



Time-Wasting Interruptions

Many interruptions are largely outside your control; nevertheless, there may be ways to minimise them.

Is your desk positioned on a toilet route or a vending machine?

If so, you will have more through traffic passing by, with the likelihood that some of it will make a pit stop at your desk! If you can, move your desk away from the runway, even if you turn it around so that you are not facing people walking past and are, therefore, less likely to make eye contact. Perhaps you can get a screen fixed to the front of your desk, which will also help to minimise noise. The less visible you are, the less likely you are to be interrupted.

Do you have a visitor's chair by your desk?

This is an invitation for passers-by to sit down and become visitors! If you really need the chair, keep it nearby, not right in front of your desk. Alternatively, make sure it has a permanent pile of paperwork on it; this may make you appear disorganised, but it will also make it difficult for timewasters to take a seat.

Do you have your own office with a door?

Even if your organisation operates an open-door policy, there may be occasions when you need quiet, uninterrupted time to do some important work. It's your door – close it! Please note, however, if you keep your door closed all day, five days a week, people will get wise to you and walk in anyway.

Do you stand up when they sit down?

Standing up implies that you are just on your way somewhere. If you perch on the edge of your desk, your body language says, 'This is an uncomfortable place to sit; I'm not going to be here very long, so get to the point, please.'

Do you ask them what they want and how long it will take?

If not, why not? This sets a boundary around the interruption and helps you evaluate whether its purpose is important enough to warrant your time and attention. If the subject sounds important and you are busy right now, arrange a time to discuss it at their desk/office. If you are on their territory, you can always leave when you've had enough.

Take responsibility for YOUR time, as others probably won't.