Subject: microproductivity, the sprints method and the Pomodoro method
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I have been talking with a few of you recently about how to avoid being overwhelmed when facing a big challenge. In engineering, we used to call this problem decomposition - breaking a large problem into small pieces that can be solved individually, and hopefully, in parallel (so teams can accelerate progress). It is an essential skill in classes like senior design (or in research) where many of you will face the challenge of tackling a huge engineering problem for the first time.

This is what I often call the programmer's mindset and why I think learning how to write structured, modular code is such an important life skill. Programming is an excellent way to learn how to do this. Once you understand how to write modular, object-oriented code, you can apply the same skills to many things in life.

It seems like this process is gaining increased traction in the learning community, and goes by several names. Recently, I have seen articles referring to this as microproductivity:

https://www.integrify.com/blog/posts/power-of-microproductivity/

the sprints productivity method:

https://lifehacker.com/how-to-use-sprints-productivity-method-1850911750?utm_source=pocket-newtab-en-us

and the Pomodoro method:

https://lifehacker.com/use-the-pomodoro-method-to-study-more-efficiently-1850395495

Whatever you call it, learning how to decompose a large task is an essential skill in helping you avoid the paralysis that can often occur when you are feeling overwhelmed.

-Joe