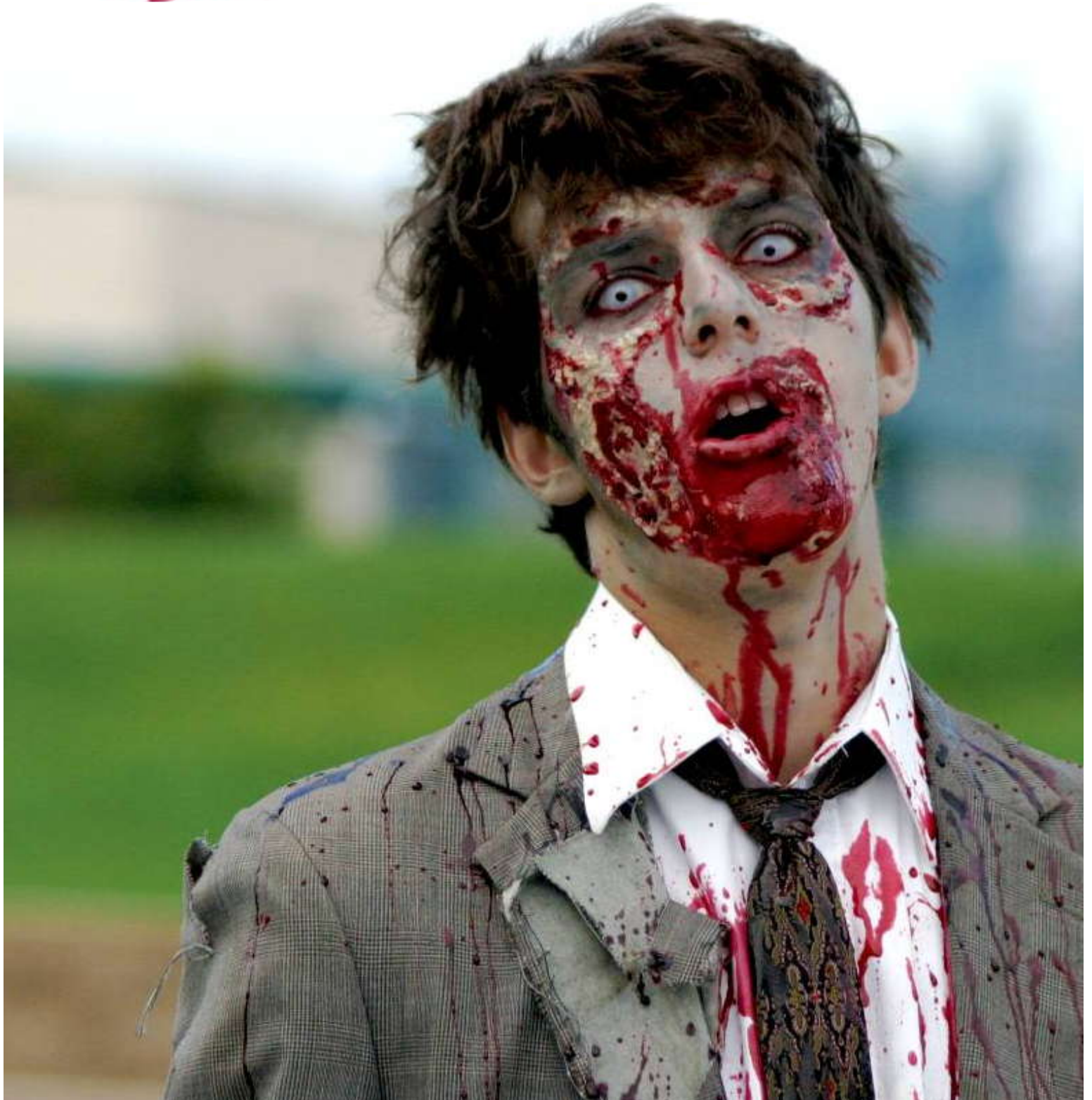


**Stop Procrastinating.**

**FIGHT ZOMBIES**



Stop Procrastinating. **FIGHT ZOMBIES**

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The photo is provided by Daniel Hollister and is compliant with the [Creative Commons 3.0 license](#). You can get your own copy of this very awesome picture at [www.ThatZombiePhoto.com](http://www.ThatZombiePhoto.com).

It's one of the best zombie pictures available online.

**Stop Procrastinating. Fight Zombies.**

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## **IT'S A SIMPLE PREMISE**

Everyone procrastinates. We hate it. We want to be productive. We know that productivity leads to greater achievement. But we all procrastinate anyway, at least in some things.

I've found a way to eliminate procrastination. It's fun; it's easy; and I end up getting lots of stuff done! So I'm sharing it here with you.

It's a simple idea built on 5 premises that can be summed in as this: **Your procrastinated projects are like zombies. And you need to fight them. Or else.**

If you hate zombies and if you hate procrastination and want to get more done, this book is for you.

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## **PART ONE:**

# **ATTACK OF THE ZOMBIES**

In Part One, I'm going to discuss the 5 premises making up my belief that our procrastinated projects are like zombies. Each chapter adds to the idea so that, by the end, you'll clearly see your procrastinated projects for what they are: The living dead that will relentlessly pursue you.

## **PREMISE #1:**

### **YOU HAPPILY LIVE YOUR OBLIVIOUS LIFE**

A happy family goes about their daily routine: Kids go to school and learn; mom and dad go to work and do important things; in the evening they enjoy dinner and recount the joys and trials of the day. Later, they watch an episode of *Law and Order* before turning in for the night, eager to do the same thing tomorrow.

For the most part, life is good. The kids are doing okay in school, although little Billy is avoiding his math homework while littler Sally tries to get out of spelling. And mom and dad lecture Billy and Sally on the importance of doing the work they're avoiding (but the truth is, mom was supposed to work on a report earlier in the day but cleaned her desk instead, and dad was supposed to prepare an annual employee review but instead he wrote his article for the monthly newsletter then read old copies of *Golf Digest* magazine hidden inside a financial statement).

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They did stuff today, but not everything they should. And as they all turn in for the evening, we see a slovenly shadow skulking around the lawn... and it's NOT Mr. Hoskins, the crazy guy from down the street. The shadowy figure's shuffling gait and eerie moaning hint that this is something else. Something far scarier with an insatiable appetite for living flesh.

We're not unlike that family. We live our lives and every day is filled with activities that need to get done. At the end of the day, if we got most of those tasks done, we're happy folk and we can watch *Law and Order* with a clear conscience, satisfied with our productivity.

But lurking in the back of everyone's minds is the reality that maybe they didn't do everything they *could* have done. Or *should* have done. Or *wanted* to do. We started the day with the best of intentions: We ate a balanced breakfast, we were out the door almost on time, and we didn't punch the annoying guy in the carpool. So far, 3 wins out of 3 in the morning.

But then that report showed up on our task list and we suddenly realized how messy our desk was. Or maybe that employee review sat there, taunting, while a dog-eared copy of *Golf*

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*Digest* seemed like a much more enjoyable way to spend the afternoon.

So we go to bed at night, happy that we did *most* of our work and hopeful that we'll get to the other stuff tomorrow. But something is lurking outside on the lawn. And its dead eyes are focused on your living flesh.

**PREMISE #2:  
THE DEAD SHOULDN'T TERRORIZE YOU  
(BUT THEY DO)**

The family, unfortunately, is oblivious to the fact that something terrible has happened in the world. The undead have risen from their graves to hungrily feed on living flesh, but no one realizes it at first. Mom, Dad, Billy, and Sally get up the next day and go to school or work.

Everything progresses normally. At her job, mom wonders why some employees aren't showing up and jealously suspects that Mary-Louise didn't invite her to a Tupperware® party she was planning. And at his job, dad watches the janitor shuffle around and surmises that he's been drinking again, although he smells more like death than vermouth.

At school, all seems well until a blood-curdling scream catches everyone's attention. It belongs to Ms. Marten the guidance counselor who once coaxed better self-confidence about of shy kids, but everyone hears her gurgling pleas for the undead to

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stop feasting on her and suddenly everyone finds themselves remarkably shy. Zombies swarm the hallways and teachers lock classroom doors and frantically shout for the children to calm down.

The dead have arisen from their graves and are attacking. The first wave takes everyone by surprise. What these undead creatures lack in strategy, coherence, balance, and speed, they make up for in sheer numbers and a hunger that cannot be satisfied. Unsuspecting people are swarmed and succumb. Some fight back but are overcome. Many are dead before the first coffee break of the day.

Likewise, we face a similar situation. That report we put off, that client project that should have been done, that speech we should have written, each of those procrastinated projects are like the undead. Those projects should have been tackled and finished (or, at least started), but instead they lurk in our to-do lists like slow-witted zombies.

Chances are, there aren't one or two or three of these projects, but a dozen or more zombie projects that we've procrastinated on.

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The "why" doesn't really matter; does it? Sure, a lot of people try to figure out the "why" of procrastinating. "Fear of failure" and "fear of success" are two of the most common reasons I've seen. And while they may be true, knowing that fact doesn't help. We still procrastinate. We still find something else to do other than the thing (or things) that we should be doing.

Instead of doing what needs to be done, we do something else and we don't deal with those undead projects. And at the end of the day it drives us crazy... but we'll do it again tomorrow. Those zombie projects are terrorizing us!

**PREMISE #3:  
ZOMBIES ARE RELENTLESS**

Mom, Dad, Billy, and Sally try to survive. No matter how fast they run, or how far they go, or where they hide, the slow-shuffling zombies seem able to keep up. Perhaps it's because they don't need to eat, sleep, or shower, while our now-fearful family continues to require those basic survival necessities.

The family now needs to watch around every corner. They need to stand well back when they open the closet. They need to avoid backing into a dark room. If there's one impressive quality that zombies have, it's relentlessness. (It's certainly not etiquette). Zombies are persistent in a way that is both annoying and scary.

And that's the case with our procrastinated projects. They are relentless. They are persistent. They are always there, lurking on our schedules, on our to-do lists, on our tasks list, and on that list we keep on the fridge of stuff that doesn't go on any other list in our lives. Every procrastinated project is hiding in

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the closet, under the stairs, in a dark room, or underneath the desk. That's where they go because we sometimes try to put them out of our minds (and yet we see them every time we look at our time management systems).

We don't work on those projects because there are other things we'd rather be doing. The project we should be working on seems less enjoyable than some other project (or time-filling activity). The project we should be working on seems unwieldy or confusing, whereas a few minutes on Twitter or Facebook doesn't seem like a waste and can be far more engaging.

But in making that choice, we are making another, unwitting choice: We are allowing the things we don't want to do to continue to annoy us, hassle us, lurk in our lives and on our to do lists until *something* happens.

That "something"-result could be that they just go away. Sometimes that happens, and it's not always bad when those procrastinated projects disappear. Or that "something"-result could be far more dramatic and costly to us. Perhaps we lose face in front of our manager, or we set an entire project back by a week, or we lose a client. That happens, too. Occasionally,

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we do indeed stop procrastinating (but often it's either last minute... or far too late).

Until something happens that makes these projects disappear or compels us to take them on, we are terrorized by these ill-mannered, every-present zombies that simply fill up space on our schedules and in our minds. We read books on getting rid of procrastination and we occasionally put some of it into practice but there is rarely an effective, long-lasting result.

**PREMISE #4:**  
**YOU CAN ONLY RUN FOR SO LONG**

The family is on the move. They're driving down the Interstate in their 1985 wood-paneled station wagon. They've each got a sleeping bag, mom has made egg salad sandwiches, and the family dog Sport is the only unconcerned one among them and he shows his lack of concern by hanging his head out the window and letting the wind whip the drool from his tongue.

Everything is quiet and the only sound is dad puffing on his pipe. They've had a few close calls but nothing really bad has happened... yet. But what they don't want to say, but they all somehow know, is that something bad will eventually happen. It's a matter of when, not if. Will it be the next time dad stops for gas? Will it happen the next time Sport has to stop to do whatever dogs do? Or will it be the time after that? Or the time after that?

The family knows they may eventually run out of gas. And egg salad sandwiches. They know that mom will have to change her

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stilettos for a good pair of hiking shoes. But for now, they keep driving and hoping and watching anxiously in their rearview mirrors.

We do the same thing. Our procrastinated projects accumulate behind us like a horde of the undead and we, in our wood-paneled station wagons, avoid those zombie projects and keep driving, hoping that they'll just go away. We know that we should do something about them. We know we can't avoid them forever.

There will come a time when we run out of egg salad or gas, or the dog has to pee, and we will come face to face with the foul-smelling zombie project that we don't want to think about but now can't avoid looking at.

## **PREMISE #5:**

### **YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT AT SOME POINT**

The tank is on empty and dad pulls into the gas station. He's been thinking about something for the last 10 miles and he doesn't know how to say it. Mom knows, too, because she's seen his fingers unconsciously touch the shotgun that he once used to hunt turkeys with her father and brother (back before her brother joined a cult and became a vegan).

The kids sense something, too, because dad pulled off the road even though the sign in the dusty window of this roadside gas station says "no gas" (and they are all smart enough to figure out that the sign wasn't placed there when the local mechanic was miraculously healed of an intestinal ailment).

This is not a stop for fuel. The family realizes that the time to run has ended. Those evil-smelling, shuffling crowds are never going to stop pursuing them. Those zombies will never be very far behind.

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The time has come to fight; to lay it on the line and either live or die, but to at least take a stand. Rather than pressing on and waiting for the zombies to inevitably overtake them, the family knows that they will either win their freedom for another day or two by taking a stand right now.

And that's what you need to do, too. Your procrastinated projects are never far behind. They are always going to relentlessly pursue you. As long as you avoid doing them, you are simply running from those zombies. No matter how much you try to evade them, they will inevitably catch up. What needs to happen is very simple. You need to stop running. You need to turn and fight. You need to start a zombie reckoning...

## **PART 2:**

# **THE RECKONING**

In Part 2, I'm going to show you how the principles you use to kill real zombies is the same principle you would use to kill zombie procrastinated projects. I've divided it into steps that you can take to transform your productivity and end procrastination for good.

## **DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND**

Zombies will continue to pursue you until they catch you. That's what zombies do. Heck, that's all that they can do. So the first thing you need to do is decide that you no longer want to run. You need to decide to stop procrastinating and instead you need to decide to turn and fight.

This is the point that most books about procrastination make... but they end here.

Part of the problem of procrastination is that it's a non-event. We schedule our to-do's and when we do them we're productive and when we don't do them we've procrastinated. Procrastination is never something you schedule in, yet it finds its way onto our schedules anyway by being the unconscious default state when we're not productive.

So, if you are serious about stopping procrastination, you need keep it from becoming an unconscious default state by actively addressing it. And you can do this by adding zombie fighting

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into your schedule. Okay, so you don't have to write "fight zombies" in your schedule, especially if you're on a shared calendar at work and your anal retentive coworkers don't share your fascination with the undead. But you can make an appointment with Mr. Z or you can block out a period of time for a "project" (and that project happens to be the steps that we are talking about here).

How much should you block out? I find that 30 minutes a couple times a week is good. I'll talk more about that specific amount of time later in the ebook. If you have a lot of projects that you procrastinate on (say, more than 10) or if you have fast cycles on your projects (faster than two or three days) you may want to do shorter zombie-fighting bursts throughout the week.

But for most people I suspect that zombie fighting twice a week will be more than enough. If you're not sure, start by scheduling it in on Tuesday and Thursday. If it's not enough, try scheduling it in on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. If that's still not enough, schedule it in every day. And if that's not enough, you may have bigger problems than I can address in this book.

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## **ACTION STEP:**

- Schedule 30 minutes of procrastination-busting productivity at least twice a week. If you have a lot of projects that get procrastinated, consider scheduling it more frequently.

## **CREATE A BUNKER AND GET READY**

A bunker is where you have your last stand. In the story you read earlier in this ebook, it was the "no gas" gas station. A zombie-fighting bunker is a safe place that has all the ammunition you can gather, a little food in case you are there for a while, and maybe a few Mad Libs to burn off the hours that you are waiting. You know that this is where you will either defend yourself for a few more days or you'll go down fighting.

Zombie fighting is best done with a bunker mentality. You set up a fortress, you get prepared, and then you wait for the zombies to come to you. And they will, because that's all they know how to do.

In the world of zombie productivity, a bunker is your work area. It's also a mental state of readiness. The distractions are minimized: The telephone is set to go right to voicemail. The various emails/Twitter/Facebook/IM connecting points you have need to be off.

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You should go to the bathroom first. You should hang a "do not disturb" sign on your door.

You will also need:

- A timer.
- A penchant for killing the undead.
- A red pen or marker.
- You will need 4 slips of paper (print out the ones on page 45 or design your own to look something like this:



That's it. There's not much you need when putting together your bunker and getting ready to fight.

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**ACTION STEPS:**

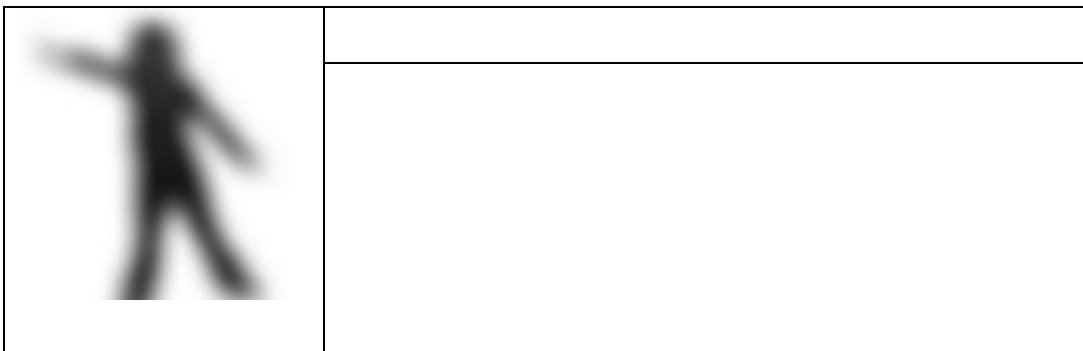
- Adopt a "last stand" mentality.
- Have a timer, 4 slips of paper, and a red marker handy.

## AIM FOR THE HEAD

In your bunker, you've been playing Mad Libs and singing campfire songs and reminiscing about what life was like before zombies. You all express regret over not calling your mothers just one more time. Then the lookout, who has been watching diligently between the cracks in the boarded-up window, says that she sees zombies on the horizon. An attack is imminent.

In your zombie-fighting bunker, you get ready to fight those procrastinated projects on your horizon. You put aside your Mad Libs. You stop reminiscing. It's now time to get serious.

Set your timer for 10 minutes. Then, pull out the 4 slips of paper that look like this...




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... and select 4 procrastinated projects you need to deal with. You'll only have time to deal with 4 projects. On another day, you can deal with 4 more. The temptation here will be to deal with the easiest 4 but you should just pick 4 randomly. (Someday you might only have a couple of projects but right now you might have far more than four).

On each of the 4 slips of paper, write down the names of the projects like this:

	<i>Frank Smith's employee review</i>

Do that for each project. One title on one slip of paper. Easy so far!

Next, is the real secret of this whole system.

Ask any zombie-killing expert how to kill a zombie and they will tell you: You need to aim for the head. If you cut off a leg or just

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punch them in the nose, they'll keep coming. You need to cut off their head.

Your procrastinated zombie-projects have a head, too. It's usually the most important part of the project and it is often (although not always) the part that you are procrastinating on.

On the slip of paper, write down the most important part of the project that you still need to do. It doesn't matter if you haven't started the project or if you're part way through or nearly done. The most important part is often the biggest, most unwieldy part of the project or the biggest "grind". It's the part that takes sitting down and actually doing. It's different for every project but you know exactly what I'm talking about.

- In college, while studying for exams, the part that was never procrastinated was the gathering of notes and textbooks and pouring of coffee. The part that was procrastinated was opening the books and getting down to the grind of the work – the most important part.
- Also in college, those procrastinated zombie term papers. Coming up with a thesis statement was easy enough. Maybe even outlining your main points was doable. But


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opening up the source material and pulling out notes was excruciating... and avoided.

- At work, salespeople often find that little aspects of their job are easy to do – from administrative puttering to rereading sales reports – but picking up the phone to call prospects is the far more difficult but far more fundamental part of the job.
- Also at work, the presentation is left until the last minute because it is a grind to figure out what you want to say, put together supporting slides, getting handouts for everyone, and knowing that people will barely listen anyway.

Get it? I hope so. Just write down the most important part of the job. Like so:

	<i>Frank Smith's employee review</i>
	<i>Write the review.</i>

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In the example above, the employee review just needed to have pen put to paper as the most important thing.

This should take a total of 10 minutes. If it takes less than 10 minutes, even better! If it takes more than 10 minutes, you are probably spending too long figuring out what the most important part of your projects might be. I believe you instinctively know what the most important parts are most of the time.

### **ACTION STEPS:**

- Write down the project.
- Write down the most important part of the project (which is often the part you are procrastinating on).

## **SHOOT THE ONE CLOSEST TO YOU**

As the zombies approach, there is little need to make strategic decisions. They shuffle slowly, unceasingly over the horizon. They amble at a pace that might be mistaken for a casual, drunken saunter. You don't need to think, you just need to shoot. At the one closest to you.

Bang.

Nice work. Now, shoot at the one that is next closest you.

Bang.

Good. See how easy this is? Now shoot at the one that is next closest to you...

And so it is with those slips of paper, each listing a zombie project. Put them all into a nice little pile. Don't think about the ones below. Don't think about how you should later be putting together a presentation for your boss. Don't think about whether

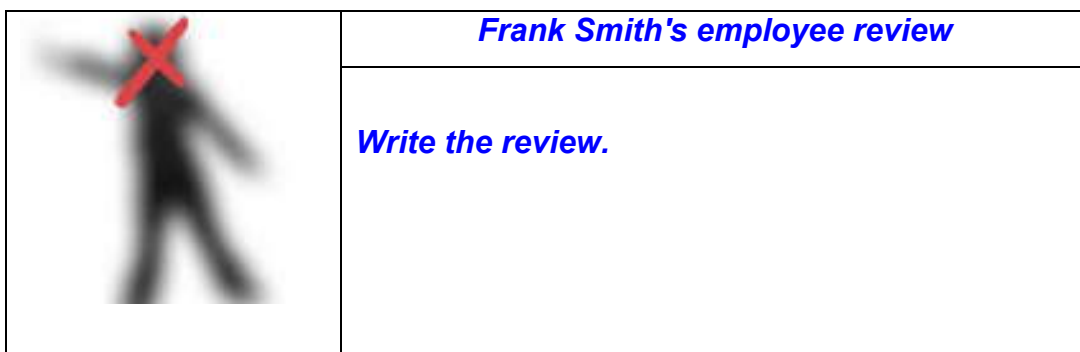
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you need to buy whole wheat or white bread on the way home from work. Just think about the zombie project that is closest to you.

Now here's what to do: Look at the first sheet of paper. Read the most important thing you can do on that project. Start the timer. And begin. Do the most important thing for 5 minutes. Just 5 minutes. That's it. Do as much as you can as fast as you can on that one project for 5 minutes.

When the timer dings, take out your red marker and draw an "X" through the stick zombie's head on your paper. Bang! You've just shot your first zombie in the head. Like this:



Put the paper aside, throw it on the floor, or put it to the bottom of the stack so you don't see it. (You'll need it in a minute, though, so don't throw it out).

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**ACTION STEPS:**

- Select the top project.
- Spend 5 minutes working intensely on the most important part of that project.
- "X" out the project when your 5 minutes is up and put the paper aside.

## **SHOOT THEM ALL**

You don't take a stand against just one zombie. You deal with a bunch. You shoot the one closest to you and then you move on to the next one. It's not rocket science, it's self preservation!

And that's how it is with your zombie project killing-fest. After you've spent 5 minutes shooting the first zombie project in the head, switch to the next project.

Grab the next paper off the pile. Aim for the zombie head by reading the most important thing that needs to happen on the project. Then reset the timer for 5 minutes and start this one.

Work for 5 furious minutes on the most important part of the project. When the timer dings, "X" out the head, throw it on the ground, and go on to the next one. Do this for twenty minutes total (which, in case you failed third grade math, is 4 projects at 5 minutes each).

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**ACTION STEP:**

- Do all 4 projects by taking one project at a time and working for 5 minutes on the most important part.

## **MAKE SURE THEY ARE DEAD**

In some cases, you'll shoot a zombie in the head and it's gone for good. But sometimes your aim isn't perfect. You just winged it. Now that you have a bunch of rotting dead-then-undead-then-mostly-dead-again corpses lying on the ground in front of your bunker, you need to go around and make sure they are dead.

So here's what to do: Pick up one of your 4 projects and list three things you can do on that project in the next 3 days. Keep each task under 15 minutes. If the task takes longer, list it 3 times.

Some ideas for what to schedule:

- A continuation of the work you've started. This is often the most effective choice for a next task since you've "popped the cork" and built some momentum in your project. You'll be able to easily approach and complete this next step because there are no barriers; the work has already been started.

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- Going back a step and doing the work that you need to do before you can get very far into the "most important part" of the project.
- Starting on the next consecutive step or the next most important part of the project.

Schedule these into your schedule and move on to the second, third, and fourth project. Schedule those three 15 minute projects for as soon as humanly possible in your schedule.

### **ACTION STEP:**

- Schedule three 15 minute momentum-sustaining activities for as soon as possible.

## **SET UP A WARNING SYSTEM**

Just because you were successful this time around doesn't mean that you've eradicated the world from zombies. There are more coming, just over the hill. You've bought yourself time but there will be others.

So what can you do? Well, you can set up a warning system so that zombies who stumble over your alarm will inadvertently warn you that they are there. And, as an added bonus, zombies aren't that stealthy so you don't have to be very covert.

There are warning systems you can incorporate into your life to make sure that you're aware when zombies are advancing. In my experience, I've found that there are 3 "signals" that indicate to me when a project has turned into a zombie:

- The project gets moved from one day to the next for 2 days in a row. (Yes, sometimes it's because I'm busy and had to push it off but more often than not I'm aware of what my schedule is like and it's just a matter of not

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getting to it). If 2 days is too tight of a timeline for you, make it 3 days: If a project gets pushed 3 days without being touched, it's turned into a zombie. (Note: You need to be honest with yourself here because sometimes you can trick yourself into thinking that you've touched a project when all you've really done is just the easy preliminary work).

- Projects in a numbered sequence get skipped. I like to number my projects and do them in order. I'm not militant about it but it's a good way for me to watch for zombie projects: As I go through from one number to the next, I'll sometimes skip a number and that's my signal that I've got a zombie on my hands.
- You look at your to-do list and check Facebook, Twitter, or email instead. Yes, we might need to access these or other sites throughout the day as part of our work. However, when we look at our schedule and see a particular task but we do these (or similar) distractions instead, we've got a zombie problem.

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These 3 warning signs are very effective ways of alerting you that you have a zombie to address during your next scheduled zombie-fighting.

### **ACTION STEP:**

- Set up warning systems to identify your procrastinated projects before they get too old.

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**PART 3:**  
**MORE STUFF ABOUT ZOMBIES**  
**AND ABOUT PROJECTS**

In this part of the ebook I jammed in everything I couldn't put somewhere else. Lots of good stuff here, though, so be sure to check it out. I promise not to sell you anything.

## WHY THIS WORKS

This whole zombie thing works. It works for three reasons:

1. Procrastination is a non-event and it's our default state so it sneaks into our schedules without us realizing it. By proactively scheduling zombie-fighting time, we acknowledge that it exists and it allows us to define what is normally a not-easily-defined "headspace".
2. Procrastination occurs because there's a project (or a part of a project) that we don't want to start (or restart). Often, people find that once they "pop the cork" and get a bit of critical mass and momentum, the project goes faster and easier than they thought. We can get a surprising amount of work done in 5 minutes, and most of us are happy to do something we don't want to do for just 5 minutes. Much longer than that, though, and the theory falls apart. (For example, in my experience, trying this for 10 minute segments isn't nearly as successful).

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3. And it's fun. Yeah, you might not love zombies as much as the next person but it puts a face (an ugly, smelly, undead face) onto your productivity. Most procrastination books can be pretty clinical. They aim for professionalism, which is okay, but procrastination isn't solved with clinical professionalism. Procrastination is solved far more effectively with fun!

## **TIPS FOR BETTER ZOMBIE FIGHTING**

- Have fun. That is the most effective way to fight procrastination.
- Do as much as you humanly can in the 5 minutes allotted for that zombie project. No cheating!
- Schedule zombie-fighting time regularly. At least twice a week. If you get to that time and don't have anything to do, reward yourself.
- Make a commitment to someone. ("I'm going to shut my office door and when I come out, I'm going to have started 4 projects").
- Brag about your effort. Go onto Twitter and tweet that you've just done some zombie killing. Add #zombieprojects so the rest of us notice.

## Stop Procrastinating. **FIGHT ZOMBIES**

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- When thinking about the "head" of the project, be sure to write down a project that will take at least 5 minutes or more. Performing a task that only takes 30 seconds (and then twiddling your thumbs for the other 4 1/2 minutes) is likely not the part of the project that you were procrastinating on. Remember that the whole secret to success of this system is that you are popping the cork to get the project moving again.
- This works on just about anything from business projects to personal projects to chores around the house to home renovation projects to working out.
- When you schedule the 3 additional actions on the project, try to keep them as close as possible to the type of work you were already doing on the project. Momentum is easier to maintain when it follows in a straight line.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Why zombies?**

Zombies are awesome! Also, zombies are things that should be dead but aren't and they seem to always stick around until we decide to do something about them. I don't know about your projects but that describes my projects perfectly.

### **I don't like zombies. They are gross.**

Yes they are gross. I'm sorry you don't like them. Also, you haven't asked a question.

### **Does this system work?**

Yes it does. Try it out twice a week for a month. What do you have to lose? An hour a week. And what could you potentially gain? A whole bunch of increased productivity on projects that you were avoiding.

### **Why does this work?**

Procrastination is about doing something that seems to be more enjoyable than the project you're avoiding. But if you can

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make the project itself more enjoyable – and if you acknowledge procrastination through more effective scheduling – then it changes the circumstances.

## **Can I do more than 4 projects in one session?**

You can try. But you're going to face 2 challenges:

1. Scheduling more than 30 minutes a day on this project is going to end up making it something that you are tempted to procrastinate on, which defeats the purpose.
2. This can actually be exhausting work. Four projects at 5 minutes each is okay. If you're working as diligently and focused as you can, you'll want a break after 20 minutes. I've tried it for longer – up to an hour – and found it was more exhausting than one might think.

## **Can I work on projects for more than 5 minutes at a time?**

You might not want to. Five minutes is a good amount of time: You can get a surprising amount of work done, it's a period of time that doesn't seem like a huge commitment (which helps to eliminate the potential to procrastinate) and you may end up with an excitement because you were "just getting into the project" when the timer stopped. This feeling is good! It will help your momentum when you continue the project later.

**Are there any projects that this system doesn't work on?**

I haven't found any, although you might find it to be challenging if the "head" activity requires you to go somewhere or talk to someone. This can often take more than 5 minutes. In those cases, I will write down a different head in the ten minutes prior to the zombie-fighting activity. Or, if it's the only thing I can possibly do on the project, I'll save it as my last zombie project and I'll go and do it and just take as long as it needs to take.

**What if the "head" of my project requires me to do something else first?**

This is tricky! It can lead to [Yak Shaving](#). Sometimes we have no choice but to do something else first. You will encounter those from time to time. But often I will try to do the "head" task – the most important task – no matter what, even if it normally would require me to do some preliminary activity first.

The reason is: I usually don't have a problem with the preliminary activity; it's usually that more significant and challenging task that is keeping me from the project. Even if I end up going back and having to redo some of the work I did during my 5 minutes of zombie-fighting that project, I would

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rather pop the cork and get the most difficult part of the project done first.

Rarely is any project so completely isolated from one stage to the next that you can't do something on a later stage first.

## **Will this help me to fight real zombies?**

My lawyers tell me to say "no". (But between you and me, I think it can).

## **Can I buy the movie rights from you?**

Have your people call my people. And if you can get Henry Winkler to play a zombie, I'd even give you a discount.

## **What's your favorite zombie movie?**

The first zombie movie I ever saw was George A. Romero's classic [Night of the Living Dead](#). It was great. My favorite zombie movie (although purists might argue that it's not technically a zombie movie) is [28 Days Later](#).

## PROACTIVE PRODUCTIVITY

It's nice to be productive even when it doesn't involve zombies. Although I love fighting zombie projects, it's great when you get to your zombie-fighting time in the week and you don't have any zombies to fight! I can break out the latest copy of *Golf Digest* or turn on the TV and watch *Days of Our Lives* or learn to yodel.

To avoid creating zombies, you need to be productive. I've found the following techniques to be useful, although they might not work in every situation.

- I revisit my productivity hourly. Yes, hourly. No, I'm not kidding. I have a timer and I set it for an hour. When the timer dings, I check my mental state, I revisit what I wanted to accomplish in the last hour and then preview what I want to accomplish in the next hour. It takes about 10 seconds but it's a great way to stay on top of my productivity and destroy procrastination before it even starts.

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- I have made a commitment to myself to start on all new projects within 1 hour of getting the assignment. I may not get very far into it – especially if I have other things going on in that hour – but the basic act of opening a document, doing some initial reading and review of the project, and maybe creating a quick outline is often a good start. This is true on all client work I do as well as on \*some\* personal projects (but not nearly as much as I'd like. Note to self: Make sure I'm starting more).
- Recognize and eliminate the failure points. I'm a pretty good starter but where I (and lots of other people) struggle is when the nose-to-the-grindstone effort kicks in. Then it's far more fun to move on to something else. These are potential failure points where zombies tend to rise from their graves. You can keep them from happening by outsourcing a bunch of your work that normally happens around this point (check out the place where I get my assistant: <http://contemporaryva.com>).
- Figure out what is manageable for you. Over the years I've discovered that a lot of my projects easily divide into 15 minute segments. I'm not sure why that is but it is.

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(Maybe for you it's 10 minutes or 20 minutes or 30 minutes). Whatever. Find out what your magic time is and build your schedule around it. Don't block out an hour for 1 big project. You might find that you can do it more effectively if you break it up into four smaller 15 minute projects throughout the day.

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## **ZOMBIE CARDS**

Print out the cards on the next page and use them for each zombie-fighting session. Or, if you don't want to waste paper, just use scrap paper and your own artistically-crafted stick-figure zombie.

If you print the ones on the next page, make sure you also break out your blue-handled safety scissors and cut them up into four individual slips of paper. You'll be more likely to do the work when you only look at one project at a time.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Hi, I'm Aaron Hoos. I'm a business writer and strategist and I work with businesses to develop content and content strategies. I've been a professional writer for over 15 years and I have an MBA in Strategic Management. In spite of that, I'm still writing about zombies.

Visit my site at [AaronHoos.com](http://AaronHoos.com) and follow me on Twitter at [@AaronHoos](https://twitter.com/AaronHoos). Once in a while I'll write about zombies, but most of the time I write about business.

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