

In this lesson, you'll learn how to quickly complete a daily review of your systems to help you get more of your best work done.

As we've learned over and over in this course, success with systems is just as much about maintaining and improving them as it is about creating them in the first place.

Whatever work it is you're doing, each day you'll likely be using a number of different systems and routines both small and large to help you do it efficiently and to the best of your abilities.

A quick daily review is an effective way to make sure you're making the best use of the systems you've built in the most tangible way.

Once you're comfortable with the process, it should take less than five minutes to complete, so even though you do it every day, it will never become a burden. You may actually look forward to it.

So, what's involved in a daily systems review?

If you already do a daily planning session, it's really just a few extra questions to help set up your day to be more successful. But in case you don't have a daily planning session, then let's take a look at how that might work and how you can structure it to get the most out of the systems you've been working so hard to build.

Like I said, this is a really quick exercise that shouldn't take more than a few minutes and, like any good review, it's both backward and forward looking.

So, to start, I like to do a quick debrief of the previous day. What happened yesterday? How did the day go?

When I ask myself this question, I'm trying to identify the important work that I did yesterday. Remember, your systems are here to help you do more of your best work faster. So I want to look back and see that I made use of them and that I actually did something important yesterday.

If I find that I accomplished something on my "important list," that's about as far as I need to go with that question. You don't need to get too introspective during a daily review.

But if you don't find a satisfactory answer to that question, then you should spend a moment uncovering why.

Why didn't you get something important done yesterday? What stopped you?

Maybe you got a lot of work done, but none of it was very critical. Or maybe you just had a bad day and weren't motivated to get what you really wanted done.

If you're not sure, just make a guess. Why do you *think* things didn't go as well as you would have liked?

It's important to identify something here because it'll become the basis of the hypothesis you test today.

So, moving on to the hypothesis.

Now you need to ask yourself, what do I need to try today to make today go better than yesterday?

Again, this is just a little guess you're going to test. Don't overthink it or spend too much time contemplating it. You get a lot of chances to get it right (one every day in fact), so just come up with something simple. What do you think you can do differently today to make it better than yesterday?

And remember, you're only asking this question if you weren't satisfied with how yesterday went.

Alright, once you're done with that, it's time to make a quick plan for today.

What needs to get done?

This is where you need to remind yourself about the difference between urgent work and important work. Both are always going to exist almost every day. And if you're not careful, it's easy to focus on those things that feel urgent.

It feels good in the moment, but when you get to the end of the day and didn't make progress on what's really *important*, that doesn't feel so great.

So, you might have a number of things that need to be done, but make sure that you identify just one or, at most, two main priorities for the day that are related to the things you know are really important and not just urgent.

Okay, now is where your systems come into play. Ask yourself, what systems and routines can I operate to help me achieve my important goal for today?

If you need to get an important piece of writing done, then you can rely on your writing system. Or if you need to work on an important project, you can rely on whatever systems you've built to help you make time and space for that project.

Once you answer that question, ask yourself if there's anything that will muck up the plan. What things might get in the way of progress today that you'll need to maneuver around.

Something I've realized is that most challenges that come my way on any given day aren't really unexpected. Maybe I know a difficult phone call is coming, but I'm not sure when. Or maybe I often get sidetracked by impromptu meetings on Wednesdays.

I kind of know that these things *might* happen, but I also just wish they wouldn't, so I don't focus on them. I don't give them any time or attention.

If they do happen and I didn't make a plan, well, now my day is off track and I have to work extra hard to get my focus back.

Take a moment right now to make a contingency plan. If you think something could derail the day, decide right now what you'll do if that happens.

I think most people avoid this because they're afraid that if they dwell on it, it will make it more likely to happen or psyche them out. But I've found exactly the opposite to be true. When I'm really honest with myself about what I'm afraid might derail my focus, it's actually easier to avoid those things because they can't creep up on me.

And even if I don't fully control it and it *does* happen, I don't have to try to make a plan to get back on track while I'm in the middle of it and I'm least likely to be successful. I already made a plan when my head was clear, so I can deal with whatever I need to calmly, and I know what to do to get things moving the right direction again.

Alright, one thing you might be wondering right now is what to do if you don't actually have an answer to that previous question about "what systems will help me get my work done today?"

If that's the case, don't worry about it—you don't need to do anything about it now, but do make a mental note. It's a hint, and you'll want to see if it comes up again later.

If you find that, over a number of days, you have something important to do but you don't have any systems to help you do it faster or better or more reliably, that's an indication that you have a really good opportunity to improve your life by building some structure there.

And that's basically it. About three to five questions depending on how you answer them.

Like I said, it should take you less than five minutes to do this. It might take a little longer at first just because you're getting used to the format and the procedure, but once you know the steps, it should go quickly.

It shouldn't feel like a burden at all. If it does, that's an indication that you're probably overthinking it and putting too much detail into your answers. Don't do that—you'll have an opportunity to get into the details later.

Now, what about *when* to do this? That's entirely up to you. The most natural times are either first thing in the morning or at the end of the day.

Lots of people prefer to do this at the end of the day so that reviewing their day is easy because it's fresh in their mind and they wake up knowing exactly what to do the next day.

Personally, though, I prefer to do this first thing in the morning. I don't have a good reason why. It's just how I like to do it.

So, there's no one time that's best for everyone. Whenever you feel like doing it the most is when you should do it. If you're not sure, try both and see what feels right.

Also, if you already have a daily planning routine that you follow and it works for you, don't feel like you have to change everything. Take what works from what we just learned and try to incorporate what you think will be most helpful.

You don't have to follow this perfectly to get value out of it. And that applies to all the review procedures in this module. Take what works for you and leave the rest.

So, here's what we just learned:

We learned that a daily review is a really quick and easy way to make sure you make time for your most important work every day. And to do that daily review, we just need to ask ourselves three to five question. How did yesterday go? How can I make today better? What's most important today? What systems can I lean on? What might stop me from getting my important work done?

We also learned that there's no specific time when you need to do this, though mornings or evenings tend to work best for most people. And we learned that you don't have to follow this strictly. If you have a daily planning system already, you can just work what you find helpful from this lesson into it.

So go ahead and jot those questions down and answer them for yourself. Do it this evening or tomorrow morning. Or, if you already have a daily planning routine, work this little review into it.

When you finish that, I'll see you in the next lesson.