

Want to leave work at 5.30pm sharp? By following the following office-efficiency tips, you'll gain a huge five hours and 15 minutes, reach the end of your seemingly never-ending to-do list, and make it home in time for the nightly news.

Save two hours

Ignore your personal emails and quit stalking your mates on Facebook. If someone sends you an email with the subject, "FWD: OMG! You have to see this photo!", it's going to be tough not to open it. But, succumbing to such emails will equal hours of distraction when the attachment links you back to FB. So, just don't go there! Professional organiser Roz Howland (inorderorganising.com.au) recommends an inbox detox. "Stick to after-hours for personal email. When temptation arises, train yourself to get up and do a different activity."

Save 30 minutes

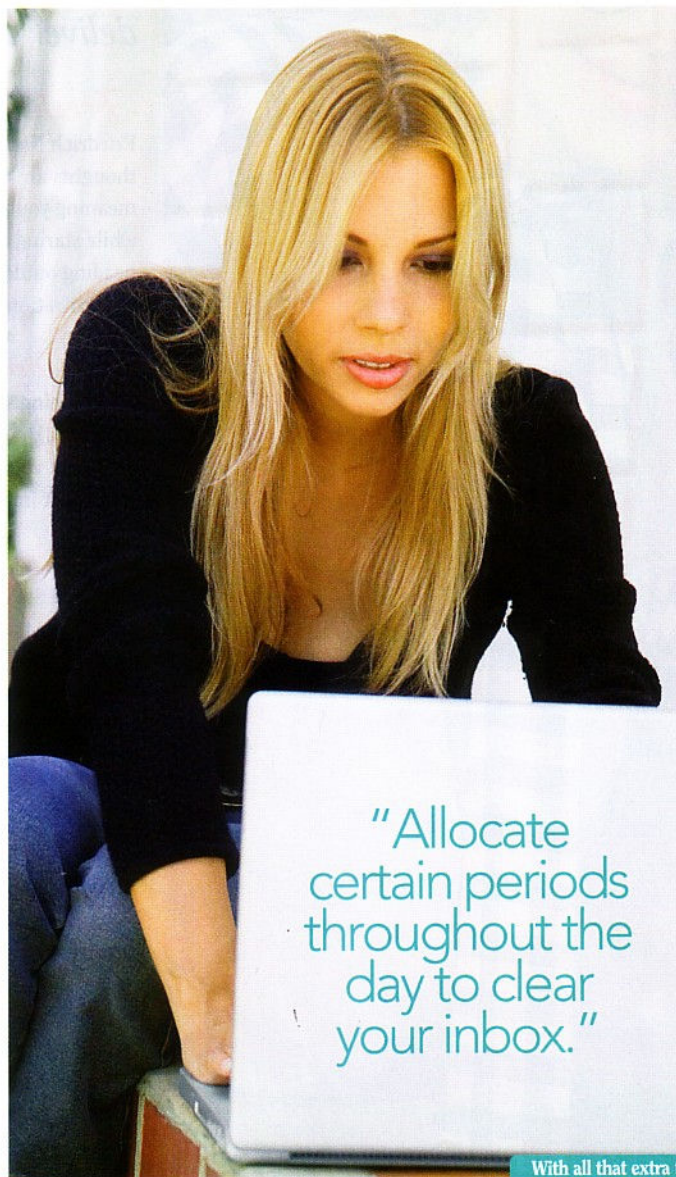
Ahh, that dreaded 3.30-itis. As soon as you feel your eyelids start to droop, step away from the computer. Yes, get up, prepare tea, or go outside, breathe the fresh air, and let your eyes adjust to the real world. "Go for a brisk walk around the block," suggests Howland. "Physical movement and mental space from the task at hand can increase efficiency three-fold." Nina Sunday, managing director of Brainpower Training (brainpowertraining.com.au), says you can up your productivity by "working from a to-do list with achievable tasks on it". Sounds perfectly doable to us.

Save one hour

Make sure you clear and clean as you go. Rather than cast that niggly task aside for later, just get it over with. Howland recommends you do the same

Shorten your WORK DAY

Avoid those 8pm finishes by tweaking your day with these simple time-management tricks.



Save YOUR sanity

Embrace the humble filing tray. Go on, be excessive. It'll categorise your work for you, and automatically organise your desk.

with paperwork. "Open all mail over a bin. Immediate ditching of unnecessary envelopes, etc, avoids backlogs, delayed decisions, and buried desks," she says. Also, divvy up your time appropriately. "Allocate certain periods throughout the day to clear your inbox, and stick to those times," recommends Sunday. "If you have only 10 minutes before a meeting, use that time to complete a 10-minute task."

Save 45 minutes

Stop talking. Even if you're desperate to hear about your workmate's "overnight romance", you'll kick yourself later when you're staying back late and everyone else has their feet up at home. Sunday recommends "the 3-10 rule". "Most conversations can be completed within three minutes, but can stretch to 10 if they have to. Always wind it up at 10 minutes." Or, keep the conversation on hold until lunch time. As much as you argue it will, waiting to hear the goss probably won't kill you.

Save one hour

Delegate tasks to others. "I often ask myself, 'Who else can do this?' – especially for jobs that have been on my to-do list for some time," Sunday says. If you've worked your way into a position where you have a bit of authority, don't be afraid to pass on a duty, but always "be polite and praise a job done well," suggests Howland. "We all perform better when we're treated with respect and gratitude." *The end*

With all that extra time on your hands, head over to cleo.com.au