

# 5-Minute Power Boosters for the Office

By Mike Kramer, SparkPeople Contributor



Office life. If you let it, it can suck the energy right out of you. Or, you can take advantage of your workspace to put pep in your step and become more productive than ever.

Your office—where you spend 30% to 50% of your waking hours—can work *for* you or *against* you, depending on how you use it.

“The workplace is the forgotten arena of the self-improvement battle,” explains SparkPeople Coach, Joe Downie. “But it’s the place where people need help the

most! Stress is a huge factor in how well you perform at work. It clouds your thinking and wears you down,” continues Coach Joe. “Without that energy, you lose creativity, concentration and motivation.” In return, he says, all you gain is irritability and tension.

Of course, the most effective way to fight low energy is with a heavy dose of thorough stretching, proper breathing, and good posture. “There are plenty of power boosters all around you. You don’t have to drop everything and run to the gym.” In fact, there are dozens of ways you can reduce stress and increase energy—within 50 feet of the office. (No special equipment required.)

For starters, he suggests five minutes of mental or physical activity for every hour you spend at the computer. People who sit at desks and computers for hours on end are most prone to dwindling production from low energy.

## Get Physical

- Go to the office staircase and step up and down the bottom step (like step aerobics).
- Massage your own head and shoulders. Find trigger points of tension in the shoulders, jaw, and base of the skull. Hold pressure for 6-10 seconds.
- Take two steps back from your desk and lean forward until you’re in an angled pushup position against the edge of your desk. (This will also work against a wall.) Do a couple quick sets of incline push-ups.
- Lift 1-3 packs of printer paper in each hand. Curl them like weights or lift them over your head.
- Close your door and shadow box for a few minutes. Try to imagine a stressor while you’re punching
- Start a pick up game of trashcan basketball! Create trick shots, or play against a coworker. A little friendly competition can go a long way.
- Jumping jacks are a simple, quick way to pump you up. Try to increase your intensity (speed) and duration (minutes) to keep it challenging.
- Go for a short walk around the office or outside around the block.
- Stand up and stretch your muscles. Don’t forget your neck and wrists.

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- Lastly, Joe's favorite office exercise—using a stress ball. Squeezing a stress ball relieves stress while strengthening the forearms and wrists for typing.

### **Go Mental**

- Do word puzzles. Crosswords, word finds—even a jigsaw puzzle.
- Fill out a Mad Lib with your co-workers. A little laughter can improve your mood and decrease stress instantly.
- Rearrange your office.
- Switch hands with whatever you're doing.
- Draw something. Let your mind create.
- Stand perfectly still for two minutes. Just regroup.
- Do some deep breathing exercises or quiet meditation.
- Make an inkblot with a folded piece of paper and liquid ink. Have fun with what you see in the blot.

Staying energized and stress-free at work isn't difficult. The key is finding reasons to stay out of your chair:

- In the morning, take as long as possible before sitting down.
- Forget the boardroom. Hold walking meetings.
- Hand-deliver mail, memos and faxes.
- Chat face-to-face instead of by email or phone.
- Use a bathroom on the other side of the building or on another floor.
- Have a lot of phone time? Buy a cordless phone and move around while talking.
- Replace your chair with a stability ball. This helps you maintain good posture, and by balancing, you're working your core muscles all day.

Taking care of yourself at the office is just one way fitness can help you in other parts of your life. All it takes is a few minutes at a time.