



# What You Need to Know to Conquer Information Overload

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In the age of the internet, high-speed connections, email, and instant messaging that goes straight to the devices we keep on ourselves nearly 24/7, information overload is both real and a huge problem. With all the ads to click, blogs to read, and posts to like, it's no wonder we often feel like the internet is drowning us instead of lifting us up.

- The truth is, we can only really concentrate on **one thing** at a time. Multitasking is simply not feasible.
- When we “multitask,” what's really happening is we're **switching from one task to another rapidly**, which, ironically, ends up making us perform worse than if we had just focused on one thing at a time.
- **Information overload** is similar to multitasking because it pulls our attention in several different directions, keeping us from really giving it our all when it comes to the important task we're actually trying to accomplish.

But how can we focus on just one thing at a time when our phones are buzzing at us, and there are 10 “URGENT” emails in our inbox? There are a few ways to minimize the noise of daily life, and luckily they are pretty simple.

## #1 Meditate

Meditation is a great way to quiet the mind and focus your thoughts.

While meditating, try keeping your focus on your breath. If your mind starts to wander (as it probably will!), gently bring your thoughts back to the present moment. This exercise helps you feel grounded during the rest of the day because you'll be able to bring your attention back to where it needs to be, instead of getting lost in the sea of online information.

Many top entrepreneurs and business owners use meditation to help them field the daily influx of buzzes and beeps alerting them throughout the day. Try meditating for just a few minutes in the morning to start your day off right, or in the middle of the day for a quick reset, or even at the end of your day to quiet down your mind! It's free, easy, and you don't need anything to do it!

## #2 Breathe

Breathing exercises work wonders for keeping the anxiety of information overload at bay.

Start with square breathing, which is a method of breathing that — you guessed it — forms a square! Just breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, let it out for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and repeat! This technique is similar to meditation, but is even easier and focuses solely on breath work. As you take control of your breathing, your brain gets the signal that there's nothing to be anxious about anymore, and it will clear your mind. Take a few minutes out of your day to just breathe and let your mind reset!

## #3 Digital Detox

A digital detox is exactly what it sounds like — a break from all things with screens!

So much information overload comes from the internet, laptops, phones, tvs, ipads, etc. Take a digital detox to clear your mind and refocus on the things that really matter. You can take a break from technology for as long as you want, or just for one evening, or maybe just for one hour during the day!

Whatever amount of time works for you, take it. If you need to keep working, try moving to pen and paper instead so you can stop staring at a screen. Simply taking a break can make you feel much more at peace when you finally go back to using tech.

## #4 Digital Declutter

If you can't take a full break from technology, you can also try decluttering your digital devices.

Clutter makes us easily distracted because there's more than one thing to focus on. And your devices can be cluttered too! On your computer, get rid of unnecessary files or any other visual distractions like distracting wallpapers or push notifications. When working, try to only have one tab open on your screen at a time. For your phone, you can remove or silence apps that continually demand your attention throughout the day. When you keep your space clear, even your digital space, your mind will be clear too.

## #5 Organize Your Inbox

The email inbox can be a frightening place. And the more you don't look at it, the more it piles up, making it even worse! But you can make your inbox a place that works for you instead of against you.

Start by doing some digital decluttering and marking all your old emails as read. Then go through and unsubscribe from any unnecessary email lists. Next, organize your emails into a system that makes sense to you — whether that's putting all the unread emails at the top, organizing them into folders, or something else. Just by organizing how your emails get shown to you, you take back the power of what information gets through to you and how it is prioritized.

## #6 Time Block Your Day

Pick specific times during the day that you will let yourself look at your phone, or answer emails, or read articles, or scroll through social media.

**Example:** a lot of people only answer emails for 1 hour during their day so they can get through all of them at the same time and save themselves the headache of checking it constantly throughout the day and distracting themselves. You may feel like those "URGENT" emails can't wait, but if you answer an email within at least one day, that's considered standard.

Setting boundaries around your tech usage is so huge when it comes to taking back control of your focus and energy! If you really feel stressed about not answering emails right away, create an automatic reply that lets the people emailing you know you only check your emails during a specific time and will get back to them soon.

## #7 Take a Break!

Take more than just a digital break, and take a break from everything!

Find a time during your day to go outside, walk around, dance a little, or do anything that gets you up and moving around. When our bodies are in motion, we think better and perform better. So remember to get up from your desk occasionally and smell the fresh air!

## Conclusion

At the end of the day, we have the power to decide what digital information we consume, and how much. Although it may feel like you're only productive when you're always reading the next email, message, post, or what-have-you, the truth is that if you're always intaking new information, you're never actually processing or implementing that information.

So give yourself moments of peace throughout your day to let your brain catch up. Step away from the digital world. Gain some clarity. Breathe. Then come back when you know you won't be overwhelmed anymore. The internet should work for us, not against us, and as long as we start being conscientious about how we use it, we won't end up drowning, but swimming.