

The Complete  
Guide  
To Your Most  
Productive  
Morning Ever

Kalen Bruce

# The Complete Guide to Your Most Productive Morning Ever

By Kalen Bruce

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## About the Author

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Learn more about Kalen here.

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There's something magical about the morning hours. This quiet, calm time of the day is unrivaled. In fact, the morning time is so unrivaled that it's the only time of day in which thousands of articles and hundreds of books are written about every year. Benjamin Franklin said one of the most quoted phrases in history about the morning time:

***“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”***

We've all heard that before. So, what's so special about mornings? Why do so many successful people give the early morning so much credit? I'm going to tell you.

This guide is going to empower you with everything you need to wake up early, be unbelievably productive and even help you understand why you should wake up early. Let's get started.

## Chapter 1: Why Be a Morning Person?

“Either you run the day or the day runs you.” —  
Jim Rohn

Your morning sets the tone for the rest of your day. That’s great news, because you can control your mornings. You can use them to achieve your goals and accomplish some pretty amazing things. However, we all know that a bad start to your day can bring the rest of your day down with it.

Being a morning person doesn’t mean you have to be disgustingly cheerful from the moment you pop out from under the covers. It simply means that you start your day on purpose, as opposed to only waking up because you have to be somewhere.

Why are mornings so great? Here are a few reasons:

- **Peace and quiet.** If you live with someone, especially young children, you may have a hard time finding a quiet place to do anything. Waking up before everyone else will give you the peace and quiet you need.
- **Your time.** You need time to yourself. For yourself. Waking up early is a great way to make that time happen. Many successful people spend the first hours of each day alone, to reflect, think, meditate and grow.
- **Your happiness.** Morning people are generally happier than evening people. One study showed that morning people are less likely to be depressed than people who prefer evenings to do their work.
- **Accomplishing goals.** Morning people are more likely to set and achieve goals. Waking up earlier allows you to plan for the day, which means you can plan to make progress towards all of your goals.

It's simple. If you wake up earlier, you're more prepared. You're not going to be rushed like you may be if you wake up just in time to be somewhere. If you're used to over sleeping, you can add several hours to your day just by waking up earlier.

That's all great to hear and it sounds wonderful, but what if you have a hard time dragging yourself out of bed each morning? I thought you might ask that. Now you know the why, in chapter 2 we'll talk about the how.



## Chapter 2: How to Actually Wake Up

I used to sleep until noon every day. It didn't matter if I went to bed early or not. Eventually, I stopped being a complete loser (not that waking up late makes you a loser, but I was definitely a lazy loser) and got a job that required me to start waking up around 8:00 am.

Once I decided to start controlling my mornings, I began waking up earlier. I started by waking up at 7:00 AM, and over the years I have started waking up earlier and earlier. Now I wake up at 4:00 AM. Yes, the world is in motion at 4:00.

This wasn't something that just happened. It was completely intentional. It had to be. It would have been impossible for me, a former noon-sleeper, to start waking up at 4:00 by some stroke of luck. In this guide, I'm going to show you exactly what I did and what you can do to actually get out of bed each morning.

1. **Make a gradual change.** Like anything else, if you start this in full force tomorrow by waking up five hours earlier than you usually do, you're going to fail. Don't set yourself up for failure. Start by waking up 15 minutes earlier than normal. Then wake up 15 minutes earlier than that every few days. Slowly adopt this new habit.

2. **Find your reward.** Think of something you would really look forward to. It could be a steaming cup of coffee or tea. It could be a large breakfast. It could even be an early morning walk. Find something that motivates you and look forward to it every morning.

3. **Start with your passion.** What's your passion? Reading? Writing? Working out? As humans, we are most disciplined in the things we are most passionate about. Start your day with something you're passionate about and you'll be much more likely to get up and do it.

4. **Move your alarm clock.** Once you're out of bed, you're less likely to go back to sleep. Move your alarm clock to a shelf across the room. This is a great way to make sure you get out of bed. Once you're up, stay up. And wake up to a pleasant sound, not an ear-shattering beep.

5. **Wake up at the same time.** If you go to sleep and wake up around the same time each day, you'll condition your body to naturally be tired and wake up at those times. If this doesn't work with the hours at your job, try to stay on a schedule as much as possible.

6. **Use natural light.** Since you're reading this, you probably prefer waking up before the natural light of the sun is shining through your window, but you can find a natural light alarm clock that will do the trick. Natural light helps your body to naturally feel awake.

7. **Understand sleep cycles.** One sleep cycle is about 90 minutes, so plan to sleep for a number of hours that's a multiple of 90. For most adults, 7.5 or 9 hours is a good goal to strive for. Worst case scenario, sleep for at least 6 hours. If you wake up just before your alarm, go ahead and get up; your sleep cycle is over. You can always try the [Sleep Cycle alarm clock](#). It monitors your heart rate and attempts to wake you up once your sleep cycle is over.

8. **Get moving.** You don't have to head to your local CrossFit box or run a marathon, but get your blood pumping as soon as you get out of bed. A quick walk or a few minutes of jumping jacks will do the trick. Just do something that wakes your body up physically.

9. **Change your mindset.** If you dread mornings, change your mindset. Start looking forward to them and all the productivity they bring. I know it's possible to shift your mindset, because I am a self-made morning person. It wasn't natural at first, but now it is.

It's important to figure out what works for you and do it. Whatever it takes to get out of bed, it's worth it. Don't go off how you feel. It's likely that you'll feel a little groggy at first, but once you get up, even just 10 minutes earlier, you'll feel much better.

Sometimes my morning self seems to think my night self is cruel for setting the alarm so early, but a few minutes after I'm out of bed, my morning self is thankful for my responsible night self.

If you're still having a hard time rolling out of bed, you may just need a little will power. When you wake up in the morning and you don't feel like getting up, try simply telling yourself "I said I would get up, I've got to get up." If that's the first thing you say in the morning, there's no time to think of a thousand different excuses for why you shouldn't get out of bed.

Start your morning on purpose, at a specific time. And for God's sake stop hitting the snooze button. That extra nine minutes can be quite productive if you're awake and it won't help you feel better. If anything, it will make you even more tired and groggy than you were the first time the alarm went off.

Just get up. Get out of your bed. If you really want to go back to bed, promise yourself a nap later in the day. Even better, try a coffee nap later on. They're better than coffee or naps alone.

One of the most important factors to waking up early is getting enough sleep. Let's talk about sleep for a minute.

**What's a coffee nap?** Caffeine doesn't activate as soon as you drink it. With a coffee nap, you simply drink a cup of coffee or tea (fairly quickly), then take a nap for about 20 minutes. That gives the caffeine time to activate right about the time you wake up. Perfect timing!

## Chapter 3: How to Get Better Sleep

“When I woke up this morning my girlfriend asked me, ‘Did you sleep good?’ I said ‘No, I made a few mistakes.’” -Steven Wright

If you’re not getting a good night’s sleep, you’re not going to have a very productive morning. Here are some tips for getting better sleep:

1. Avoid caffeine & alcohol within the last few hours of your day.
2. Get a high quality mattress & pillow. They make a difference.
3. Make sure the temperature is at a comfortable setting for you.
4. Avoid heavy meals at night. They decrease sleep quality.
5. Avoid “blue light” during the last few hours before bed.
6. Use visualizations when going to sleep. More here.
7. Use sleep “tools”, such as black out curtains & sleep monitors.
8. Exercise regularly. Studies have shown that people who do, sleep better.

Now that you know how to sleep, let’s move on to morning time. For many, a morning isn’t complete without a cup of coffee. Should caffeine be part of your morning routine? Perhaps, but you should use caffeine strategically.

## Chapter 4: Effectively Using Caffeine

Caffeine can be your best friend or your worst enemy. If you have ever had a caffeine-withdrawal headache, you know what I mean about the latter. There are highly effective, healthy ways to use caffeine, but first, I have a challenge for you.

If you consume caffeine on a daily basis, try completely cutting it out for a couple weeks. At least one week. This will allow your body to reset your tolerance to caffeine, thus making it more effective when you start using it again. It is a drug after all.

Once you have cut the caffeine and are ready to add it back to your life (oh caffeine, how sweet thou art), try some of the following ideas:

**1. Drink coffee or tea over a longer period of time.** This will release the caffeine more steadily, over a longer period, which will help sustain your energy levels instead of spiking and crashing.

**2. Drink water first, before the coffee.** Hydrating your body can increase your energy and you may not even need the coffee. Or you can instead use caffeine later in the day when you start to lose energy.

**3. Don't go back to drinking coffee daily** (switch to decaf if you must). Use caffeine when you need it. It will be much more effective to only use caffeine when you have a big job to do or when you need an extra boost.

**4. Don't be so quick to grab a second cup of coffee or tea.** You may not need it, or it may be more effective to save it for later. Give the caffeine time to start working. Wait before you make the quick decision to grab another cup.

**5. Eat before your coffee.** Consuming caffeine on an empty stomach can be a bad thing. I admit that I like taking caffeine on an empty stomach when I really want to get a boost and it is very effective for that, but don't make it a habit. Here's why:

“Drinking coffee on an empty stomach, such as first thing in the morning, stimulates hydrochloric acid production. This can be a problem because HCl should only be produced to digest meals. If your body has to make HCl more often in response to regular cups of coffee, it may have difficulty producing enough to deal with a large meal.” Source.



## Chapter 5: Create Your Perfect Morning

“Morning is an important time of day, because how you spend your morning can often tell you what kind of day you are going to have.”

-Lemony Snicket, *The Blank Book*

You will wake up about 25,000 mornings in your adult life. Make them count. There are many ways to start your day each morning. You will be most productive if you have a ritual.

I use the word ritual, because “routine” usually creates a negative, boring, mundane picture. I define a ritual as “an activity or group of activities, practiced daily, that leads you toward your goals.” Doesn’t that sound a lot better than some boring routine?

To maximize your productivity, you need a plan. Here’s how to create your plan that creates your perfect morning:

**Plan the night before.** It only takes 10 minutes to plan your morning if you do it the night before. If you wait until morning, you may still be a little groggy. Not having a plan for your morning can be enough to motivate you right back to sleep. When you wake up, you should know exactly what you need to do.

“I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: ‘If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?’ And whenever the answer has been ‘No’ for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.” -Steve Jobs

What should be included in your morning ritual? Steve Jobs started his day with a question and then proceeded to spend time with his kids and help them finish up any homework they had left. That was part of his morning ritual. Here are 12 ideas of what to include in your morning ritual:

1. **Affirmations.** Affirmations are a highly common way to start the day. The process is simple: remind yourself of everything you have and everything you have done and can do. Write these down and read them to yourself each day. There is power in writing these down and even more power in speaking them out loud.

2. **Breakfast.** Unless you're an intermittent faster, you probably eat breakfast most mornings. You've just went many hours without eating (break-fast). Eating a healthy breakfast can not only calm your appetite, it can give you plenty of energy, if you do it right. Stick to high-energy foods like vegetables, fruit and smoothies. Protein foods are good too. Stay away from heavy grains that will make you feel tired and sluggish.

3. **Exercise.** Exercise gives you energy. Often we have a false sense that, when we are tired, we need more sleep. That may not be the issue. You need exercise to increase your energy levels. This goes together with eating a healthy diet. Both are important to increase your energy.

4. **Family.** As I mentioned above, Steve Jobs spent the mornings with his kids. Wake them up a little earlier for some early morning family time or spend some quiet time with your spouse before the kids get out of bed.

5. **Gratitude.** Start your day by being thankful. We all have many things to be thankful for. Even if you're an extreme pessimist, you can find something. The things we have, the things we've

accomplished. Even the ability to breathe and wake up each day is something to be thankful for.

6. **Meditation.** Many people swear by meditation, while others still think it's some form of voodoo. This doesn't have to be spiritual (though it can be). Meditation can be as simple as sitting in silence and focusing on one thing, such as your breath, for a certain amount of time.

7. **Prayer.** If you're not spiritual or religious at all, this could just be a time of silence, like I mentioned above. But if you do have someone or something to pray to, it's a great way to start the day. Connecting with your spiritual senses first thing in the morning will set a positive course for your day.

8. **Reading.** Read something positive. A good book, non-fiction or fiction. A spiritual book. Whatever you like. But positive books are going to lead to a more positive day. There's no better way to begin your day than growing and learning.

9. **Silence.** Starting your day with complete silence is a great way to set a relaxed mood for your entire day. It could be just a few minutes, but early morning silence has a huge positive impact on your entire day.

10. **Visualizations.** This is becoming more popular every day. You can use visualizations in different ways. The traditional way is to visualize yourself having already achieved the goal you're striving for. The more modern way has you visualize yourself doing the action it takes to reach your goals, such as writing like

a madman or running as fast as you can. I prefer the modern form, but it's your ritual. Your call.

11. **Water.** If you don't include any of the other ideas, include this one. Drinking a liter of water, or at least a full glass, will boost energy levels and hydrate your dehydrated body. You probably don't drink water in your sleep, so you just went several hours without the most important thing your body needs. Drink water, first thing.

12. **Writing.** If you're a writer, this is a no-brainer for you. If you're not a writer, you may think this doesn't apply to you. It does. Even if you're not writing a book, article or blog post, simply buy a journal and start scribing. You can write about yesterday or just record your thoughts. You will grow to love this habit.

There are many ways to start your day and create your ritual. You can find an entire plan, like the Miracle Morning, or you can create your own. Either way, create a ritual so you'll know exactly what you plan to do each day. It's also important to do what you do best. You may be highly creative in the mornings. If that's the case, create something! If your mind doesn't work too well before 10:00 AM, you may want to stick with more trivial tasks. Either way can be productive as long as you do what you do best, at the right time.

You're responsible for creating your morning and waking up on purpose. You've got to find your "why." Figure out why you want to wake up early and what you want to accomplish.

"Every morning I get up and look through the Forbes list of the richest people in America. If I'm not there, I go to work." -Robert Orben

Your goal may be to earn more money. It could be to become filthy rich. Or you may want a closer relationship with your family or your God. You may simply want to grow as a person by becoming more fit or learning something new each day.

There are thousands of reasons to get up each morning. You've got to find your reason. Once you find it, do everything in your power to make it happen. You've got thousands of mornings left. Make them count.

# Resources

## More on Morning Time:

- [How to Combat Your Morning Self \(And My Ritual\)](#)

## More on Creating Habits and Self-Discipline:

- [How to Create Good Habits \(And Stick With Them\)](#)
- [How to Create a New Habit \(Even if You're "Too Busy"\)](#)
- [Do You Really Have to Practice New Habits Every Day?](#)
- [Stop Being Lazy – Instill Self-Discipline and Run Your Life](#)
- [How to Create More Self-Discipline in Your Life](#)

## More on Money:

- [Learn how to budget](#)
- [Learn how to invest](#)
- [Learn how to save money](#)
- [Learn how to use credit cards](#)
- [Learn how to pay off your debt](#)

Part of the content in this guide was originally published as an article on LifeHack by Kalen Bruce. You can see the article [here](#).