

Using Technology to Overcome Barriers

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will review how setting priorities and staying organized can help you stay productive. You will explore some common barriers that may prevent you from staying on track. You will then consider how some digital tools and strong technology skills can help you remain focused.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Prioritizing and Organization Tools
2. Common Barriers
3. Digital Solutions

1. Prioritizing and Organization Tools



KEY CONCEPT

A well-known saying is “work smarter, not harder.” Strong technology and productivity skills can ensure you are doing just that.

This course has helped you learn techniques and strategies that can help you become more **productive**. Even when you use these tools, there can be times when obstacles are in the way. It is important that you know how to identify the barriers in your life that might inhibit you from prioritizing your tasks and time correctly.

Fortunately, you now know about digital tools that can help you not only plan, but also revise plans as needed. Applications like calendars and to-do lists help you get on track but they also help keep you on track. The key is that you keep your focus on the task at hand by removing or mitigating barriers that pop up.



Technology: Skill Reflect

Think about something that may come up that would impact your ability to complete an important task. For example, if you are working on schoolwork, what is something

that could distract you? Is there a digital tool that could help make sure you keep your focus where it needs to be?

2. Common Barriers

When thinking about barriers that may impact your ability to be productive, there are some that are more common than others. As you review the list below, reflect on times these hurdles impacted your work. How did you handle the situation? Were you able to overcome the distraction? Is there a digital tool you could have (or did) use to stay focused?

- **Time Wasters:** You explored time wasters in an earlier lesson. These include things like surfing the internet or watching TikToks. These may be enjoyable and they may even reduce your stress levels. The problem is, they are also very good at keeping you from working on important tasks. The good news is, you can control if and when you are wasting time.
- **Interruptions:** These are disruptions that are not planned, like a phone call or an instant message at work. While you are not aware of when things like this may occur, you can take steps to minimize their impact on you and your ability to focus on more important and urgent matters.
- **Complex Tasks:** When you have a task in front of you that is complicated or involves multiple steps, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. You cannot avoid tasks like this... they can happen at work or at home. What you can do is plan in a way that sets you up for success. It helps to break complex tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- **Ineffective Planning:** Even the most diligent planner can stumble sometimes. When you have a plan that is ineffective, your productivity drops and you can start to feel stressed. Fortunately, you can avoid this by not just planning ahead, but by also knowing when things are not working and adjusting that plan as needed.



Productivity: Why Employers Care

Employers need to know that their employees are able to avoid distractions at work. A distracted worker is one who is less productive and that can impact everything from completion of tasks, office morale, and even the bottom line of a company. An individual who cannot focus at work is one who may find themselves out of a job.

3. Digital Solutions

There are two ways to think about dealing with barriers. First, you should do all you can to plan for them. Anticipate what might come up and use the digital tools available to you to work to prevent them. The other key

to minimizing impacts from barriers is to be able to adjust when an unexpected one arises. Consider the digital tools listed below and how they can help you with the common barriers above.

Time Wasters	Interruptions	Complex Tasks	Ineffective Planning
There are apps that can help you minimize or remove these distractions completely. For example, Freedom is an app you can run on your computer that will prevent you from getting on the internet. Some of these apps can be more specific and block you from things like social media sites.	Email is a common interruption. There are apps like Siesta Text that allow you to set up an automatic email response. You can turn this on for a set amount of time to let senders know you will need to get back to them at a later time. Some devices, like phones, have this feature built-in. You just need to check the settings and activate it.	You can use goal tracking or project management tools to help break complex tasks into smaller pieces. In some cases, you can even assign items to specific people. Some examples are Trello (project management) and Wunderlust (goal tracking).	A calendar is one of the best tools available for planning how to use your time. There are other apps like Toggl that can work in conjunction with your calendar. Apps like this track how you spend your time. With this knowledge, you can plan better or revise your calendar as needed.

Using digital solutions like those listed above does take time. You will need to learn how to invest in the time to learn how to use them and, in most cases, set them up. While that is time that could be spent on other things, it is time well spent. In the end, the work you do upfront will increase both your **technology** skill and your **productivity**.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you reflected on the benefits of using **prioritizing and organization tools**. You looked at some common **barriers** to using them effectively. Some of these you can plan for, while others may come up unexpectedly. You learned that no matter how they come up or when, strong technology skills and use of **digital solutions** can help you mitigate them so you can stay productive as you work toward your goals.

See you in your next challenge!