



Core Principles for Daily Architecture

[Spanish version available here](#)

Some ideas to keep in mind when following this outline:

You will need to spend some time carefully observing your personal behaviors, routines, and rhythms. What works best for you is unique and won't necessarily mirror the patterns of friends or family members. Be honest with yourself in your observations - don't be concerned with the expectations of others at this point. You need to listen to yourself in order to discover your unique needs.

How many hours do you want to spend on school work each day? How much time do you think is reasonable? This may be aligned with what your teachers are suggesting, or it may be quite different. Keep in mind that learning and working from home have a very different rhythm than doing so from school and both students and teachers are in the process of discovering those new rhythms. Focus on the quality of your work rather than the quantity of what you complete each day. The *process* of learning is what is important, not getting it all done.

Subtraction (applied incrementally)

- What really matters?
 - Observe yourself over the course of several days and take note of everything you do and when. It might be helpful to use a [time tracker](#) to do this. Don't leave anything out! Note when you work on a particular task, when you take a break to check email or social media, when you get up and stretch or have a snack, and so on. Note what times of day you are most engaged, energized and creative as well as when you tend to lose focus and need a break. If you like, you can copy this [template](#) to log all of the activities throughout your day (it includes a sample log so you can see how it might look). Feel free to change the tasks and



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activities to match your personal schedule.

After a few days of observation, look over your daily logs. Are there tasks or activities that could be eliminated or reserved for only certain times of day?

Some examples of activities you might consider eliminating or reserving until later in the day are

- Social media
- Email
- Texting
- Busy work (non-essential school tasks, things you find yourself doing just to fill the time)

● Eliminate multitasking

- Look at your schedule and the work you plan to do for the day. Designate specific periods of time to focus on each task (more about this below). Stick to one thing at a time. If you are working on the computer, you may find it helpful to close files and tabs that are not related to your designated project and only open them when you plan to work on that item or task.

If you find that you are losing focus, it is better to step away and take a break than to switch to a different project. Get up from the computer, stretch, take a short walk if you're able to go outside, do a few jumping jacks, etc. Come back to the project when you are able to give it your full attention.

Productivity over Reactivity

- Internal over external orientation
 - Move away from doing things because of guilt or because you're "supposed to" and toward what really matters (happiness, self-actualization, performance). This is a good time to have a discussion with your teachers about what most engages you within each subject area. Perhaps you can design an independent study project that gives you the space to explore each subject in a manner you find engaging and exciting.
- Align peak creativity with peak energy periods
 - Look back at the log you created and take note of what time of day you found you were naturally most engaged and energized. This is likely around the same time



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of day each day. These are the times to schedule your deepest and most creative work.

If you find it difficult to determine when these times are based on your log, schedule an energy/engagement check-in with yourself 2-3 times per day for several days. You can copy this [Energy and Engagement Rating Scale](#) to track your personal highs and lows.

Stress and Recovery

- Using the information you gathered about your personal energy peaks and valleys, plan some stress and recovery time into your day. Do you find that your energy dips after lunch? Schedule a brisk 15 minute walk after eating and before you get back to work. Other quick recovery activities you can try whenever you have energy dips include:
 - Do 50 jumping jacks
 - Balance on one foot for 60 seconds, then the other
 - Do 5 minutes of [yoga \(for younger students\)](#) or [yoga \(for older students\)](#)
 - Jump rope for 5 minutes (if you don't have a jump rope, use an invisible one)
 - Have a healthy snack
 - Wash your face
 - Any of these fantastic [Brain Breaks](#) created by David Sladkey (some require multiple participants)

Deep Work

- Mindfulness training is a powerful way to deepen your concentration and enhance the quality of your work and your engagement with all that you do. If you are unfamiliar with mindfulness or meditation, you may want to consider using a guided meditation app, such as [Headspace](#). Many apps offer a limited number of free meditations to help you get started.
 - Begin each day with a core morning meditation. Do this as soon as you wake up, before checking email, social media, etc. If you are implementing the journaling routine below, you may want to meditate after your morning journaling session. The amount of time you spend meditating each day depends on you and what feels right. You might start with a short 5 minute session each day and try to build up to longer sessions over time.



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- Take micro meditation sessions throughout the day as needed. When you find that you are losing focus, a quick 1-2 minute session can help bring you back to presence.
- Commit to deep presence during meetings/course work
 - Keep meetings short
 - Eliminate other distractions
 - Turn off notifications for all apps. Even the ones you think you might need. Give yourself two days to try it out. You may be surprised by how much this changes the quality of your presence.
 - When possible, schedule meetings and course work during your peak focus times of day (see calendar structure below)

Redesign calendar structure

As much as you are able, schedule your day around your thinking and creative work times, rather than trying to fit them in between other activities and tasks. This creative/thinking time should be aligned with your peak energy and focus times based on your observations and daily log. When you create your new calendar, you may find it helpful to color code the structure of your day with one color for productive work and another for recovery times.

- Allow for the back and forth between stress and recovery throughout the day
 - Allow for the small oscillations mentioned in the Stress and Recovery section above
 - In addition, schedule longer decompression or activity breaks throughout the day
 - 15-20 minutes of play time for younger students
 - Legos
 - play-doh
 - A 15 minute jog for older students (if possible)
 - For any age, something that uses [gross motor skills](#)
- Plan to oscillate between input and output throughout the day. Input activities include watching presentations and lectures, reading, and researching. Output activities include writing and/or journaling, planning and envisioning, and creating.
 - Schedule a 20-30 minute think time after presentations, meetings, or instruction to allow time to digest the information
 - Include 5-10 minute breaks between all meetings



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- If you have a longer session planned, it should be broken into 30-40 minute chunks with 3-4 minute breaks between
 - The [Pomodoro technique](#) is effective for many people. 25 minutes of work followed by a 5 minute break. Use your breaks to reconnect with your body. (Catching up on social media during breaks will destroy your focus.)

Journaling/MIQ system

Developing a daily journaling routine is a powerful tool for tapping into your subconscious mind and your deepest levels of creativity. As you refine your journaling system, you will begin to identify patterns and themes in your work as well as where the gaps lie in your thinking.

- Schedule a 10 minute journaling time at the end of your working day. For example, if you plan to stop school work at 4:00pm, schedule the journaling at 3:50.
 - Begin by briefly recapping what you worked on over the course of the day.
 - Next, ask yourself “Where am I stuck?” or “What is the Most Important Question I can ask right now?”
 - Do not try to answer the question! Simply write it in your journal and then walk away.
 - Go about the rest of your non-school/work activities without ruminating over your MIQ. Spend time with your family, cook a meal, play a game, relax.
- As soon as you wake up the next morning, spend 5-10 minutes writing freely in your journal. Do this before any inputs or conversations with others if possible. If you want to look back at your MIQ from the night before you may do so, or you may prefer to just write or draw whatever comes to mind.
- At the end of each week, look back over your MIQs and journaling sessions for the week. What patterns do you notice? Are most of your questions related to each other (i.e. they’re mostly focused on struggles with motivation)? Do you notice any gaps in your questions (i.e. you tend to focus on the technical issues that arise, such as lack of resources, and aren’t exploring the nuances of your creativity?).
 - This part takes a lot of practice, but as you get better at identifying both patterns and gaps, you can begin to plan for how you’ll address them in future work sessions.
- Do short 30-60 second bursts of essential note taking after inputs throughout your day. You can review these as you’re writing in your journal at the end of the day.