

# Getting things done (or not)

...

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Sitola, 23.11.2022

# Motivation

# New boss, new tasks



## The Many Emotions of a Father With a New Baby



**Exhausted**



**Happy**



**Sad**



**Surprised**



**Excited**



**Pooped On**

# Problems with work / tasks / things / stuff

They just keep coming

- Second law of thermodynamics

Day has (almost) 24 hours, and week 7 days

- Sleep is good for you
  - polyphasic sleep is not

Distractions

- Music
- Code brown
- Smartphone notifications
- Emails
- Other tasks that have to be done
- ~~Special military operation~~ War
- ...

Solutions

- Drugs (only short term)
- Circle of control
- Cut the open loops
- Organization

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# Getting things done (or not)

# Getting things done - key ideas

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity (2015)

Author: David Allen

Publisher: Penguin Books; Revised edition (March 17, 2015)

Paperback: 352 pages

ISBN-10: 0143126563

ISBN-13: 978-0143126560

Reduce stress

- of forgetting something
- of vague tasks
- of feeling overwhelmed

Brain is good for thinking, not remembering

- unfinished stuff
- second brain / Zettlekasten

See the light at the end of the tunnel

- clearly defined outcomes
- can create a roadmap
- see the progress
  - result is a collection of intermediate tasks

# Workflow



# 1. Capture

Collect everything from everywhere

- things that might need to get done
- things that might be useful for you
- things that bothers you
- long term goals
- don't include daily tasks and routines

Point is to have a single (or just a few) location(s) where you store these things

- not your head

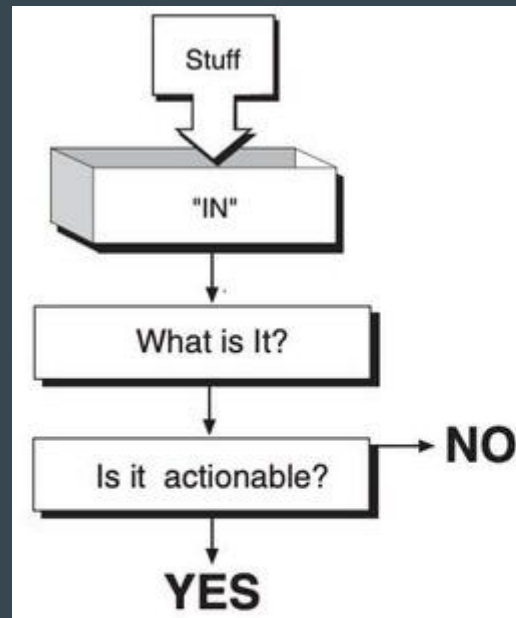
Inbox

- digital / physical
  - use dummies when necessary
- keep it at hand
- keep adding stuff as it comes to your mind
- feel free to be vague
  - the point is not to forget, but get it out of your mind
- empty the Inbox regularly

## 2. Clarify

Process every item of your Inbox

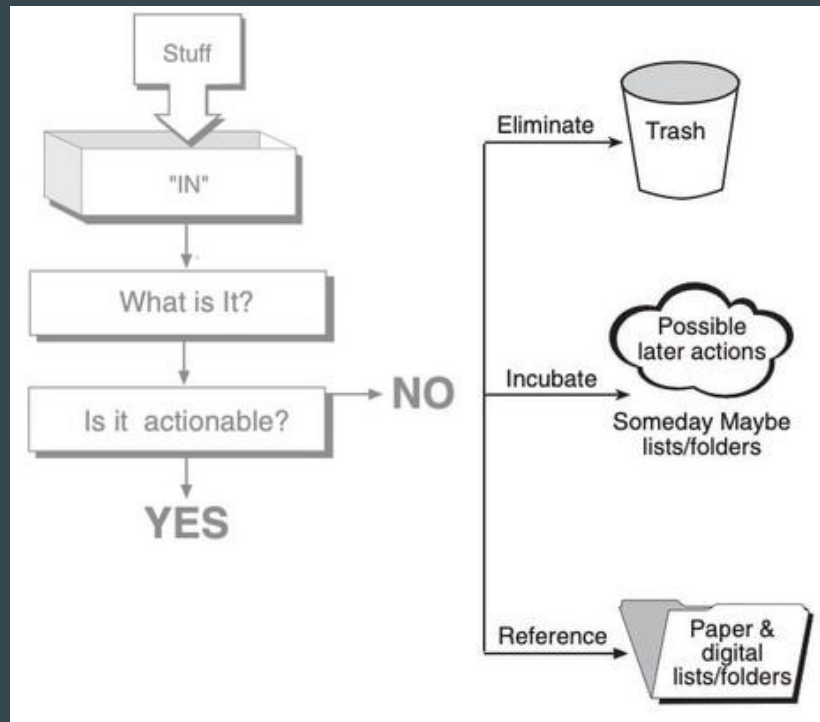
- clarify exactly what your commitment is
  - what is this
  - why do I care
  - what is the ideal result
- decide if there's anything that can / should be done



# 3. Organize

There's a bunch of things we cannot 'do' anything about

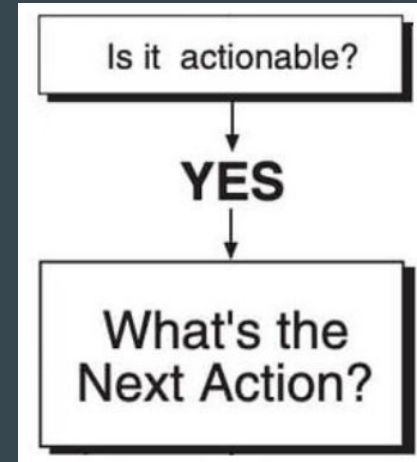
- get rid of them
  - very satisfying & liberating
- store them for later
  - till the time is right
  - graveyard of dreams
  - source of inspiration
- it might be a reference
  - second brain / Zettlekasten



# 3. Organize

There's a bunch of things we can 'do' something about

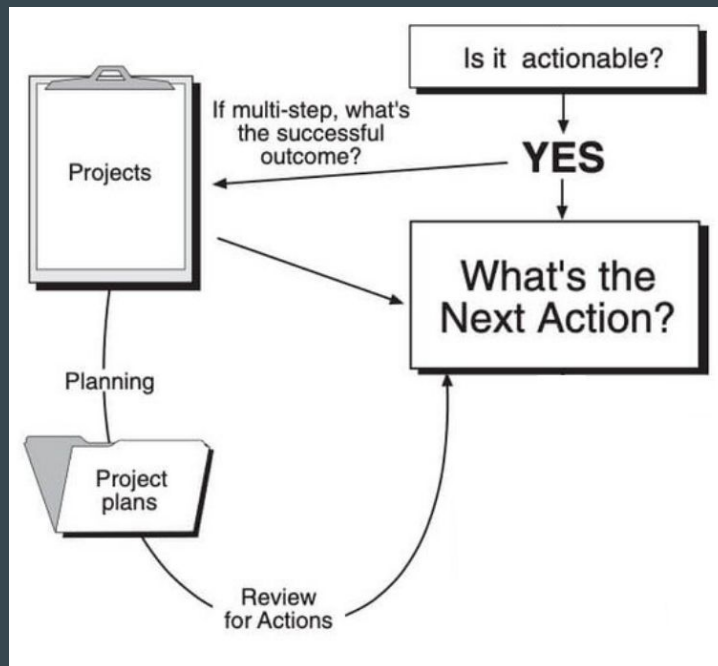
- what is the next (few) action(s) that will deal with this stuff?



# 3. Organize

The 'stuff' needs more actions

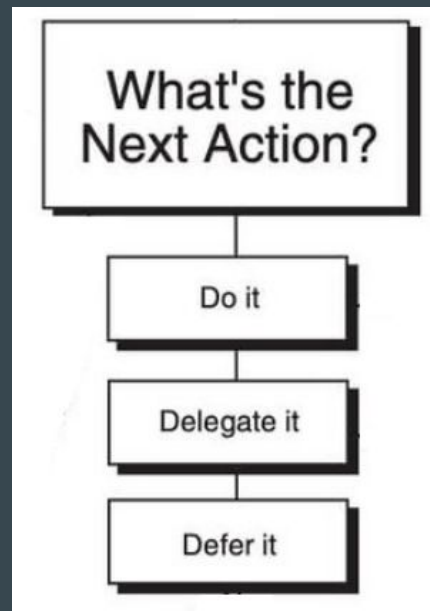
- let's call it a Project
- keep a list of next actions
  - they should be reasonably 'complex'
  - but short
- might have associated resources
  - emails
  - documentation
  - reports
  - deadlines



# 3. Organize

How to deal with an action?

- do it now
  - short or critical
- do it later
- delegate it to the person that should do it
  - (virtual) assistant (Tim Ferriss's 4-Hour Workweek)



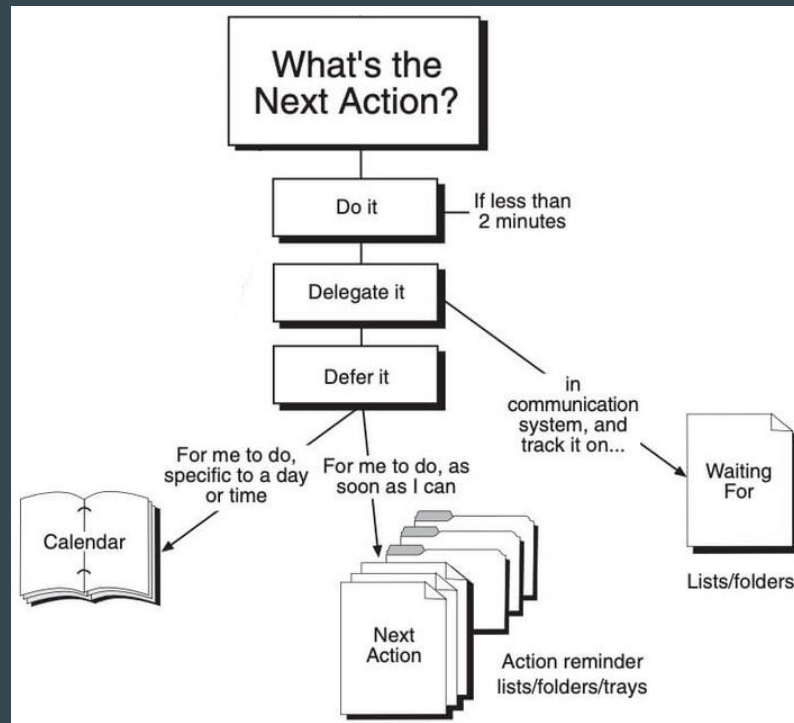
# 3. Organize

How to organize actions?

- do it now

For the rest, use Lists

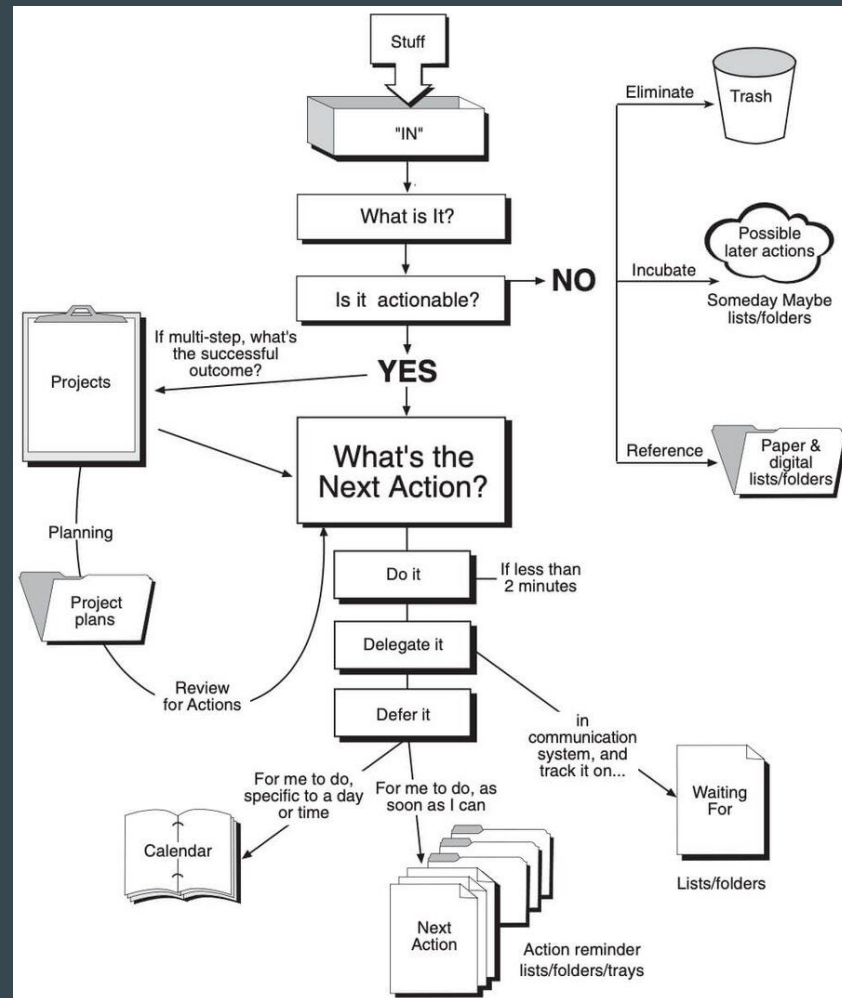
- Waiting-for
  - delegated stuff
  - keep date and mean for reference
- Calendar
  - deferred actions that have to happen at specific time
- Backlog / Pending
  - 'at the next free moment'
  - consider storing a context



# 3. Organize

## Typical lists

- Inbox
- Backlog / Pending
- Waiting for
- To read
- To see
- Errands
  - location / event specific
  - shopping list
- Projects
- Future / Tickler list
- Checklists
  - house / flat / equipment maintenance
- Calendar





# 4. Reflect

Having lists is useless unless you review them

- based on context
  - errands
- when you finish some action
- weekly / monthly / annual reviews
- don't forget to process Inbox

Review your system

- implement changes if you don't like how it works
- keep your system updated

# 5. Engage

Having lists is useless unless you use them

- things from the Calendar must happen at specified time
  - meetings are problematic
- expect interruptions
  - IM / emails / incoming calls can be postponed
  - people not so much
- process next thing from the Backlog
  - pick one based on
    - context
    - available time
    - available energy (mental or physical)
    - priority

# Pitfalls to avoid

## 1. Capture stuff, don't keep it in your head

- keep limited number of places where you capture it

## 2. Clarify what that stuff means and what is the next action

- 'sandals' are good for Inbox, not for Backlog

## 3. Stay organized

- easier said than done
- keep things where you expect to find them (Zettlekasten)

## 4. Reflect regularly

- keep reviewing lists based on the context (errands)
- check your calendar

## 5. Do things

- without it the system fails
- mind your deadlines

Process stuff step by step, one at the time

- you will lose track if you try to do all at once
- Projects are typically way too complex anyway

# Implementation

Actively using GTD since September

Implementation agnostic

- I opted for electronic version
  - tens of SW
  - Trello

# Trello

- for free + paid extras
- modular
  - user-defined actions (limited per month)
    - weekly automatic summaries (good for scrum)
  - power-ups
- mobile app + website
- supports
  - attachments
  - deadlines
  - (custom) labels
  - cross-references
- can be shared with other people
- many existing templates
  - of course I did my own

## Native support for list

- list contains cards (actions)
- card contains
  - description
  - checklists
  - history
  - labels
  - attachments
  - assigned members
  - deadlines
- cards can be emailed

# Trello - practical example

# Positives

# Positives

Task switching

- Based on energy, time and context

Project tracking

Clear head

Checklists

Getting rid of those little annoying things (2 min rule)

Excuse for saying 'no'

Encourages you to do one thing at the time



# Negatives

# Negatives

## The book

- very long and repetitive
- feel free to read just first two chapters, the rest is just reinforcement, anecdotes and examples
- does not highlight the need for NOT doing things and for rest
- does not highlight ‘pay yourself first’
- does not highlight automation
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20181217083456/http://www.geekpreneur.com:80/26-reasons-not-to-use-gtd>

## The system

- it’s hard and boring to keep it up-to-date
- it won’t help you to do ‘actual’ work faster
  - coz it does not affect the work itself
- might make you anxious
  - you see all things that you don’t do
- can easily backfire
  - “Ah, you’re done? Excellent, I need you to ...”
- does not help you to decide ‘what is enough’

## The implementation

- non-existent integration with email and project materials

# Getting things done (or not)

# How many things can you do?

Say you work 8 hours per day

- the work year 2022 has 252 workdays
- that's 2016 work hours
  - I know a person who does that in first 7 months

“Generating most of the actions that you currently have in front of you are the thirty to one hundred projects on your plate.”

You HAVE to

- eat
- sleep
- move
- socialize

You will never be able to accomplish all the things you would like!

# You'll do it when you retire!

Born 1936 - 1971?

- special table, the time included months, different for men / women (and number of children)
- man 1940: 60 years and 10 months
- woman 1940: 53 years (5 kids) - 58 years and 8 months (no kids)

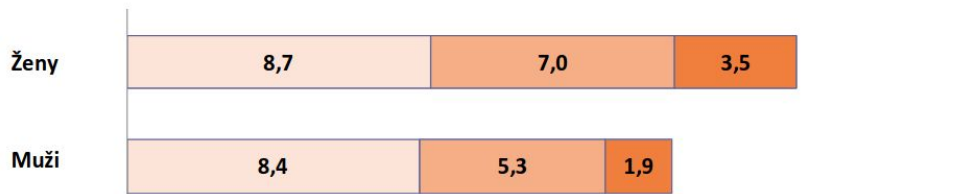
Born after 1971?

- 65 years
- need to be insured for a minimal time period
  - 26 years if you went to pension in 2010
  - 35 years if you go to pension in the future
- you can retire prematurely at 63 (up to 55 in some cases)

# Naděje dožití a naděje dožití podle zdravotního stavu ve věku 65 let založené na omezení běžných činností (délka života ve zdraví), chronické nemoci a subjektivním zdraví v České republice (údaje o zdraví ze šetření SILC 2011)

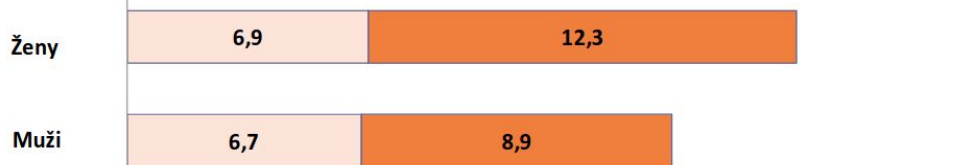
## Naděje dožití ve věku 65 let a průměrný počet roků

- bez omezení běžných činností
- s mírným omezením běžných činností
- s vážným omezením běžných činností



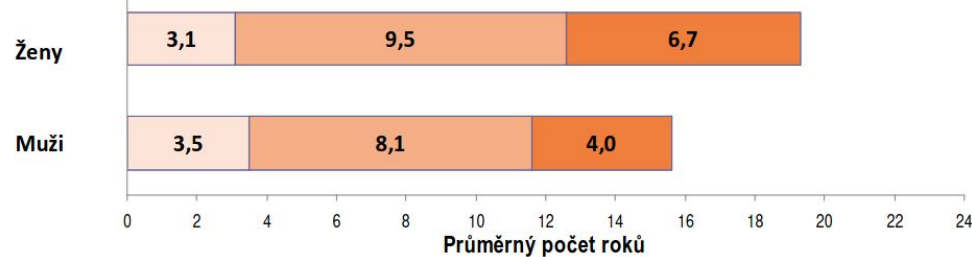
## Naděje dožití ve věku 65 let a průměrný počet roků

- bez chronických nemocí
- s chronickými nemocemi



## Naděje dožití ve věku 65 let a průměrný počet roků

- ve velmi dobrém nebo dobrém subj. zdraví
- v přijatelném subjektivním zdraví
- ve špatném nebo velmi špatném subjektivním zdraví



# So what should you do?

Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals

Author: Oliver Burkeman

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (August 10, 2021)

Hardcover: 288 pages

ISBN-10: 0374159122

ISBN-13: 978-0374159122

“Rejecting the futile modern fixation on “getting everything done,” Four Thousand Weeks introduces readers to tools for constructing a meaningful life by embracing finitude”

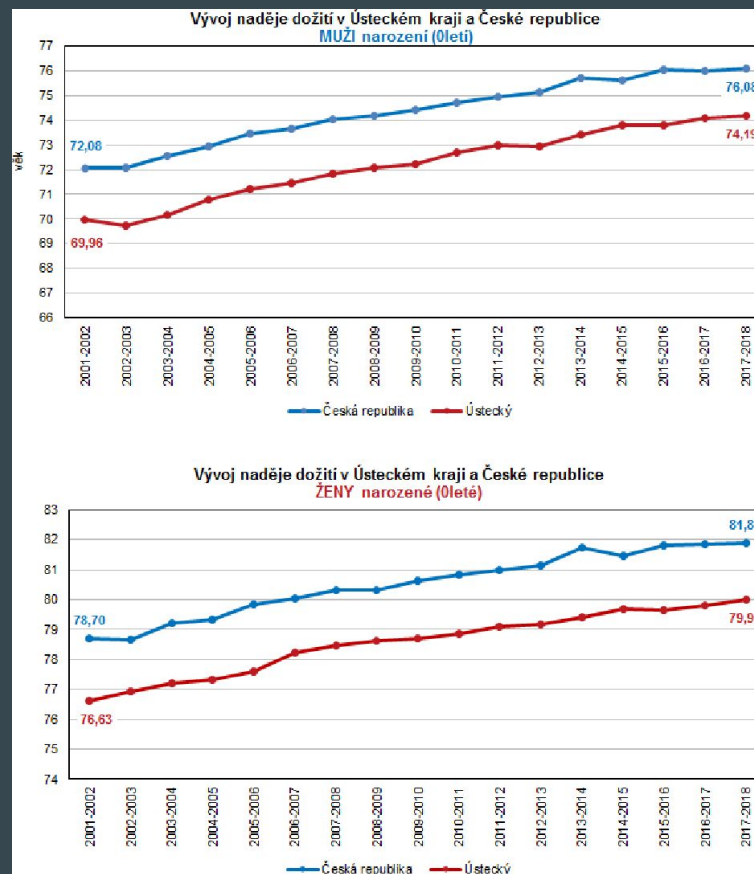
## **Introduction: In the Long Run, We're All Dead**

The average human lifespan is absurdly, terrifyingly, insultingly short. Here's one way of putting things in perspective: the first modern humans appeared on the plains of Africa at least 200,000 years ago, and scientists estimate that life, in some form, will persist for another 1.5 billion years or more, until the intensifying heat of the sun condemns the last organism to death. But you? Assuming you live to be eighty, you'll have had about four thousand weeks.

# How many weeks do you have left?

1 year = 52.1429 weeks

| Years | Remaining weeks<br>Woman | Remaining weeks<br>Man |
|-------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 0     | 4104                     | 3758                   |
| 5     | 3843                     | 3498                   |
| 10    | 3582                     | 3237                   |
| 15    | 3322                     | 2976                   |
| 20    | 3061                     | 2716                   |
| 25    | 2800                     | 2455                   |
| 30    | 2539                     | 2194                   |
| 35    | 2279                     | 1933                   |
| 40    | 2018                     | 1673                   |
| 45    | 1757                     | 1412                   |
| 50    | 1497                     | 1151                   |
| 55    | 1236                     | 891                    |
| 60    | 975                      | 630                    |
| 65    | 714                      | 369                    |
| 70    | 454                      | 108                    |
| 75    | 193                      | -152                   |
| 80    | -68                      | -413                   |
| 85    | -329                     | -674                   |
| 90    | -589                     | -934                   |





# So what should you do?

## Your time is finite

- try to accomplish things that will really matter once you're gone
- start spending the time
  - pursuing things you enjoy
  - on things that have intrinsic value to you
- it's OK to say NO to things
  - limit the number of Projects you're working on
- explicitly accept sub-optimal solutions for non-essentials
  - Parkinson's Law: "Work expands to fill the time allotted for its completion"
- practice doing nothing

## No need for depression

- what you do is enough
  - "Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today." (12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos by Jordan Peterson)
- you cannot solve all problems of the world
  - but you can improve some aspects
- keep a 'Done' list
  - to see that you're not slacker
  - add little things if necessary
- avoid routines

# Conclusion

# Conclusion

## GTD

- good tool
- don't worship it

## Dealing with stuff

- you have limited resources
  - use them wisely

# Related books

What We Owe The Future by William MacAskill

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos by Jordan Peterson

Letters from a Stoic by Seneca

The 4-Hour Workweek by Tim Ferriss

# Sources

[https://www.mzcr.cz/wp-content/uploads/wepub-upload/files/5/ak%C4%8Dn%C3%AD%20pl%C3%A1ny%20-%20p%C5%99%C3%ADlohy/AP%2013\\_a3\\_EHLEIS\\_CR.pdf](https://www.mzcr.cz/wp-content/uploads/wepub-upload/files/5/ak%C4%8Dn%C3%AD%20pl%C3%A1ny%20-%20p%C5%99%C3%ADlohy/AP%2013_a3_EHLEIS_CR.pdf)

[https://www.czso.cz/documents/11248/125415245/2018\\_Nadeje+doziti\\_pro+pdf.pdf/50062089-08dd-4578-ae21-0e73e51ed3dc?version=1.1](https://www.czso.cz/documents/11248/125415245/2018_Nadeje+doziti_pro+pdf.pdf/50062089-08dd-4578-ae21-0e73e51ed3dc?version=1.1)

# Trello

## Rules

⌵ All 🔍 Create Rule

---

🗑️ ✎ 📄 🗑️ 🔍 + Add to another board Enabled on 1 board, last modified 2 months ago

when an item is added to checklist "New step", remove item "{checklistitemname}", and add item "[{cardname}] {checklistitemname}" to checklist "Steps"

Enabled on this board

---

🗑️ ✎ 📄 🗑️ 🔍 + Add to another board Enabled on 1 board, last modified 2 months ago

when an item is added to checklist "Progress", convert the item to a linked card at the top of list "Pending" using pattern "{cardlink}" copying labels

Enabled on this board

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🗑️ ✎ 📄 🗑️ 🔍 + Add to another board Enabled on 1 board, last modified 2 months ago

when a card is moved into list "Done this week" by anyone, move the card to the top of the list, find the first card linked in the attachments, and check item "{triggercardlink}" in checklist "Progress"

Enabled on this board

# Trello

## Card Buttons

▼ All

Create Button

 Add Steps    

Last modified 2 months ago

add an empty checklist named "New step" to the card, add an empty checklist named "Steps" to the card, and add an empty checklist named "Progress" to the card

Enabled on this board  Enabled on all boards on this workspace  Shared with workspace

 Done    

Last modified 3 months ago

move the card to the top of list "Done this week", and mark the due date as complete

Enabled on this board  Enabled on all boards on this workspace  Shared with workspace

## Scheduled Commands

⌵ All



Create Command

+ Add to another board

Enabled on 1 board, last modified 2 months ago

every monday at 9:00 am, create a report with all cards in list "Done this week" with the orange "Work" label, and send an email notification to "davidstrelak@gmail.com" with subject "Weekly Report for week #{weeknumber-1w}" and message "\${report\_html}"

Enabled on this board

+ Add to another board

Enabled on 1 board, last modified 3 months ago

every monday at 10:00 am, move all the cards in list "Done this week" to list "Done"

Enabled on this board

+ Add to another board

Enabled on 1 board, last modified 2 months ago

every monday at 9:00 am, create a report with all cards in list "Waiting For" with the orange "Work" label, and send an email notification to "davidstrelak@gmail.com" with subject "Waiting for in week #{weeknumber}" and message "\${report\_html}"

Enabled on this board



# Q&A