

Insights from *When* by Daniel Pink

“Timing isn't everything but it's a big thing” – Daniel Pink

Between the hours of 2pm and 4pm (the midday “trough”):

- Doctors mistakenly give more patients a fatal dose of anesthesia before surgery than any other time of the day.
- Danish schoolchildren score significantly lower on standardized exams.
- CEOs of publicly traded companies are more likely to say something stupid in a quarterly earnings call and cause their stock price to drop.

“Across many domains, (the midday) represents a danger zone for productivity, ethics, and health.” - Daniel Pink

Your attention and mental ability is biologically programmed to rise and fall according to your circadian rhythm. When you wake up your attention and mental ability peak, trough, and rebound for approximately the next 16 hours.

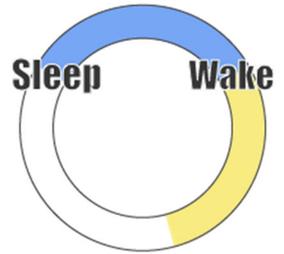
During the Peak (first 7 hours of your day):

Execute logical work. Focus on clarifying, organizing, structuring, and explaining. Do work similar to programming a computer, writing a legal brief, or taking a math test.

If you're a writer or content creator, do your research and editing during the peak.

If you're an salesperson, schedule important sales calls during the peak.

If you're an educator or student, schedule math and science classes during the peak.



During the Trough (7-9 hours after waking up):

The best thing you can do in the through is avoid important work or take a nap.

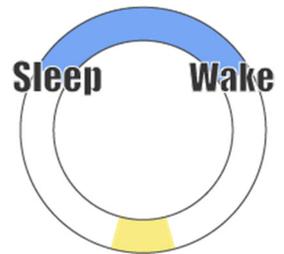
“In many ways, naps are Zambonis for our brains. They smooth out the nicks, scuffs, and scratches a typical day has left on our mental ice.” – Daniel Pink

The best naps are between 10-20 minutes. That’s right, 10-20 minutes is all you need. A 5-minute nap has no effect, but a 10-minute nap is scientifically proven to increase mental alertness for three hours.

“Italian police officers who took naps immediately before their afternoon and evening shifts had 48 percent fewer traffic accidents than those who didn't nap.” – Daniel Pink

NASA pilots, air traffic controllers, and computer programmers routinely take naps to boost performance.

If you can't nap take frequent breaks and execute your least important, most mundane work (run errands, sort notes, clean the house, etc.).



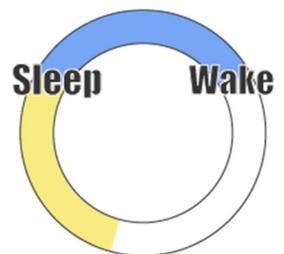
During the Rebound (last 7 hours of the day):

Execute insight work. Focus on generating ideas, innovating, and designing.

If you're a writer or content creator, do your creative writing during the rebound.

If you're a salesperson, brainstorm ideas for your next presentation during the rebound.

If you're an educator or student, schedule art and design classes during the rebound.



BUT...

You might be the ~25% of people who have the late chronotype and experience a “peak” in attention in the evening and “rebound” in the morning. If you have a late chronotype, you will perform best on logical tasks in the evening and insight tasks in the morning.

You have a late chronotype if on free days (you don't have obligations and you haven't been partying all night) you are slow to get up and have a moderate amount of energy in the mid-morning, but experience a surge of energy in the evening.

