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## FEBRUARY ISSUE

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# Increase Your Productivity

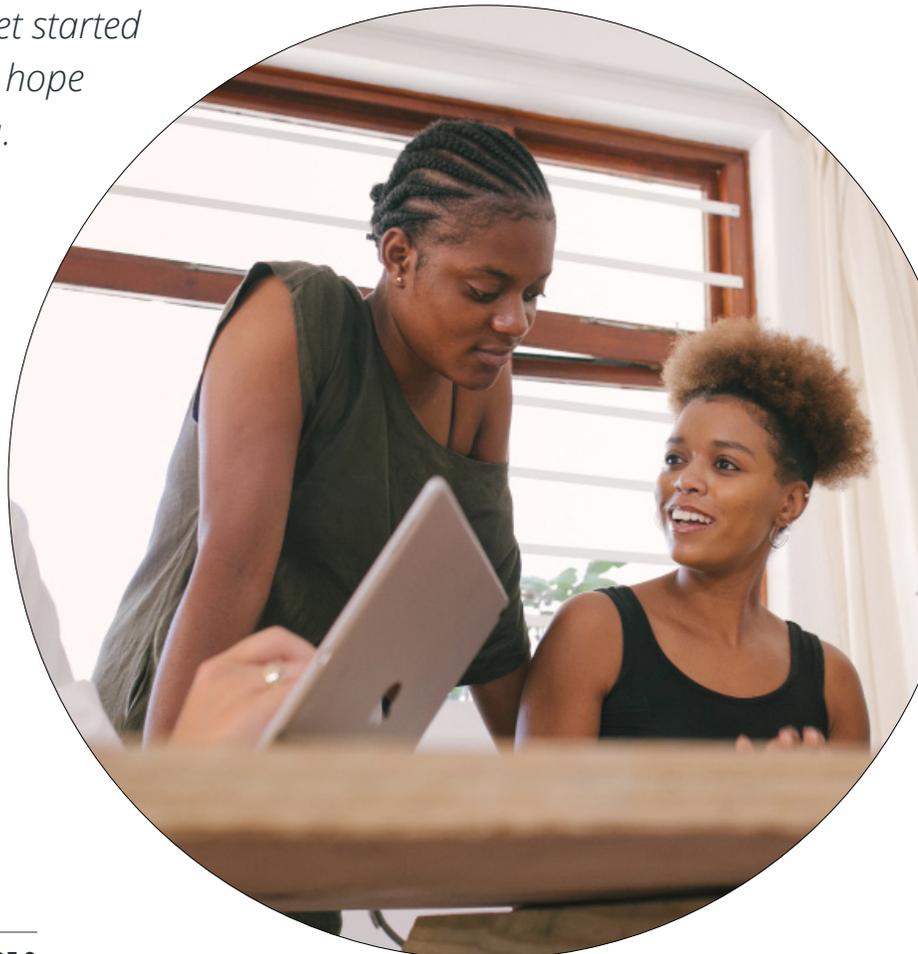
*We've collected some tips to help you get started on the path to greater productivity. We hope you find one or a few that work for you. Good luck!*

## 1. Take effective breaks.

Leaning back in your chair to scroll through social media might give you a break from the task at hand, but it won't help you be more productive. Try these tactics instead:

You may never have been to a yoga class, but you still can benefit.

Take a short walk around the office or, even better, get outside.



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, about something non-work-related.

Take a short (not more than 20 minutes) nap. For even better results, have a cup of coffee before you close your eyes. It takes about 20 minutes for caffeine to be absorbed into your bloodstream, which means your coffee will be kicking in right about the time you are waking up.

## 2. Make a list.

Most people make “to do” lists. Productive people make good “to do” lists. Here are some tips:

not general goals to be achieved this week or this month. For example, “work on budget” is not a productive list item because it is far too open-ended. Instead, break that end-goal down into discrete tasks, e.g., review last year’s budget; highlight areas of potential

savings; list new line-item requests for this year.

Are you a morning person or does it take you a few hours to really hit your stride for the day? Tackle your most challenging projects when you are most alert.

For example, “10:00 – Call client to explain/warn of late delivery.” Then, follow through. Scheduling an appointment, with a set time, can help you avoid the trap of “structured procrastination” -- that is, busying yourself with less important tasks to avoid doing the difficult, but more important, task that really needs to be done.

You can write your list in a notebook or on an index card or desk calendar, or type it into your phone or computer. Choose any method that works for you and stick with that one method. If you have more than one list, something is going to fall through the cracks.

## 3. Write tomorrow’s list today.

Set aside ten minutes at the end of each workday to write tomorrow’s to-do list. This one small change in your routine can have a huge impact on your productivity because it allows you to hit the ground running when you come to work each morning. You don’t have to exert any energy in figuring out what to do first; you just have to get started.

## 4. Keep track of how you spend your time and set limits, as needed.

Pay close attention to how you spend your time each day. Are you surprised at how long certain tasks take? If so, look for ways to be more productive. For example:

Does your mind wander every time you sit down to complete a certain required, but routine (i.e., boring) task, like reviewing and tabulating monthly expense reports? Set a time limit: “I will not spend more than 20 minutes on this task.” Then, focus and get it done. Even better, consider whether

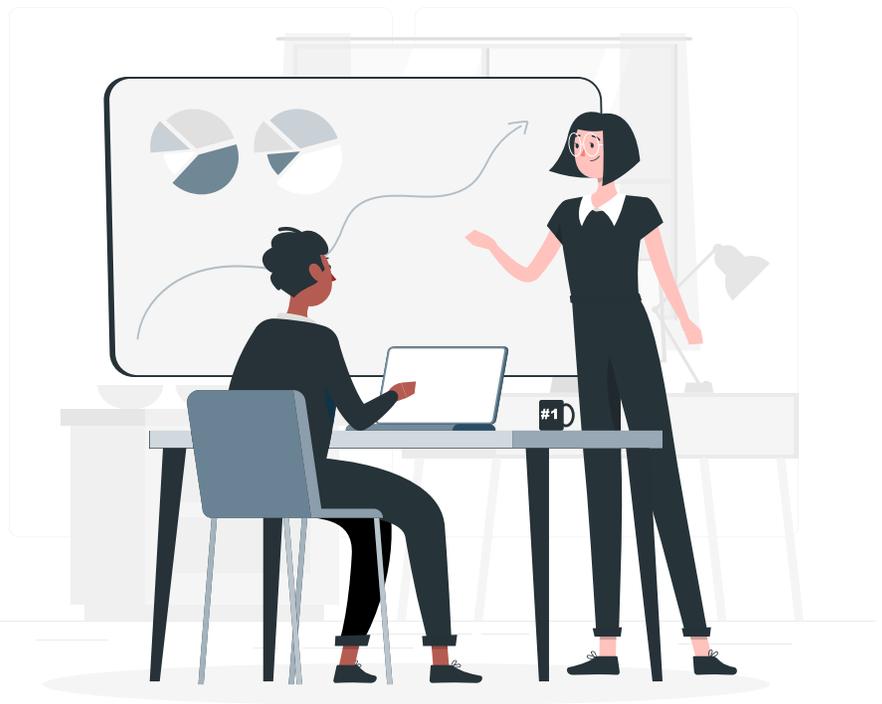
you can delegate that task to someone who can accomplish it more efficiently?

Do you tend to wring your hands over creative projects and spend significant time worrying over the (often insignificant) details? If so, you may have to let go of the idea of perfection. Train yourself to do your best (not perfect) work; call it “done”; and move on to the next project.

Do open-ended projects tend to morph into never-ending projects? Set a realistic deadline and hold yourself to it. The pressure of a deadline, even a self-imposed deadline, will help you to focus and work more productively. Remember the old adage, “Work expands to fill the time allotted.” Measure the value of each task and allot only that much time.

### **5. Stand more.**

Sitting for long periods of time may be as bad for your health as obesity and smoking. See <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/>



expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005. It’s also bad for productivity. Make it a point to stand more throughout the day. For example:

Invest in a “standing desk.” A quick Google search will give you a range of styles and prices to choose from. Stand up for all telephone conversations. If you have to sit to take notes or manipulate computer files, alternate standing and sitting.

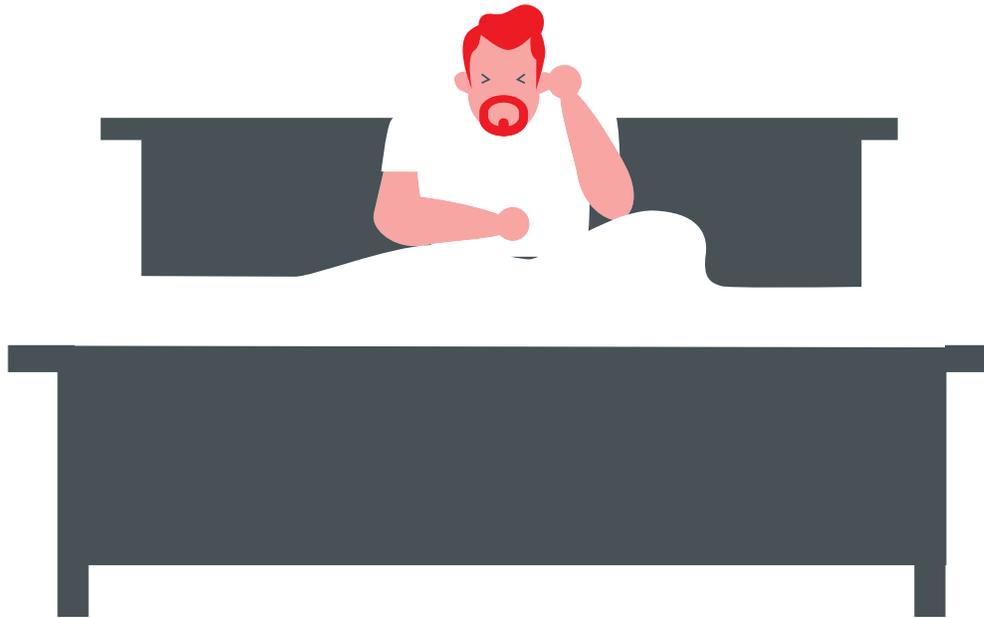
### **6. Take care of yourself.**

Bring your best self to work each day, physically, mentally

and emotionally. It’s not always easy, but make a consistent effort to:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise. Active people are productive people.
- Eat a protein-packed breakfast and lunch.
- Drink more water. Even mild dehydration can make you feel listless, sluggish and fatigued.
- Set boundaries, so that you have clearly delineated non-work time to rest and recharge. 📌

*Illustrations by Freepik*



# For a Better Night's Sleep, Practice These 8 Habits

*If you struggle to get a good night's sleep, you are not alone. Poor sleep is an epidemic among American adults.*

According to the CDC, 50 to 70 million Americans suffer from insomnia. The problem might be difficulty falling asleep; difficulty staying asleep; waking up very early; or feeling tired the next day.

Sleep is essential for good health. It's hard to enjoy

life when you are dragging yourself through each day. Poor sleep can compromise your memory, mood, and judgment. You are more likely to be involved in accidents and make errors on the job when sleep deprived. Chronic sleep deficits can contribute to a host of disorders such

as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and even a shortened life span.

Stress is a major cause of poor sleep and few events in life are more stressful than sustaining an injury. Bad sleep patterns may persist

even after your legal crisis is resolved or other sources of stress may arise.

The good news is that, no matter what the cause, you can improve your sleep by practicing good “sleep hygiene.” Here are 8 sleep hygiene habits that will help you get a better night’s sleep whether your challenge is stress and anxiety, shift work, or jet lag.



### **1. Stick with a regular schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.**

Sticking to a regular schedule regulates your internal clock and trains your body to be drowsy at bedtime and alert when it’s time to get up. Set an alarm so that worry about oversleeping does not keep you awake. Resist the temptation to stay up late

and sleep in on weekends or days off. You’ll have trouble getting back into your schedule and will likely experience a “sleep hangover” on your first day or two back at work.



### **2. Create a restful sleep environment.**

Keep your bedroom light-free. You may need to invest in light-blocking drapes or eyeshades. Don’t sleep with the TV or computer on. If your clock face is illuminated, cover it or turn the clock toward the wall. Besides the light, checking the clock as you try to fall asleep or if you wake up can increase anxiety and make it harder to get to sleep. Close the door if lights are on in adjacent rooms or shut them off if you can. Keep the temperature cool, between 60 and 75 degrees,

and the room quiet. Use earplugs or a white noise machine if noise intrudes.



### **3. Watch what you eat and drink in the hours before bed.**

Avoid stimulants like nicotine and caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola, energy drinks) in the four to six hours before bedtime. If you are especially caffeine sensitive, you may want to limit your caffeine to a single cup of coffee early in your day or switch to decaf. Herbal tea may even be a better choice as decaffeinated beverages contain some caffeine. Similarly avoid alcohol a couple of hours before bed. Although alcohol may relax you and you may fall asleep easily, you’re likely to wake up later and be unable to get back to sleep. Don’t eat a

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large meal within a few hours before retiring. The digestive process may keep you awake. Also eating shortly before bed sends your body a confusing message that you are gearing up for activity when the body's internal clock is telling it to shut down. If you find you are hungry before bedtime, opt for a light snack that is easy to digest.

#### **4. Follow a relaxing bedtime routine.**

An hour before bed, stop working and turn off your electronic devices. You might try a warm bath, pleasure reading, listening to music, relaxation exercises, or a little TV. Some people are better off with no TV as the light from the screen or the program itself may be stimulating. You can find instructions for a number of effective relaxation techniques on the internet such as deep breathing exercises, progressive relaxation, acupressure, and guided imagery. Avoid stressful activities, emotional topics, and vigorous exercise,

all of which are likely to increase alertness.



#### **5. Exercise daily.**

Participants in numerous studies have reported that regular exercise helped them fall asleep faster, sleep more deeply, sleep for longer periods, and feel more rested when awake. Research also shows that exercise reduces anxiety and depression both of which interfere with sleep. But schedule your exercise early enough in your day so as not to rev you up before bed.

#### **6. Eliminate naps.**

Many people take short power naps to boost alertness and productivity when fatigue sets in during their day. If you nap, but find you are not tired at bedtime, try skipping the nap.

#### **7. Get up if you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes.**

Remaining in bed and trying to force sleep is likely to be counterproductive. The longer you try unsuccessfully to sleep, the more anxious, frustrated, and alert you become. Once you are up, try some relaxation techniques, listening to music or an audio book, or light reading. Keep the lights dim so as not to send a wake up signal to your brain. Wait until you begin to feel sleepy to return to bed.



#### **8. Call your doctor if sleeplessness persists.**

If your sleep doesn't improve despite following these tips, you may need to be evaluated for an underlying medical condition. ■

*Illustration by Designs.ai*

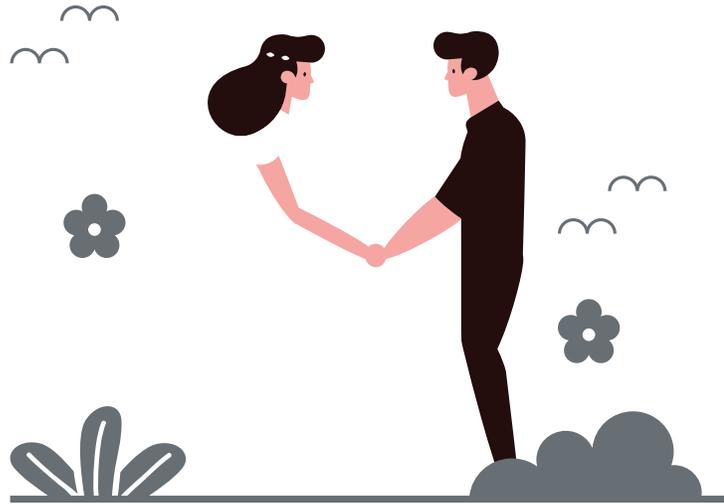
# The History of Valentine's Day

*You might think that the greeting card industry invented Valentine's Day as a way to boost sales during that slow period between New Year's Day and Mother's Day. Not so.*

Hallmark produced its first Valentine's Day card in 1913, but Valentine's Day was celebrated long before then. However, the reason we celebrate romantic love on that particular day remains something of a history mystery.

One story holds that Valentine's Day originated with Valentinus, a third century theologian and scholar who was jailed and sentenced to death for his Christian beliefs. While in jail, Valentinus restored the sight of the jailer's blind daughter. Valentinus was executed on February 14, but not before he wrote a farewell letter to the jailer's daughter, which he signed, "From Your Valentine."

A similar story holds that a priest named Valentine was jailed for speaking out against the Roman Empire; while in jail, he wrote letters to a woman he loved, signed, "Your Valentine." According to a third story, Emperor Claudius believed that his



soldiers would be better fighters if they were single and unattached. Accordingly, he forbade his soldiers from marrying. The young priest Valentine would have none of that. He so believed in love and marriage (and so despised the brutal practices of the Empire) that he risked his life to perform secret marriage ceremonies. Valentine married hundreds of soldiers in these surreptitious ceremonies.

Finally, some scholars trace the origins of Valentine's Day to medieval author, Geoffrey Chaucer. In 1376, Chaucer

published a poem, titled "The Parliament of Fowls," in which a group of birds has a spirited debate about, among other things, the nature and purpose of love. The poem ends with a song in praise of St. Valentine.

Whatever its true origin story, Valentine's Day has evolved into a day to acknowledge, celebrate and be thankful for the love we have in our lives. ▀

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*Illustrations by Designs.ai*

# Cake Box Cookies

## Featuring Funfetti and Strawberry Cake Mix

*There are few better pastimes than baking cookies. But who wants to go through all the hassle of making them from scratch when you can easily make a delicious and unique cookie that is sure to please out of something you might already have in your own cabinet?*

Cake box cookies are not a new concept, but there are endless possibilities when it comes to customizing and styling these cookies..

They are also incredibly easy to make and use very few ingredients, so let's dive in!



### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 box of your preferred cake mix (strawberry or funfetti recommended)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup of butter or oil
- Preferred topping (White chocolate chips, cream cheese frosting, sprinkles are all good options.)

### **DIRECTIONS:**

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Beat the eggs.
- Melt the butter and add to eggs.
- Add cake mix.
- Mix well to create your delicious dough.
- Add your white chocolate chips if desired.
- If you have a cookie scooper (highly recommended) spray it with Pam, and start scooping out your dough!
- Place on parchment paper or a greased cookie sheet and bake for 8 - 10 minutes.
- Add your sprinkles or drizzle with cream cheese frosting (microwave 15-20 seconds to get it ultra drizzly.)
- Enjoy!