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# Minimalist Productivity System with AI

A simple, low-overhead system built on one task list, short daily plans and AI used only when it clearly saves time.

| 17 | 7 | 20 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AI prompts | fill-in templates | A4 pages |

## What is inside

**One Trusted Task List**
A single home for every task, kept small and honest

**Simple Daily Planning**
A short plan that fits on a card and takes minutes

**Selective AI Assistance**
Use AI only where it clearly saves time

**Weekly Reset Routine**
A short weekly pass that removes friction

**Focus on High-Value Work**
Protect time for the work that matters most

**Two-week start plan**
A simple sequence for putting the system into practice

# Contents


1 **One Trusted Task List**
A single home for every task, kept small and honest — Pages 3–6

2 **Simple Daily Planning**
A short plan that fits on a card and takes minutes — Pages 7–9

3 **Selective AI Assistance**
Use AI only where it clearly saves time — Pages 10–13

4 **Weekly Reset Routine**
A short weekly pass that removes friction — Pages 14–16

5 **Focus on High-Value Work**
Protect time for the work that matters most — Pages 17–19

✓ **Two-week start plan**
A simple sequence for putting the system into practice — Page 20


## Who this is for

People who have tried complicated productivity methods and felt overwhelmed, and professionals who want steady results without constantly managing their system.

## How to use it

**Use one list**
Pick a single place for tasks. Every template in this guide feeds that one list.

**Add AI last**
Try each routine by hand first. Bring in an AI prompt only where it clearly saves time.

**Remove friction**
If a step feels like a chore after a week, simplify it or delete it.

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

# Why One List Beats Many

Tasks scattered across apps, notebooks and sticky notes force you to keep checking everywhere. A single list removes that overhead and gives you one place to trust.

1. **Choose one home**
   Pick the simplest tool you will really open every day: a notes app, a basic to-do app or a paper notebook. The best tool is the one you already use.

2. **Capture everything there**
   Anything you need to remember goes onto the list, even if it is small. The list works only if it is complete.

3. **Keep tasks specific**
   Write each task as a clear action that begins with a verb, such as “Email Sam the draft” rather than “Sam project”.

4. **Separate ideas from tasks**
   Keep a short second note for ideas and someday items so the main list stays actionable.

5. **Trim on a schedule**
   Remove or reword stale items during your weekly reset, so the list never becomes a graveyard.

PROMPT 1 · LIST CLEANER

> Here is my task list: [PASTE]. Rewrite each item as a clear action starting with a verb, merge duplicates, and mark any item that looks vague so I can clarify it. Do not remove anything without telling me.

**Tip:** If you must keep two lists, make the second one strictly for ideas and someday items.

NOTES

# Master Task List Template

Use this layout in your chosen tool or copy it onto paper. Keep each section short; the goal is a list you can scan in one minute.

**TODAY** three tasks at most

**THIS WEEK** up to ten tasks

**WAITING FOR OTHERS** who and by when

**LATER THIS MONTH**

**SOMEDAY OR MAYBE** ideas without a date

**RECURRING TASKS** weekly, monthly and yearly

# Inbox Sweep Checklist

New tasks arrive from everywhere. A quick sweep once or twice a day keeps them from piling up.

### Gather

- [ ] Check your email for requests
- [ ] Scan messages and chats
- [ ] Look at sticky notes and papers
- [ ] Review voice notes or photos

### Decide

- [ ] Do it now if it takes two minutes
- [ ] Add it to the list with a date
- [ ] Delegate or forward it
- [ ] Delete it if it no longer matters

### Clarify

- [ ] Rewrite vague tasks as actions
- [ ] Add a deadline only if it is real
- [ ] Note who you are waiting on
- [ ] Move ideas to the ideas note

### Finish

- [ ] Empty the inbox of processed items
- [ ] Check that Today has three tasks at most
- [ ] Close unused apps and tabs
- [ ] Note anything to raise in the weekly reset

# Three Prompts for Keeping the List Lean

Paste your list into an AI tool, remove anything private, then try one of these prompts.

## 2 Spot the stale items

**Use it when:** Your list has grown long.

PROMPT

> From the list below, identify items that look outdated, vague or duplicated, and suggest whether to delete, clarify or keep each one. Give a one-line reason per item.
>
> [PASTE LIST]

MY VERSION

## 3 Break up a big task

**Use it when:** One item keeps getting postponed.

PROMPT

> Break the task "[TASK]" into 3 to 5 small steps that each take under 30 minutes. Put them in the order I should do them and name the first step clearly.

MY VERSION

## 4 Turn notes into tasks

**Use it when:** You have messy meeting or phone notes.

PROMPT

> Extract only the action items from these notes. Write each as a verb-first task, include who owns it if mentioned, and ignore everything that is not an action.
>
> [PASTE NOTES]

MY VERSION

# The Three-Item Day

A long plan creates stress and a short one gets done. The three-item day keeps your planning small enough to survive a busy schedule.

1. **Check fixed commitments**
   Look at your calendar and note meetings or deadlines that cannot move. This shows how much time is truly available.

2. **Pick one main task**
   Choose the single task that would make today a good day. Do it first, before email or messages.

3. **Add two supporting tasks**
   Choose two smaller tasks that are worth doing. If all three get done, you have had a productive day.

4. **Leave room for surprises**
   Plan for less than your available time. Unplanned work always appears, so a lighter plan is more realistic.

5. **Write it where you will see it**
   Keep the three items on a card, a sticky note or the top of your task list, so they stay visible.

PROMPT 5 · THREE-ITEM PLAN

> My tasks are: [LIST]. My fixed commitments today are [COMMITMENTS] and I have about [N] focused hours. Suggest one main task and two supporting tasks, and tell me what to postpone.

**Tip:** Treat anything beyond the three items as a bonus, not a failure when it slips.

NOTES

# Daily Plan Card

Fill this in each morning. It should take less than five minutes.

**DATE**

**FIXED COMMITMENTS**

**MAIN TASK** the one thing that matters most today

**SUPPORTING TASK 1**

**SUPPORTING TASK 2**

**FIRST ACTION** what I will do in the next 15 minutes

**WHAT I WILL IGNORE TODAY**

# Three Prompts for a Quick Daily Plan

Use these only on days when planning by yourself feels slow.

## 6 Fast prioritizer

**Use it when:** You have too many tasks and little time.

PROMPT

> I have [N] hours today. Tasks: [LIST]. Pick the three most worthwhile tasks, explain each choice in one line and tell me what can safely wait.

MY VERSION

## 7 Time fit check

**Use it when:** You are unsure your plan is realistic.

PROMPT

> Here is my plan with estimated times: [PLAN]. Add up the time, compare it with my [N] available hours and tell me honestly which items to cut.

MY VERSION

## 8 Evening tidy-up

**Use it when:** You want to end the day cleanly.

PROMPT

> Based on what I did today [NOTES], list what to carry over, what to drop and the one task to start with tomorrow. Keep it under 80 words.

MY VERSION

# When AI Is Worth Using

Minimalism does not mean avoiding AI; it means using it on purpose. Ask a few simple questions before reaching for a tool.

1. **Does it save real time**
   If the task takes under two minutes by hand, skip the tool. AI helps most with drafting, summarizing and sorting.

2. **Is the task low risk**
   Use extra care with anything involving facts, money, health or legal matters. Always verify before you rely on the output.

3. **Can you review the result quickly**
   Good uses are tasks where you can check the output in seconds, such as a rewritten email or a summarized note.

4. **Is the information safe to share**
   Do not paste private or confidential details into a tool unless you are sure it is appropriate.

5. **Do you keep final control**
   Treat AI output as a draft. You decide what to keep, change or discard.

PROMPT 9 · IS AI USEFUL HERE

> I want to do this task: [TASK]. Should I use an AI tool or do it by hand? Consider time saved, risk, and how easily I can check the result, and give a short recommendation.

**Tip:** Keep a short list of the three or four AI uses that save you the most time, and ignore the rest.

NOTES

# AI or Not? Decision Checklist

Run through this list before you use AI for a task. Three or more ticks under Yes usually means it is worth a try.

### Yes, try AI

- [ ] The task is repetitive or wordy
- [ ] I can check the result quickly
- [ ] No private information is involved
- [ ] A rough draft is useful to me

### Maybe, be careful

- [ ] Facts or numbers must be exact
- [ ] The topic is new to me
- [ ] The audience is important
- [ ] I would struggle to judge the quality

### No, do it myself

- [ ] It takes under two minutes
- [ ] It needs my personal judgment
- [ ] It involves confidential details
- [ ] It requires care and empathy

### After using AI

- [ ] Read the output fully
- [ ] Check any facts or figures
- [ ] Edit it into my own voice
- [ ] Save the prompt only if it worked well

# Three Low-Effort AI Prompts

These three cover most everyday needs without adding complexity to your system.

## 10 Shorten and clarify

**Use it when:** You have a long message or note.

PROMPT

> Rewrite the text below so it is half the length and easier to read. Keep my meaning and tone, and do not add new information.
>
> [PASTE TEXT]

MY VERSION

## 11 Summarize for action

**Use it when:** You need the key points fast.

PROMPT

> Summarize the text below in five bullets, then list any actions I need to take and any dates mentioned.
>
> [PASTE TEXT]

MY VERSION

## 12 Draft a first version

**Use it when:** You face a blank page.

PROMPT

> Write a short first draft of [EMAIL/NOTE/OUTLINE] for [AUDIENCE] about [TOPIC]. Keep it under [N] words, plain in tone, and leave placeholders where you need facts from me.

MY VERSION

# Example: AI Used for Five Minutes

This fictional example shows AI used briefly and then set aside, which is the minimalist approach.

**SITUATION**
A long email thread needs a reply and the writer has ten minutes before a meeting.

**WHAT WAS PASTED**
The last three messages, with names and private details removed.

**PROMPT USED**
“Summarize this thread in four bullets and list the question I need to answer.”

**RESULT**
Four short bullets and one clear question. The writer checked them against the thread in under a minute.

**WHAT WAS DONE BY HAND**
The reply itself, written in the writer's own words in three sentences.

**OUTCOME**
About ten minutes saved, with no new tool and no change to the system.

**WHY THIS WAS A GOOD FIT**
The task was low risk, the output was easy to check, and the summary only replaced reading, not thinking. The writer stayed in control of the actual reply.

**A POOR FIT FOR COMPARISON**
Asking AI to decide how to respond to a sensitive disagreement would be a poor fit. That needs personal judgment and care, so it stays with the person.

YOUR EXAMPLE

# The Twenty-Minute Weekly Reset

A weekly reset keeps a simple system working. It is a short, calm review, not a long planning ritual.

1. **Look back briefly**
   Scan the past week's tasks and calendar. Note what was finished and what slipped, without blaming yourself.

2. **Clear the list**
   Delete tasks that no longer matter, reword vague ones and move anything stuck to a clearly named later date.

3. **Empty the inboxes**
   Process email, messages and loose notes until there is nothing left waiting to be sorted.

4. **Check the week ahead**
   Look at the coming week's commitments and decide where focus time can fit before the calendar fills up.

5. **Choose the top three**
   Pick the three most important outcomes for next week, and write them where you will see them every day.

PROMPT 13 · WEEKLY RESET HELPER

> Here are my notes from this week: [NOTES] and my commitments next week: [COMMITMENTS]. Suggest what to carry over, what to drop and three priorities, and flag any day that looks overloaded.

**Tip:** Schedule the reset at the same time each week and treat it like an appointment.

NOTES

# Weekly Reset Template

Complete this at the end of the week. Short answers are enough.

**WHAT GOT DONE**

**WHAT SLIPPED AND WHY**

**TASKS TO DELETE OR REWRITE**

**FRICTION I NOTICED** something that made work harder than needed

**ONE THING TO SIMPLIFY**

**TOP THREE PRIORITIES NEXT WEEK**

**TIME I WILL PROTECT FOR FOCUSED WORK**

# Three Prompts for the Weekly Reset

Remove private details before pasting anything into an AI tool.

## 14 Friction finder

**Use it when:** You want the system to feel lighter.

PROMPT

> Based on these notes about my week [NOTES], identify the two biggest sources of friction and suggest one small change for each. Prefer removing steps over adding tools.

MY VERSION

## 15 Weekly summary

**Use it when:** You want a brief recap.

PROMPT

> Write a four-sentence summary of my week from these notes, covering progress, one problem and one thing to carry forward. Keep the tone neutral and honest.
>
> [PASTE NOTES]

MY VERSION

## 16 Next week skeleton

**Use it when:** You want a starting plan.

PROMPT

> Draft a simple outline of next week using my three priorities [PRIORITIES] and my fixed commitments [COMMITMENTS]. Leave open time unscheduled and show no more than three tasks per day.

MY VERSION

# Defining Your High-Value Work

High-value work is the small set of activities that produce most of your results. Naming it makes it easier to protect.

1. **List what you are responsible for**
   Write the main outcomes your role, business or studies expect from you over the next few months.

2. **Find the few that matter most**
   Circle the two or three activities that clearly move those outcomes forward. These are your high-value work.

3. **Notice what is low value**
   Mark tasks that feel busy but do not change results, such as endless inbox checks or unnecessary formatting.

4. **Assign each a time slot**
   High-value work needs a regular place in the calendar, ideally when your energy is best.

5. **Say no to the rest, kindly**
   Decline, delay or delegate low-value requests. A clear priority makes polite refusals easier.

PROMPT 17 · HIGH-VALUE FINDER

> My role involves these activities: [LIST]. My main goals this quarter are [GOALS]. Help me identify which two or three activities likely have the most impact and which are low value, with a short reason for each.

**Tip:** Revisit your high-value list every few months, because it changes as your goals do.

NOTES

# High-Value Work Map

Complete this once, then revisit it during your weekly reset.

**MY MAIN GOALS THIS QUARTER**

**ACTIVITIES THAT MOVE THOSE GOALS**

**ACTIVITIES THAT FEEL BUSY BUT CHANGE LITTLE**

**MY BEST HOURS FOR FOCUSED WORK**

**WHAT I WILL PROTECT IN MY CALENDAR**

**WHAT I WILL SAY NO TO OR DELAY**

**WHO I NEED TO TELL ABOUT MY FOCUS TIME**

# Protected Focus Blocks

Reserve at least one focus block per day for high-value work. Write the task name in each block and leave the rest of the day flexible.

| Time | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Early morning** | | | | | |
| **Mid-morning** | | | | | |
| **Late morning** | | | | | |
| **Early afternoon** | | | | | |
| **Mid-afternoon** | | | | | |
| **Late afternoon** | | | | | |

# Your two-week start plan

Add only one habit at a time. The aim is a system you can keep for years, not a perfect one that lasts a week.

**Day 1**

**Choose your one list**

Pick a single tool for tasks and move everything there using the master list template.

**Days 2–3**

**Start the three-item day**

Fill in the daily plan card each morning. Limit yourself to three items.

**Days 4–5**

**Try one AI prompt**

Use one low-effort prompt on a real task and note whether it saved time.

**Day 7**

**Do your first weekly reset**

Complete the weekly reset template in about twenty minutes.

**Days 8–12**

**Map your high-value work**

Fill in the high-value map and block time for it on your calendar.

**Days 13–14**

**Remove one step**

Delete or simplify anything that felt like a chore. Keep the system small.

Simplicity supports consistency. If any part of this system feels heavy after a week, remove it. Results vary by tool version and settings.