

The Pomodoro Technique

What is it?

The Pomodoro Technique is a time-management tool developed in the 1980's and has since been used by professionals and organizations around the world to promote productivity. Pomodoro means "tomato" in Italian, and the popular icon associated with the Pomodoro Technique is the tomato-shaped kitchen timer (which you use with the Pomodoro Technique). An essential component of the Pomodoro Technique is that it requires the student to actively plan out each study session and be thoughtful about what tasks to accomplish. Another essential component of the Pomodoro Technique is that it teaches users how to effectively take breaks when working.



Why does it work?

Your college life is hectic. Right now, you probably have readings to catch up on, a paper to write, and that nagging physics homework in your backpack. Where do you begin? The Pomodoro Technique helps you plan out your course of action in a very thoughtful way so you feel you have a sense of direction. Sometimes "time" is your worst enemy; if you have too much time before your work **must** be done, why bother starting now? If you don't have enough time, you'll rush through it and end up with a product that doesn't really represent what you are capable of. The Pomodoro Technique will help you because it will teach you to use time as a tool to systematically accomplish each task on your to-do list. Also, when you work, you often reward yourself with breaks (which is good!) but those breaks are often spent doing other activities (like checking email, Facebook) that end up consuming far more time than you intended. Then, it feels impossible to get back on track with what you were doing. The Pomodoro Technique will help you structure your time by taking small, frequent breaks. The Pomodoro Technique also helps you learn to accurately gauge how much effort and time academic tasks will require.

How does it work?

The Pomodoro Technique is a way of taking your study time and chunking it into small, bite-sized pieces, and self-monitoring what you accomplish while you work. First, you create a task-list of the work to be accomplished and estimate how many "chunks" (or "pomodoros" which are 25-minute sessions of uninterrupted work) each task will take to complete. Next, you set a Pomodoro Timer (or other software) and get to work. After 25 minutes, the timer will ring, signalling you to record what you accomplished and take a short, 3-to-5 minute break. As you check things off of your list, you are giving yourself feedback about what you have accomplished, which will help you in the future in setting timelines for completing work. Also, you will find it rewarding that your "to-do" list is shrinking, and being replaced by a "done" list!

Resources:

- Perhaps the best resource is a free e-book available at <http://www.pomodorotechnique.com/>. The cheat sheet on the reverse of this handout is from this website.
- If you enjoy using technology, there are online and downloadable versions of the Pomodoro Technique. www.mytomatoes.com is a great website that walks you through using this technique, and a list of free software versions can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro_technique_software.
- Please email Dr. Jonathan Thomas-Stagg at jstagg@illinois.edu

Change that habit!

The best way to change your academic habits for long-term success is to invest time and energy into practicing strategies like the Pomodoro Technique. It may not work great right away, but the effort you put in to practicing better academic habits is directly proportional to the success you will experience. Coaching at DRES can help you change your habits. To start coaching, please contact Dr. Jonathan Thomas-Stagg at jstagg@illinois.edu. Thanks!