GEEKY PRODUCTIVITY
BY STEVEN SAVAGE

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I use Agile methods, specifically SCRUM, to be more productive. Here's a "bite size" look at the major techniques I use – so you can mix and match!

FOCUS ON VALUE

Ask yourself what the value of your projects are.
Force-rank them to prioritize – nothing is ever of "equal" value.

WORK BREAKDOWN

Break down work to help you prioritize important parts.
- **PROJECTS – Big efforts with specific ends.**
  STORIES – Individual pieces of Value – best phrased as "As person X I want Y so Z" to get a clear vision.
- **TASKS – Pieces of work in each Story to get it done.**

Breakdowns help you deliver value and prioritize – as you may juggle many Projects at once.

BACKLOGS

Try keeping backlogs, reviewing, and prioritizing
- **Incubator – Stick all your may-do ideas here!**
- **Backlog – Keep a list of things you want to do – Projects and maybe even stories.**

Review these regularly to decide what to do, keep track of your goals, and revise them as needed!

SCRUM FOCUSES EFFORTS

- **Pick time periods of about the same size. These are Sprints (I use a month)**
- **At the start of a Sprint, pick the topmost items in your Backlog you can do.**
- **Do them.**
- **At the end review, reprioritize, and do it all again.**

There's a lot of Scrum advice and guides to use!

PACE YOURSELF

- **Establish a Work In Progress limit to avoid multitasking, context switching, and distraction**

GET VISIBILITY

- **Make efforts visible so you stay engaged.**
- **I recommend a big chart if you're not sure – right on your wall.**
- **I track work as not started, in progress, in review, and done.**

REVIEW AND IMPROVE

- **Review your work and progress regularly so you can improve – a Retrospective.**
- **Don't be harsh – just use it as a way to get better.**

STAY IN TOUCH

Communicate with people you work with, do stuff for, and more.
Communications is more effective and useful that big plans and elaborate updates.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

- **There's so many resources for Agile, scrum, and productivity you can save time.**
- **Make improvement it's own project!**

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Suggested Reading List:

- **The Agile Manifesto** – www.agilemanifesto.org – The classic manifesto, it's a thought-provoking read – and you can search for the various people who wrote it and their works.
- **Getting Things Done by David Allen** – www.DavidAllen.com – Though his works aren't quite classifiable as Agile or Scrum (or indeed, any method), he has lots of good advice and tips. Also he has a whole "out-of-the-box" personal system.
- **Anything Else by David Allen** – www.DavidAllen.com – Dude writes a lot.
- **The Scrum Guides** - www.scrumguides.org - Online guides for Scrum!
- **Scrum: a Breathtakingly Brief and Agile Introduction by Chris Sims and Hillary Johnson** - What is says on the tin. A great quick guide!
- **The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right by Atul Gawande** – Using checklists to be more productive – useful for everyone!