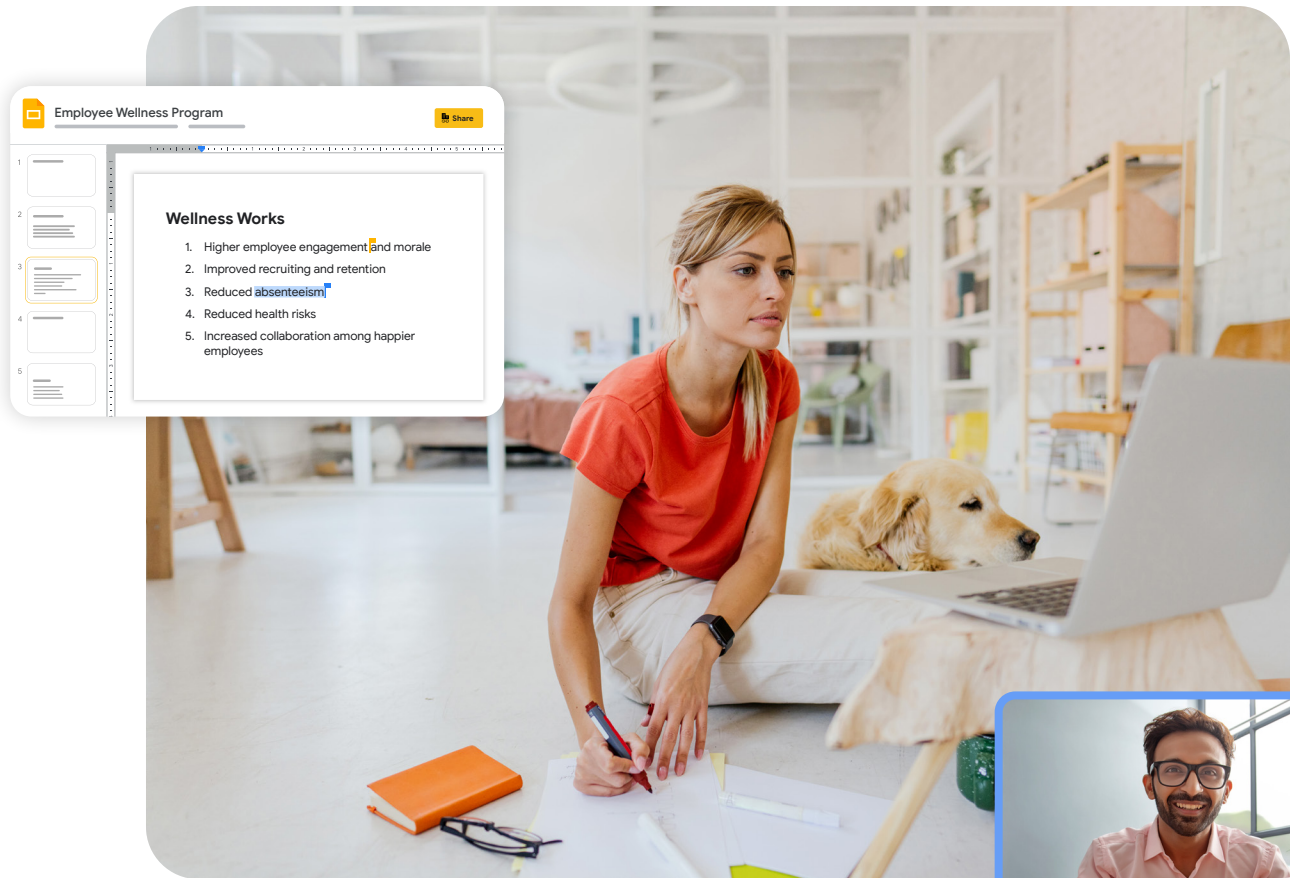
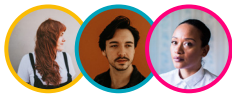


The ^{Tom} Google Workspace guide to productivity and wellbeing ✓



Employee Wellness Program

Share

1

2

3

4

5

6

Wellness Works

1. Higher employee engagement and morale
2. Improved recruiting and retention
3. Reduced absenteeism
4. Reduced health risks
5. Increased collaboration among happier employees



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Impact over output: A note from Google's Executive Productivity Advisor

I spend a lot of time coaching executives on ways they can make the most of their work day. Over the years, people have come to me with very different ideas about what productivity is, why it matters, and how to achieve it. Often, they think it's about extracting every last ounce of output from a day — likely because the idea of productivity comes from economics and is most closely associated with factory conveyor belts and efficiency.

My definition of personal productivity is different. It's less about getting as much as you can out of each day and more about achieving the things you set out to accomplish and making an impact.

Productivity is grounded in understanding yourself as a whole person.

What makes you happy at work? What are your natural rhythms and peak times for creativity, focus, or efficiency? When are you most engaged in meetings? What makes you feel unstoppable when responding to emails? And when do you need to take a break, do some uninterrupted thinking, or deepen social connections with your colleagues?

When people don't understand these aspects of productivity, they struggle to make an impact — no matter how well they manage their calendars and inboxes.

During the global pandemic, we realized the importance of sustaining the wellbeing of ourselves and our families, setting healthy boundaries, and bringing intention to the work day. Among those lucky enough to have the flexibility to work from home, many had to juggle new obligations, from homeschooling to caregiving. Without a solid plan in place, people often found themselves working longer hours. According to [LinkedIn](#), signs of burnout increased among U.S. employees by 33% in 2020.

Now, as hybrid work becomes the norm for many organizations, it's important we take a fresh look at personal productivity and plan to maximize our wellbeing and impact across all the places we work. This guide can help you along the way!



Laura Mae Martin

Laura Mae Martin

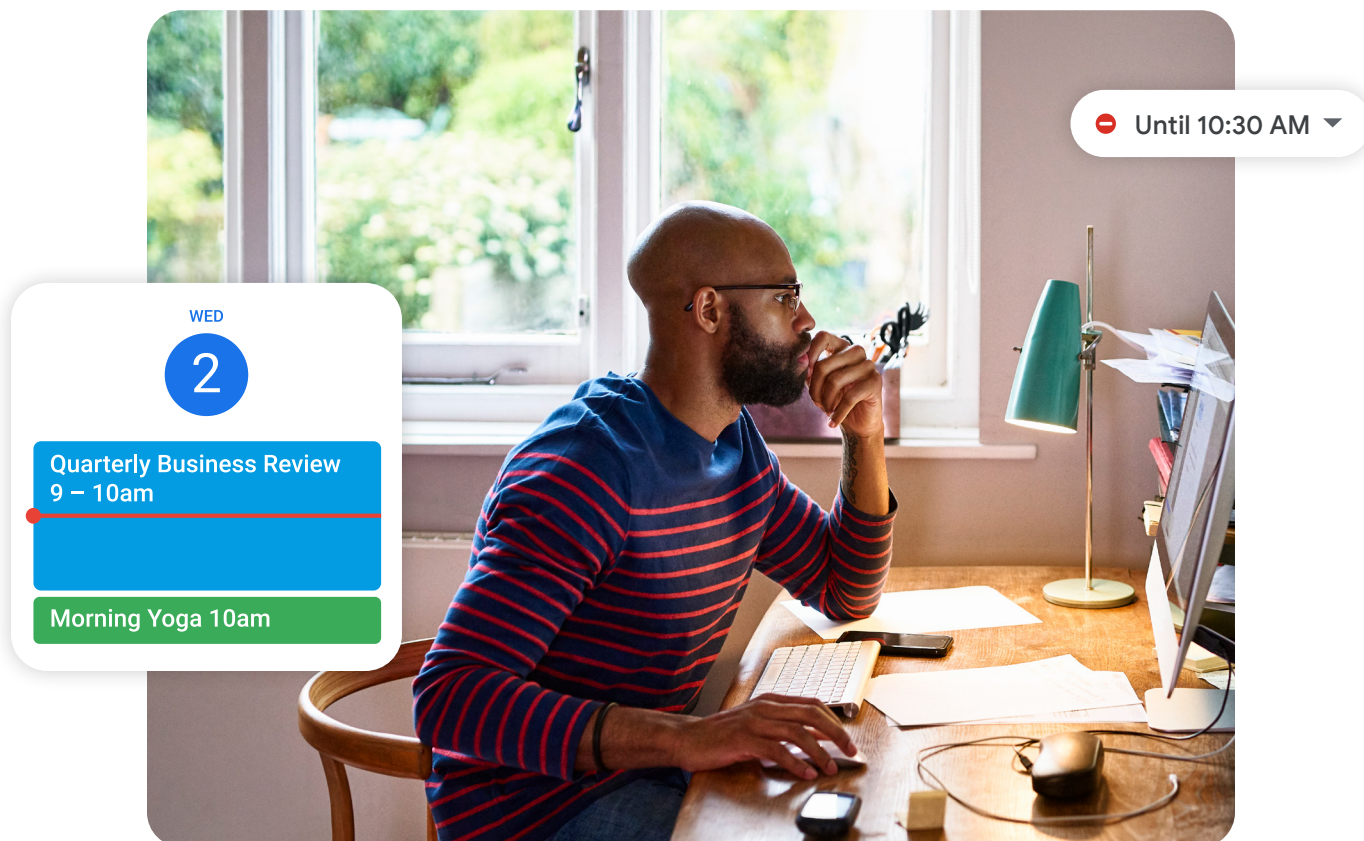
Google's Executive Productivity Advisor

Chapter 1

Rethinking your time and your calendar

If you're a surgeon or a retail associate, you probably have a fairly fixed schedule and work location. But for millions of knowledge workers, there's often flexibility for how the workday and work week are structured, especially now that the hybrid work world is here to stay.

Meetings don't have to interrupt your peak focus times, and brainstorming sessions don't have to happen when you're feeling the least creative. And even if you have a fixed schedule and location, you can decide when to check emails, build reports, or meet with teammates.



Here's how to rethink your use of time and take control of your schedule:

☰ Understand your natural work rhythm

This is the first step to being more productive and fulfilled at work.

- Make a list of the times throughout the day and week when you feel most energized and focused. These are your **peak times**.
- You can also make a list of the times throughout the day and the week when you are most likely to need a break. These are your **reset times**.

📅 Block peak times

Regardless of your working style, you should **block your peak times at least 2–3 times per week**.

- If you can avoid it, don't let these windows be scheduled with meetings or whittled away with distractions or other activities like checking emails.
- **Reserve peak times for activities that are analytical, strategic, or require deep focus.** Maybe it's writing a blog post, building a presentation, or completing some data analysis.

📅 Plan and theme your day

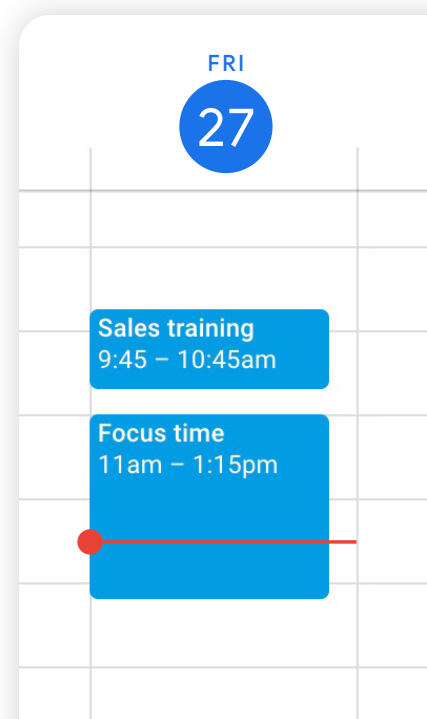
Think about your week holistically and **be intentional about your activities**.

- Which activities make the most sense on which days and at what times?
- If you're working in a hybrid model, what sorts of collaborative activities should you schedule for your office days versus your at-home days?

Most people I talk to **plan their work-from-home days** so that they maximize their peak time activities, and then dedicate their **in-office days to things like team building, socializing, and collaboration**. It's worth noting that some days naturally lend themselves to certain activities.

💡 Did you know?

Friday afternoons are generally a terrible time to have productive meetings, but they can be a **great window for returning emails or planning the next week**.



✔ Avoid doing the small tasks first each day

Your natural inclination is to chip away at small wins like email and quick tasks to avoid doing the big stuff.

- Adopt the habit of **tackling your biggest thing the moment you sit down to "work,"** before touching anything small, and you will see a huge difference in how much you get done in a day.

🔄 Minimize context shifts

Context shifting – jumping between various, unrelated tasks – means that you never find a groove for deep, focused work. According to an [Asana study](#), on average people **switch between apps 10–25 times per day to do their work.** For every switch and attempt at multitasking, there's a cost.

- Take advantage of natural affinities in your schedule and avoid context shifts when you can.
- When you're looking at your calendar, think about activities that can prolong your focus on a single domain of work. For example, if you have your weekly one-on-one meeting with your manager and you also have your own direct reports, you might schedule your own team meeting right after your one-on-one, so that you can assign tasks and share information while it's timely and fresh in your mind.

📄 Commit the plan to (virtual) paper

As you plan your days, use a template that surfaces the key activities you want to accomplish, including **an hour-by-hour plan.**

- Use this [Daily Plan template](#), which covers the day's top three priorities, snack-size to-do's, mindful moments, the hour-by-hour plan, and the next day's priorities, as well as the things to be grateful for.
- **Complete the Daily Plan the afternoon or evening before** – rather than leaving it until the morning, when emails and meetings are already piling up.

✔ HOW IT'S DONE WITH Google Workspace

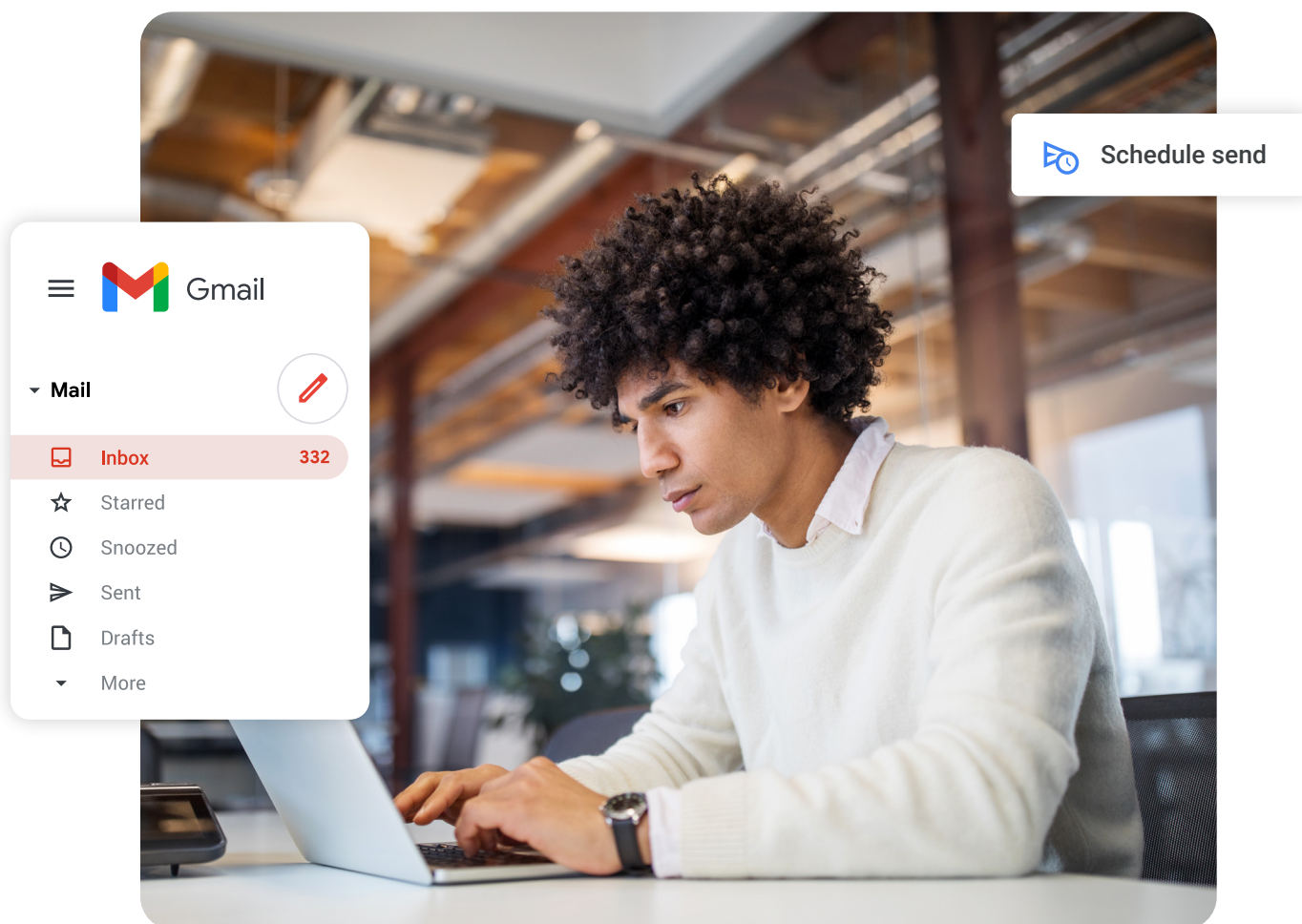
[Set your working hours and availability](#)

The screenshot shows the Google Calendar interface. At the top, there is a hamburger menu icon, a calendar icon with the number 20, and the word "Calendar". Below this is a "Create" button with a plus sign icon. The main part of the screenshot is a calendar grid for July 2021. The days of the week are labeled S, M, T, W, T, F. The dates are arranged in a grid, with the 20th of July highlighted in a blue circle. Below the calendar grid, there is a "Meet with..." section with a search bar containing the text "Search for people". At the bottom, there is a "My calendars" section with three items: "Lila Johnson" (checked), "Birthdays" (checked), and "Reminders" (checked).

Chapter 2

Transforming your **inbox**

According to research from [Harvard Business School](#), as most knowledge workers went remote due to the pandemic in 2020, email usage spiked. To bridge the gap with colleagues, people sent significantly more emails every work day, and more of those emails were sent after hours. Plenty of people were trying to tame their inboxes before the pandemic, and the surge only made it more frustrating. But it doesn't have to be a struggle.



Here are my top 10 email productivity tips:

- 1. Cut down on notifications:** Don't bother your brain with notifications for every single new email — check email proactively, instead.
- 2. Respond within 24 hours, even if it's only to check in:** Giving an update like, "Hi, I got this email but won't be able to get to it until later this week!" is a great way to set expectations and avoid a second follow-up email.
- 3. Close out your email 1–2 times a day:** Email is important, but it's also the ultimate distraction. Most people leave it open all day and check it every 30 minutes (if not more). When you need to focus, try closing your email tab.
- 4. Don't click on an email more than twice:** If you read an email then mark it as unread, you'll have to read it again to remember what to do with it. Read it once to scan and tag your future action (for example, labeling it as "must respond" or "to do this week") then once more when you answer it.
- 5. Make sorting, reading, and answering emails separate activities:** We lose energy switching between activities. Instead of bouncing between tasks, sort everything first. When that's done, read everything.
- 6. Keep emails that require action — otherwise archive or delete:** When your inbox contains emails without clear action items, it gives your brain the false sense of having too much to do. Be ruthless about deleting, archiving, or snoozing emails that don't require an immediate action.
- 7. Skip some emails:** Every email you see takes a tiny piece of your energy, so each item in your inbox should be something you *need* to look at. Gmail lets you create filters so that certain emails "skip your inbox" and won't appear as new emails. For example, set up a filter with "Has the words:unsubscribe" and email newsletters won't distract you, but you can search for them later.

Did you know?

On your phone, you can set up notifications for certain emails — say, the ones from your boss. This will help you **identify important emails and disconnect when you want to.**

- 8. Don't mix your read and unread emails:** Combining read and unread emails in your inbox is a recipe for anxiety. Have new emails come into one section while keeping emails you've already read in a different section.
- 9. Stay focused by keeping new email out of sight:** It's hard to answer emails when there are shiny new ones coming in. Use sections like "Snoozed emails" and "Starred emails" to make it easier to stay on task.
- 10. Search to find what you need:** Email labels can help you stay organized, but [searching your email](#) is a faster way to find the email you're looking for. Search by date, sender, subject, and more, or get specific with queries like "has:attachment".

✓ HOW IT'S DONE WITH Google Workspace

[Turn off notifications](#)

[Create filters](#)

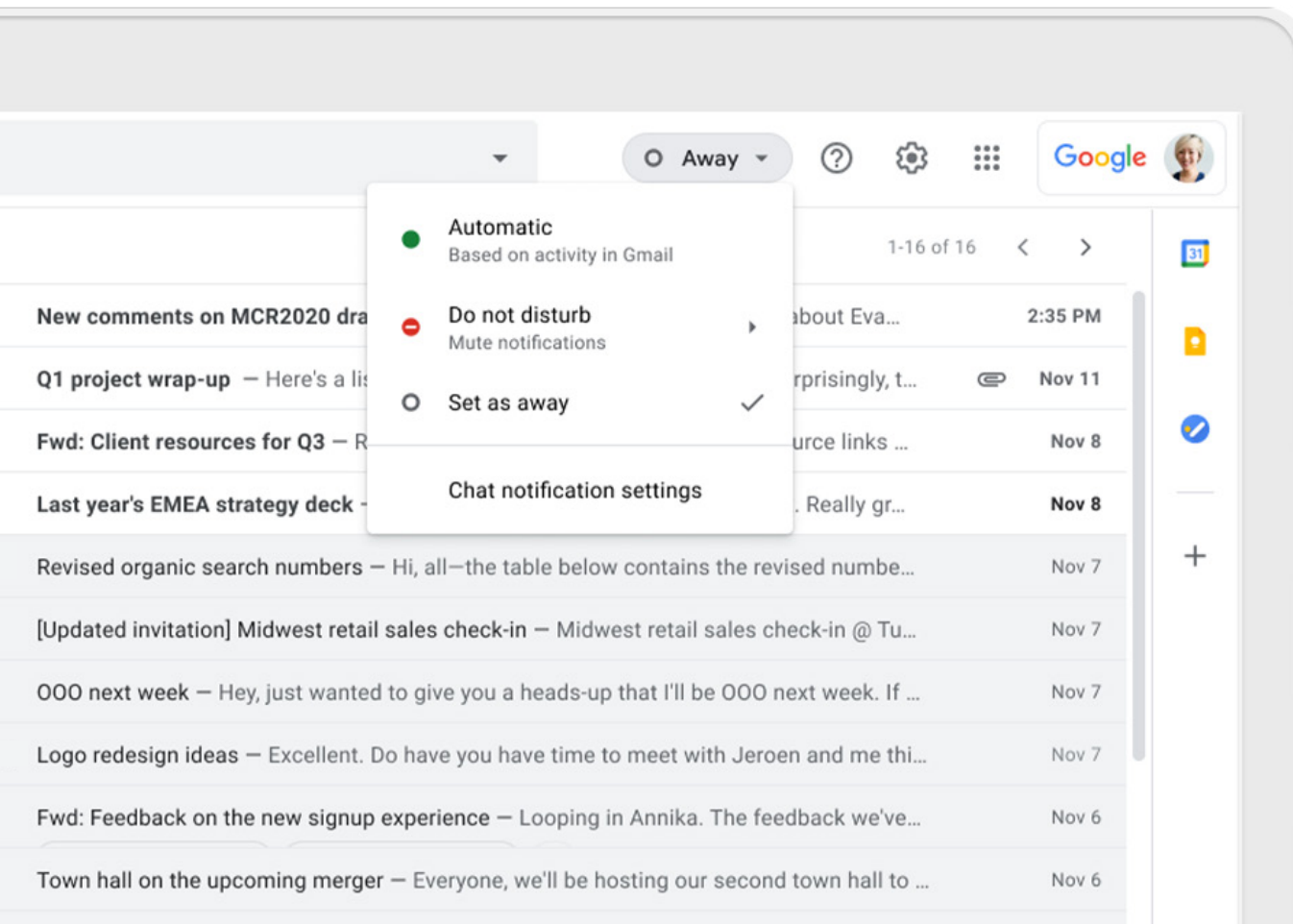
[Create multiple inboxes](#)

[Organize emails with labels](#)

[Snooze emails in Gmail](#)

[Send and archive emails at the same time](#)

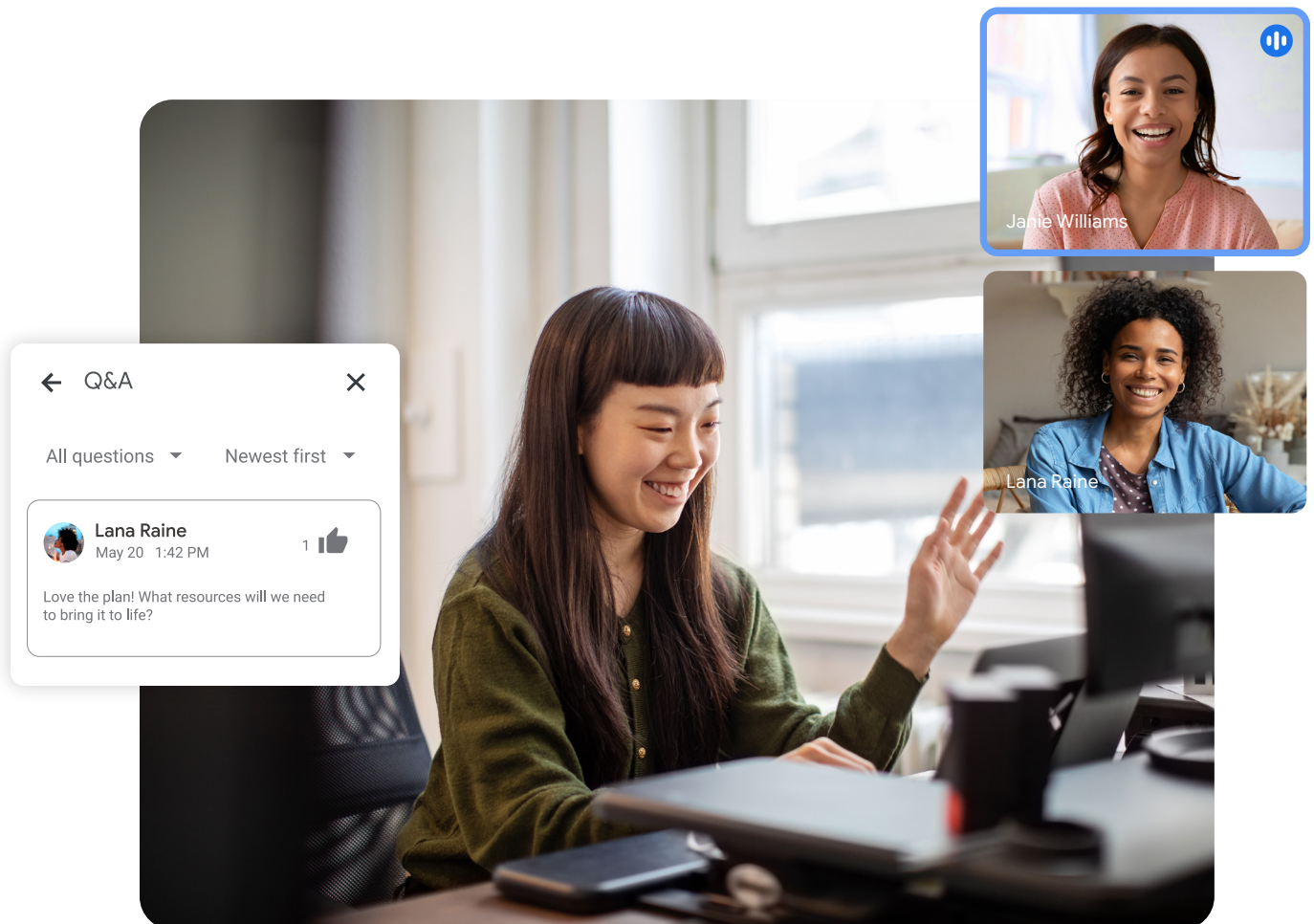
[Create an event right from an email!](#)



Chapter 3

Making meetings more meaningful

When run well, meetings empower teams to work together, share diverse perspectives, and brainstorm new ideas. At Google, we've spent years thinking about how to make meetings more efficient and useful. As our teams shifted to fully remote work in 2020, we applied what we've learned to make meetings more helpful and meaningful for everyone — wherever and however they work together.



Here's how to make the most of your meetings:

Schedule judiciously

Before scheduling a meeting, ask yourself if you can easily achieve the same objectives with an email, shared document, or casual chat. I've never met anyone who wished they were in more meetings! Also, schedule a shorter amount of time than you think is required. Parkinson's Law states that work expands to the time allotted (and, by extension, meetings expand to whatever time is assigned).

Only invite the right people, and only accept the right invites

According to research, once you have seven people in a decision-making group, each additional member reduces decision effectiveness by 10%.¹ I typically limit my meetings to attendees who can contribute meaningfully to the conversation, help the group reach a conclusion, or take away new insights that will help them do their jobs.

If you're on the receiving end of a meeting invitation and don't believe your presence will add value, follow up with the host to share your thoughts and ask for a detailed agenda. If you still feel strongly that you don't need to be there, decline the invitation with a brief explanation. Ask for the follow-up notes and action items.

Send an agenda every time


An agenda helps ensure key contributors show up, compels the host to think carefully about the goals of the meeting before it starts, encourages participants to prepare, and keeps the meeting on track once it kicks off. Carefully consider the order of your agenda items as well, since the flow and tone of the meeting will depend on it.


Delegate meeting management


For big meetings, ask an attendee not involved in strategic decision-making to take notes, help the group stick to the agenda, and ensure that the discussion wraps up on time. For regular meetings, such as weekly team check-ins, consider giving everyone a turn to serve as facilitator.


Planning update



Tuesday, March 15 9–10AM







 [Join with Google Meet](#)


 [Join by phone](#)

 3 guests
3 yes (1 in a meeting room, 2 virtual)

 Lori Cole 

 Tania Davis 

 Jim Kao 

 [Meeting notes](#)

Going?

Get people warmed up

To grab attendees' attention and encourage punctual arrivals, consider starting your meetings with a humorous YouTube video or a piece of engaging content. People at Google know that I kick off my meetings with something fun, so they're more likely to show up on time. Opening with an icebreaker like a yoga stretch or a trivia question is sometimes a great option.

Take running notes

Writing an ongoing account of the meeting as it unfolds can help keep people stay engaged while saving you time on follow-up. Take notes in a shared document and give everyone editing or commenting access to make the meeting feel more inclusive. Afterward, clean up the notes, highlight follow-up action items, and add a summary for quick review.

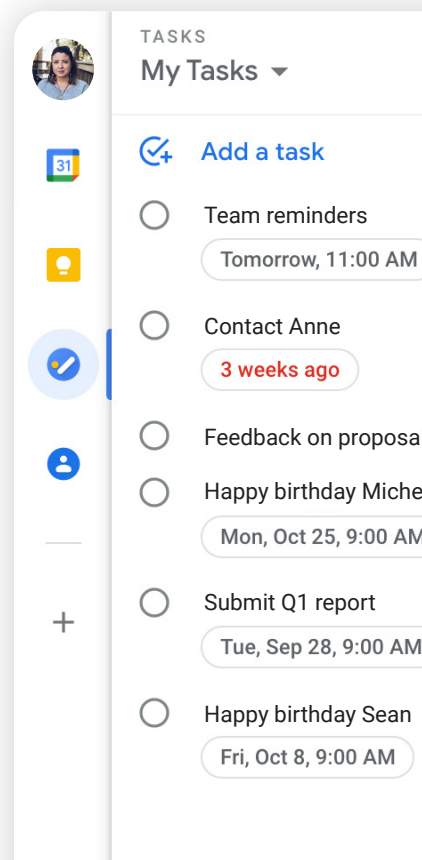
★ Strive for one takeaway for every 15 minutes

Ever come away from an hour-long video conference feeling dazed and wondering what – if anything – just took place? For every 15 minutes that your meeting lasts, aim for attendees to end the meeting with at least one takeaway. Ending the meeting with a brief recap of the most important items covered is also a good way to make sure everyone walks away with clear outcomes in mind.

Keep everyone engaged



Ask questions in meetings that specifically involve your audience. As many of us worked remotely during the pandemic, we were able to keep people involved in virtual meetings with instant polls, live Q&A, and emojis. Keep that type of engagement going into the hybrid work world. Encourage remote participants to keep their cameras on so that you can read nonverbal cues and create a more immersive experience for everyone.

When soliciting feedback, ask questions of specific people rather than general questions of the group. "Laura, do you think this approach will work?" is more effective than "Does everyone think this approach will work?" Also, to help those who don't love group settings, consider asking for feedback when you first send out your agenda. People will sometimes add written comments on a topic that they wouldn't necessarily share in person or during a virtual group meeting.



TASKS

My Tasks ▾

-   Add a task
- Team reminders
Tomorrow, 11:00 AM
- Contact Anne
3 weeks ago
- Feedback on proposal
- Happy birthday Miche
Mon, Oct 25, 9:00 AM
- Submit Q1 report
Tue, Sep 28, 9:00 AM
- Happy birthday Sean
Fri, Oct 8, 9:00 AM

Follow up

Thorough and timely follow-up prevents all the important work your meeting set in motion from fizzling out as soon as the last attendee departs. Use a simple, manageable system such as a shared Google Sheet or Doc to list every decision the group made, and assign a point person and deadline for each one. Update the Doc as the status changes for each item.

Ask for feedback and evolve

If you're the owner of a recurring meeting, ask for feedback from attendees, say quarterly. Is this meeting too long, too short, just right? Too frequent, not frequent enough, just right? Then adjust as needed.

Think about meetings in terms of collaboration equity

As hybrid work becomes a reality for many of us, remember to make sure everyone is able to participate fully, regardless of where they're located, their experience level, and the device they're using. For those who might be hearing impaired, visual learners, or more comfortable in a different language, use live captions and translations in programs like Google Meet. You should also think about how remote participants show up in the physical conference room. Are they a small video square on the wall? Is there a way to make them more present?

Mastering the tools

Knowing your tools inside and out is an essential part of being productive.



If there's a product you use everyday, you should spend the time to learn all the things it can do. This goes for email apps, phones, televisions — anything.



Look around in the settings and watch some training or demo videos.



Invest 30 minutes up-front for any new tool and make an effort to keep up with new features as they roll out.

HOW IT'S DONE WITH Google Workspace

[Direct attention to content with a laser pointer in Slides](#)

[Accept and present audience questions with Q&A in Slides' presenter view](#)

[Quickly open a Google Docs file to take notes](#)

[Use closed captions in Slides](#)

Chapter 4

Bringing productivity and wellbeing together

I host a reading challenge that invites my fellow Googlers to read one book a week, a habit that some of the world's most productive people adopt. Regular reading is good for attention training, being exposed to new ideas, and creating brain space. [One study showed](#) that as little as six minutes of reading each day can reduce a person's stress level by 68%, helping to clear the mind and minimize body tension. Many participants say the reading challenge ends up being their most productive time of the year — in all aspects of their lives.

This is a great example of how productivity and wellbeing go hand-in-hand. To perform at your best and make the biggest impact, you need to be well rested and well nourished, and you need time to think.



Team meditation
Thursday, August 5 · 9:00 – 10:00am

Snooze until...

Tomorrow	Wed, 8:00 AM
Later this week	Thu, 8:00 AM
This weekend	Sat, 8:00 AM
Next week	Mon, 8:00 AM


Pick date & time


Here are my favorite wellbeing tips for enhancing productivity:


Find your whitespace at work (and in life).


Your productivity comes down to two things, your ability to open loops and your ability to close them. You need time for both, but most people spend all their time closing loops.

- Make time to think of new ideas and mull things over.
- Consider scheduling "brain blocks" on your calendar — try going on a walk, setting up brainstorming with your team, or eating lunch alone without your phone and see what new loops open up.

 **In the office, put your phone in a secure place at your desk when you go get water, use the restroom, or go for a short walk.** This allows your brain to rest and decompress from devices, even just for a few minutes.


 **Try "one tab only" working for a week.** Whatever you're working on, only have that one tab pulled up (or maybe two). Emailing? See Gmail only. Reading a doc? Minimize everything else.


 **When you're struggling to get something done, find your point of least resistance.**
Does meditating for 10 minutes sound daunting? How about 5 minutes? Can you answer 4 emails before you go home, or is 2 more reasonable? Work out for 45 minutes, or half an hour? Focus on how you feel when you say a goal, and as soon as the number feels more "effortless," start there!


 **Turn off notifications** on your phone outside of work hours.

While working from home, pick your hot spot and your not spot.

- Your **hot spot** is the place you usually work. Consistently working in the same place causes the sights, smells, and sounds of the spot to become associated in your brain with "thinking about work," and you easily slip into "work mode" when you're there.
- Your **not spot** is a place where you never work or think about work. This allows your brain to easily slip into "relax mode" in that spot. Treat your work at home like a guest.

 **Learn to meditate, take a mindfulness course, take up yoga, or enroll in that cooking or creative writing class you've always been curious about.**
The richer your personal life, the better you perform at work.

 **Making hybrid work connections.** Every week, pick a few emails NOT to send. Instead, on one of the days you're in the office, go grab coffee or have a conversation. We've all just come through a tremendously isolating experience and every moment of human connection is precious.

 **Find 3–5 things to be grateful for every day and write them down in your daily plan.**
Achieving the right work/life balance is about finding an integration of work and life that brings out the best parts of each. Remembering and documenting the parts of both that make you happy help give you energy each day.

Working differently with Google Workspace

When we launched Google Docs in 2006, the world was introduced to a new way of working. All of a sudden, people could work in the same online document, at the same time. Real-time content collaboration was an absolute game-changer for productivity and collaboration — and a stark contrast to the legacy tools designed for individual work on office desktops.

Fifteen years later, Google Docs is part of [Google Workspace](#).

Built on a cloud-native communication and collaboration platform, Google Workspace brings together the apps loved by billions of people — Gmail, Chat, Calendar, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Meet, and more — into a single integrated workspace that transforms how people work and get things done together.

The people and organizations who adopt Google Workspace [enjoy work more and are more productive](#) because they no longer have software updates, document version collisions, or server glitches holding them back. Instead, they have the flexibility and innovation they need for anywhere, anytime teamwork and collaboration. And their work is fueled by a set of seamless apps and tools that connect the right people, conversations, and content — while helping them protect and prioritize their time.

If you're ready to make more of an impact, I encourage you to explore all the ways Google Workspace can transform how you and your team work together.

[Sign up for a free trial.](#)

Or subscribe to my [productivity tips channel on YouTube](#).

