

# Freelance Productivity Systems — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a personal operating system you actually run, not a stack of notes you forget. Work through it with your real, current business in mind so every exercise produces something usable: one trusted capture inbox, an organised project list, named weekly and daily planning rituals, a defended deep-work schedule, an admin batching plan, and a one-page business dashboard. Each section maps to one course module, moving from capturing everything out of your head, through planning rituals and time-blocking, into protected deep work, and finally into the review rhythm and dashboard that keep the whole system, and you, sustainable.

## Capture and Trust: One System for Everything

Get every commitment out of your head into one trusted inbox, then clarify it into projects and next actions you can act on without re-thinking.

### Exercise: Do a Full Mind Sweep

Block 45 uninterrupted minutes and write down every single thing that has your attention, with no organising or judging. Keep going past the obvious until the page stops filling, most people surface 50 to 100 items, and notice the relief of seeing them outside your head. This is the backlog your system has to absorb.

- What client deliverables, follow-ups, and unanswered messages are currently living only in your memory?

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- What business admin have you been avoiding (an unsent invoice, an unfiled expense, an unsigned contract)?

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- What personal commitments and errands keep intruding on your work time?

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- Which of these items, if you forgot it, would actually cost you money or a client?

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### Worksheet: Choose Your Capture Inbox and Entry Points

Commit to ONE app as your single capture inbox and wire fast entry points into it. If capture takes more than a tap or two you will skip it, so make it effortless before you rely on it.

Chosen capture app (one only, e.g. Todoist or Things):

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Phone entry point (widget, share-sheet, or home-screen shortcut):

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Desktop global hotkey for quick add:

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Email-to-inbox address (set up and tested? yes/no):

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Voice / hands-free capture path:

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Offline fallback (pocket notebook or notes app):

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## Worksheet: Clarify Five Real Items

Take five raw items from your mind sweep and run each through the Getting Things Done decision: actionable or not; single action or project; the verb-first next action. This trains the habit you will use to process every future inbox to zero.

Item 1 raw -> next action (verb-first) -> project? -> context label:

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Item 2 raw -> next action (verb-first) -> project? -> context label:

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Item 3 raw -> next action (verb-first) -> project? -> context label:

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Item 4 raw -> next action (verb-first) -> project? -> context label:

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Item 5 raw -> next action (verb-first) -> project? -> context label:

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## Checklist: Capture System Readiness

- I have chosen exactly one capture inbox and stopped scattering tasks across apps
- I can capture a thought in under three seconds from phone or desk
- I have done a full mind sweep and emptied my mental backlog into the inbox
- I know the GTD decision: actionable? single action or project? next action?
- I apply the two-minute rule: anything under two minutes gets done, not logged
- Every project in my list has a clear, verb-first next action

## Planning Rituals: Turning a Backlog Into a Realistic Week

Install named weekly and daily rituals, plan to your real capacity, and protect your few most important tasks from a flood of small ones.

### Worksheet: Design Your Weekly Planning Ritual

Define when and how you will run your weekly review and plan. Make it a fixed, recurring calendar appointment, then plan to your TRUE capacity, not a fantasy 40 hours. Estimate your real focused capacity honestly.

Fixed weekly planning slot (day and time, e.g. Friday 16:00):

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Location and reward that makes it pleasant (cafe, coffee, playlist):

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My honest weekly focused-work capacity in hours (after meetings, email, surprises):

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This week's 3 to 5 outcomes that would make it a success:

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Pipeline / marketing action I will schedule this week:

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Money check: invoices to send, payments due, budgets to watch:

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## Exercise: Time-Block a Full Week

Open Google Calendar or Notion Calendar and drag this week's chosen tasks onto the timeline as real events: deep-work blocks, call windows, an admin block. Use day theming and leave 25 to 30 percent buffer. Then notice what did not fit, that is the over-commitment you would otherwise have discovered the hard way.

- Which days will be Maker days (deep delivery) and which Manager days (calls and admin)?

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- Where does your largest deep-work block sit, and is it in your peak-energy hours?

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- What window have you reserved for meetings so the rest of the day stays protected?

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- What did not fit on the calendar, and what will you cut, defer, or renegotiate?

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## Worksheet: Build Your Daily Shutdown and Startup Scripts

Write the exact steps of your end-of-day shutdown and start-of-day startup so each becomes a follow-the-script ritual, not a decision. Include your shutdown phrase and your rule for when you set MITs.

Shutdown step 1 (process which inboxes):

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Shutdown step 2 (review and tick completed work):

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Shutdown step 3 (capture loose ends + set tomorrow's 1 to 3 MITs):

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My shutdown phrase that ends the workday:

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Startup step 1 (review plan and MITs, 60-second time-block):

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Startup rule: first deep-work block BEFORE opening email? yes/no:

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## Checklist: Planning Rituals In Place

- ] My weekly planning ritual is a recurring, protected calendar appointment
- ] I plan to my real focused capacity, not an imaginary 40-hour week
- ] I time-block tasks onto a real calendar, not just a list
- ] I leave 25 to 30 percent of each day unblocked as a buffer
- ] I set 1 to 3 Most Important Tasks each day and do the hardest one first
- ] I run a daily shutdown so I can actually stop working

## Deep Work and Defended Focus

Audit your real deep-work hours, design and defend a daily focus block, and batch the shallow admin that would otherwise leak across your day.

## Exercise: Run a One-Week Deep-vs-Shallow Audit

For one week, log your time in rough 30-minute blocks and label each one deep or shallow. At week's end, total your genuine deep-work hours. Most freelancers are shocked to find only 8 to 12 hours in a week they experienced as flat-out, that number is your true production capacity.

- How many genuine deep-work hours did you actually log this week?

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- What were your three biggest sources of shallow work and interruption?

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- At what time of day did deep work flow most easily for you?

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- What single change would buy you the most additional deep-work time next week?

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### Worksheet: Design and Defend Your Deep-Work Block

Lock in a rhythmic daily deep-work block and the ritual and boundaries that protect it. The point is to remove the daily question of whether you will do deep work, the answer is already yes, at this time.

Fixed daily deep-work block (start and end time):

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Startup ritual cues (place, drink, headphones, phone removed):

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Notifications off and email/chat closed during the block? yes/no:

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Client communication windows I will state (e.g. 12:00 and 16:00):

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Where my phone lives during deep work:

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Session success metric (how I know the block was a real win):

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### Worksheet: Plan Your Shallow-Work Batches

Decide the fixed windows where email, calls, and admin will live so they stop contaminating the whole day.

Giving shallow work a cap is what frees the rest of the day for depth.

Email check times (2 to 3 fixed slots, never first thing):

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Call window (e.g. 14:00 to 16:00, certain days only):

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Weekly Admin block (day, time, what it covers, invoicing/expenses/follow-ups):

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Distraction blocker tool and the sites/apps it locks during deep work:

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Notifications I will permanently disable (email, Slack, social):

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### Checklist: Focus Defended

- I have a fixed daily deep-work block protected on my calendar
- I run a startup ritual and set a clear goal for each deep-work session
- All notifications are off and my phone is out of the room during deep work
- I have stated client communication windows and hold them
- Email, calls, and admin are batched into defined windows, not sprinkled all day
- I use environment design (blockers, logged-out apps) instead of relying on willpower

## Running the Business: Review, Dashboards, and Sustainability

Install the nested review rhythm that keeps the system honest, build a one-page dashboard, and protect the energy and boundaries that make it last.

### Worksheet: Write Your Weekly Review Checklist

The weekly review is the keystone habit, and it sticks only when it is a written checklist plus a pleasant ritual. Capture your own steps here so the review becomes follow-the-steps, not figure-it-out.

Get clear, inboxes I will process to zero:

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Get current, calendar window I review (e.g. 2 weeks back, 4 weeks forward):

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Project pass, where I update every active project's next action:

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Money pass, invoices/payments/budgets I check:

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Pipeline pass, prospects and proposals I review:

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Plan pass, how I set next week's 3 to 5 outcomes and block time:

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### Exercise: Stand Up Your One-Page Dashboard

Create a single Notion page or Google Sheet with the handful of numbers that let you steer the business. Fill it in for this week and month, then commit to updating it every weekly review and reading it every monthly review.

- How many billable and deep-work hours did you log this week versus your target?
- What is your effective hourly rate (total revenue divided by total hours actually worked)?
- How many active prospects and outstanding proposals are in your pipeline, and their value?
- What is your runway, how many months would your savings cover with zero new income?

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### Worksheet: Energy and Boundary Plan

Protect the human running the system. Map your energy to your schedule and set the boundaries that keep work from swallowing everything. A freelancer who guards their energy out-produces an exhausted one working twice the hours.

My peak-energy hours (when deep work flows) and the work I will put there:

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My low-energy hours and the admin I will batch into them:

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Hard workday start and stop times:

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What I will say no or not now to this month (and to whom):

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Non-negotiable recovery inputs (sleep target, movement, breaks):

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## Checklist: System That Lasts

- I run a daily shutdown, a weekly review, and a monthly business review
- Each review is a recurring, non-negotiable calendar appointment
- I maintain a one-page dashboard of utilisation, pipeline, and cash
- I update the dashboard weekly and make decisions from it monthly
- I schedule my hardest work in my peak-energy hours and protect real breaks
- I keep the system simple enough that I actually use it, and review the system itself quarterly

## Your Action Plan

1. Choose one capture inbox app today and wire in a phone widget, a desktop hotkey, and an email-to-inbox address.
2. Block 45 minutes this week for a full mind sweep, then process the whole inbox to zero using the GTD decision and two-minute rule.
3. Organise your list into projects, context labels (Deep Work, Calls, Admin, Errands), and areas of focus.
4. Put a recurring 30-minute weekly planning ritual on your calendar and run it from a written checklist.
5. Time-block next week onto a real calendar, theming Maker and Manager days and leaving 25 to 30 percent buffer.
6. Set a fixed daily deep-work block, defend it with a startup ritual and notifications off, and tell clients your communication windows.
7. Batch email into 2 to 3 fixed checks and create one weekly Admin block for invoicing, expenses, and follow-ups.
8. Run a daily shutdown ritual that closes loops and sets tomorrow's 1 to 3 MITs, ending with a shutdown phrase.
9. Build a one-page dashboard tracking billable and deep-work hours, effective rate, pipeline, cash, and runway.
10. Schedule a monthly 60 to 90 minute business review to read the dashboard and decide on outreach, rates, or capacity.











