

# Getting Things Done for Lawyers and Law Students

Stress-free productivity

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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes how lawyers and law students can improve their productivity and reduce their stress by adopting David Allen's *Getting Things Done* methodology

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## Introduction

“Get everything out of your head. Make decisions about actions required on stuff when it shows up — not when it blows up. Organize reminders of your projects and the next actions on them in appropriate categories. Keep your system current, complete, and reviewed sufficiently to trust your intuitive choices about what you're doing (and not doing) at any time.”<sup>1</sup>

The above quote neatly summarizes David Allen’s approach for productivity. Allen describes this approach in his book, *Getting Things Done*, and it has had a massive impact on those who have taken the time to learn its principles.

This paper provides an overview of the GTD system, and offers explicit and relevant examples for how the lawyer and law student can employ this system to their benefit. In addition, a variety of resources that can aid in the effective and continued use of the GTD system will be presented. The rationale for the lawyer or law student to apply the GTD methodology is as follows. While we are all over-saturated by the amount of things that we have to do on a daily basis, lawyers and law students face a unique set of problems with regards to managing their time.

Lawyers are bound by the ethical code of zealous representation; this means they must manage their time efficiently. Similarly, the number one complaint levied against lawyers regards their lack of availability to their clients. Law students, face

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<sup>1</sup> David Allen *Getting Things Done* 16

similar demands on their time. Keeping track of numerous classes, and allocating their time efficiently is one of the great challenges of law school. This is particularly true of law school, where most students have recently left the more programmed world of an undergraduate program with its multiple tests and assignments. This stands in stark contrast to the law school approach of a final grade often being completely based upon the performance on one test. In other words, law students must learn to allocate their scarce resource of time in an effective manner, and prepare for the exam through the semester based on a self-organized regimen, in order to succeed.

In each case, lawyer or law student, the Getting Things Done methodology allows for better organization and allocation of resources, and, thus, better results.

Ultimately, the great benefit of the GTD system is in its flexibility. Whether a lawyer or law student opts to embrace the system completely, or to adopt piecemeal elements, some benefit will accrue. The principle benefit is that by utilizing the system, those who employ it will be more effective and carry less stress.

As a bit of background, the Getting Things Done approach became something of a *meme* online in 2004. This makes sense, as it is perfectly suited for those who spend an inordinate amount of time online: specifically, web-developers and coders. These tech-

types are constantly attempting to manage microelements of information coming from a multiplicity of sources; all of which must be kept in order. However, and while it's a generalization, it is also consistent with the personality of the "creative type," many of these web coders rebel against rigid guidelines and structures. This dichotomous relationship in which the coder is attempting to efficiently manage multiple projects, each with a significant amount of inputs, while also eschewing traditional organizational habits led to a tremendous amount of need for a system such as Mr. Allen's. Coders being coders they did not simply adopt the GTD concept, full cloth. Rather, they examined, discussed, and otherwise tweaked the system. All along the way, given their proximity to all things "Internet," their findings were broadcast online; hence the *meme*.

While it was the coders who adopted the GTD system earliest, it was the functionality of the system that allowed it to "cross the adoption chasm." That is, according to Moore, in order for something to go from early adopters to a more widespread population, a product or service must do one of two things: (1) Improve a customer's life, but not force them to learn any new skills (the classic example of this is the DVD player); (2) Improve one's life by a factor of 10, even while forcing new skills to be learned (the iPod).<sup>2</sup> Allen's system falls within the second category. While the system does require some learning of new skills, the result of this learning is improvement by a factor of 10. Fortunately, this skills required to be learned are common sensical; they are less rote learning and more heuristic.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on how technological (or other) products and ideas move along the life cycle curve, and, specifically, make the leap from early adopters to a more widespread adoption, see: Geoffrey A. Moore 1991 Harper Business Essentials

Given this, the GTD system quickly spread from the early tech adopters. It's proliferation has now reached virtually all sectors. Two sectors, however, that, as yet, does not seem to be employing the system to any large degree are lawyers and law students.<sup>3</sup> This is discouraging. The GTD system, with its emphasis on organization and productivity, is seemingly tailor-made for both groups. This paper (and accompanying materials) will explain the GTD system thoroughly, and attempt to articulate how the employment of the System will add value to both lawyers and law students.

It's important here to note that the GTD system is *not* a to-do list. To do lists, while effective for some people, tend to only exacerbate unproductive behavior for most. While, as we will see shortly, it is important to have a capture device for your tasks and projects, this is the only similarity between the GTD system and a to-do list. Once captured, the GTD system imposes a structure that allows for maximum efficiency; an efficiency simply not found in a traditional to-do list. Put simply, we tend to write down the items on our to-do list, cross off a few, and then promptly take no further action on any of the other items until—days, weeks, or months later—we write another to-do list containing many/most of the same un-acted upon items. All the while, we carry these un-acted upon items (referred to as “open loops” in the GTD parlance) in our brains; they keep us from acting with maximum efficiency.

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<sup>3</sup> This assumption is based on semi-formal observations. I have spoken to approximately 25 lawyers at various stages in their career, as well as spoken to dozens of law students. While a very few had heard of the system, none were employing it.

## Understanding the GTD System

There always comes a time when one must choose between contemplation and action.”

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

To begin defining the GTD system it's important to understand the terminology. The most important phrase in the GTD system is “Open loops.” as Allen defines them, Open Loops are “anything pulling at your attention that doesn't belong where it is, the way it is.”<sup>4</sup> In attempting to further explain this concept, I use the example of anything that you have thought about more than once, but have not taken any action on.<sup>5</sup> It is these open loops that cause cognitive dissonance, and negatively impact upon productivity.

Additionally, they add stress, which also correlates negatively to productivity. An open loop could be as large as “begin preparing for a law exam/case,” or as small as “buy a birthday card for my niece.” In both cases, once this idea is in your head, and you think about more than once without taking any action upon to bring it to conclusion/closer to conclusion, it is a non-value adding element of your life. Again, the size of the task is not important. We have all laid awake at night thinking about some small detail—for the fifteenth time—that we have taken no action upon. Doing so keeps us from getting to the more crucial elements of our life: the bigger tasks, the more value-adding tasks.

Additionally, the stress and lack of sleep caused by these ultimately trivial open loops has a very detrimental effect upon our lives and work.

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<sup>4</sup> Allen at ??

<sup>5</sup> I began using the GTD system shortly after its publication, and have spent the last several years refining the system to work effectively for me as both a law student and Professor of Management. I, therefore, while keeping in the spirit of Allen's approach, will occasionally add my own augmentations and clarifications to Allen's ideas.

Both lawyers and law students run the risk of being overcome by these open loops. The amount of inputs that require some form of action accrued on a daily basis by these parties is monstrous. Add to these the inputs accrued just through modern life—bills, scheduling, etc.—and it becomes clear both why we are not as productive as we would like/need to be, and how badly a system to confront these open loops is needed. Kerry Gleeson, founder of the Institute for Business Technology and an expert on personal productivity, says, “This constant, unproductive preoccupation with all the things we have to do is the single largest consumer of time and energy.”<sup>6</sup> However, as you begin ordering the things you have to do—by taking control over them—you move them from your mind to a place where you are no longer paralyzed by the sheer volume of things to do and lack of time in which to accomplish them. As you begin ordering the things you have to do—by taking control over them—you move them from your mind to a place where you are no longer paralyzed by the sheer volume of things to do and lack of time in which to accomplish them.

### Identifying Open Loops

In order to get things done efficiently, you must first identify all of your open loops. You must then begin determining what actions you need to close them. This does not mean that you must close them right away. You must have a range of goals—long, mid, and short-term—and order them efficiently into your overall strategy.

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It is therefore not a matter of completing all of these goals in order to close the loops. Instead, you must get them out of your mind and into an organized system. This is crucial. If you allow open loops to stay unorganized in your mind, you will constantly be in a state of low efficiency.

There are several steps that you must take to get your open loops under control:

- Step 1: Anything that is open—unfinished, to be completed— must be taken from your mind and placed into an organizational system.
- Step 2: You have to understand what the next physical action must be taken to either close the loop or begin the process of closing the loop.
- Step 3: Once you've determined the physical action(s) you need to do, you have to have a system to constantly update and monitor your progress.

### *Exercise 1: The Purge*<sup>7</sup>

It's not until we allow ourselves to let the pressures out of our brains — the open loops — that we realize exactly how many things were causing us stress, and limiting our overall productivity. The simple act of purging your brain of all the open loops is an immensely satisfying process. Just by getting the open loops out of

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout this paper, I will intersperse exercises as a means to emphasize the points being made. I will additionally consolidate these exercises as an appendix at the end of the paper. Taken together, these steps represent a GTD framework that is easily and immediately approachable and beneficial.

the ethereal realm of the brain and into a more tangible form allows us to begin processing them.

There are few more satisfying exercises than this one. Uniformly, when I have recommended students and lawyers to take as long as it takes — typically, about 15 minutes — to sit with a piece of paper and pencil (or computer), and write down all of the things that are on your mind, and in some manner causing you stress, the impact upon completion is significant. If the item you write down has something to do with your legal practice/law school activities, great. If not, that's okay too. Even if it is not directly related to your legal activities, it is keeping you from making working at peak efficiency.

Even with this tiny bit of effort, you should feel some small increase in organization and control. This should also lead to a small increase in clarity, and perhaps a sense of relaxation. Importantly, it should lead to an increase (however minute) of motivation. You have, in essence, taken control over the open loops, rather than being controlled by the open loops.

If you achieved even a small degree of positivism from this exercise, imagine how you will feel when this process is multiplied. The result is an exponential increase in productivity. This increase in productivity is a result of thinking. In fact, you haven't *done* anything. However, your potential actions are now more organized, so that when you do act, you will do so in a vastly more efficient manner.

As we move from the more general to the specific, remember that this organization process starts at the nano level. That is, as David Allen says, “anything you have allowed into your psychological or physical world that doesn’t belong where it is, but for which you haven’t yet determined the desired outcome and the next action step...As long as it’s still ‘stuff,’ it’s not controllable.”<sup>8</sup>

The final word Allen uses is particularly relevant to our process; lawyers and law students must be in control. For law students, losing control of all that they have to do means potentially flunking out of law school. For lawyers, there are potential ethical issues with respect to the zealous representation of clients if control is lost. The only way to be in control is to measure the distance between where we are and what needs to be done to close the open loops—big or small.

### **Organizing Open Loops**

Once the time has been taken to purge the brain of all of the open loops, the process of getting them into a system so that they don’t return unclassified to the brain is the next step.

### **The Two-Minute Rule**

One of the most effective elements of the GTD orthodoxy is, in my opinion, what I refer to as the “Two-Minute Rule.” It is often the small, niggling things that we

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think about dozens and dozens of times a day (or night, while lying awake) that cripple us. Details like returning an email, paying an online bill, faxing a document, checking an account balance online, and so forth all are small, uncomplicated, easily accomplished, and often the type that are generate tremendous amounts of procrastination. Along with the procrastination comes stress, and the inability to tackle the more essential (often larger and more complex) tasks. Therefore, it is essential to complete these items quickly in order to move on to the other, more important and value-adding tasks.

### *Exercise 2: The Two-Minute Rule*

Returning to the list created in Exercise 1, identify all of the items that — given the right context — you could complete in two minutes or less. If you prefer to use five minutes as the time frame, that is fine. By context, what I mean is that — as we will discuss in more depth below — in order to efficiently make progress in the GTD system, you must contextualize your items. It does you no good to look at your to-do list and realize that you are not in the right physical place to make progress on your tasks — you can't cross off "pick up the dry cleaning while researching a law review article any more easily than you can work on your law research while out running errands. Therefore, assigning a context to each of your items is essential; you will then be able to maximize your efficiency by planning your efforts in line with your context.

For now, while applying the two-minute rule, assume that you are in the appropriate context to complete the item in two minutes or less. Put a “2” next to each of these items.

### Next Actions

As Discussed above, the GTD system is decidedly not some sort of souped-up to-do list. While, as we will see below, elements such as context, play a part in distinguishing GTD from to-do lists, what really differentiates is it the idea of “next actions.”

These are the crucial elements of GTD. GTD is essentially an action-based system; everything must be acted upon in order for it to not become an open loop. To-do lists do not contain this all-important next action feature.

Above, we explored the two-minute rule. The reason for placing the two-minute rule discussion prior to this next-action element is because when you can accomplish something in two-minutes or less, you don’t need a next action—it’s done. The possibility of an open loop infiltrating your productivity is gone.

Of course, not all items can be handled in two minutes or less (though it’s surprising how many can). For all items that cannot be handled in two-minutes or less, a next action must be associated to them. This next action is, simply put, the very next step you can take towards the completion of the item. If, for instance, the open loop

you've identified is "study for my Criminal Law exam," you need to frame that in the context of next actions that move you closer to completion. For instance, the very next action required might be to gather all the relevant materials (lecture notes, Horn Books, etc.). In essence, by attaching an actionable activity to this otherwise vague item (study for my Criminal Law exam), you've taken it out of the ethereal and into the tangible. Certainly, there are a variety of next actions that will need to be attached to this example—create an outline, create a Mind Map, etc.—and each can be iterated after the preceding one has taken place (it resembles a Gantt chart approach).

### *Exercise 3: Define Next Actions*

The important thing is to begin attaching the *very* next action to each item.

Remember, also that some percentage of your open loops can be closed via the two-minute rule. Most, however, that take longer than two minutes to complete require more than one action, and thus it's important to begin associating the very next action to each open loop that is not able to be completed via the two-minute rule.

With the items on your list that do not have a "2" next to them, now indicate what the very next action for each will be.

### **Discard**

Having identified all of the items that you initially purged, and have since either marked with a “2,” indicating they can be completed in two minutes, or less, or assigned a next action, to those that cannot, there may still be some that have neither a next action nor a “2” next to them.

Perhaps, for instance, there’s an email that you should answer, but will take more than two minutes, but you can’t or don’t want to determine the next action involved to close the loop. Or, perhaps, there is a phone call that you’ve been meaning to return, but it’s not something that would provide value, and you have no ethical reason to return the call (i.e. it’s not a current client). We all have a number of open loops that we procrastinate upon simply because they’re not value-adding enough to deal with; the opportunity cost is too high. Still, these open loops rattle around within our brains, taking up psychic space, and contributing to our inability to be as efficient as we should. The simple way to deal with these items is to allow yourself to let them go. Draw a line through them, both literally and metaphorically, and admit to yourself that you are never going to call the person back; you are never going to answer/write the email; you are never going to do whatever. You are simply being honest with yourself. In all likelihood, you never would do these things any way, but the sooner you admit this, and remove the “possibility” of them getting done from your brain, the sooner you can actually get things done that do add value.

#### *Exercise 4: Discard*

Go through the list, and identify all items that you would like to discard from your life and brain. Some of these may very well have a “2” beside them or a next action. The reason I suggested doing it in this order — that is, not simply discarding the items before assigning a next action/two-minute rule to them — is because having ascribed either of these may make something that prior to doing so seemed impossible/not worth the time, possible.

If, after qualifying the open loops with a next action/two-minute rule, you continue to feel that doing these actions isn’t worth the opportunity cost, by all means cross them off.

Likely, however, you have assigned next actions to those items you need to complete, and assigned items with the two-minute rule marking (“2”) because they need to get done.

For all the other items, determine which could be obliterated, and with their absence rid you of the non-productive contamination which comes with items you know you will never do, but heretofore couldn’t let yourself forget.

### **Delegation/Dependency**

While likely not terribly applicable to the average law student, delegation is an important component to the GTD system. Certainly, some of the items remaining on your initial purge list could be accomplished more efficiently by someone else.



Whether this is a large-scale detail, such as creating a brief for an upcoming case that an associate could handle, or alphabetizing the files that an intern could handle, delegation is imperative.

Related to this is the concept of dependency. Certain actions have others along the critical path on the way to completion. It's imperative to determine, at this point, precisely who is responsible for the completion of the project. If, for instance, a group of law students has endeavored to develop an outline for a course, there may be several parties who would be responsible for each section. Completion of this outline is, therefore, dependent upon each of those students getting their job done.

As an attorney with others working for you, it is thus imperative to attempt to gain buy into the GTD system from those who you may be dependent upon for completion of projects. An office that has a shared ethos and lexicon with respect to productivity will, axiomatically, be more efficient. It will additionally, allow for a deeper connection to the over-arching goals of the firm.

#### *Exercise 5: Discard and Delegate*

Now, go through the list and determine which items can be delegated, and to whom. Make note of each of these items. Similarly, determine which items you are dependent upon the contribution of others to complete, and note who the contributor is on the list.

#### *Someday/Maybe*

The final step in categorizing each of the items that were initially purged is to address those items that you can't bring yourself to discard, but are not able — for whatever reason — to deal with currently.

These could be large projects you don't want to forget about, but simply don't have the time/energy to currently address. Perhaps you have an idea for a big project—a book, a law review article, etc.—that you don't want to abandon, but also cannot allocate the time or resources to currently. These, while valid items, still fall into the category of an open loop if they are not dealt with.

Additionally, these are precisely the types of ideas you don't want to lose.

Eventually, given enough open loops, those great ideas will be pushed aside and forgotten. By putting them into a system, and, importantly, a system that has a tickler embedded within it (more on this below), it ensures that these ideas will not be lost to posterity. Certainly, you may elect to abandon them, and remove them from the Someday/Maybe list, but, in any case, they are in a far better place outside of your head, and thus not contributing to the psychic clutter.

### *Exercise 6: Determine your Someday/Maybe items*

Go through the list and determine if any of your items fall into the category of things you are reluctant to abandon/act upon currently, but are unable to take any action upon currently. This may mean reviewing some of the items you have previously codified as items with next actions on them. The reason for removing such items

from the list will become apparent in the next step. For all of these someday/maybe items mark them with a “SM.”

## Projects

Having now sifted through each of the items from the initial purge, and filtered out many of the items; either through discarding them, delegating them, deferring them (someday/maybe); or completing them in under two minutes, what are left are items that require additional actions to complete. These are referred to as projects.

Each project consists of a series of next actions that ultimately lead to completion. Some of these next actions may be delegated, while others may be contingent upon the actions of someone else.

For a law student, a project could be something like a paper, or, perhaps, even something as broad as completing an entire course, or studying for the bar. In each case, the ultimate goal is successful completion, and there may be myriad next actions involved in doing so. Next actions for the completion of a course might include things like each classes' reading assignment, weekly outlining, mind mapping each separate part of the course, and outlining in preparation for the final.

A project for an attorney could be, for instance, just about any client/case that the lawyer is working on. The GTD system is a natural for lawyers, as each project can

be organized to accommodate the individual elements of a case—depositions, discovery, etc. — which all must naturally come together at the end in order to successfully complete the project.

### *Exercise 7: Gathering your Projects*

Take a moment to determine which of the remaining items from your initial “purge” list require more than one action to complete, and thus must be classified as projects. Assign a “P” next to each.

### **Context**

The final element involved in understanding the GTD system is that of context. As referenced above, it is imperative to organize your next actions in a manner so that you can complete as many of them as possible. Typically, a to-do list approach simply lists the things that need to be done in an order that corresponds to when you remember the item needs to be done. In this manner, your list lacks context. You might, for instance have a list that has items such as “begin drafting closing argument for case X” next to “pick up dry cleaning,” followed by various other items, and then items such as “research law review articles for case Y,” and “deposit checks.” In this hypothetical, it would clearly make far more sense to attempt to lump the law-related cases together and the errands together. In other words, you need to contextualize the items. If you have your list in front of you, and you have time to get some things done, but you're in the wrong place, it's inefficient.

Therefore, applying context allows you to group the items into an order where you are able to accomplish multiple items in the same context. For instance, in the above example, you might contextualize the two legal issues by adding “@ office,” and the two others as “@ errands.”

### ***Exercise 8: Giving Context***

Review your list one final time, and attempt to apply context to each item. This contextualization should span all items except those you have labeled someday/maybe or those you have deferred. Projects, single action items, and two-minute rule items should all be contextualized.

## **Maintaining the GTD System**

Too often, we try out some new gimmick that works for some period of time, and then falls into disrepair due to lack of maintenance, efficacy, or usage. While the GTD system avoids the above in some part due to it being more of a shift in approach, than a shift in action. In other words, once you begin thinking in terms of the two-minute rule or the discard/defer process, it's hard to go back to not approaching items in this manner. That said, as with any discipline, it takes a degree of maintenance, and while I believe that best usage of the GTD methodology is to adopt the parts that prove to be most effective for your needs, and ignore the other elements, since this is a personal decision, and what is useful for one is not for others, it's important here to discuss some strategies and technologies that can be useful to ensure your usage of GTD isn't fleeting.

## Ticklers

One of the most crucial elements to maintaining a solid GTD practice is inserting some form of reminder — or “tickler,” in GTD parlance” — into your system. While you should just routinize the idea of beginning your day with a brief purge—the first, as exemplified in our above exercise, should by a significant amount be the longest one you undertake; from this point on, these purges should take less than a few moments—and filter process: assign next actions, complete ones that fall within the two-minute rule, delegate, contextualize, and so forth.

I will address below how to organize the items, but here it’s important to address the items that will fall outside this organizational structure: your someday/maybe items. While all other elements can be neatly organized and acted upon, these someday/maybe items do have the possibility of being pushed aside and forgotten about. While it’s beneficial to have removed them from your brain, and thus freed up psychic space for more beneficial items, it’s important to not lose track of these someday/maybe items altogether.

Thus, you must develop a system in which you are reminded (“tickled”) every so often to review your someday/maybe projects. Once reviewed, they can either be acted upon, returned to the someday/maybe file, or discarded.

## GTD tools

This introduction of a system into our discussion allows for a segue into the tools that can be used to implement the GTD process. As discussed in the introduction, the GTD *meme* was largely influenced by those deeply involved in technology. One benefit of this is that many, many tools were developed. These tools run the gamut from very simple and free implementations to complex and expensive. Most currently have some form of integration with iPhones or Blackberrys. Further, it is entirely possible, using Google alone, to create your own GTD system.

I will list several of the most popular GTD systems below. What each of them have in common is a quick way to get items out of one's head and into an actionable GTD system; an ability to create projects with next actions; an ability to contextualize the items and projects; and some form of tickler (reminder).

## OmniFocus

OmniFocus, created by the makers of such excellent tools as OmniGraffle and OmniOutliner (which no law student should be without) have developed perhaps the most fully-featured GTD tool. While they admit that they've simply used David Allen's GTD methodology as a jumping off point, and added (and subtracted) to Allen's general concept, it certainly aligns with the GTD concept.

This video presents a good overview of the project's features:



The full-featured nature of OmniFocus is the upside. The downside is that it's Mac only, and costs \$79.95. Beyond the price, the largest downside is that there's no integrated PDA app as yet.

### Things

A more recent GTD app on the market that is cheaper than OmniFocus (\$49.95), and has a very impressive iPhone app is called Things. As with OmiFocus, builds upon Allen's GTD system. It will be imminently approachable to anyone who has read Allen's book (or the above). Items are easily placed into projects, someday/maybe, and each item can easily be contextualized.

A brief introduction of Things can be viewed [here](#).

While Mac only, the cheaper price, and — more importantly — the [iPhone app](#) makes Things a compelling choice.



## Taskpaper

Continuing down the price spectrum, [Taskpaper](#) comes in at \$29.95. It is a very elegantly simple application (Mac only), that follows the GTD formula, but adds none of the bells and whistles seen in either OmniFocus or Things.

A screencast of Taskpaper can be viewed [here](#).

I used Taskpaper for quite some time, and found it to be helpful. However, it's lack of an iPhone app and calendar function ultimately made me move to Things.

## Nozbe

[Nozbe](#) is a free web-based GTD system that is very full-featured and has an iPhone app. It basically follows Allen's GTD orthodoxy, and includes projects, next actions, contexts, and so forth. One interesting feature of Nozbe is that it has a team feature that allows for shared projects.

The fact that Nozbe is free and non-platform specific (works with PCs) makes it a good choice. However, my experience with it has not been great; it feels clunky, and the web-based nature of it makes off-line work impossible.

## Remember the Milk

[Remember the Milk](#) is another web-based (and, thus, cross platform) GTD application. What began as a simple task management application has now evolved into a full-feature GTD system. In addition to being free, and having an iPhone app, Remember the Milk is useful because it integrates well with Google apps (such as Google Calendar), and, because of Google Gears, is able to be used offline as well.

Because of all of this, Remember The Milk is my suggestion for the GTD app to begin with.

## My GTD approach

### Google

Having used all of the above-mentioned apps for a good period of time, I have left them all behind and created my own system using Google's array of free services. While not perfect, because I have been using the GTD approach for several years, I know what works for me. As a law student, my contexts are fairly minimal: my office, law library, home, or errands. I therefore use Google docs to create context based folders. In each are project folders; my various courses, for example. Inside these folders are Google docs that list the tasks associated with the completion of

the project. Each task has an associated due date that is entered into Google Calendar. Google Calendar has a decent alarm function, which acts as a tickler.

I have an additional file in Google docs for someday/maybe projects, and inside the folder are Google docs with a brief description of the project. I set a Google Calendar alert to remind me to review these projects every three months.

Additionally, I have a document at the top of my GTD meta folder in Google Docs that acts as my brain purge/2-minute rule document. Each day, I purge onto this document, and begin filtering into the above referenced folders, as well as clearing out any items that can be accomplished in two minutes or less.

Because there is a very good (recently improved) Google iPhone App, I can easily access my system when away from my laptop.

Further, because of Google Gears, I can synchronize my system to my hard drive, and work offline; this is fantastic for plane trips.

Additionally, because so much of my activity is based around email, and since I have switched over completely to Gmail, the integration of email based projects into my system is seamless.

The last advantage of this system is that because it is all in the cloud (aside from my Google Gears synchs), I can access my GTD system from any computer (Mac or PC), and don't have to worry about losing data due to a hard drive failure.

Did I mention that it's all free?

## Conclusion

*While we are all over-saturated by the amount of things that we have to do on a daily basis, lawyers and law students face a unique set of problems with regards to managing their time. Lawyers are bound by the ethical code of zealous representation; this means they must manage their time efficiently. Similarly, the number one complaint levied against lawyers regards their lack of availability to their clients. Law students, face similar demands on their time. Keeping track of numerous classes, and allocating their time efficiently is one of the great challenges of law school. This is particularly true of law school, where most students have recently left the more programmed world of an undergraduate program with its multiple tests and assignments. This stands in stark contrast to the law school approach of a final grade often being completely based upon the performance on one test. In other words, law students must learn to allocate their scarce resource of time in an effective manner, and prepare for the exam through the semester based on a self-organized regimen, in order to succeed.*

*In each case, lawyer or law student, the Getting Things Done methodology allows for better organization and allocation of resources, and, thus, better results.*

*This paper has attempted to provide an overview of the GTD system, and provide explicit and relevant examples for how the lawyer and law student can employ this system to their benefit. In addition, I have provided a variety of resources that can aid in the effective and continued use of the GTD system.*

Ultimately, the great benefit of the GTD system is in its flexibility. Whether a lawyer or law student opts to embrace the system completely, or to adopt piecemeal elements, some benefit will accrue. The principle benefit is that by utilizing the system, those who employ it will be more effective and carry less stress.