



The 10 Minute Start

Start the thing you have been avoiding, before you feel ready.

Four things: a rule, a sentence for the moment you catch yourself planning, three things off your desk, and thirty starts you can do in half a minute.

Keep this where you can see it. Ten minutes is the whole commitment.



Why starting is a different skill

Most people are not bad at work. They are bad at the ten seconds before work.

You can be good at your job, careful with people, and still spend three weeks not opening the one thing that matters. That is not laziness and it is not a character flaw. Starting and finishing are two different skills, and almost nobody teaches the first one.

Willpower is the wrong tool for it. Willpower is what keeps you going once you are already moving. At the start it is close to useless, because the first step needs no effort. It needs to be small enough to take while you feel nothing.

Nothing in this guide needs a new app, a new notebook or a good night of sleep. It needs ten minutes and a timer.

The 10 minute rule

Ten minutes on a timer. Then you stop, whether or not it went well. That is the whole method, and it works because it takes away the two things that actually stop people: the size of the job, and the question of whether today is the right day.

- Ten minutes, on a timer you can see. Not about ten minutes. A timer.
- One action you can watch happening. Not work on the pitch, but open the deck and write the headline for slide one.
- Your phone in another room. Not face down on the desk. Another room.
- Stop at ten. Even if it is going well. Especially if it is going well.

That last rule is the one people skip, and it is the one that carries the whole method. Stopping while a piece is still open leaves an edge you can pick up tomorrow. Your head holds on to unfinished things and lets go of finished ones, so a job left deliberately half done is easier to come back to than a job that is neatly closed.

Ten minutes is short enough that you never need to feel motivated. It is long enough to get past the first bad minute, which is the minute that decides most days.

Minute nine

At about minute nine, your head starts to bargain. It has a short list of lines and it uses them on everybody:

- *This does not count, I have barely done anything.*
- *I should have started earlier. I will do a proper session tonight.*
- *I need to plan this out properly first.*
- *I am doing it wrong.*

None of those is information. They are the feeling of being a beginner, wearing a reasonable voice.

1. Write the line down on the page you are working on. Do not answer it in your head. In your head it wins.
2. Say the time out loud. One minute left.
3. Do the ugliest version of the next small step. Wrong, rough, badly spelled, clearly not



finished.

4. At zero, write one line at the bottom: next time I start with . Close the page and walk away.

The one sentence

Say this the moment you notice you are planning instead of starting:

I am not deciding whether this is worth doing. I am only deciding the next ten minutes.

Out loud, not in your head. The point of saying it is that it interrupts the argument, and an argument you keep inside is one you lose.

Planning almost never announces itself. It arrives as one of these:

- Making a list of the work instead of doing the first item on it.
- Researching the right way to do it.
- Tidying the desk, the folder, the desktop.
- Rewriting the plan in a nicer format.
- Reading one more thing about it first.
- Checking your phone while you get your head straight.

On the days a full sentence feels like too much, use the short one: ten minutes, then I stop.

The tell: if you have been getting ready for more than two minutes, you are planning. Say the line and put your hands on the actual thing.

Three things off the desk

1. Your phone. In another room, on a shelf you would have to stand up to reach. Face down on the desk is not the same thing, because you can still see it.
2. Everything belonging to another project. The pile, the post, the printout for the other job. One project on the desk, one tab on the screen.
3. The thing you use to get set up. The notebook you were going to set up properly. The app you have not learned yet. The drink refill round. Off the desk until the ten minutes are up.

Why getting organised is the trap

Getting organised feels like work because it produces visible progress. A tidy desk, a fresh plan, a colour coded week: all real, all satisfying, and none of it exposed. That is exactly why it can swallow a whole day. It is the feeling of doing the thing without the risk of doing the thing.

You do not need a system to start. You need ten minutes, and the system is what you build once something is already moving. On a good day that takes five minutes. On a bad day it is the most comfortable way to lose an afternoon.

The test: if what you are doing right now could be handed to someone else, and it would not matter if it never got done, it is getting ready, not working.

30 starts you can do in 30 seconds

For the days you feel nothing at all. Pick one line and do only that. It should take about half a minute and leave the work slightly more open than it was.

- 1 Open the file. Do not read it. Just open it.
- 2 Put the ten minute timer on, before you decide anything.
- 3 Write the title of the thing at the top of a blank page.
- 4 Write the first line badly, on purpose.
- 5 Write the last line first, even if it is wrong.
- 6 Write down what done looks like, in five words.
- 7 Read the last paragraph you wrote out loud.
- 8 Delete the paragraph you keep skipping over.
- 9 Close every tab that is not this one.
- 10 Put the phone in the other room.
- 11 Say the sentence out loud.
- 12 Write the question you are stuck on, as if you were asking a friend.
- 13 Text the first step to yourself, so it is waiting there tomorrow.
- 14 Pick the smallest piece of it and put a star next to it.
- 15 Ask one person one question about it.
- 16 Circle the part of the brief you actually understand.
- 17 Copy the brief onto a blank page and write the first line of it.
- 18 Set the timer and start with the part you are least sure about.
- 19 Write three headings. Bad ones. Keep the third.
- 20 Stand up, take three breaths, and press record, open or write.
- 21 Print it, or put it where your eyes land.



- 22 Turn the internet off for ten minutes.
- 23 Write the version you would send if you were allowed to be blunt.
- 24 Screenshot the confusing bit and circle what you do not follow.
- 25 Choose one file in the folder and close the rest.
- 26 Write down what you would do if you only had ten minutes.
- 27 Make the list, then do the first item on it. Today.
- 28 Say out loud what you have been avoiding, in one sentence.
- 29 Put this week's deadline in the calendar as an appointment with a time.
- 30 Start the ugly version and title it the ugly version.

Seven days, ten minutes a day

If you do one thing with this guide, do this. It is the whole method in a week, and it fits around a job.

Day 1	Ten minutes on the thing. Stop when the timer goes.
Day 2	Ten minutes on the same thing. Start where you left the edge open.
Day 3	Ten minutes, and keep a tally of every time you swap into getting ready. Do not try to stop it, just count it.
Day 4	Ten minutes on the ugly version. No editing of yesterday's work.
Day 5	Ten minutes at the time of day you least want to. Straight after work, before you sit down.
Day 6	Two rounds of ten minutes, one in the morning and one in the evening.
Day 7	Read your minute nine notes. Pick the start that worked best and use it twice next week.

You will not feel like starting. That was never the deal. You start for ten minutes, the feeling either turns up or it does not, and either way the work has moved.