

The Best Way to Structure Your Day: The 10-3-2-1-0 Formula

Here's a dead simple strategy for calmer nights, more energetic mornings, and greater productivity.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

The super successful swear by their daily routines. Whether it's Sir Richard Branson recommending his long-standing habit of [waking up at 5 a.m.](#), or author Tim Ferriss telling fans how much of a lift it gives him to [make his bed each morning](#), the right structure to your days can help you achieve incredible things, many business superstars attest.

The problem, though, is the quantity of these tips. While one person recommends morning journaling, another person argues [exercising in the early hours](#) is the key to maximum productivity. Is there any way to boil down much of this advice into [the basic principles of a sound daily routine](#)?

How to keep all this advice straight

Yup, suggests [author](#) and fitness coach [Craig Ballantyne](#). Despite all the chatter about productive mornings, he contends that the perfect daily routine actually starts with bedtime. After all, if you don't get to sleep at a decent hour and have restful nights, you're not going to have the energy for whatever it is you choose to do first thing--be it jogging, [journaling](#), or your most important creative work.

"The single most important factor in winning your mornings and owning your days is to get up 15 minutes earlier and work on your No. 1 priority before anyone else is awake. It's that simple," he says. But he concedes that's easier said than done for lots of us.

His solution is something called the 10-3-2-1-0 formula. It's a simple memory aid that packs a lot of sound sleep and productivity advice into a just a few lines. Here it is:

- 10 hours before bed: No more caffeine
- 3 hours before bed: No more food or alcohol
- 2 hours before bed: No more work
- 1 hour before bed: No more screen time
- 0: The number of times you hit the snooze button in the morning

"When you follow this formula, you'll get more done and stop letting the big opportunities in your life slip away," says Ballantyne, who offers [more advice on each individual point here](#).

What science says

Is he right? There's science to back up a lot of these points. The blue light emitted by electronics has been shown by research [to disrupt sleep and impact performance](#) the next day, and there's a host of [neuroscience that indicates giving your brain a breather](#) from work isn't an indulgence--it's necessary for maximum focus and productivity. And come on, we all know the snooze button is a bad idea, no matter how sweet it can feel to hit that little devil in the morning.

So maybe it's worth giving the 10-3-2-1-0 formula a try. Follow Ballantyne's advice for a few days and let us know if it makes a difference to your energy and productivity in the comments.

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