

# The 5-Minute Daily Shutdown Routine

A scientifically grounded protocol to close cognitive open loops, protect evening recovery, and switch off with intent.

## THE SCIENCE: OVERCOMING THE ZEIGARNIK EFFECT

Unfinished tasks remain active in working memory, causing evening rumination. Your brain doesn't require tasks to be *finished* to let go—it simply needs a trusted, explicit plan for *when and how* they will be handled.

### MINUTE 1 The Brain Dump

Spend 60 seconds jotting down **every lingering thought**, unwritten reply, or unresolved scenario onto a single physical or digital scratchpad.

**Why it works:** Offloads working memory, signaling to the prefrontal cortex that items are securely stored.

### MINUTE 2 Assign Next Actions

Assign a specific, concrete action + time to each item (e.g., *"10:00 AM tomorrow: Draft slide 4"* instead of *"Fix deck"*).

**Why it works:** Satisfies the Zeigarnik Effect by providing explicit closure for open mental loops.

### MINUTE 3 Set Communication Signals

Handle sub-60-second administrative loose ends and explicitly set your Slack/Teams status to **Offline**.

**Why it works:** Establishes clear digital boundaries, curbing the subconscious urge to check in "just in case."

### MINUTE 4 Lock Tomorrow's Top 3

Select your **3 high-impact, non-negotiable priorities** for tomorrow and place them prominently on your calendar.

**Why it works:** Eliminates morning decision fatigue and stops late-night anxiety about forgotten priorities.

### MINUTE 5 The Physical Trigger

Perform a clear physical ritual: close all browser tabs, shut the laptop lid completely, and turn off your desk lamp.

**Why it works:** Sensory physical cues act as a firm neural boundary, telling the brain: *Work has officially ended*.

## DAILY EVENING CHECKLIST

☐ Brain Dump

☐ Actions Set

☐ Status Offline

☐ Top 3 Locked

☐ Laptop Closed