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Multitasking Myth Buster

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Multitasking Myth Buster

What you need

- Piece of plain paper
- Pen or pencil
- Timer (Most modern phones have a stopwatch built into the 'clock' app)

Instructions

TASK ONE

Draw two horizontal lines on a piece of paper. Now, have someone time you as you carry out the tasks that follow:

On the first line, write:

I am a great multitasker

On the second line, write out the numbers 1-20 sequentially, like those below:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

How much time did it take to do the two tasks? Usually, it's about 20 seconds.

TASK TWO

Now, let's multitask. Turn your piece of paper over and again draw two horizontal lines.

This time, and again have someone time you, write a letter on one line, and then a number on the line below, then the next letter in the sentence on the upper line, and then the next number in the sequence, changing from line to line. In other words, you write the letter "I" and then the number "1" and then the letter "a" and then the number "2" and so on, until you complete both lines.

I a.....

1 2.....

I'll bet you your time is double or more what it was on the first round.

You also may have made some errors and you were probably frustrated since you had to "rethink" what the next letter would be and then the next number.

That's switch-tasking on something very simple, but that's exactly what happens when we attempt to do many things (often more complex) at the same time.

Next time you think you're multi-tasking, stop and be aware that you are really switch-tasking.

Then give yourself a time limit (10 minutes, 45 minutes?) and focus on just one task and see if you can't complete it better, faster, and with less energy.

