

# ATOMIC HABITS

By James Clear

You don't need to make major changes to your life all at once to have a big impact. Rather, make tiny changes to your behavior, which, when repeated over and over, will become habits that may lead to big results.

## How to Build New Habits

### 1. Make your cues as obvious as possible

#### Change your environment to encourage better habits

We all have cues that trigger certain habits. Since certain stimuli can prompt habitual behavior, you can use this to change your habits. For example, if you want to eat healthier food then put your cut vegetables on the shelf that you see as you open your fridge instead of hiding them in the vegetable drawer.

#### Use implementation intentions (a clear plan of action, setting out when and where you'll carry out the habit you'd like to cultivate).

If you want to build a new habit you must have a clear plan of action. Don't say, "I'm going to start working out". Instead, say "I'll work out on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 7AM for 20 minutes".

An implementation intention introduces a clear plan of action, setting out when and where you'll carry out the habit you'd like to cultivate. Research shows that this is the most effective way to cultivate a new habit.

### 2. Make your habits rewarding

#### Temptation bundling - take a behavior that you want to adopt and link it to a behavior that you enjoy.

Our brain releases dopamine (a hormone that makes us feel good) when we do activities that we enjoy. However, dopamine is also released when we anticipate these activities not only when we actually do them. Therefore, if we make a habit something we look forward to, we'll be much more likely to actually do it. James Clear suggests using "temptation bundling" to do this. Temptation bundling is when you take a behavior that you want to adopt that is unappealing and link it to a behavior that you enjoy (one that will cause your brain to release dopamine). For example, make a decision that you will only watch TV when you are on the treadmill.

### **3. Make the habit as easy as possible to adopt**

#### **Focus on reducing friction**

We prefer to do things that are easy. Therefore, making behaviors as easy as possible is important to turn them into habits. For example, if you want to go for a run then keep your running gear out.

#### **Use the two-minute rule**

The two-minute rule makes any activity feel manageable. The rule recognizes that simply getting started is the first and most important step toward doing something. For example, if you want to read more then don't commit to reading one book every week. Instead, make a habit of reading for two minutes per night. Once you start reading you will probably keep going.

If you want to run, then commit to running for two minutes only. Once you start running you will probably keep going.

### **4. Make your habit satisfying**

The most important rule for behavioral change is to make habits satisfying. This can be difficult since our habits are often beneficial in the long run and we don't always get immediate satisfaction. Therefore, when you are trying to build habits with a long term benefit, try to attach some immediate satisfaction to them. For example, if you want to start losing weight, start saving for something that you really want to buy. Each day that you eat well and/or workout put a dollar (or however much you decide on) into the savings account. You will now get some short term satisfaction each time you put money into your account. This will keep you on track until you reach your long term goals.