

# Ruts

There's an old adage that a "rut is merely a grave with both ends cut out."

For the worst of ruts, to some of us, it seems that the ends haven't been cut out.

In fact, getting in a rut can be one of the most damaging states to be in. Our creative juices have long since dried up, our internal "opportunity finder" has stopped looking for opportunity – much less finding it. When we're in a rut, pretty soon, our positive mental attitude will turn to indifference, and then to a negative outlook.

So, what's a person to do?

It's obvious, isn't it – get out of the rut. It's easy to say, but sometimes, it's mighty difficult to do. Ruts, like graves, have a way of holding onto their occupants.

So here's a little list of activities that can help you get out of a rut. Some of them seem trivial, some maybe even dumb – but let me tell you, they can make a difference. Sometimes, even a trivial change can help get you out of a major rut.

Here's our list. No doubt you could add more that work for you.

1. Change the physical position you work in. Work standing up for a while (or sitting down, if you normally stand up to do your job). Move your chair. Work on the other side of your desk. Take a break and work in a vacant conference room/cubicle/office for a while. If you work out of your home, work in a different room (try doing office work in the bathroom or the basement, for example).

Why does this simple trick work? Part of being in a rut is the same physical surroundings/posture/environment. If you change the environment you work in, or change the **way** you work in the environment, you can change your outlook enough to start your way out of the rut.

2. Alter the time you come to work. Come an hour or two earlier, or stay an hour or two later. If you can't come into work earlier, or stay later, than your normal schedule due to office restrictions, then put in your extra time somewhere else – the train station, a restaurant, a park, or somewhere else that's different. Or just get up earlier in the morning, and work in your home for a while before leaving for your job. In your "extra" time, concentrate on new ideas, new options, new strategies.

3. Occasionally change the path you take to work. Take a different route to your job, even if it's just for a few days. Take the train or the subway, if one is available. Make a change that will change you. You can change back if you need to – or you can only make the change on just a few days during the week. The key is to take a different path to work, so you get your mind looking at different things.

4. If you can, turn your schedule topsy-turvy. Move meeting times and appointments, if you can get away with it. Making a change – even a small change like this one – can get your mind on its way out of a rut.

5. Adopt a different tasking strategy. Use a “to-do” list if you don't use one already. People who use some sort of task list consistently get more accomplished than those who don't use such a list.

6. Go out to lunch if you don't currently. Even if you only eat your sack lunch while sitting on a park bench, it's better than eating it at your desk. Go to lunch with a coworker, (or even someone from a neighboring building).

7. If you don't currently exercise, then start. If you currently exercise, consider changing your exercise regimen to invite in other types of exercise (Pilates, anyone?).

8. If it's permitted where you work, try playing some low-volume music on your computer while you work. I personally like smooth Jazz and Hawaiian slack-key guitar for the office, but everybody has their own preference. Stay away from music that would anger your neighbors – or buy a set of headphones (and keep one ear uncovered so you can hear what's going on around you).

9. Try listening to a different radio station on the way to work – or listen to audio books – business books (or pirate novels) work well for some people. The different audio choices will help change your outlook by introducing new experiences, viewpoints, and options.

10. Read extensively, and change what you have been reading. I recommend the Wall Street Journal for business folks, as well as various business books, but out-of-your-discipline books and business biographies are also useful for finding great ideas to help you get out of your rut.

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