

Effort Activity 7: Red Flag Rescue Plans

It can feel really good to begin a new habit. You might have planned to put more effort into your work – and for a week or so, it's been working. You've paid attention in class, taken part in discussion, offered a few answers to open questions... you might even have completed a piece of work to twice your normal standard and handed it in early. Things have been going great! Except... now you're feeling your motivation fade. You can sense yourself slipping back into old patterns of work.

So what can we do when we feel our positive start ebbing away?

That's when red flag rescue plans come in. Creating one of these now is a great way of preventing slips in the future. It's a simple three-part plan which helps you keep an eye on yourself. When a good habit fades it doesn't collapse in one disastrous afternoon, it falls apart in two stages...

Stage one: small slips and excuses

Slips feel insignificant to start with. They happen now and again and we often find ourselves excusing them. *It's no big deal*. And that's true... as long as you spot them and adjust. Everyone's slips are different but look out for things like...

- You let one lesson go by and realise you just weren't paying attention.
- You realise your work has got scrappy and you haven't engaged in classroom activities.
- You notice you've rushed off a homework in ten minutes – deep down you know it's poor.
- Your gaming and TV time has gone up a lot over a few days, usually a sign that you're avoiding something.

Stage two: red flags

This is where the fade gets more serious. It's when a number of slips combine over a few days or a week. Things begin to feel like they're falling apart. Look out for issues like...

- You notice three lessons have gone by and you've switched off in all of them and missed some crucial stuff.
- A topic seems to be hard but for a few days now you've just ignored it.
- You've skipped study sessions and haven't gone back to check-over class notes for almost a week.
- You're using social media, games, videos and other distractions much more regularly.

It's your job to put a rescue plan in at this point! As soon as a red flag goes up, you need evasive action to get back on track.

The rescue plan

Everyone's rescue plan will be different; the more varied the better. Think of all the things you could do if you notice red flags going up. It could be options such as...

- Stay behind after school for a couple of nights, go to the library and put in some rescue work.
- Speak to a teacher, admit you're struggling, ask for a re-cap of a tricky topic.
- Borrow a friend's notes and go through them.
- Ask a class-member to talk you through a difficult section, or attend a lunchtime catch-up.

By writing these down now, you're strengthening your commitment to them. Students with clear red flags and well-organised rescue plans have two main advantages over everyone else:

1. They've got a list of red-flag indicators to watch out for – and these make it much more likely that they spot when a good habit is fading.
2. They have a list of actions to complete as a ready-made solution to a red-flag, so they're much quicker at problem-solving.

Use the space below to list what your behaviours look like at each stage, and then make some notes on a possible rescue plan:

Small slips and excuses	Red Flags
<i>When a good habit wobbles slightly, I'll know because I tend to do the following...</i>	<i>When a good habit gets into serious trouble and starts to collapse, I'll know because I'll be doing the following...</i>

A red-flag rescue plan
<i>When I see red-flag behaviours start to happen I'll take the following action...</i>