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One complaint I occasionally hear about the writer's life is loneliness. While I – solid INTJ here – don't have that issue, there's another common one amongst writers: procrastination. For some it's postponing starting a client piece while for others it's delaying their own administrative or marketing tasks.

How can writers slay this particular demon? Brace yourself, because you're about to be well and truly out of excuses. Have you heard of Focusmate?

What is Focusmate?

Imagine getting on a video call with a stranger. You tell this person a specific task you need to work on or finish. Then they tell you theirs.

You wish each other good luck, then mute your mics.

But the cameras stay on. And you each get to work.

At the end of the session you share how things went...did you finish? If not, how much do you have left? What are your next steps?

Focusmate is essentially a virtual co-working session except you can't hear each other; however, you could see each other at any time by looking at the window running Focusmate. Major accountability pressure, right?

How it works

Focusmate is an application that connects you to other people who also want to be held accountable for finishing – or at least making good progress on – work they really need to get done. You choose a day and time in Focusmate to work; Focusmate automatically pairs you with a partner for a live, virtual coworking session for that time.

Does it work? Focusmate says their most recent internal survey showed 95.5% of users reported a significant increase in productivity and reduced procrastination.¹

My Focusmate experience

I first heard about Focusmate in January after joining [Ilise Benun's](#) Simplest Marketing Plan Plus (SMP+) program. I signed up and began using it right away. As of now, I'm on a 15-week streak.

In my experience, yes it works. I keep a “Focusmate list” for those sessions—it’s usually working on something for my business. It could be marketing, writing, networking, catching up on emails, or admin tasks but it’s always something I must do. And it gets done.

How to make Focusmate work for you

This app could be just what you need to pin yourself down on those tasks you know have to be done but keep putting off. Imagine knowing you’ve booked a session for tomorrow and you’ll tell someone, “I’m working on XYZ today.” Well, now you kinda have to! Is it completing a section of a white paper? Do you need to finish that blog post? Finalize a contract for that great new client you just landed? Focusmate can be the accountability tool you need to get your most important work done.

Focusmate is easy to use. Let’s get some obvious questions out of the way if you’re new to it.

- **Free and paid options.** No need for your wallet – the free version of Focusmate comes with three sessions per week. Start with that. Decide later if you want or need more.
- **Easy tutorial.** Their easy-to-consume tutorial for beginners has three easy steps, plus helpful do and don’t guidelines. I’ve also noticed the app lets your first partner know it’s your first Focusmate session and to be considerate and helpful. (Bonus: It’s on their website, but Focusmate also conveniently emails the tutorial to you before your first session.)
- **Add sessions to your own calendar.** After booking a session, Focusmate sends an email with a calendar invite for you to optionally add it to your own calendar such as Apple or Google.
- **Three session length choices.** Pick from 25-, 50-, and 75-minute sessions depending on how much time you have available or how long you want to work.
- **Nothing extra needed.** You don’t need to download other apps or software. Book and join sessions directly on their website, and Focusmate runs in browsers.

Pros and cons

The accountability factor cannot be overstated here. Knowing you have a Focusmate session booked and someone is expecting you to be there to work quietly with them has an accountability all its own. Once in session, knowing the other person *could* see you makes you stick with what you’re supposed to be working on.

One con – depending on your equipment – is the possibility of having to determine which browser works best for you with Focusmate. They recommend using Chrome because it supposedly reduces processor overload due to video. I’ve used Safari and Firefox so far with no issue; my MacBook does get a little warm during the longer sessions, so perhaps I should try Chrome.

The benefit, regardless? Your work Actually. Gets. Done.

Tips

- **International is great!** Due to the time of day I typically use Focusmate – weekdays between 5-7:30 a.m. Central – my partners are usually overseas. It may be o’dark thirty in the States but Focusmate has matched me with partners in Berlin, London, Dublin, Zurich, and elsewhere. Don’t worry about where you are – someone somewhere in the world is glad you’re there.
- **Use it for work only.** Focusmate has a zero-tolerance policy for networking, sales, business development, harassment, or inappropriate behavior.
- **Start small, make changes later.** I recommend starting with simple, short tasks in 25-minute sessions if that’s more comfortable for you. As you get more experience with Focusmate you may find the longer sessions more useful and begin to use it for more complicated work.
- **Save good partners.** Use the app’s “favorite” feature to save good partners to work with in the future. You can use this later to have Focusmate prioritize them when finding session partners for you.

Focusmate may not cure loneliness. It can, however, be a great tool to power through even the most mundane items on your to-do list. The sense of accomplishment you have on the other side is worth it.

Source

1. Jacobson, T. (n.d.). *What is the purpose of Focusmate?*. Focusmate.
<https://support.focusmate.com/en/articles/4044434-what-is-the-purpose-of-focusmate>