

Basic SUCCESS



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INTRODUCTION

We want to be successful. We want to make it in our profession or career and build a successful life, both at work and in private. To increase our chances of making that happen there are some necessary skills we need to master. That's what this



Follow along and be prepared to take notes. Some of these skills will sound very familiar. Don't let that lead you to skip over those sections. Instead ask yourself if this is a skill you've truly mastered, or if there's room for improvement. I bet there is... I know there are plenty of things I can get better at when it comes to every single skill I'm about to share with you.

I hope this guide will be a resource you come back to again and again. Start with one or two skills that you

think need work. Make some progress and then come back and work on a different skill set. Keep cycling through the skills in chapter two until you feel that you've mastered all of them. Then come back a few months later and see if there isn't still room for improvement. Keep learning and keep improving.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?



What does success mean? It's a little hard to define, in part because success can mean so many different things to every one of us. Add to that the fact that even when we're talking about reaching the same goal or doing the same thing, what we consider successful can vary and it gets even more complicated. Let's look at two students for example. One of them may consider getting a

"C" in Math a big success, while the other counts anything other than an "A" a failure. Success then means reaching the goals you set for yourself.

There are two definitions of success

I want to share with you. By the way, if you look up the definition of success (online or in that old set of encyclopedias), you'll find that there are quite a few more definitions. These are the two that matter for this discussion.

- Success is the **accomplishment of an aim or purpose.**
- And, a person who achieves **desired aims or attains prosperity.**

In each definition, I highlighted the keywords where I want to focus. The two aspects of success are to accomplish a goal and gain prosperity. For some people, success means having a purpose and serving others. Their definition



of success may include having a happy and stable family. Financial success means not having to worry about paying the bills each month. Others focus more on the prosperity aspect. Their version of success includes a successful career, a high paycheck, and the money to buy fancy cars and own a big house.

How you define your unique success is entirely up to you. It will also change over time. In school, success may mean getting good grades or spending the least amount of time on homework. In college, it may mean passing your classes and getting into the fraternity or sorority of your choice. As a young adult, it may mean making it as a freelancer or traveling the world. [Later on, success may be raising a beautiful family and building your dream home.](#) The point is that your definition of success changes as the goals you want to reach and the things you want to do with your life change.

Before we move on to the success tips, take a moment to define what success means to you. Draft out a few big goals. It doesn't have to be anything precise, but it will help you work through the tips and ideas for the various success skills in the next chapter if you have already sketched out something. With that said, let's move right along into the ten [fundamental success skills](#).

SUCCESS SKILLS

By now you should now have a pretty good idea of what success is

and how to define your success. So, let's go over ten essential and fundamental success skills. Think of them as [the foundation for building a successful and fulfilled life](#). In the beginning, you are going to want to work on attaining each skill. I recommend you work through each one, one a time until you feel like you've obtained a good grasp of each. Feel free to skip around though. While I've put some thought into the order I'm presenting them in here it's ok to move around. Choose whatever order seems most applicable or exciting for you. Just be sure to work on each skill set eventually.

Once you've mastered the basics, come back and read through each section again. [You'll pick up new ideas](#) and things to try to help you improve and master each skill as you continue to work your way through the list again and again. As with so many things in life, the learning never ends and there's always room for improvement.



Goal Setting

One of the first and most important skills you want to acquire to be successful is goal setting. It should be your first step in any endeavor. After all, if you don't have a goal, you won't know what to do first, what to do next, and when you've become successful.

Why Is It Important

Setting and defining goals are an essential part of success. They give

you a direction to go in, something to work towards, and provide an



identifiable result. Let me give you an example. Let's say you want to be thinner. That doesn't give you much to work with because the definition is weak. Instead, consider setting a proper goal of losing 25 pounds by the start of your summer vacation. You now have something tangible, and precise knowledge of where you're going. [You know exactly how much time you have.](#) Working backward, you realize that you need to lose about a pound a week to [reach that goal](#). You do your research, try some things, and figure out that by going for a 30-minute walk per day, eating salads for lunch, and cutting out the nighttime snacking, you can lose that much weight each week. Now you exactly know what you need to do on a daily basis to be successful and be ready for bathing suit weather when your vacation starts.

Does this mean you'll always succeed when you set a good goal? Of course not, but you are no longer walking in the dark. You know what you need to do. Some of the other

skills will help with making sure it happens.

How To Get Started



The best place to start is to [define success for yourself in one specific area](#). Think of the weight loss example. It's specific. You're not worried about finances, or even your looks in general. The goal is to lose weight by summer. Don't be afraid to be very specific in your goal setting. You can always work on a different goal simultaneously, or once you reach this one. Get specific.

Whenever possible, make it a measurable goal. Losing weight or saving money is too general. It makes it hard to figure out the steps you need to take to reach your goal. Instead, pick something like losing 10 pounds or [saving \\$2,000 in your savings account](#).

Next, put a deadline on it. A wise person once said that goals without deadlines are just dreams. A deadline gives you something to aim for and keeps you from procrastinating indefinitely.

Last but not least, break down your goal into millstones, baby steps, and daily tasks. What do you need to do today, this week, and this month to reach your goal by your deadline?

Write all of this down. Make a plan for the coming days and weeks and get to work.



Improving Your Skills

Once you've mastered the basics of goal setting and gone through the process a few times, it's time to improve your skills. Here are some ideas:

Set the bar higher. Push a little harder and make your goals more ambitious. You're capable of more than you think you are. Set a stretch goal and see how close you can come to reaching it.

Start working towards multiple goals at a time. Add one more to the mix and get started on it. Then add another. [Continue until you get to a point where it gets distracting](#). This advanced strategy is particularly helpful when you want to improve things in different areas of your life or different parts of your job or business simultaneously. For example, you can work towards paying off debt, building your freelance business, and losing weight at the same time.

Get better at setting SMART goals. We briefly talked about setting good, measurable goals. SMART goals take it a step further. They are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Can you come up with some goals that follow this formula?



Decision Making

The next important skill to master is decision-making. Even goal setting involves a lot of decision making including what goal to aim for, what to tackle first etc. You'll find there's a lot of overlap in these skills and as you work through the list, you'll get better at all of them.

Why Is It Important

There are two parts to the decision-making skill. The first is to learn to make decisions and the second is to make good on the best decisions. Both are equally important. If you don't learn to make decisions and get in the habit of taking charge of your life, others will run it, and who wants that?

Decisions govern anything, from what we eat and wear on a daily basis, to big life choices like who to marry or what college to attend. Some decisions have a short and rather unimportant influence on our life going forward (like picking that bacon burger for lunch), while others have a long-lasting impact like taking on a mortgage or turning down a job offer.

[Speed is another important factor](#).

We live in fast times and are often required to make important decisions on the spot. Getting good at this will help us perform under pressure and greatly increase our

chances of making the right decision.

How To Get Started

Ideally, decision-making is a skill that we learn and practice from young childhood. Some people emerge as adults comfortable making day-to-day decisions, while others have a harder time with this skill. In either case, the key to getting better at decision-making is practice.

[Think of it as a skill like learning a new language.](#) It seems uncomfortable and hard at first, but the more you do it, the easier and more natural it becomes. Start by forcing yourself to make conscious decisions on a daily basis. Pick your breakfast instead of grabbing the same bowl of cereal you've eaten since you were five. Speak up when it comes to choosing a place for lunch, or what direction to take in a project at work. [Volunteer to make decisions as often as you can.](#) The more you do it, the easier it becomes and the better you get at it.

That will also help you get over your fear of failure. Often the biggest stumbling block when it comes to decision making is that we're worried about making the wrong choice. Get comfortable with failure.

Here's the reason why this is important. Making mistakes and making the wrong decision is the quickest way to learn. Think back to when you were a child. Mom would tell you that the stove is hot and not to touch it. Touching it (the wrong decision) burns your hand. While it

was the wrong choice to make, it taught you a valuable lesson. You now know without a shadow of a doubt that the stove is hot and that touching it is a bad idea.

We get this idea in our head that failure is a bad thing and we must always make the right choices. Instead, start to embrace the possibility of failure. Make those decisions, make them quickly, and learn from the ones that don't turn out as expected.



Improving Your Skills

Once you have gotten used to decision-making, there are some additional things you can do to sharpen your skills. They are all about [making decisions faster](#) and making better decisions in the first place.

There's no need to agonize over most decisions. Train yourself to make them quickly by putting yourself on a deadline. Grab a kitchen timer and force yourself to

decide on a meal plan for the week in 60 seconds for example.

Learn to trust your gut. [Making quick decisions](#) will help you do this. Your brain subconsciously does a lot of processing and helps you make the right choice more often than not. When we overthink, we tend to no longer trust that gut feeling.

[Break down complex decisions.](#) It's not possible to make every decision in a few minutes. When there's a lot of information or variables involved, don't be afraid to sit down and compile all the information you need to make an educated choice. Sort through what's important and what isn't.

Try pro and con lists. While they will not work in all instances, there are times when a simple list will help clear things up for you and help you make the best decision.

Realize that there isn't always a best or perfect decision. Very often you're faced with several equally [good choices](#) and need to pick the one that's the best fit for you right now.

We learn from our experiences and decision-making. Try keeping a journal with your thought processes and decisions for a while. Go back and revisit your choices and your decision-making process with the benefit of hindsight.

Decision Making



Being organized is another [essential skill for success](#). That will help you on so many levels from focusing your time and efforts to no longer wasting time looking for stuff. If you're a creative and disorganized person, a little organization may be just what you need to [take your success to the next level](#).

Why Is It Important

Living an organized life does two important things for us. It clarifies things and it saves time. Let's start with the time-saving aspect. How often have you spent valuable time looking for a file, a piece of clothing, or your car keys? It would be better to use that time for the more important stuff. A little organization will keep you from having to tear the house or office apart on a regular basis.

Just as important is the fact that you end up keeping mental tabs of what's where. That's a lot of mental clutter that stops you from staying focused. That brings us to the second significant advantage of getting organized. You're able to see things more clearly when all the information is laid out in an organized manner. You don't have to try to remember where a vital file is, or where you put your favorite shirt if everything is organized well and has a place.

How To Get Started

Getting organized can seem like a daunting task if it's something that's not already part of your usual routine. It's a matter of getting into the habit of getting and staying organized. [The key to success](#) is to start small and work on establishing new habits.

Pick something that's making your life a lot harder than it has to be right now. It could be something as simple as spending too much time looking for your keys in the morning. Pick a dedicated spot for them like a hook next to the front door, or a small dish on a side table in the living room, and make yourself keep the keys there whenever they are not in use.

Once you've established that first habit, pick something else. Next, you want to tackle larger projects like your closet, the garage, or your filing system at work. It can take a lot of work and effort to get things organized in the first place. Work on it in little chunks at a time, but do it consistently. Make yourself review and sort through digital files for 10 minutes at the beginning of your workday or right after you get back from lunch. [Make it a new habit](#). Then once you've worked through the backlog, use the time to stay on top of things going forward.

The good news is that getting [organized is contagious](#). Once you start working on one part of your life, one area of your home, or one aspect of your job or business, you're going to want to get organized everywhere else.

My biggest piece of advice on getting started is to [pace yourself](#). It's easy to dive all in and exhaust yourself to a point where you don't want to do anything for a few weeks after. That's not going to help you get and stay organized in the long run. Instead, set a time, work fast and furious for 10 or even 30 minutes per day and then move on to something else. You'll be amazed at how much you'll get done in a few short weeks by staying consistent.



Time Management



It's easy to let your day get away from you. Before you know it, it's quitting time and you've spent all eight hours doing busy work without making any progress. Good time management is all about prioritizing what's important.

Why Is It Important

It's easy to stay busy and feel productive. Getting things accomplished and making progress is a different story. That's why good time management skills are important. You need to know where to spend your time most effectively TODAY to make the most progress. Master this and you'll do well at school, work, or in running your own business.

How To Get Started

The best place to start is to pay attention to where you're spending your time. Keep a journal and start jotting down what you're doing at any given time during your workday. At the end of the day review what you've done and evaluate what was productive and what wasn't.

It also helps to have a list of high-value tasks. These are the items you should be working on the hardest. It could be studying for your finals, researching new products to offer, or making client calls. Think about what your most valuable tasks are and write them down. Then start making more time for them. These tasks will be

different from person to person and will change over time.

Improving Your Skills

To improve your time management skills, get in the habit of scheduling your day. That could be as simple as a short to-do list that has your most important tasks for the day on it, or it could be as involved as scheduling your entire day with time blocked out for each important task.

Try out a few different time management systems and planners, always focus on spending as much time as possible on your most valuable tasks. Reviewing your time journal and getting back in the habit of tracking how you're regularly spending your time can also be helpful. The end goal is to continue to increase your productivity.

Effective Communication



You don't live or work in a vacuum. Being able to communicate well is another one of those basic skills that will make your life easier and help you get ahead.

Why Is It Important

Being able to speak and write effectively will help you communicate effectively with those around you. Think about all the different ways you use to communicate in your personal and professional life. If you can share

ideas and thoughts clearly, it's easier to work together with others. If you can articulate yourself well, you're more likely to get what you want and there will be fewer mistakes or misunderstandings.

How we speak and write, particularly in a professional setting, makes a strong impression. As you work towards communicating more effectively, you'll improve those all-important first impressions.

How To Get Started

One of the best ways to improve your writing and speaking is to get into a reading habit. Reading a variety of texts and books will expose you to various ideas, new words, and a variety of thought concepts. You will start to absorb this information and improve your communication skills without trying.

Don't be afraid to read a wide range of material from informational texts and trade publications to your favorite fiction. Each book or report communicates something and you'll learn from it in one way or another. Read regularly and make grabbing a book a daily habit.

Improving Your Skills

Another great way to improve your skills is to keep a journal. Daily writing practice will help you get better at formulating ideas with the help of a pen. That will serve you well when the time comes to write a paper, or send an important email.

When it comes to speaking clearly, our fear of public speaking is what holds us back the most. Make yourself get out there and address a

crowd. Joining a speaking club like Toast Masters can be helpful in getting in the extra practice and overcoming your fear. Joining a local theater group or attending a stand-up comedy workshop are other good ideas. See what's available to you locally and step outside your comfort zone when it comes to speaking in front of people.

Networking

We hear about the importance of networking and the various networking events we should be attending to get a job, move up the career ladder, get into the consulting gig, or boost our business. Let's look at what this means and why it's important.

Why Is It Important

Did you ever fall in with the wrong crowd growing up or know someone who did? Who we surround ourselves with and who we choose to spend time with has a big impact on our lives. Thankfully it's just as true when you choose the right people to help you succeed.

Meeting the right people can help you see what you're capable of and adjust your goals accordingly. Knowing the right people can help you get an introduction or recommendation that helps you get the job or tap into a new market. Spending time with the right people can be highly motivating and you may just get the info you need to take the next step towards your big goal.

How To Get Started

The best place to start is with [networking events](#) that are already happening. No need to reinvent the wheel. Check with your local chamber of commerce on what types of events are available in your area. Attend a trade show or conference. Find a group on campus that shares your interest.

[Tapping into your existing network](#) can also help. Talk to your friends, colleagues, and acquaintances to see if they could introduce you to new people. Be friendly and do what you can to make a good first impression when you meet new people.

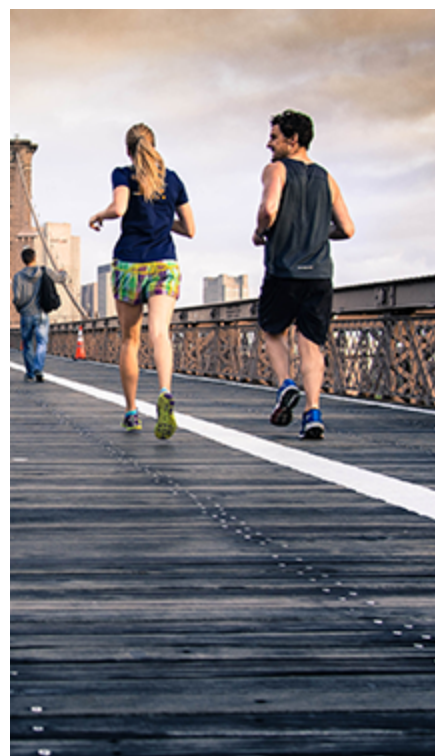
Improving Your Skills

One of the best ways to improve your networking skills is to work on shifting your focus. It's easy to reach out to someone and try to get them to help you. Sadly, that isn't the most productive strategy. We tend to massage things for our benefit and to advance our agenda.

Instead, approach each new meeting and event with an attitude of looking for a way to help the other person. Start with what you can do for them and build some goodwill. Work on establishing the relationship first before ever bringing up what they can do for you. It's counterintuitive but a powerful way to improve your networking and get what you want and need in the end.

Discipline

It's time to tackle an essential but less popular success skill – discipline. Deep down you know that this is an important success skill, but you may also resent working on it. I hope I can change your mind. Discipline is about persistence and seeing things through to the end.



Why Is It Important

It's easy to get distracted, isn't it? There are new ideas, diversions, and all sorts of important and unimportant tasks vying for our attention at any given moment. And that doesn't even include social media. We're on constant information overload and have to be able to prioritize and focus before we can get anything done. That's where discipline comes in. It's nothing more than setting a goal

and then persistently working on it until you [complete the task](#).

Without discipline, it's all too easy to get distracted and find yourself staying busy and "working" all day without any results to show at quitting time. I don't have to tell you that this isn't a [good formula for success](#).



How To Get Started

The best way to [develop good discipline](#) is through practice. Start by setting yourself one or two tasks each day. They could be something simple and easy like making your bed every morning or something more challenging like finishing a work task each day or spending 30 minutes learning a new language. The task itself doesn't matter all that much and it doesn't have to be the same thing each day. The important part is that you don't go to bed before you finish the few tasks you've set yourself.

[That gives you practice and gets you into the habit](#) of persisting until you complete things. As time goes by,

make your task harder and start to incorporate things you don't want to do. The more you practice, the easier it will become to stay disciplined.

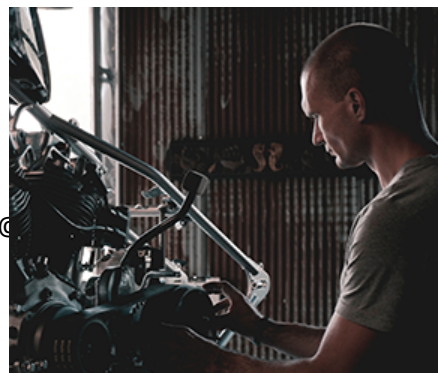
Improving Your Skills

To improve your discipline skills give the following a try for a few months. Before you end your workday, or for personal things before you call it a night, sit down and jot down three things you want to get accomplished the next day. They don't have to be super involved or complicated and make sure they are things you can finish that day. [Don't be afraid to push yourself a little bit though](#). These are your three "must get done" tasks for the day.

Focus on these items first thing in the morning and no matter what happens, don't quit for the day until you complete them. Make it a non-negotiable habit. It will strengthen your discipline while greatly increasing your overall productivity. [You'll be amazed](#) at how much you can accomplish with this one little habit.

Patience

Patience is the ability to [maintain discipline](#) and focus even when things take much longer than expected. It's another basic but crucial success skill that will serve you well throughout life.



Why Is It Important

[Good things come to those who are patient](#). I'm sure you've come across this old saying. It's true and there are some very good reasons why you should work on your patience level. Let me name a few. [Being patient keeps you from making hasty decisions](#). It's easy to get swept up in a moment of high emotion and make a decision that we regret almost as soon as we make it. Patience gives us the ability



to wait, even if it's just long enough to let tempers cool and give it the consideration it deserves.

We live in a world of instant gratification where you can download any movie, song, or book you want within seconds. Hundreds of thousands of products can be shipped to our homes the next day. With this kind of attitude of wanting it now, it's becoming harder and harder to realize that some good things take time to develop and build. You don't create a good marriage in a day or grow a healthy business in a week. And, most "overnight successes" actually had many years of hard work and effort behind the scenes. In short, our world isn't as instantly gratifying as we've been lead to believe.

Last but not least, we value things we had to be patient for more than something that just falls into our lap. If [increased satisfaction and](#)

happiness is your goal in life, patience is an **important skill you want to embrace**.



breathing exercises to stop yourself in your tracks. Once you've calmed down a bit, you can start to think objectively about the situation and realize that it isn't the problem you thought it was. In the big scheme of things getting to your destination a few minutes later than anticipated isn't that big of a deal.

By realizing that things aren't as bad as you first thought, it becomes easier to be patient and wait it out.

Improving Your Skills

Patience is a skill that you can learn with simple practice. Practice what I shared with you above will help you become more patient over time. Of course, that's not the only thing you can do.

The key to increasing patience is becoming more aware of yourself and your surroundings. In other words, you want to work on mindfulness to increase patience. There are several different things

you can do to increase mindfulness. The first and probably most effective way is to try meditation. Find a meditation exercise that sounds interesting and give it a try. Another great option is journaling. It forces you to clarify your thoughts by putting them on paper. Any journal will work, manual or electronic. You can just jot down your thoughts and ideas, or try a gratitude journal where you write down a few things you are **grateful for each day**.



The key with this as with any of the other skills is consistency. You want to **create better success habits**, one task and one day at a time.



Focus

It's hard to believe, but we've made it all the way to our last success skill – focus. You may be starting to get a little overwhelmed with all the different skill sets that you need to work on and improve to help you become more successful in all areas of your life. Yes, there's a lot to do, to learn, and a lot of new habits to form. That's where focus comes in.

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It helps you work through the list



one item at a time.

Why Is It Important

And that right there is why the skill of focus is important. It's so easy to get overwhelmed or distracted in this fast-paced world of many options. Let's use this short report as an example. It's easy to jump from success skill to **success skill** trying your hand at each for a little bit without making much progress on any given one. You won't get very far with that strategy. If you focus on one skill at a time, on the other hand, it won't take you long to master the first and to start seeing some real results. From there you can focus on the next, then the next, and so forth. Before you know it, you've greatly improved in **all basic success skills**, laying a foundation that will serve you well for the rest of your life. That's why **the skill of focus** is so important.



How To Get Started

The best place to start improving your focus is to stop multitasking. Yes, it's tempting to work on a bunch of different tasks at once, and boy does it make you feel productive. The problem is that this is deceiving. Study after study shows that multitasking makes you less productive. Don't trust the studies? Try it for yourself. Instead of handling everything you do in a day all at once, cut out the distractions and work on one task at a time. You'll end up with a few extra hours at the end of your day.

Make a conscious effort to work on one task at a time. Cut out as many distractions as possible. Don't be tempted to keep an eye on your phone, social media, or answer emails at the same time. You'll lose your focus and everything you do will take much longer.

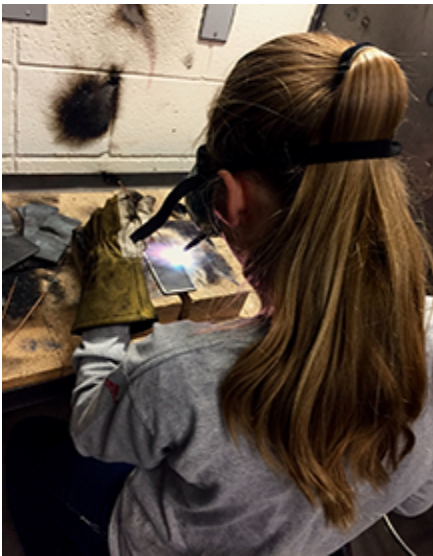
much easier to focus and be as **productive as possible** when you're **working under a tight deadline**.

To improve your focus skills, start by making a list of tasks you want to accomplish today. Then block out time for each item on your list. Work through it one task at a time until you've made it through the list. Do what you can to finish your work in the time allotted or less. That forces you to sharpen your focus and concentrate on one task at a time.

Conclusion

Is your head spinning from going through these **basic success skills**? It may seem like a lot, but as mentioned above if you focus on one new skill at a time, it won't take very long to make progress and become a more successful person.

The good news is that these skills complement each other and as you start to get better at one, it will be easier to excel at the others. For example, when you become **more organized, it's easier to focus**. Focus on the other hand will help you become a more patient person



which in turn is a great skill to have when networking with other people. Each skill complements and works with the next, so no matter where you choose to start, you will make progress.

My best advice is to simply pick on a new skill, work on it, and make it a new and productive habit that becomes part of who you are, how you work, and how you live your life. Then pick another one and work on it and so forth until you've made it through each skill on the list. Start with the **"getting started"** information and make sure you have that down for each skillset. The next go around, you should move to the ideas for improving your skills. From there the sky is the limit. There are many articles, blog posts, podcasts, videos, and books on the topic of success. Keep

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The best way to **improve your focus** is to put deadlines into play. I don't have to tell you that work stretches to fill the space you allow it. It's

become more and more successful at what you do.

