

Atomic Habits

An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones

By James Clear

Chapter 1 - The Surprising Power of Atomic Habits

- **Small improvements** are not noticeable but many small improvements of 1% will have a huge positive impact in the long run.
- Habits are the **compound interest** of self-improvement.
- You should be far more concerned with your current **trajectory** than with your current results.
- **Overnight success** is the result of the **accumulation of small actions**.
- **Goals** are about the results you want to achieve. **Systems** are about the processes that lead to those results. Focus on **improving your system** and the results will take care of themselves.
- You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.
- To get rid of your bad habits, you need to **fix your system**.

Chapter 2 - How Your Habits Shape Your Identity (and Vice Versa)

- Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe. To build long-lasting habits, **change your beliefs** first.
- By **changing your identity**, your behaviors will align with your beliefs. When someone says “I want to quit smoking”, in his identity, he is still a smoker. If he says “I am not a smoker”, it is much easier for him to quit smoking because it is his identity.
- Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.
- **Your identity shapes your habits**, and your habits strengthen your identity.

Chapter 3 - How to Build Better Habits in 4 Simple Steps

- A habit is an **automatic behavior** that frees your mind for a new task. You have an automatic process to solve a repeated problem.
- Habits do not restrict freedom. They create it. With habits, you have **more free-thinking** and creativity for new tasks.
- The process of building a habit can be divided into four simple steps: cue, craving, response, and reward.
- **The cue**: it is a signal that triggers your brain to crave a reward
- **The craving**: it is the motivational force that will push you to act
- **The response**: it is the habit, it should be doable to become repetitive.
- **The reward**: it is the reward that relieves you from your craving and teaches which habits are useful.

How to Create a Good Habit:

- The 1st law (Cue): Make it obvious.
- The 2nd law (Craving): Make it attractive.
- The 3rd law (Response): Make it easy.
- The 4th law (Reward): Make it satisfying.

How to Break a Bad Habit:

- Inversion of the 1st law (Cue): Make it invisible.
- Inversion of the 2nd law (Craving): Make it unattractive.
- Inversion of the 3rd law (Response): Make it difficult.
- Inversion of the 4th law (Reward): Make it unsatisfying.

The 1st Law (Cue): Make It Obvious.

Chapter 4 - The Man Who Didn't Look Right

- Our brain can **detect cues** and form new habits without us being aware of the process.
- Being aware of our habits is the first step before building new ones.
- **The Habits Scorecard:** list your habits then add a "+" for good habits, a "-" for bad habits, "=" for neutral habits. You will build awareness of your habits.

Chapter 5 - The Best Way to Start a New Habit

- Broadly speaking, the format for creating an implementation intention is:
When situation X arises, I will perform response Y.
Ex: I will exercise on [DAY] at [TIME] in [PLACE].
- Being specific gives you clarity and removes distractions.
- **The Diderot Effect:** obtaining a new possession often creates a spiral of consumption that leads to additional purchases.
- Build new habits by stacking them on old habits.
- The habit stacking formula is:
After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].
Ex: After brushing my teeth, I will do 10 push-ups in my bedroom.

Chapter 6 - Motivation is Overrated; Environment Often Matters More

- Behavior is a function of the person in their **environment**.
- In a supermarket, customers have tendencies to buy what they can see.
- **Make the cues visible** in your environment to trigger the habits you want to build.
- Context matters, have a specific habit per environment.
Ex: The bed is for sleeping, not for working. When you are on your bed, you will fall asleep faster.

Chapter 7 - The Secret to Self-Control

- **Remove the cues of bad habits** to avoid temptation.
- A habit can be broken but hardly forgotten.

The 2nd Law: Make It Attractive.

Chapter 8 - How to Make a Habit Irresistible

- The more **attractive** an opportunity is, the more likely it is to become habit-forming.
- We are surrounded by cues that stimulate our **Palaeolithic instinct**.
- The food industry manipulates our **instinct** by adding sugar, salt, and fat to the foods for us to crave them.
- **Dopamine** is released not only when you experience pleasure, but also when you anticipate it.
- Dopamine motivates us to act.
- The habit stacking + temptation bundling formula is:
 1. After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [HABIT I NEED].
 2. 2. After [HABIT I NEED], I will [HABIT I WANT].
- Ex: After I get back from my lunch break, I will call three potential clients (need).
After I call three potential clients, I will check Facebook (want).

Chapter 9 - The Role of Family & Friends in Shaping Your Habits

- Our first habits come from **imitation**.
- We imitate to **belong to the tribe** with its social norms.
- We tend to imitate the habits of three social groups: the close (family and friends), the many (the tribe), and the powerful (those with status and prestige).
- One of the most effective things you can do to build better habits is to **join a culture** where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group.
- As part of a group, you **adopt the identity and habits of the group**.

- It is more attractive to adopt the habits of the **tribe**.
- We'd rather be wrong with the crowd than be right by ourselves.
- The Powerful have attractive habits because they earn respect, status, and approval.

Chapter 10 - How to Find and Fix the Causes of Your Bad Habits

- Any habits (including the bad ones) come from **cravings**.
- Cravings have origins such as: finding love and reproduction, social acceptance, achieving status, reducing uncertainty, connecting with others, obtain food.
- Our current habits are the methods we learned to **satisfy our cravings**.
- Habits are positive when we associate them with positive feelings.
- Build hard habits by shifting your **perspective** by highlighting the benefits.

The 3rd Law: Make It Easy.

Chapter 11 - Walk Slowly, but Never Backward

- **Habits form based on frequency**, not time. The more you do, the faster you build the habit.
- The most effective form of learning is practice, not planning.
- Your brain actually “grows” like a **muscle** when you repeat a habit.
- Aim for **action** (writing an article), not motion (planning about writing an article).

Chapter 12 - The Law of Least Effort

- You do not want a habit, **you want the outcome the habit** delivers.
- **Remove the frictions**, and create an environment that makes your habits easy.
Prime your environment for immediate use.
- Conversely, add frictions to your bad habits to make them difficult.

Chapter 13 - How to Stop Procrastinating by Using the Two-Minute Rule

- Decisive moments set your options that lead to the habits.
- **Master decisive moments** with the two-minute rule: when you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do.
- “Read before bed each night” becomes “read one page.”
- After having the habit of reading one page, you will naturally read more than one page.
- By showing each day, you are **casting votes** for your new identity (i am a reader).

Chapter 14 - How to Make Good Habits Inevitable and Bad Habits Impossible

- **Commitment device**: anticipate the temptations by making them impractical.
- Use technology to your advantage to **remove the temptations**.
- Onetime action that locks in good habits (ex: enroll in an automatic savings plan to save money)

The 4th Law: Make It Satisfying.

Chapter 15 - The Cardinal Rule of Behaviour Change

- What is **immediately rewarded is repeated**. What is immediately punished is avoided.
- The human brain evolved to **prioritize immediate rewards** over delayed gratifications.
- Add a small, immediate reward to good behaviors.
- Ex: when you wash your hands with soap, the good smell is satisfying.

Chapter 16 - How to Stick with Good Habits Every Day

- Use visual measurement to **track your progress**.
- Make it automatic when possible.
- After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [TRACK MY HABIT].
- Avoid repeating the mistake, try to keep the habit, and come back on track as fast as possible.
Goodhart's law: when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.

Chapter 17 - How an Accountability Partner Can Change Everything

- Inversion of the 4th law: Make it unsatisfying.

- **Set up a habit contract:** each time you fail to maintain your good habit, you get a penalty.
- **Find an accountability partner:** knowing that someone is watching you is motivating.

Advanced Tactics: How to Go From Being Merely Good to Being Truly Excellent

Chapter 18 - The Truth About Talent

- **Genes** can predispose and give you an advantage/disadvantage.
- Genes influence also your **personality traits** (openness, consciousness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism).
- Build habits that work for your **personality**.
- **Explore** and test some fields, and select the ones that satisfy you.
You can also build your field or specialize to dominate.
- Even if genes favor you, you still need to put in the work.

Chapter 19 - The Goldilocks Rule: How to Stay Motivated in Life and Work

- **Goldilocks Rule:** Humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks right on the edge of their current abilities.
- To become excellent, you have to fall in love with **boredom**.

Chapter 20 - The Downside of Creating Good Habits

- Once a skill is mastered, there can be a **decline in performance** over time.
- **Habits + Deliberate Practice = Mastery**
- Review your habits and make adjustments to avoid complacency.
- Stay flexible in your identity.