

Ask the Expert Getting things done

Getting things done

At work, we all recognise the feeling of not making progress on the actions and projects that matter most to us.

David Allen's *Getting Things Done* methodology is designed to support us to do less with focus.

There are 5 steps:

- 1) **Capture:** collect what has your attention
- 2) **Clarify:** process what it means
- 3) **Organize:** put it where it belongs
- 4) **Reflect:** review frequently
- 5) **Engage:** simply do.

"Your head is for having ideas not for holding them." – David Allen.

Move from open loops to making progress

Open loops are ideas, actions, or thoughts that are 'hanging in limbo' in your mind. A thought pops into your head that might sound like:

I must remember to reply to that e-mail, I still haven't chatted to my colleague about xxx.

These open loops create ambient anxiety and drain our energy. It's useful to remind ourselves we can only hold around 4 things in our mind at any one time.

Project list

David Allen defines a project as anything that can't be completed in one action. Very few people have a current or complete project list.

"You can only feel good about what you're not doing, when you know what you're not doing" – David Allen.

How to get things done



2-minute rule

If you have a task that takes less than 2-minutes to do then do it immediately.

Don't postpone it.

Or add it to your to-do list.



Define done

Everything you're working on should have a clear stopping point.

A point where you know you're done.

Without this, it's difficult to make progress.



Weekly review

At the end of every week it's useful to have a moment to 'catch up' with yourself.

Review your calendar and notice what's you've missed. See what's coming up that might need action now.



Next action?

Try ending meetings and conversations with clarity by asking:

What's the next action?



"Small things done consistently, in strategic places, create major impact."

David Allen

What stops you from getting things done?



Recommended resources



Getting in control and creating space

Ted Talk from David Allen author of [Getting things done: The art of stress-free productivity](#).



Squiggly Careers Skills Sprint Prioritising

We share more practical tips about how to prioritise on episode [#344](#) of Squiggly Careers.