

Deep Focus Protocol

A structured system for cognitively demanding work

ENVIRONMENT SETUP

- Phone in another room or airplane mode**
Presence of phone reduces available cognitive capacity even if unused
- Noise-canceling headphones with consistent ambient sound**
70dB ambient noise improves creative performance vs silence
- Single task visible — all other tabs closed**
Every open tab is a mild attentional drain
- Water bottle, nothing else on desk**
Physical clutter correlates with cognitive load

SESSION STRUCTURE

- Fixed start time — same time daily**
Temporal cues automate focus initiation over time
- Set a hard stop time before starting**
Parkinson's Law: work expands without constraint
- Write the single deliverable for this session**
Single outcome focus prevents scope creep
- 90-minute maximum per session**
Ultradian rhythm: peak focus cycles ~90 min

BETWEEN SESSIONS

- Full break — no screens, no email**
Real rest, not distracted rest
- Walk outside if possible (10–15 min)**
Walking increases creative output, not just recovery
- No decisions during breaks if possible**
Decision fatigue is cumulative

WEEKLY REVIEW

- Count actual deep work hours (target: 3–4 hours/day)**
Most knowledge workers get <1 hour of genuine deep work
- Identify what caused focus breaks this week**
Pattern recognition enables environment redesign
- Schedule deep work blocks for next week in advance**
Pre-commitment doubles follow-through