two most common reasons sessions failed, such as meetings, fatigue or unclear goals.

4 Choose one experiment

Pick one change to test next week, such as moving sessions earlier or silencing one app.

5 Plan next week's sessions

Place the next set of sessions on your calendar before the week fills up.

PROMPT 20 · REVIEW ANALYSIS

Here is my deep work log for the week: [PASTE]. Identify patterns in what helped and what disrupted my sessions, and suggest one experiment for next week.

Tip: Keep your review honest and brief. The point is to learn, not to feel guilty.

NOTES

Weekly Deep Work Review Template

Complete this at the end of each week.

SESSIONS PLANNED AND COMPLETED

BEST SESSION AND WHY

WORST SESSION AND WHY

MAIN DISTRACTIONS

WHAT HELPED MY FOCUS

EXPERIMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

SESSIONS I WILL SCHEDULE NEXT WEEK

Deep Work Hours Log

Record each day's deep work. Score the focus quality from 1 to 5 and note what affected it.

Day	Planned	Actual	Quality	Notes
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Weekend				

Three Prompts for the Weekly Review

Remove private details before sharing your notes with any AI tool.

21 Spot the patterns

Use it when: You want to see what is repeating.

PROMPT

Here are my weekly review notes for the past month: [PASTE]. List patterns in my distractions and best sessions and suggest two experiments.

MY VERSION

22 Goal check

Use it when: You want to connect sessions to results.

PROMPT

I spent about [N] hours in deep work on [PROJECTS] this week. Based on my progress notes [PASTE], tell me whether the time was well spent and what I should prioritize next.

MY VERSION

23 Next week's plan

Use it when: You want a draft schedule.

PROMPT

Using my best focus hours [HOURS], my meetings [LIST] and my priorities [LIST], suggest three deep work sessions for next week with outcomes for each.

MY VERSION

Your two-week start plan

Consistency matters more than perfect conditions. Add one element at a time and keep the sessions you can sustain.

Days 1–2

Plan two sessions

Use the focus session plan template and schedule two sessions of 60 to 90 minutes.

Days 3–4

Reduce distractions

Complete the distraction audit and apply the environment checklist.

Days 5–7

Add AI at the edges

Try one prompt before a session and one after, and keep AI closed during the work.

Day 8

Review the week

Complete the weekly deep work review and log your hours.

Days 9–12

Protect your energy

Build a recovery routine with breaks and a shutdown ritual.

Days 13–14

Plan the next cycle

Choose one experiment and schedule next week's sessions before the week begins.

Schedule deep work blocks and protect them. Review weekly to improve your environment and habits. Results vary by tool version and settings.