

7 ways to stay productive while you're traveling

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Here's the thing about traveling: In theory, you have a lot of time to yourself. The problem is that of all the places to work, a busy airport, a packed flight and a red-eye schedule isn't exactly the perfect storm of ideal circumstances.

Being productive while you're traveling is all about finding ways to create your own "space" and find your zone even amidst chaos. Crying baby three rows up? Grab the headphones. Tired? Cup of coffee would do (just not the airplane coffee, get it before you hop your flight). Delayed flight? Find a wall outlet, plug in your laptop, sit on the floor by the big windows and get cranking. Mindset is half the battle.

1. Make the best use of the moment.

If you are trying to work on something very dense, maybe diving in while you're simultaneously waiting to hear if your flight is delayed or not isn't the best idea. Instead, use that specific moment in time to work on something less intensive. Catch up on some reading. Clear out a few emails. Allocate the right task to the right moment.

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2. Plan ahead.

There is nothing worse than thinking about how you're going to dive into something, only to realize you need WiFi to do so, or you forgot to download a document or your laptop is low on battery. Staying productive while you're on the go is all about staying one step ahead. It's the little things you do to set yourself up for future success that ultimately determine whether or not you get done what you need to get done.

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3. Commit to the work.

It's not always easy to focus when you are in an environment that is loud and distracting. But usually that distraction is only an issue for the first five to 10 minutes. If you can force yourself to commit to the work, you'll find yourself in your own zone before you know it. You won't even realize there's a kid next to you spilling lemonade all over himself.

4. Find the benefit of detachment.

There's something to be said for using what would otherwise be an inconvenience to your advantage. For example: Whenever I see people using WiFi on planes, tolerating the low connection speeds, sitting there waiting and waiting for their screen to load, I wonder why they are wasting their time. Surely there are other things you could be doing, possibly even things that would benefit greatly from two to three hours without distraction. Use your time in the sky to your advantage.

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5. Adjust to the type of travel.

Let's say you're not flying, you're driving. You have to be in the car for five, six or seven hours. You can't work because you're driving, but what you can do is find other ways to be productive. During long road trips, I like to schedule back to back to back calls. These are calls I would have to make otherwise, so why not do them at a time when I have nowhere else to be?

6. If you can't work, study.

Productivity isn't always about getting things "done." It can also be about learning and studying up so when you do get the chance to sit down and
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work, you're better prepared. Before your trip, pack a few books. Maybe download a few podcasts. Flip the script and make it more about "input" rather than "output." This can be an equally effective way to remain "productive."

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7. Know when you've burned out.

And lastly, know when you need to sleep, or rest, or just stare out the window for a bit. True productivity is all about knowing yourself. You need to know when to push through and when to take your foot off the gas. If you've been up since 3 a. m. for a 6 a. m. flight, maybe now isn't the time to grind through another piece of work. Take a nap for an hour and then tackle it. Productivity, especially while traveling, is not a sprint -- it's a marathon. Pace yourself.