

# Task management techniques

4 ways to better manage your tasks and time

John Pilbeam, Web/Digital Officer, Sainsbury Library, December 12, 2024



# Overview

- Introduction
- Methods to Master Your Time
  - 1: Getting Things Done
  - 2: Kanban Board
  - 3: Time Blocking
  - 4: Pomodoro Technique
- Conclusions



# Introduction

- Disclaimer
- 4 separate techniques
- All 4 can be used to form a workflow



Image: Productivity books and resources. John Pilbeam.



# Methods to Master Your Time

<https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/master-your-time>

## 15 METHODS TO MASTER YOUR TIME

### Pomodoro Technique

Decide Task → Set timer 25 min → Stop when timer goes off → Take 5 min break → After 4 cycles take 15-30 min break

### Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do	Decide
Not Important	Delegate	Delete

### ABCDE Method

Categorize tasks and execute by importance

- A - Most important
- B - Important
- C - Nice to do
- D - Delegate
- E - Eliminate

@Justin Mecham

### 3-3-3 Method

3 hours deep work → 3 shorter tasks → 3 maintenance tasks

### 2 Minute Rule

- If task is less than 2 minutes do it now
- If task is greater than 2 minutes delegate or defer

### 80/20 Method

Identify the vital 20% = your focus  
Eliminate or reduce the trivial many = 80%

20% Effort → 80% Results

### Eat the Frog

Do your most important and challenging tasks first part of each day

### Getting Things Done

- Capture tasks
- Clarify their meaning
- Organize them into lists
- Reflect on progress
- Engage with action

### Kanban Board

Categorize tasks:

- Left: To do
- Middle: Working on
- Right: Completed

Works great to visualize & optimize

### Task Batching

Sort similar tasks → Block dedicated time → Do tasks in batches

### Warren Buffet 5/25 Rule

- Identify the top 25 important tasks
- Prioritize them by importance
- Only focus on the top 5 tasks
- Ignore the remaining 20 tasks

@Justin Mecham

### MSCW Method

- M** - Must-Have: Critical for project success
- S** - Should-Have: Important but not critical
- C** - Could-Have: Desirable, if time and resources
- W** - Won't-Have: Deferred for future phases

### Time Blocking

8am - 11am Deep Work (your most important tasks)
11am - 11:30am Quick Tasks (emails, phone calls, etc.)
11:30am - 12:30pm Break (eat, exercise, relax)
12:30pm - 2pm Important Tasks (projects, planning, prep, etc.)
2pm - 4pm Meetings (one-on-ones, follow ups, external)

### 1 - 3 - 5 Method

Prioritize a manageable # of tasks daily

- 1 Major Task
- 3 Medium Tasks
- 5 Small Tasks

### Pickle Jar Method

- Do major tasks first
- Slot in minor tasks around the major ones
- Continuously assess and reprioritize tasks

Follow me for more like this | [Justin Mecham](#) | [linkedin.com/in/justinmecham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinmecham/)



# Methods to Master Your Time

<https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/master-your-time>

## 15 METHODS TO MASTER YOUR TIME

### Pomodoro Technique

Decide Task → Set timer 25 min → Stop when timer goes off → Take 5 min break → After 4 cycles take 15-30 min break

### Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do	Decide
Not Important	Delegate	Delete

### ABCDE Method

Categorize tasks and execute by importance

- A - Most important
- B - Important
- C - Nice to do
- D - Delegate
- E - Eliminate

@Justin Mecham

### 3-3-3 Method

3 hours deep work → 3 shorter tasks → 3 maintenance tasks

### 2 Minute Rule

- If task is less than 2 minutes do it now
- If task is greater than 2 minutes delegate or defer

### 80/20 Method

Identify the vital 20% = your focus → Eliminate or reduce the trivial many = 80% → 20% Effort → 80% Results

### Getting Things Done

- Capture tasks
- Clarify their meaning
- Organize them into lists
- Reflect on progress
- Engage with action

### Kanban Board

Categorize tasks:

- Left: To do
- Middle: Working on
- Right: Completed

Works great to visualize & optimize

### Eat the Frog

Do your most important and challenging tasks first part of each day

### Task Batching

Sort similar tasks → Block dedicated time → Do tasks in batches

### Warren Buffet 5/25 Rule

- Identify the top 25 important tasks
- Prioritize them by importance
- Only focus on the top 5 tasks
- Ignore the remaining 20 tasks

@Justin Mecham

### MSCW Method

- M** - Must-Have: Critical for project success
- S** - Should-Have: Important but not critical
- C** - Could-Have: Desirable, if time and resources
- W** - Won't-Have: Deferred for future phases

### Time Blocking

8am - 11am Deep Work (your most important tasks)
11am - 11:30am Quick Tasks (emails, phone calls, etc.)
11:30am - 12:30pm Break (eat, exercise, relax)
12:30pm - 2pm Important Tasks (projects, planning, prep, etc.)
2pm - 4pm Meetings (one-on-ones, follow ups, external)

### 1-3-5 Method

Prioritize a manageable # of tasks daily

- 1 Major Task
- 3 Medium Tasks
- 5 Small Tasks

### Pickle Jar Method

- Do major tasks first
- Slot in minor tasks around the major ones
- Continuously assess and reprioritize tasks

Follow me for more like this | [Justin Mecham](#) | [linkedin.com/in/justinmecham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinmecham/)



**1**

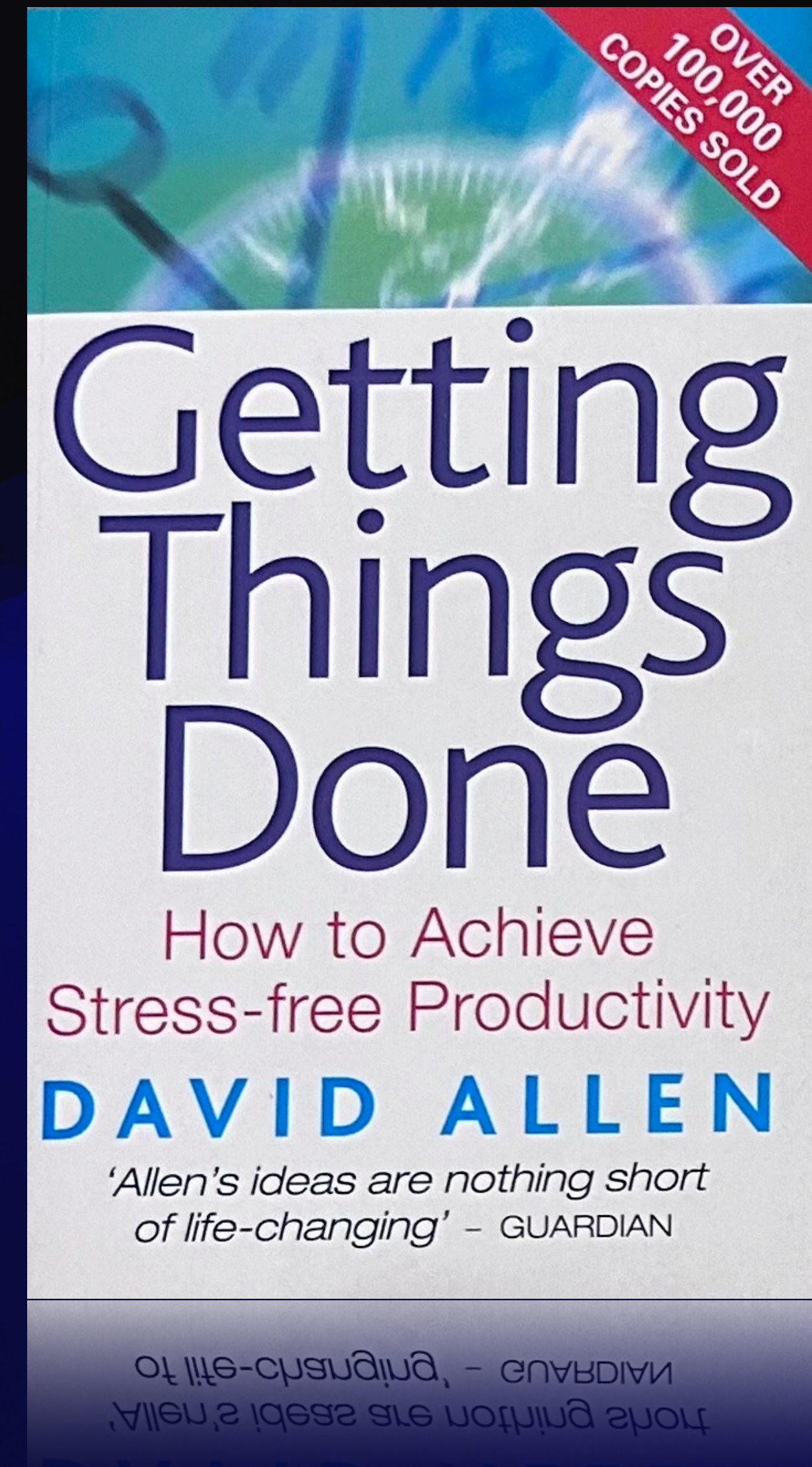
**Getting Things Done (GTD)**



# 1: Getting Things Done (GTD)

## Overview

- A self-contained personal productivity system created by David Allen in 2001.
- Manage tasks.
- Reduce stress.
- Organise tasks clearly into actions.





# 1: Getting Things Done (GTD)

## The 5 Steps

1. **Capture:** Write down everything on your mind (tasks, ideas, reminders) in one place.
2. **Clarify:** Decide what each item means and what action is needed, if any.
3. **Organise:** Sort tasks into categories, like “To Do Today,” “Waiting For,” or “Someday.”
4. **Reflect:** Regularly review your list to keep it updated and prioritise tasks.
5. **Engage:** Focus on doing tasks, one at a time, based on what’s most important or urgent.





# 1: Getting Things Done (GTD)

## Implementing

- Apps:
  - Nexus 365 (e.g. OneNote, Outlook and Planner)
  - Trello ([trello.com](https://trello.com))
  - Any Text Editor or todo list app
- Analogue:
  - Notepad and pen
- Resources:
  - Getting Things Done: Book, Audiobook and website ([gettingthingsdone.com/](https://gettingthingsdone.com/))



Image: Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain CC0 License.



2

**Kanban Board**



# 2: Kanban Board Overview

- Kanban 看板 (“signboard” or “card”)
- Developed by Toyota, Japan, 1940s
- A scheduling system for lean or just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing
- Improve efficiency:
  - Visualise workflows
  - Control inventory



Image: Toyota Production System (TPS). Source: [toyota-global.com](http://toyota-global.com)



# 2: Kanban Board History

- Kanban 看板 (“signboard” or “card”)
- Developed by Toyota, Japan, 1940s
- Lean or just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing
- Improve efficiency:
  - Visualise workflows
  - Control inventory



Image: Example of a Toyota Kanban Card for delivery of axle hub and bearings from JTEKT to the Takaoka plant of Toyota.

Photo taken with permission by Toyota. <https://www.allaboutlean.com/>



# 2: Kanban Board History

- Kanban 看板 (“signboard” or “card”)
- Developed by Toyota, Japan, 1940s
- Lean or just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing
- Improve efficiency:
  - Visualise workflows
  - Control inventory



Image: Example of a Toyota Kanban Card for delivery of axle hub and bearings from JTEKT to the Takaoka plant of Toyota.

Photo taken with permission by Toyota. <https://www.allaboutlean.com/>



# 2: Kanban Board Concept

- Like a to-do list on a noticeboard.
- Board divided into columns e.g.
  - To Do
  - Doing
  - Done
- Each task is written on a card
- Cards move through columns as work progresses.

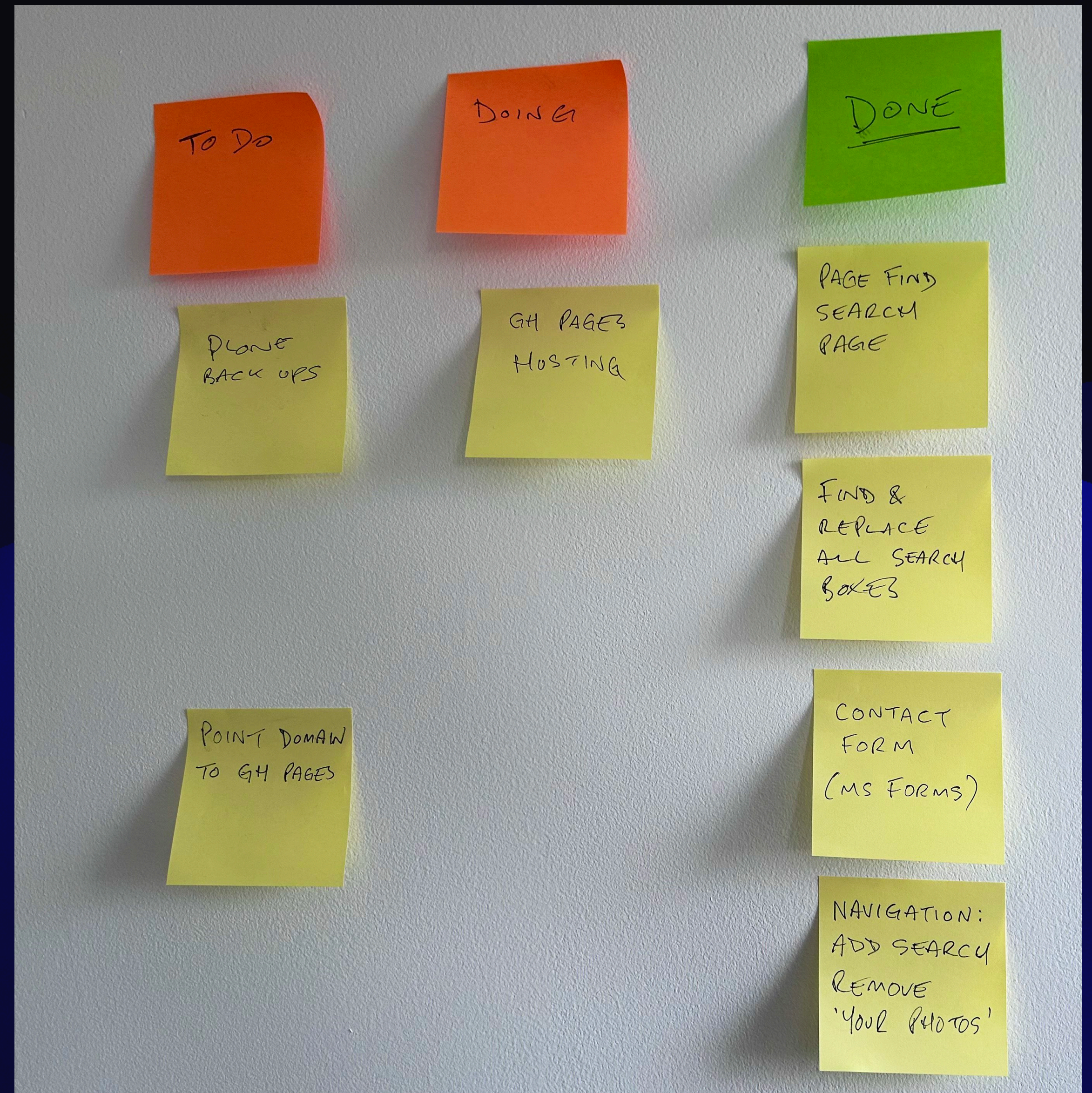


Image: Kaban board for managing a web development project. John Pilbeam.



# 2: Kanban Board Concept

- Focus on one task at a time (to avoid being overwhelmed).
- See everything at a glance (to stay organized).
- Keep improving how you work (to be more efficient).
- Like organising books on shelves in the library – everything has a place.

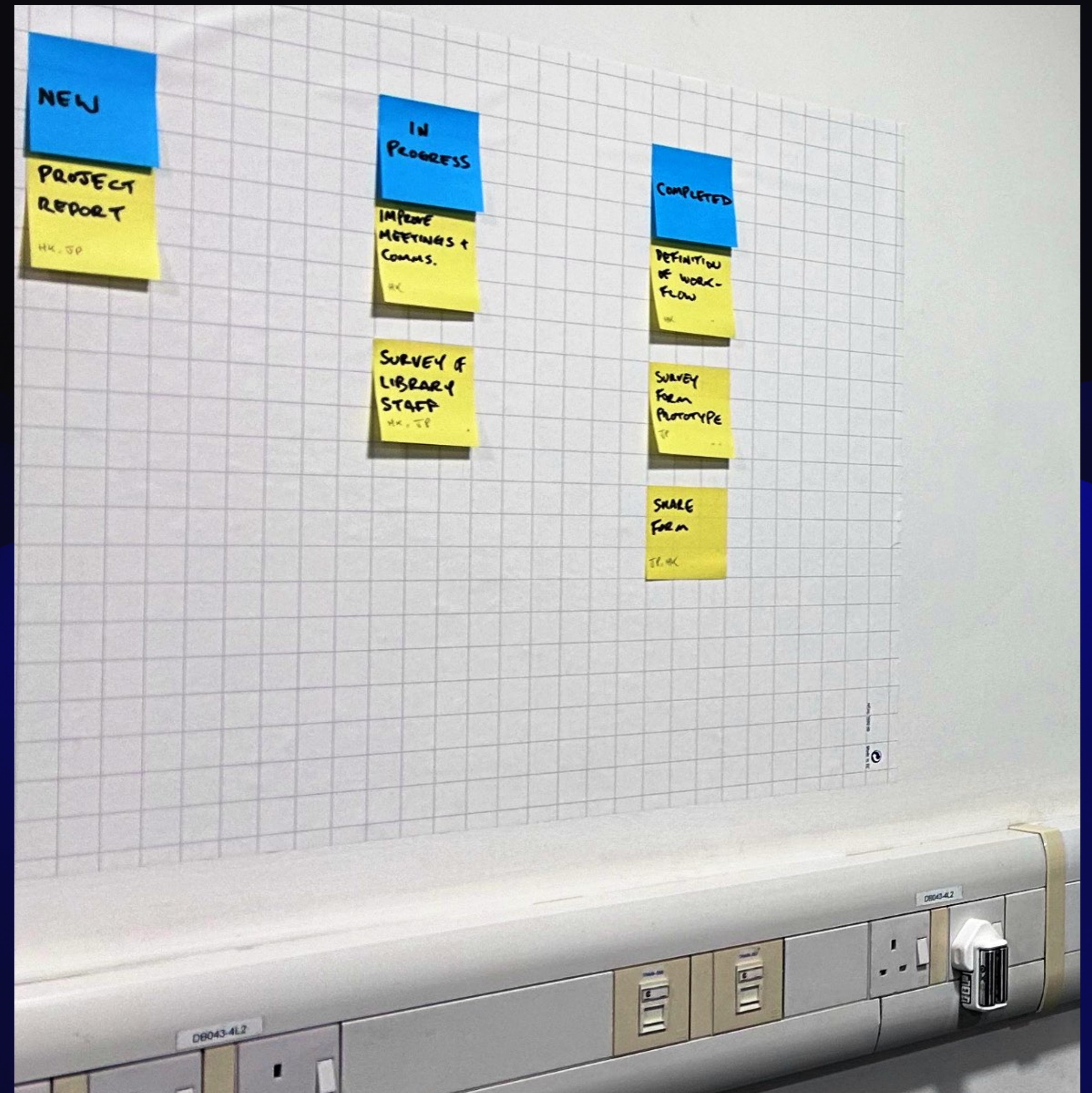
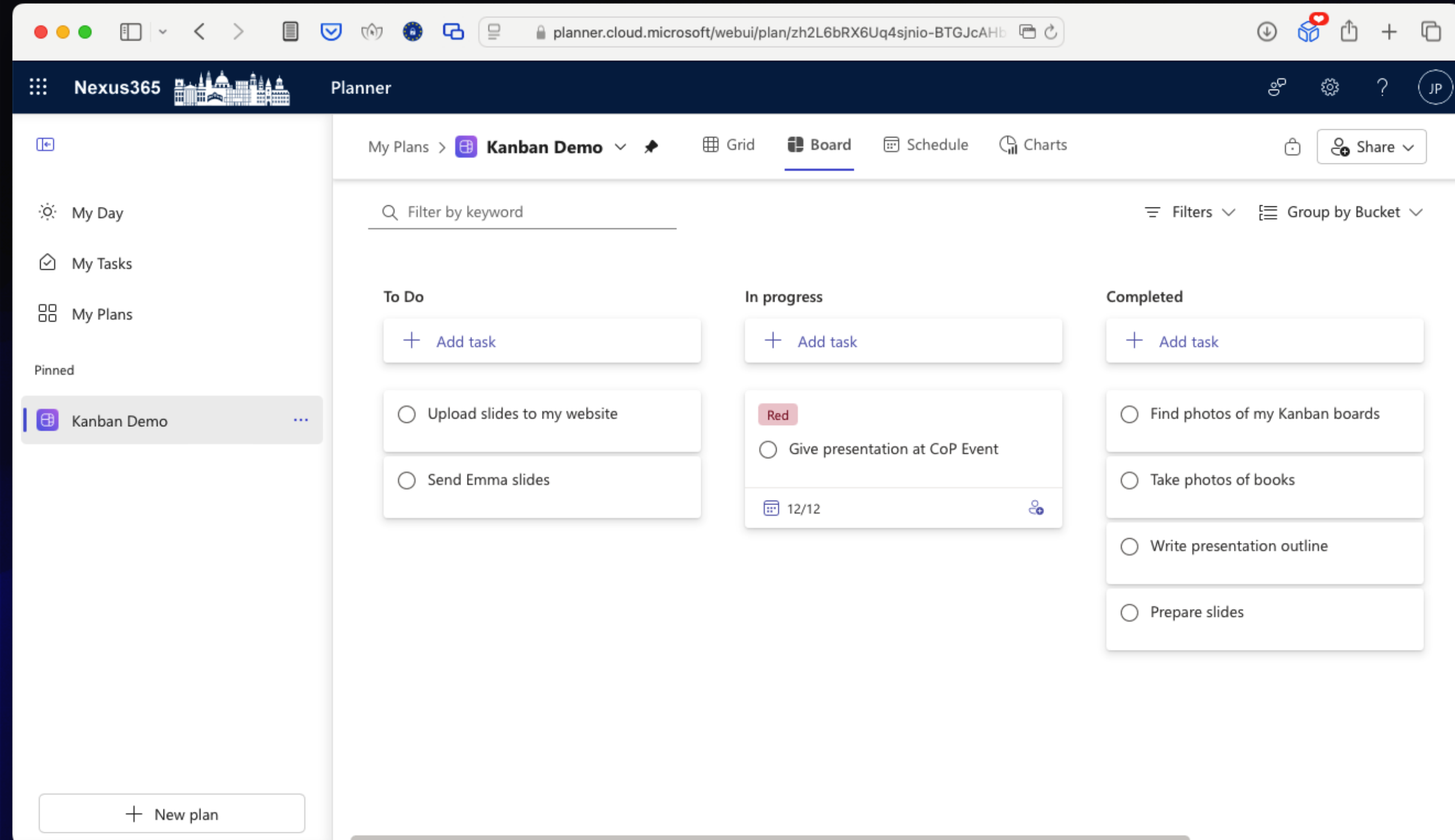


Image: Kaban board in library office. John Pilbeam.



# 2: Kanban Board Implementing

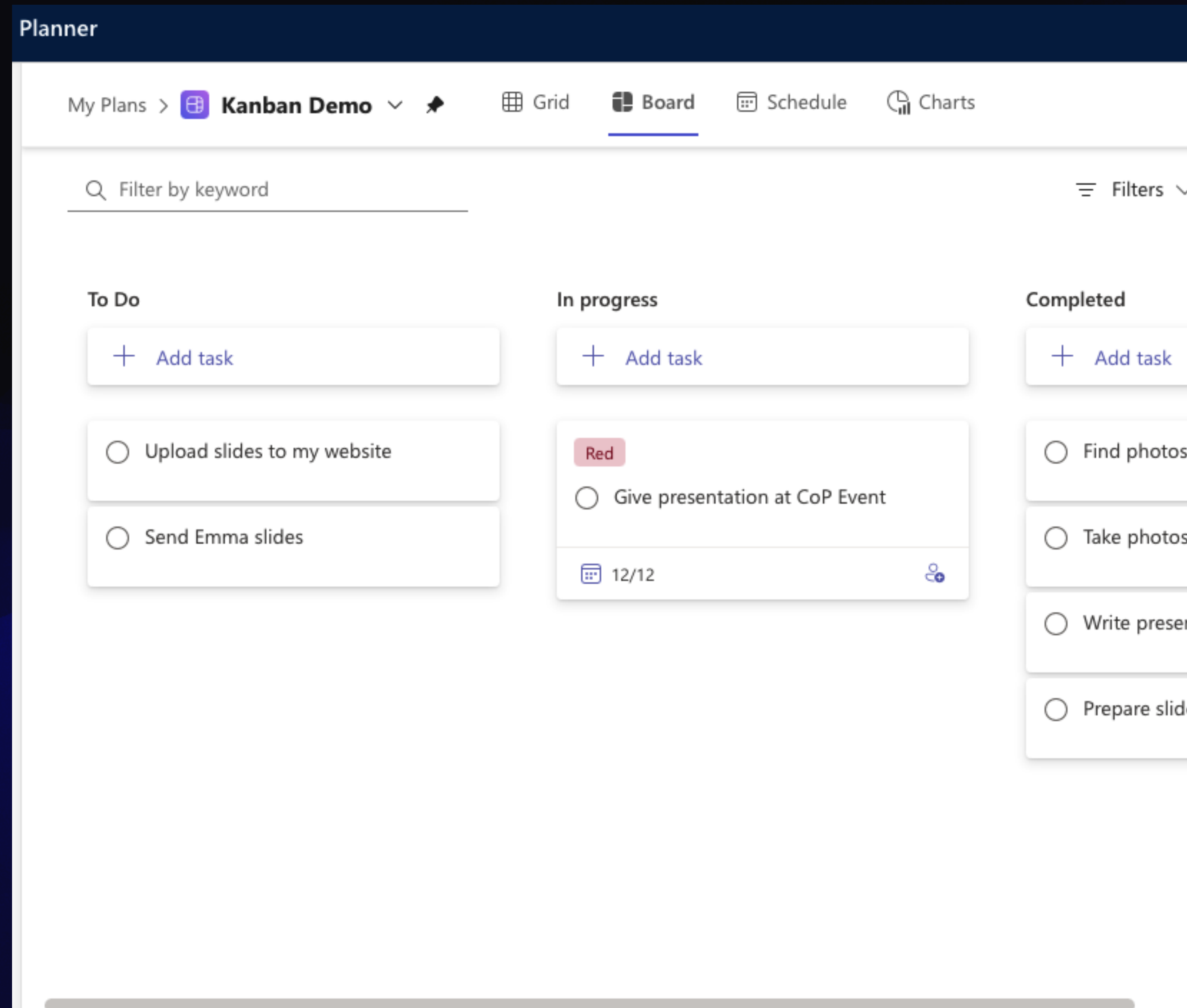
- Apps:
  - Planner ([planner.cloud.microsoft/](https://planner.cloud.microsoft/) - via Nexus365/Oxford SSO)
  - Trello ([trello.com](https://trello.com))
- Analogue:
  - Flat surface + PostIt notes
- Resources:
  - Personal Kanban ([go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101](https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101))





# 2: Kanban Board Implementing

- Apps:
  - Planner ([planner.cloud.microsoft/](https://planner.cloud.microsoft/) - via Nexus365/Oxford SSO)
  - Trello ([trello.com](https://trello.com))
- Analogue:
  - Flat surface + PostIt notes
- Resources:
  - Personal Kanban ([go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101](https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101))





# 2: Kanban Board Implementing

- Apps:
  - Planner ([planner.cloud.microsoft/](https://planner.cloud.microsoft/) - via Nexus365/Oxford SSO)
  - Trello ([trello.com](https://trello.com))
- Analogue:
  - Flat surface + PostIt notes
- Resources:
  - Personal Kanban ([go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101](https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/kanban-101))

The screenshot shows a Trello board titled 'Annual Content Plan' with three columns representing quarters: Q1: Jan/Feb/Mar, Q2: Apr/May/June, and Q3: Jul/Aug/Sep. Each column has an 'Add task' button at the top. The board contains various tasks, many with associated media and links. For example, in Q1, there is a task for 'World Book Day' with a photo of a person reading a book titled 'CHIP WAR' and a link to 'world-book-day-2023.png'. In Q2, there is a task for 'National Biscuit Day' with a photo of 'PCAS CREDIT' written on a beach. In Q3, there is a task for 'TechCrunch Disrupt' with a 'To do' label. The board also features a date picker set to '08/23/2021' and various social media and website links for each task.



3

**Time Blocking**



# 3: Time Blocking

## Overview

- Old concept, nearly as old as calendars.
- 18th-century, Benjamin Franklin popularised.
- 2000s onwards became popular with technologists and writers such as Cal Newport.
- A method of managing the day by scheduling specific blocks of time for different tasks.
- Decide when you'll do each task and set aside time for it in your calendar.
- Replaces reactive working from your inbox or to do list.



Image: Time block planners.



# 3: Time Blocking

## How It Works

1. List Your Tasks: Write down everything you need to do.
2. Block Your Time: Divide your day into blocks and assign tasks to each block (e.g., 9–10 AM for emails, 10–11 AM for research).
3. Stick to Your Plan: Focus only on the task for each block, without multitasking.

It's like reserving a study room in the library —you know when and where you'll work on something, which helps you stay focused and manage your time better.

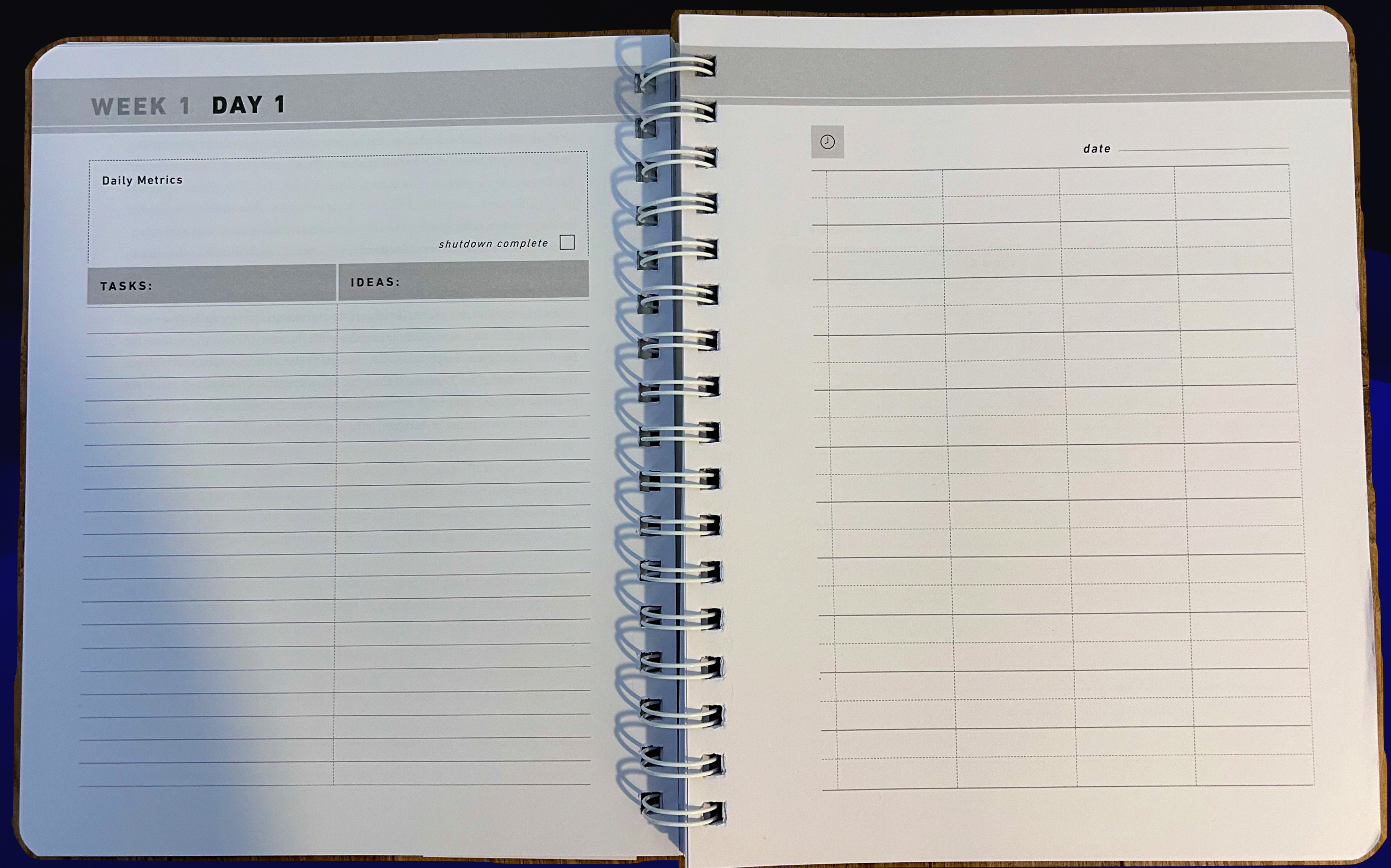


Image: Time block planner example pages.





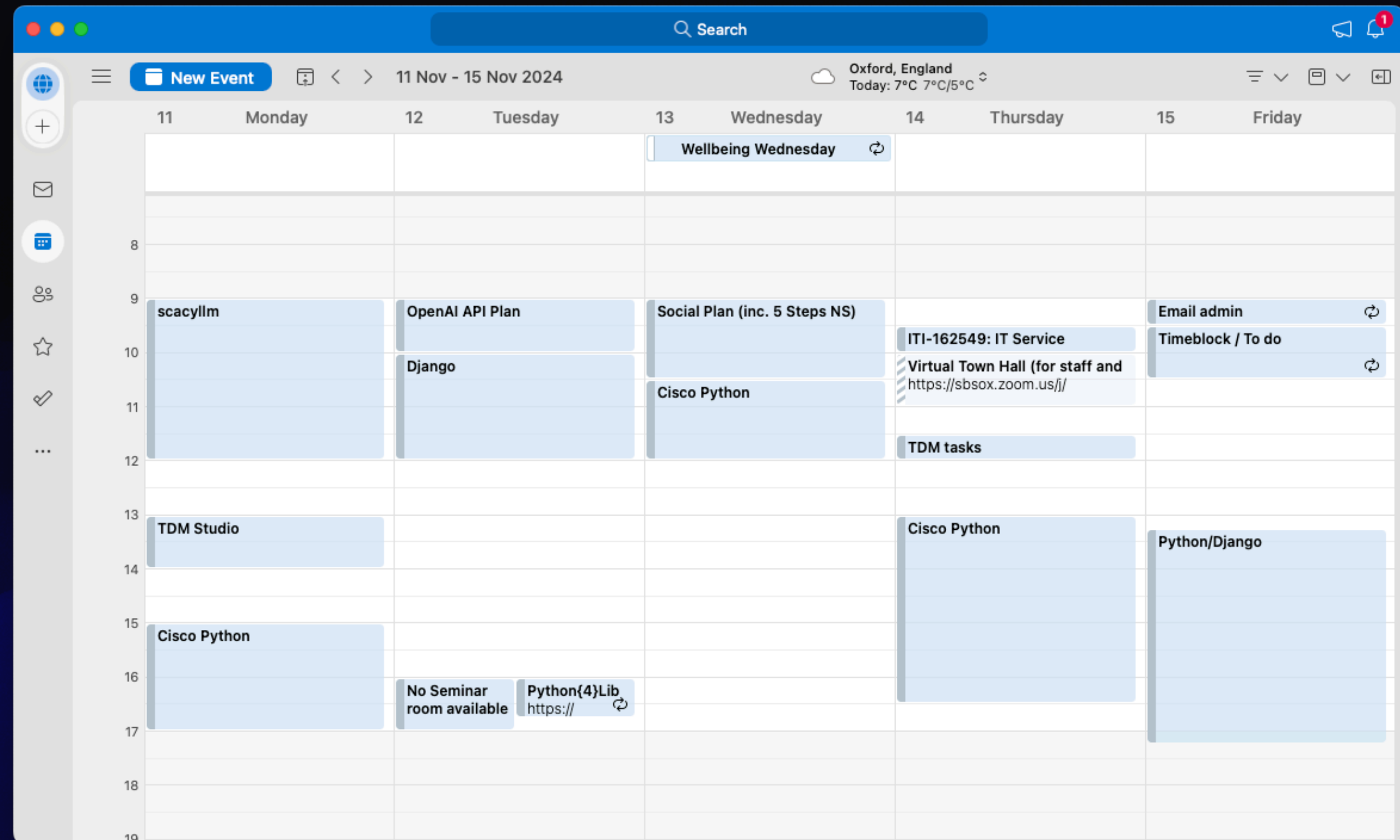


# 3: Time Blocking

## How It Works

1. List Your Tasks: Write down everything you need to do.
2. Block Your Time: Divide your day into blocks and assign tasks to each block (e.g., 9–10 AM for emails, 10–11 AM for research).
3. Stick to Your Plan: Focus only on the task for each block, without multitasking.

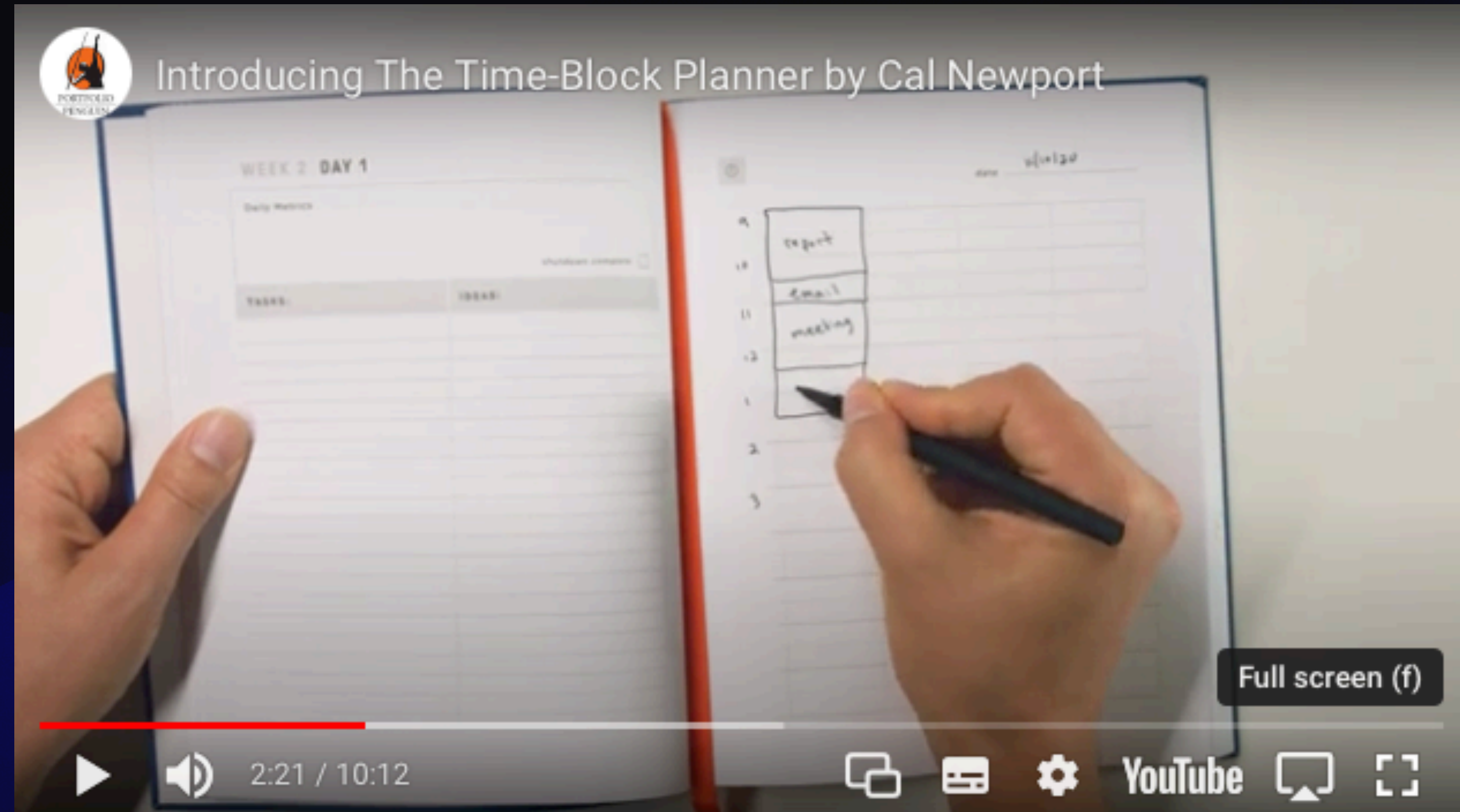
It's like reserving a study room in the library —you know when and where you'll work on something, which helps you stay focused and manage your time better.





# 3: Time Blocking Implementing

- Apps:
  - Outlook (or other calander app)
- Analogue:
  - Timeblock Planner
  - Regular notepad/diary
- Resources:
  - Time-Block Planner ([www.timeblockplanner.com/](http://www.timeblockplanner.com/))





4

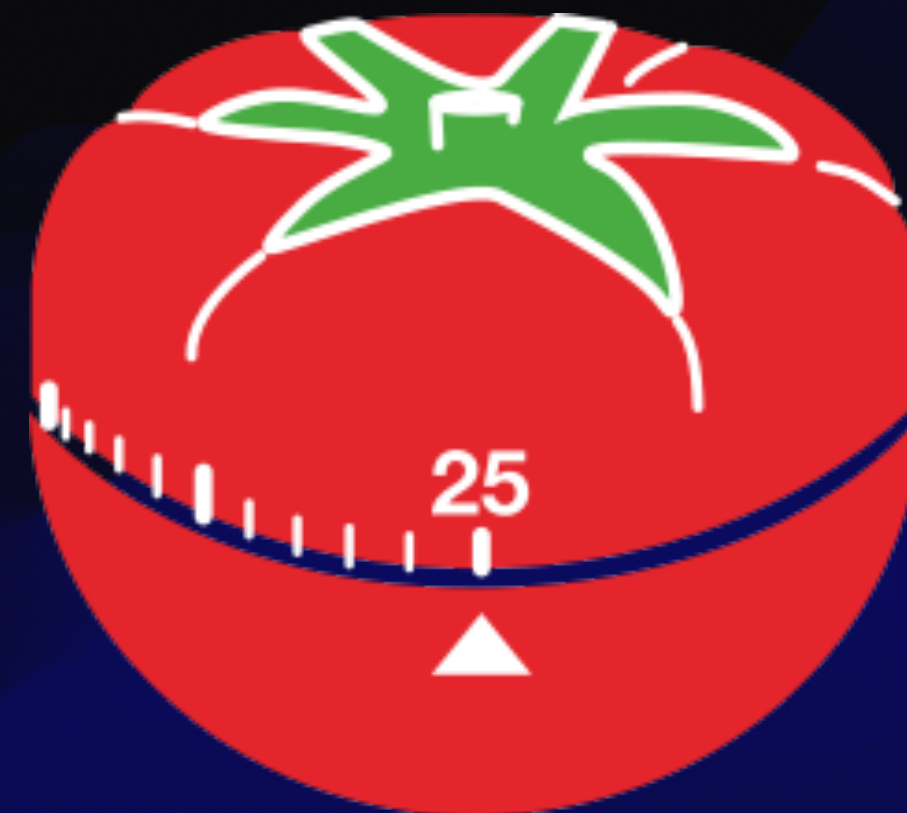
Pomodoro Technique



# 4: Pomodoro Technique

## Overview

- Time management method.
- Developed in 1987 by Francesco Cirillo.
- Named after the tomato-shaped kitchen timer he used.
- Breaks work into:
  - Focused intervals (usually 25 mins - "Pomodoros").
  - Short breaks (usually 5 mins).



*the*  
**Pomodoro**<sup>®</sup>  
TECHNIQUE  
TECHNIQUE

Image: © Francesco Cirillo FZCO. All rights reserved.



# 4: Pomodoro Technique

## How It Works

1. Choose a Task: Decide what you want to work on.
2. Set a Timer: Usually for 25 minutes.
3. Work: Focus on your task without interruptions until the timer rings.
4. Take a Short Break: Rest for 5 minutes to recharge.
5. Repeat: After 4 Pomodoros, take a longer break (15–30 minutes).

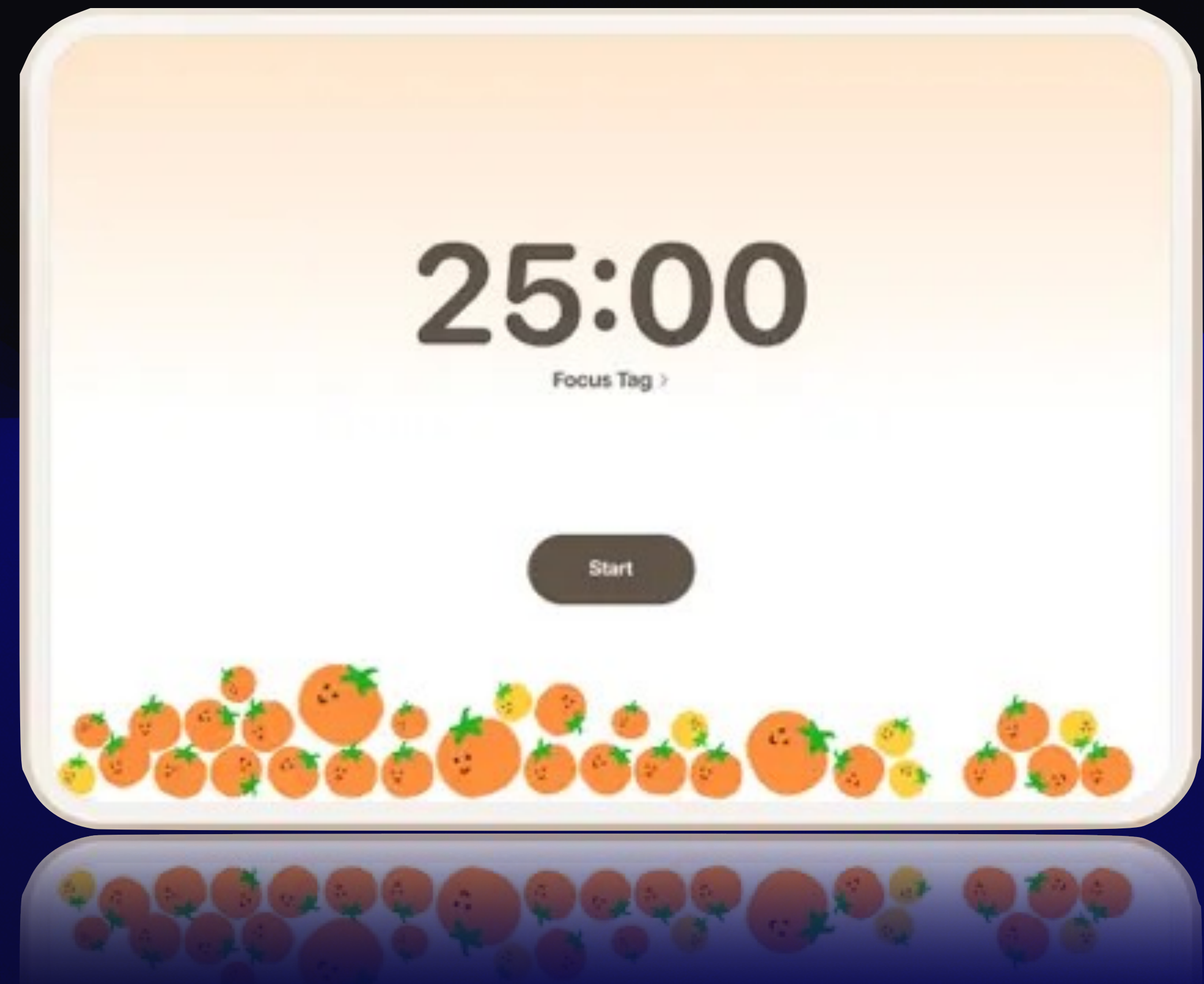


Image: FocusPomo Pomodoro Timer. FocusPomo Apps.



# 4: Pomodoro Technique

## Benefits

- Encourages focus and reduces distractions.
- Prevents burnout with regular breaks.
- Helps track time spent on tasks for better planning.

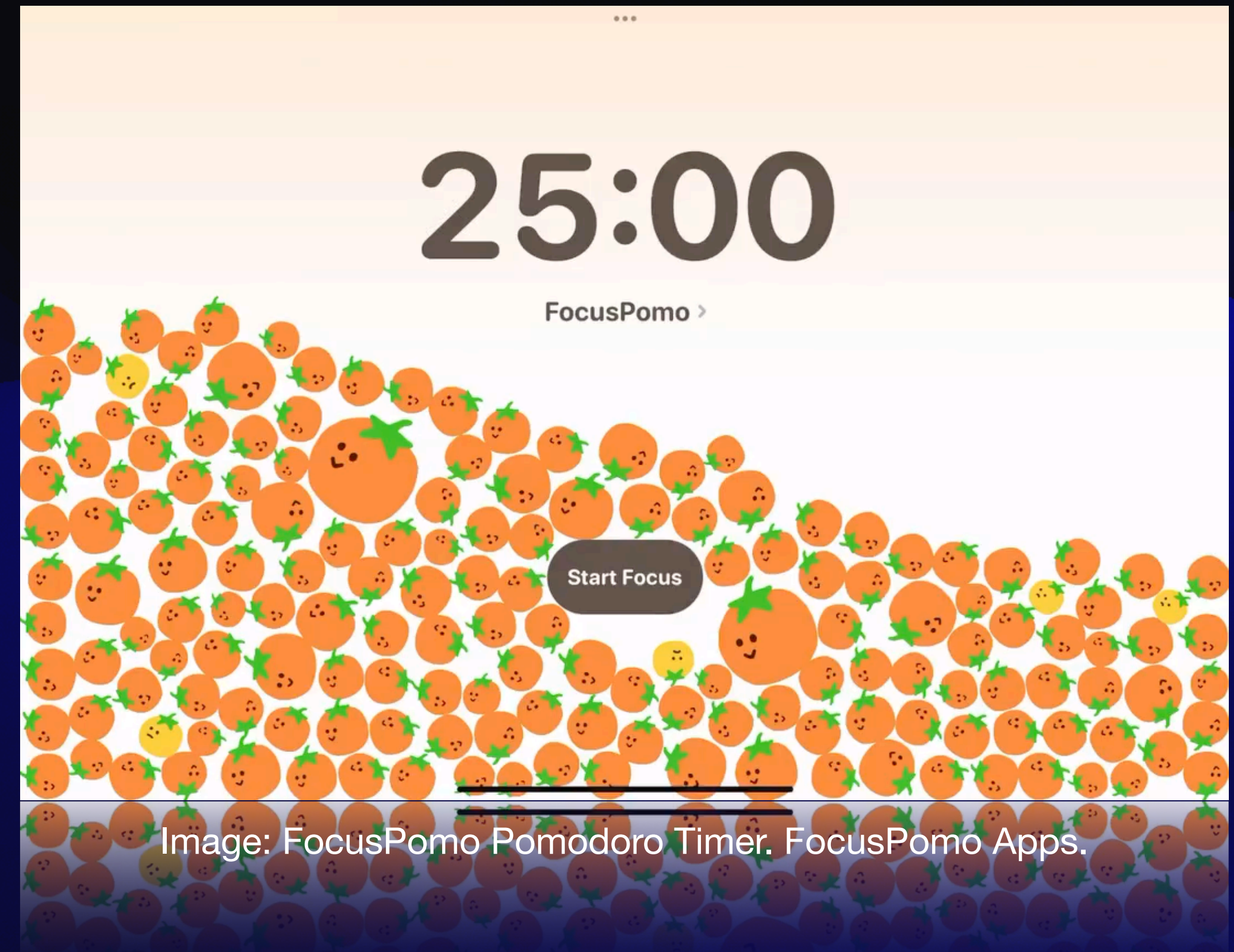


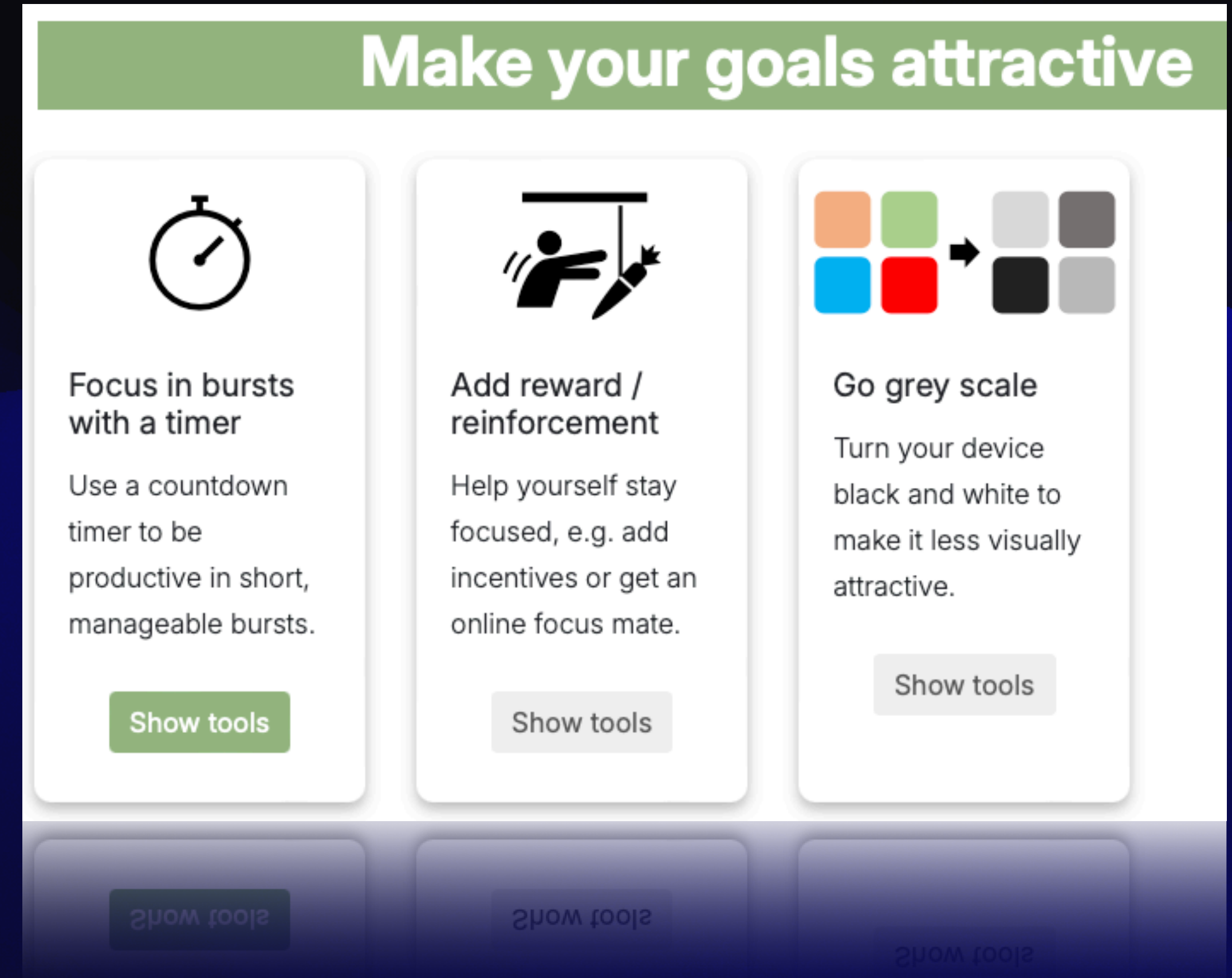
Image: FocusPomo Pomodoro Timer. FocusPomo Apps.



# 4: Pomodoro Technique

## Implementing

- Apps:
  - Be Focused (Apple App Store)
  - FocusPomo (Apple App Store)
  - ReDD ([redd-project.org/tools/](http://redd-project.org/tools/))
- Analogue:
  - Any timer
- Resources:
  - The Pomodoro Technique ([www.pomodoratechnique.com/](http://www.pomodoratechnique.com/))





# 4: Pomodoro Technique

## Implementing

- Apps:

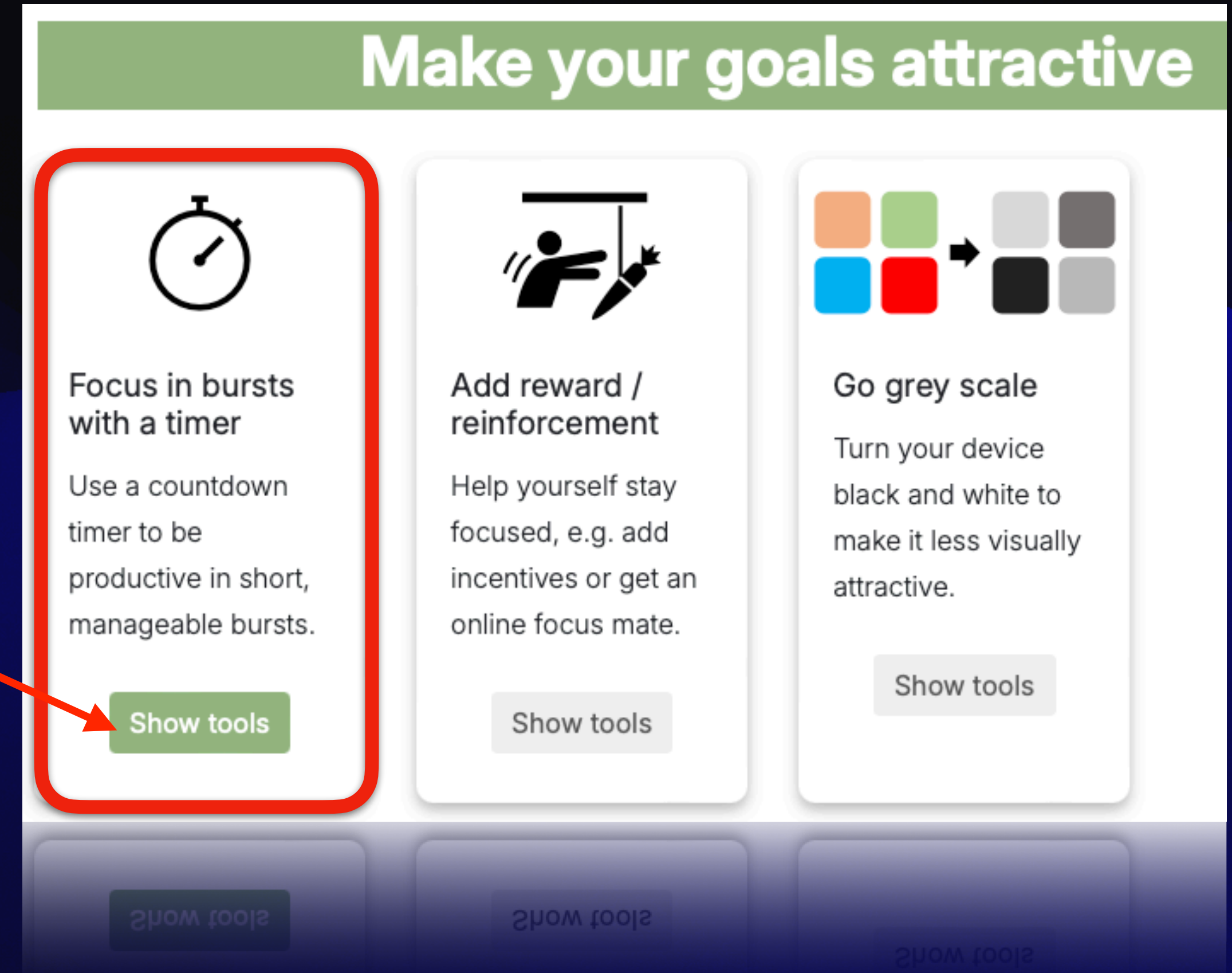
- Be Focused (Apple App Store)
- FocusPomo (Apple App Store)
- ReDD ([redd-project.org/tools/](http://redd-project.org/tools/))

- Analogue:

- Any timer + notepad

- Resources:

- The Pomodoro Technique ([www.pomodoratechnique.com/](http://www.pomodoratechnique.com/))





# Conclusions

- **Getting Things Done (GTD)**
  - Great for organising incoming tasks and ideas.
  - Requires consistent effort to maintain lists and conduct regular reviews.



# Conclusions

- **Kanban Boards**
  - Excellent for visualising workflows and managing tasks collaboratively.
  - Proper maintenance to avoid becoming cluttered.



# Conclusions

- Time Blocking
  - Ideal for structuring your day and focusing on priorities.
  - Demands discipline to stick to the schedule.



# Conclusions

- Pomodoro Technique
  - Helps maintain focus and prevent burnout.
  - Rigid time intervals may not suit tasks requiring deep concentration or environments with interruptions.



# Conclusions

- Experiment with these 4 methods - and also from the list of 15.
- See what works for you and adapt them to your work style.
- All techniques created by people struggling with productivity or focus.

## 15 METHODS TO MASTER YOUR TIME

### Pomodoro Technique

Decide Task → Set timer 25 min → Stop when timer goes off → Take 5 min break → After 4 cycles take 15-30 min break

### Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do	Decide
Not Important	Delegate	Delete

### ABCDE Method

Categorize tasks and execute by importance

- A - Most important
- B - Important
- C - Nice to do
- D - Delegate
- E - Eliminate

@Justin Mecham

### 3-3-3 Method

3 hours deep work, 3 shorter tasks, 3 maintenance tasks

### 2 Minute Rule

- If task is less than 2 minutes do it now
- If task is greater than 2 minutes delegate or defer

### 80/20 Method

Identify the vital 20% = your focus  
Eliminate or reduce the trivial many = 80%

### Eat the Frog

Do your most important and challenging tasks first part of each day

### Getting Things Done

- Capture tasks
- Clarify their meaning
- Organize them into lists
- Reflect on progress
- Engage with action

### Kanban Board

Categorize tasks:

- Left: To do
- Middle: Working on
- Right: Completed
- Works great to visualize & optimize

### Task Batching

Sort similar tasks → Block dedicated time → Do tasks in batches

### Warren Buffet 5/25 Rule

- Identify the top 25 important tasks
- Prioritize them by importance
- Only focus on the top 5 tasks
- Ignore the remaining 20 tasks

@Justin Mecham

### MSCW Method

- M** - Must-Have: Critical for project success
- S** - Should-Have: Important but not critical
- C** - Could-Have: Desirable, if time and resources
- W** - Won't-Have: Deferred for future phases

### Time Blocking

8am - 11am Deep Work (your most important tasks)
11am - 11:30am Quick Tasks (emails, phone calls, etc.)
11:30am - 12:30pm Break (eat, exercise, relax)
12:30pm - 2pm Important Tasks (projects, planning, prep, etc.)
2pm - 4pm Meetings (one-on-ones, follow ups, external)

### 1 - 3 - 5 Method

Prioritize a manageable # of tasks daily

### Pickle Jar Method

- Do major tasks first
- Slot in minor tasks around the major ones
- Continuously assess and reprioritize tasks

Follow me for more like this | [Justin Mecham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinmecham/) | [linkedin.com/in/justinmecham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinmecham/)



# Contact

**John Pilbeam**

Web Digital Officer, Sainsbury Library

[john.pilbeam@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:john.pilbeam@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

<https://johnpilbeam.com/>

