In this lesson, you'll learn how to improve your productivity and build better systems by destroying uncertainty.

This is the idea behind the "everything is actionable" rule.

One of the biggest roadblocks to productivity—and one of the biggest reasons for procrastination—is uncertainty.

It's incredibly hard to get to work and do something useful if you don't know *exactly* what to do. So, if you've ever tried to create a system or a routine where one or more of the steps involved needs a lot of thought or deliberation, you probably know exactly what I'm talking about.

Even if you make a list of many concrete actions to take, the existence of just one unclear item on that list can kill your productivity by creating uncertainty in your mind and forcing you to dwell on it.

This is is especially true when you have a *lot* to do or the work you're doing is really challenging.

Have you had the experience where it feels like you have *so* much to do that you just don't want to do *any* of it?

You get into this strange state where you feel like all you have time to do is take action, but uncertainty around any of the actions you need to take prevents you from getting started at all. Even though you *know* what to do for *some* of it, you get overwhelmed and give up on all of it.

This is the problem that the "everything is actionable" rule aims to fix. And there are a few concepts you'll need to understand in order to be successful with it.

First of all, you need to understand that you can only "do something" right now. That sounds strange at first because we make plans to do things all the time and not everything can be done all at once.

But when it comes to the act of doing—or working—that can only happen right now. You can't do something yesterday because that time has already past. And you can make a plan to do something later, but that's not executing. That's planning.

Fundamentally, we all understand this. If you want something to be done, you have to do it now, because now is the time we actually live in and have control over.

That's the first part. And the second part is where we run into trouble.

A lot of the things we want to do that would make us feel more productive are too big for right now.

This is where the "smallest actionable tasks" that we talked about in a previous lesson come in.
These are the actions that you really *can* do right now.

And to make those tasks as actionable as possible, you should be able to do them in a minute or less.

The key is to make them so small that there's no friction to getting started and no consequence for messing up or getting it wrong. That's how you remove uncertainty.

As you start to embrace the "everything is actionable" rule, you'll see how easy it is to break down most big tasks into just one-minute chunks.

In some areas of life, you're already doing this. It's just that you're so good at it that you don't have to consciously think about it.

All of your good and bad habits and routines work this way. They're a series of micro actions. Each one requires almost no thought or decision-making. That's what makes them fluid and why they've become so ingrained.

If you're going to change those routines or add to them, you'll have to engineer similarly tiny actions that come with no momentum-stopping uncertainty.

It's a simple concept, but it can be difficult to implement. Our minds are often making plans that are too big. As a result, we can't easily see the tiny actions that need to be taken to actually complete them.

So, let's do an exercise right now that will help you see more ways to embrace this rule in your everyday life.

What I want you to do is to create a 20 minute plan to clean whatever space you're in right now. If you're not somewhere that you can clean, envision that you are.

This is a great way to get started embracing the "everything is actionable" concept because we all have to clean, and having a clean space is a universally satisfying thing even if you don't like doing what it takes to *create* that clean space.

Now, to fill out that 20 minute plan, I want you to break the time up into one minute tasks. Just estimate—it doesn't have to be perfect.

What are the the 20 SATs that you can do that will make the biggest impact on the cleanliness of your space?

Go ahead and write them down.

And here are some examples that could help:

You might pick up the clothes on the floor or put the dishes that are in the sink in the dishwasher. Maybe clear the papers off the table and put all the shoes that are lying around in one place.

Now, you might notice this is easy at first, but then you start thinking of all the bigger things you'd like to do to really finish the job. Things like "clean the bathroom and kitchen" or vacuum the floors.

This work needs to be done, but it takes longer than a minute to complete.

That's okay, start breaking those down into smaller sub-tasks that *do* take just a minute.

This could mean getting the cleaning supplies out of the closet or moving the vacuum into the living room.

Really break these things up. If it normally takes 15 minutes to vacuum, what are you actually doing in each of those minutes. Maybe one minute you're vacuuming the corner of the living room. Another minute you're moving down the hall to a bedroom. The next minute you're winding up the cord.

Don't drive yourself crazy, but really try to picture each physical action that you take to complete the task.

This is how you can start to visualize all the little actions that make up the bigger things you want to accomplish.

And the net effect of regularly doing this kind of exercise is that it increases your starting speed.

Like I'm sure you're aware, just getting started is often the hardest part of any project because that's where the most uncertainty is. That's the point where you have to

jump into something with the blind faith that you're choosing the right thing but with no feedback.

When you have a series of one minute tasks that you can start with, the level of uncertainty you have to face is really small, and the frustration you'll endure if you get it wrong is much less of a barrier.

Those factors work to eliminate the time you have to spend talking yourself into (or out of) getting started.

So, here's what we just accomplished:

First, we learned about the concept of making everything actionable. To do this, you have to understand that *right now* is the only time you have available to get things done because the past has already happened and the future is too far away.

Then, we learned how uncertainty is what creates the barrier to actually getting started right now, and we learned what to do about it. We have to create incredibly small tasks that are immediately actionable in order to reduce uncertainty and the potential pain that comes from mistakes. If you do something for one minute and it doesn't work out, there's really no consequence. You can just try again.

Then, we practiced thinking this way by creating a plan for the next 20 minutes made up of one-minute tasks.

I'd recommend you follow through with that plan right now if you can. You don't have to follow it step-by-step because the order doesn't really matter. But rolling into it right now will show you how much easier it is to get started and stay moving when you're looking at your work in small, sequential pieces.

And you can see now how using this rule will be helpful when you're creating bigger, more complex systems and routines as you continue through the course.

See you in the next lesson!