



Hyperfocus Is a Gift. A Logbook Gives It Direction.

Deep concentration can produce extraordinary work and quietly erase the day around it. A practical method, one spoken sentence per quarter-hour, keeps both.

SWANDEX · 9 OCTOBER 2026 · 7 MIN READ

The previous article, [Today's CEOs Still Write It Down. Their Employees Can Too.](#), showed that the people running today's largest companies still keep written track of their intentions. This one turns to the practice itself, through the minds that find it hardest: those capable of hyperfocus.

The paradox

Some highly productive people can spend hours absorbed in a difficult problem without noticing time pass. Their persistence looks almost limitless. Yet the same people may struggle to recall what they achieved that day, underestimate how long a task took, or neglect other priorities until they turn urgent.

Psychologists call the first trait hyperfocus, an unusually intense absorption in an activity, and the second time blindness, a difficulty perceiving or managing the passage of time.^{[6][7]} Both are often discussed in relation to ADHD, though neither belongs to it alone, and much demanding intellectual and creative work rewards deep absorption. The trouble starts when concentration becomes so exclusive that the wider picture disappears: brilliant progress on one task while control of the surrounding day slips away.

A logbook is the obvious remedy. It is also the one most people abandon.

Why most logbooks die in the first week

Readers of articles like this one tend to agree, perhaps install a journaling app, and then write almost nothing. The reason is rarely laziness. Each entry costs a moment now, while its benefit arrives days later, at the first review. For a mind deep in a problem, that moment feels like a theft.

So the method has to work the other way round: make an entry cost almost nothing, and let its first benefit appear within days rather than months.

Accepting a dip

In 1997, Tiger Woods won the Masters by twelve strokes. He then rebuilt his swing with coach Butch Harmon, questioning the very movements that had just made him champion. In 1998 he won a single PGA Tour event. In 1999 he won eight, and in 2000 nine, including three majors.^[1]

The greatest obstacle to improvement is not always failure. Sometimes it is a method that works so well we hesitate to touch it. For someone used to hours of uninterrupted concentration, looking up every quarter-hour will feel counterproductive at first. Yet a brief, chosen pause to note progress is not a distraction. It is part of the work, and the aim is to enter and leave deep concentration deliberately rather than let it run the whole day.

What a good entry contains

Research tells us fairly precisely what is worth writing down.

A meta-analysis by Benjamin Harkin and colleagues, covering 138 studies and nearly 20,000 participants, found that monitoring progress improves goal attainment, and that the effect is stronger when progress is physically recorded rather than merely noticed.^[2] Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, studying close to 12,000 daily diary entries from knowledge workers, found that the most motivating event in a working day is a sense of progress, even a small one.^[8]

Sophie Leroy showed that leaving an unfinished task leaves part of our attention behind with it, a phenomenon she called attention residue.^[4] With Theresa Glomb she then found a simple antidote: a brief ready-to-resume plan noting where things stand and what comes next.^[5] E. J. Masicampo and Roy

Baumeister had found something similar: writing down a concrete plan for an unfinished goal stops it intruding on the mind.^[9]

Put together, a useful entry needs only two things: what was just done, and what comes next.

The method: a chime, a tap, a sentence

Carillon Repetition Minute strikes the quarters like a minute-repeater watch. In its full version, each chime arrives as a notification, and tapping it opens the logbook directly, ready for a typed or dictated line. Speaking through the phone keyboard's own transcription takes a few seconds and needs no break in posture or thought.

The logbook understands three simple moves. Here they are with one task, from start to finish.

1. Open the task. Writing "task+" followed by a label, one word with no spaces, starts a task. The rest of the line says what it is about and, if useful, its ultimate goal and a time estimate:

```
task+audit Review the supplier contracts. Goal: lower costs before the  
board meeting. Estimate: 3 hours.
```

The label now appears as a button in the logbook and on every chime notification, so the task stays in view for as long as it is open.

2. Record progress. At a later chime, a tap on the label's button starts the line with its name. A few words say what was done, then a tap on "next" adds the next step on the same line:

```
audit: Read the first four contracts, two renew automatically next Ask  
legal about the notice periods
```

One line holds both the record and the plan for resuming. This step simply repeats at every chime spent on the task, for an afternoon or for weeks, and each new line picks up where the last "next" left off:

```
audit: Legal confirms 90 days' notice on both next Draft the  
termination letters
```

3. Close it. When the work is finished, the × on the label's button closes the task, which writes "task-audit" in the log.

Just before closing, one free line on how it went, the result against the goal and the time against the estimate, turns the record into a lesson.

Read back later, the log shows the intention and the estimate on its first line, then every quarter actually spent on the task.

None of this is compulsory. Any line without a label is just as welcome, and the three moves do not claim to replace the more complete journaling and planning methods that many people rely on. They keep the few elements that do most of the work, captured in the moment, and leave everything else free.

A few rules keep it light:

- Under ten seconds. Longer, and the entry is becoming a report.
- Speak rather than type.
- In deep flow, a tap on the label and two words are enough: "audit: still reading". The chime has already done its job by bringing the day back into view.

Finally, decide the trigger in advance. Peter Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran's meta-analysis of 94 tests found that intentions phrased as "when X happens, I will do Y" are far more likely to be carried out.^[3] Here it is simply: when the quarter strikes, tap and say one sentence.

The reserve on every notification

Each chime notification shows, just after the quarter, a small dial modelled on the power-reserve indicator of a mechanical watch: ●●●○. It winds down while the logbook is left alone and winds back up with each entry. Only chiming quarters count, so it never runs down overnight.

The reserve answers the problem raised at the start, the logbook quietly abandoned. It keeps no streak and sends no reproach. A glance at the notification shows how long the logbook has been waiting, and one sentence winds it up again. Letting it run low is no failure either: in a study of habit formation by Phillippa Lally and colleagues, missing a single opportunity did not materially set back the habit; steady repetition over the following weeks did the work.^[10]

The first week

- Days one to three: open a single task each morning with "task+" and log only that block of work.

- Day four: read the three days back. It takes about five minutes and usually brings the first surprise: tasks that felt short turn out long, estimates meet reality, and real progress appears where none was felt.
- Days five to seven: extend logging to the whole working morning, with as many tasks as it holds.
- End of the week: copy the log into an AI assistant and ask one question, such as "Where did my time go, and what moved my main objective forward?"

Day four matters most. It is where the benefit finally overtakes the cost, and it is why the habit survives.

What the review reveals

Reflection is where a record turns into improvement. In a field experiment with new employees at an Indian IT services company, Giada Di Stefano, Francesca Gino, Gary Pisano and Bradley Staats found that trainees who spent the last fifteen minutes of each day writing about what they had learned performed more than 20 per cent better on their final assessment than those who simply kept working.^[11]

A week of quarter-hour lines works the same way. Patterns emerge that memory hides: the hour when the best work happens, the meeting that never advances anything, the problem solved on Tuesday and nearly forgotten by Friday. Quarter-hour logging itself has not yet been tested in controlled studies, but each of its ingredients has.

From concentration to mastery

Hyperfocus is a remarkable capacity, yet intensity alone does not guarantee direction. The aim is not to replace it with constant self-monitoring, but to make deep concentration compatible with memory and deliberate choice.

Perhaps the next level of achievement will come not from concentrating harder, but from learning when to look up, say what has been done, and choose what deserves our attention next.

SWANDEX, Switzerland - Technology Network

This conversation continues on

[@swandexapps](#)

Carillon Repetition Minute is free on iOS and Android. It strikes the hours and quarters like a minute-repeater watch, and its full version keeps a quarter-hour log.

<https://www.swandex.com/carillon.html>

First published on X on 9 October 2026: x.com/swandexapps/status/2108392688470942000

References

- [1] Golf Channel. "Analyzing Each of Tiger's Different Swings." 2017. Woods's swing rebuilds, including the post-1997 overhaul with Butch Harmon.
- [2] Harkin B, Webb TL, Chang BPI, et al. "Does Monitoring Goal Progress Promote Goal Attainment? A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence." *Psychological Bulletin* 142(2): 198–229, 2016. Monitoring improves goal attainment, more so when progress is recorded.
- [3] Gollwitzer PM, Sheeran P. "Implementation Intentions and Goal Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of Effects and Processes." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 38: 69–119, 2006. "When-then" plans substantially raise follow-through.
- [4] Leroy S. "Why Is It So Hard to Do My Work? The Challenge of Attention Residue When Switching Between Work Tasks." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 109(2): 168–181, 2009. Unfinished tasks keep a share of attention after switching.
- [5] Leroy S, Glomb TM. "Tasks Interrupted: How Anticipating Time Pressure on Resumption of an Interrupted Task Causes Attention Residue and Low Performance on Interrupting Tasks and How a 'Ready-to-Resume' Plan Mitigates the Effects." *Organization Science* 29(3): 380–397, 2018. A brief resumption note reduces attention residue.
- [6] Hupfeld KE, Abagis TR, Shah P. "Living 'in the Zone': Hyperfocus in Adult ADHD." *ADHD Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders* 11(2): 191–208, 2019. Hyperfocus measured in adults with ADHD symptoms.
- [7] Ashinoff BK, Abu-Akel A. "Hyperfocus: The Forgotten Frontier of Attention." *Psychological Research* 85(1): 1–19, 2021. Review of how hyperfocus is defined and studied.
- [8] Amabile TM, Kramer SJ. "The Power of Small Wins." *Harvard Business Review* 89(5): 70–80, 2011. Diary study: a sense of progress is the strongest daily motivator.
- [9] Masicampo EJ, Baumeister RF. "Consider It Done! Plan Making Can Eliminate the Cognitive Effects of Unfulfilled Goals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(4): 667–683, 2011. Writing a plan quiets intrusive thoughts about unfinished goals.
- [10] Lally P, van Jaarsveld CHM, Potts HWW, Wardle J. "How Are Habits Formed: Modelling Habit Formation in the Real World." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 40(6): 998–1009, 2010. Habits strengthened with repetition; a single missed opportunity did not derail them.
- [11] Di Stefano G, Gino F, Pisano GP, Staats BR. "Making Experience Count: The Role of Reflection in Individual Learning." *Harvard Business School Working Paper* 14-093, 2014. Fifteen minutes of daily written reflection improved trainee performance by over 20%.