How to Create Habits That Stick

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***If we want to change some aspect of our lives,*** ***we need to stop relying on memory, motivation and willpower***. Instead, we need to create habits that stick.

But how?

When I leave home, my brain is occupied with dozens of distractions. I’m unlikely to “remember” to wear sunblock. Instead, I need to develop a habit — and this starts with finding a trigger, or cue. But how?

Let’s start with the current reality. I’ve already established two habits:

* I grab my housekeys before I leave home.
* I wear sunblock when I hold the bottle.

Great. How can I build on this?

I can store my housekeys next to the sunblock. I can’t grab one without seeing the other.

Soon those two items — keys, sunblock — link together in my mind. One triggers the other. They’re associated in my mind. After a few weeks, applying sunblock is as reflexive as locking the door.

Success.

This may sound like a small victory. But building a successful, happy life is nothing more than a [series of small victories](http://affordanything.com/2016/04/04/one-percent-margin-for-improvement-aggregation-of-marginal-gains/) that accumulate over time.

Here’s my challenge to you:

* What habit would you like to form? Flossing? Exercising? Meditation? Reading?
* **When and where** would you like to perform these habits? Be specific.
* What routines are already established at that time and place?
* How can you link this new habit to your established routines?

Here’s an example:

* **Goal, Vague:** “*I’d like to learn how to invest*.”
* **Goal, Specific:** “*I’d like to read one article about cash-flow-focused real estate investing every weekday evening before dinner*.”

Great. Let’s examine your current routines.

* “*I walk my dog before dinner.*“
* “*I read articles on my iPad*.”

Okay, that’s a good start. But you don’t walk your dog before dinner. You RETURN HOME from walking your dog. What happens next?

* “*I put the dog’s leash in a drawer.”*
* *“I wash my hands in the hallway bathroom.”*
* *“Then I go to the kitchen.*“

Excellent. Let’s brainstorm ways we can connect those dots.

* **Idea #1:** “*I keep my iPad in the dog leash drawer.*“
* **Idea #2:** “*I keep my iPad in the hallway bathroom.*“
* **Idea #3:** “*I keep my iPad on the kitchen counter*.”

Perfect.

You’re linking a desired new habit into an existing routine. See why that works? This is how to create habits that stick.