

How To Create Awesome Habits

Step 1 - Review Your Current Situation

Even if you think you know yourself well this is worth spending time to do properly. Keep a notepad with you all day, and log your activities for an entire day.

Include times you wake up, commute, go to work, workout or exercise, hobbies and pastimes, meals, snacks, social events and the time you go to bed.

Log all activities within those times such as work might be broken down into computer time, which again may be broken down further. Did you snack at your desk? Did you spend 30minutes on social media? The more detail you can add the better.

Log Your Activities

Log everything you do in a day and highlight any activities that support your goal in green, and any that hinder your goal in red.

Time from and to	Activity

Step 2 - Analyse Your Activity

Let's now look at 'why' we do what we do. Log each of your highlighted 'hindering' activities in the table below, and analyse the reasons you do each one.

Examples could include boredom, avoidance, feeling lonely or sad, tiredness, social pressure, lack of organisation.

Activity	Reason or trigger for doing this activity

Step 3 - Replace Bad Habits - Daily

Your next step is to replace your hindering habits with supportive ones.

I understand that this might feel like a big ask. If you feel it is too much, consider this - even if you reduce the time spent on hindering habits and spend 'most' of your time practising supportive habits you would likely meet your goal.

Make changes little by little so that they are achievable, and over time they the supportive habits will outweigh the hindering habits, and even replace them.

Step 4 - Practise

For anything to happen you need to take action. You now need to swap your bad habits with good ones, and you need to practise this daily.

If you find this is just too much to take on - that it is too much change at once - just focus on the **single most important** hindering habit, and work on changing that.

You need to take action on this daily - log your habit swap, and check it off every day.

Troubleshooting

Positive And Negative Feedback

When we do an activity or behaviour we are rewarded with positive or negative feedback. This habit feedback loop can be described as follows:

Trigger → Habit → Feedback

Take some time to consider your habits, their triggers and the reward. What are the triggers that cause your negative habits?

With exercise in mind as your example, look at these feedback scenarios.

Positive Feedback

Dislike exercise → Put feet up and watch TV → Feel good (positive feedback)

Negative Feedback

Dislike exercise → Get going on a run → Feel tight chested (negative feedback)

Looking at this example it is easy to see why trying to start exercise would be a challenge for this person. The immediate positive reward of watching TV is a far more attractive proposition than the negative feedback of actually exercising.

To be successful we need to take down some of barriers to this or any positive behaviour that you want to make.

Add Positive Motivation

Start by adding positive motivation. Here are some examples for you to be inspired with. Use the right hand column to adapt them to suit your own goals.

Positive Motivation	
What benefit can you think of that doing X will have on you?	
Find a habit partner	
Make it a competition	
Talk about it with peers	
Track your habit success	
Reward yourself (in a positive way that is congruent with your goal).	
Learn ways to achieve (is your ability to do something is preventing you from doing it - learn how).	

Add Negative Motivation

Negative motivation is important if you want to change your behaviour.

By reinforcing the negative outcome of doing your unhelpful behaviours, you will further build leverage or 'pain' to avoid.

Take a look at these examples below and see if you can add your own examples in the right hand column.

Negative Motivation	
Tell people - accountability	
Take away your daily reward	
Create your environment to make it difficult not to achieve - for example remove junk food from your home	

Use Triggers

We have identified negative triggers that are linked with unwanted behaviour. In addition we can use triggers in a positive way to ensure success.

Triggers are key because they create a bond between a trigger and a habit. Can you link any of the positive habits you want to introduce into your life with a trigger? By doing so you will be much more likely to 'remind' yourself to practise your habit and so actually practise it.

Trigger	Habit
Wake up	Exercise
Eating	Drink
Meal	Eat vegetables
Brush teeth -	Exercise
Get home	Food preparation

Track Your Behaviours

Having a plan and telling yourself that you'll do something isn't enough. In order to get results you need to practise very specific habits. Once you have decided which habit to begin with use the table below to track your adherence to it.

Place an X in each day that you achieve it, and an O in each day you don't manage. Practise until you are over 90% compliant before adding the next habit.

Here is an example of a completed habit tracker. Use the blank version below it.

Habit / Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Habit 1	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X
Habit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X

Use the habit tracker to keep track of your progress.

Habit / Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

How You Might Expect To Feel

Changing your habits may feel uncomfortable at first.

After all, what is your 'normal' today has crept in to become normal over the course of years. Changing your habits is going to feel unnatural - it'll take a bit of effort.

It is normal to experience this sensation when you are making changes in your life. Take a look at the likely phases you'll go through below.

Habit Change Phases		
Day 1-10	Day 11-20	Day 20-30
New habit. This may be uncomfortable. Motivation will be lost over time.	You'll feel better and understand how you feel a lot better. This stage may still be uncomfortable but a lot better. This is still not routine.	Begin to enjoy the habit and see the benefits. You'll want to keep it into the future. The habit will begin to feel automatic.