10-40-10
Plan-Do-Review

Many of us use Pomodoros to get focused and productive, especially when we’re feeling stuck. Another productivity method to consider is 10-40-10. It takes one hour, and it works like this:

1. **PLAN:** Set a timer for 10 minutes and examine your task.
   Break down what’s involved (summarize the task, identify the key requirements). Determine the best way to approach the task. Consider the value of the task, not just for your professor or your employer but for you personally. Consider what a successful outcome will look like. Then make a plan: a list of enumerated steps, a sketch, a mind-map. This plan can be in any form that works for you.

2. **DO:** Set a timer for 40 minutes and work.
   Begin with the part of the task that makes sense to do first, which may not be the first question, problem, or sentence.

3. **REVIEW:** Set a timer for 10 minutes and review what you’ve accomplished.
   Does the work you produced so far align with your plan? Does it get you closer to your goals? Do you see a way to improve your process? Use your assessment to shape your next 10-40-10 session.

Wouldn’t it be better to simply start working and designate the extra 20 minutes to the task itself? Well, no. Research shows that people who plan out how to learn and work have stronger outcomes. Once we get deep into the details of a project or task, it’s pretty easy to lose sight of our high-level goals. This shift in perspective can drastically reduce efficiency and motivation.

Through the 10-40-10 Method, we teach ourselves to drive toward the goal, to focus on a specific task, and to consistently measure the effectiveness of our approaches. Over time, these steps become habitual, and we can more quickly identify the best strategies for the task and the performer.