



# HOW TO SCHEDULE YOUR DAY FOR PEAK CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

ARE YOU A CERTIFIED ORGANIZATIONAL NINJA? IT'S OKAY, NOBODY IS--SO STEAL THIS IDEA FROM CAREER KICKSTARTER AMBER RAE, WHO SHARES HER "WORK, PLAY, FIT, PUSH" FRAMEWORK FOR GETTING THINGS DONE WHILE STAYING INSPIRED.

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About four years ago I started working for myself. I wanted the freedom and flexibility to own my schedule and the space to bring my ideas to life.

One of the biggest challenges was structuring my time so I was fully experiencing the benefits of working for myself while also being as creative and productive as possible. At first, the idea of systems and planning made me cringe. I felt like they would hold back my creative potential. Eventually, organization and effectiveness challenges piled up and I decided to give structure a try.

I wondered:

How do I balance client service with working on my own ideas?

How do I avoid interruptions that mess with my creative flow?

How do I stop putting off the stuff I hate but still have to do?

In my first attempt, I mapped out my day hour by hour, squeezing in all the elements of what I defined as an "ideal day." After a few weeks, I ended up feeling like a robot and the predictability was anything but inspiring.

That's when I decided to zoom out and think more about the categories of an ideal day and how I can batch my time to be most effective.

My problem became more clear: *How do I make sure I'm getting stuff done, taking care of myself, making time from for play, and actively pushing myself outside my comfort zone?*

That's when I developed a framework called "Work, Play, Fit, Push." Hanging from my wall, it looks like:

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
WORK						
1- FAST CO 2- HAR POST 3- SPEECH OUTLINE	1- CALLS 2- INVESTOR'S DECK 3- ↓	1- INVESTOR'S DECK 2- ↓ 3- ↓	1- CALLS 2- SMILEY/ BOLD 3.0 3- TALK OUTLINE	FLY TO CHICAGO FINALIZE TALK	SPEAK @ NORTHWESTERN	Relax & enjoy
PLAY						
community dinner	frisbee	cafe hop	Nature walk	dance	show Farhad Chicago & see Mom	Chitown adventure
FIT						
RUN	rockclimb	RUN	boot camp	traveling/dance	Run w/ F	city walk
PUSH						
email BB	valuable article	investor feedback	send deck v2 feedback	Apply for A.F. speaking opp	speaking	No tech
PRIORITIES: > Nail investor's deck content > Write 2 articles: FastCo & HAR > Finalize speech for Northwestern talk > Get Bold 3.0 in motion w/ Smiley > Move & sweat every day > Show Farhad amazing time in Chicago						

Here's how it works:

### **1. Set priorities on Sunday.**

Every Sunday, I sit down and map out my week. Instead of defining the hour-by-hour of each day, I outline my weekly priorities and what I want to have accomplished by the following Sunday.

### **2. Map out work, play, fit, and push.**

**Work:** For each day, I outline my "Top 3," meaning the three most important things I will have accomplished by the end of the day. Sometimes I'll map out the entire week on Sunday because my priorities are super clear. Other times, I'll decide on my Top 3 on a day-by-day basis.

**Play:** I've found that play enables me to self-express, reflect, and give my ideas space, which shows up positively in my work. Making time to create art, get into nature, go on photo walks, read poetry, skip down sidewalks and the like puts me in a constant state of curiosity and flow.

**Fit:** Movement keeps ideas moving forward so I aim to move my body for at least 30 minutes each day.

**Push:** Since learning and growth is important to me, I do something that scares me (almost) every day. This may be asking someone whom I deeply respect for an interview or writing about a topic that makes me feel vulnerable.

### **3. Batch your days.**

Batching actions into specific days and creating time for creativity has been a huge gamechanger for me. Here's how I break down my schedule.

**CREATE on Monday/Wednesday/Friday:** I create holes in my schedule for thinking and creating. On these days, instead of thinking about how to spend my time in advance, I pay attention to my body and take breaks as needed.

**CALLS and MEETINGS on Tuesday/Thursday:** When possible, I avoid phone calls and meetings because I find them typically unproductive and often easy to solve via email. I set aside three hours on Tuesday and Thursday for meetings, and once these spots are filled, I say no. There are, of course, occasional exceptions.

**"Hate you but have to do you" is saved for Wednesday morning:** Things like paying bills, clearing out my email inbox, and the like, take up just one morning.

**SPONTANEOUS Saturday:** With so much structure, I make room for spontaneity. On Saturday, I let go and go where the day takes me. Balancing structure with a day of free-spiritedness makes me feel whole.

**INTENTIONAL Sunday:** Plan for the week ahead.

Above all, when it comes to reaching peak creative performance, it's all about experimenting to figure out what works best *for you*.