

Interruptions Blaster!

Interruptions take time away from whatever you're working on. Sometimes this is a good thing - we need a break, but at it's worst an interruption can throw us off and we can lose a creative thought, forget something critical or even lose a deal! But BEFORE you take any action, you need to understand the SOURCE of your interruptions, so you can RESPOND purposefully instead of reacting on auto-pilot.

Part 1: Keeping an Interruptions Log

INSTRUCTIONS: Over the course of the next week or so, complete the table below whenever you get an interruption. You may have to do this afterwards - perhaps at the end of each ay or when you have a break. Fill out ALL the columns and print as many of these pages as you need to record all your interruptions...

What is the Interruption? Name your interruption & briefly describe it	WHO IS the Interrupter? Remember, it could be you!	DATE & TIME Include day of the week	Approx. TIME SPEND on Interruption	WHO BENEFITTED from the Interruption?	How IMPORTANT is the Interruption? Score out of 10 (where 10 is high)	An URGENT interruption?	NEXT TIME: Jot down any ideas that spring to mind
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪
					..... / 10	Y/N	▪

Part 2: Reviewing Your Interruptions Log

After a period of a week or two of observing your interruptions – and your response to them, let’s do a quick review.

List below the ‘themes’ or recurring interruptions you notice right away:

1.
2.
3.

Take a closer look. What **common threads and patterns** do you begin to notice?
(This could be times of day, days of the week, WHO is interrupting, are they VALID interruptions or are they always urgent so you HAVE to stop what you’re doing? Or perhaps you notice something else?)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What else would you like to make a note of here?

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Part 3: Taking Action to Ease Your Interruptions

When it comes to interruptions there is a never-ending realm of possible actions.

The KEY with ALL interruptions is to PAUSE before you take any action.

STOP, take a deep breath and evaluate the situation.

Ask yourself, “Is this interruption more important than what I’m currently doing?”

What you choose to do depends on many things including WHO the interrupter is, whether it’s URGENT or not, whether the interrupter is a repeat offender, whether it benefits YOU or not, whether the interruption is valid, whether you are in a state of flow etc. And if you find you are actually welcoming interruptions AND not getting things done, you may need to have a deeper review around your motivation.

Finally remember, **Say “Yes” to the person but “No” to the task - if necessary.**

Respect is essential – whether you are dealing with yourself or someone else.

My Interruption Action Plan:

So, it's time to plan what to do with future interruptions. Below, list here your common interruptions or interrupters and what you will do in future. Review your initial thoughts in your interruptions log where it says, "NEXT TIME I could". If you're stuck, see the Appendix for ideas and thought-starters.

Interruption/Interrupter	WHAT I WILL DO when this happens again:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Finally, let's look at bigger actions to reduce or avoid those interruptions altogether:

You may also need to set up some new processes for other people so they don't need to interrupt you or interrupt you less. For example if you're interrupted because a customer refund needs authorizing you could empower your employees to authorize the refund if it's less than \$50. Or you could schedule regular meetings with people and ask them to save their 'interruptions' for your meeting.

List here any one-off actions to avoid future interruptions:

Action	By when I will complete this action:
1.	
2.	
3.	

SUMMARY: Interruptions can be frustrating or they can be stimulating - giving you a welcome break. To handle interruptions more effectively you need to stop reacting on autopilot and instead take a deep breath, giving yourself a few short moments to evaluate how you are doing and then make the best decision for you.