

Workbook / Journal

Based on the Book

# ATOMIC HABITS

By James Clear

*The goal of this journal / workbook is not to change all your habits overnight. Instead, the goal is to develop one small habit that will have a big impact on your life. When that habit starts becoming automatic, you can print a new copy of this workbook and work on your next habit. These small changes will accumulate and eventually change your life!*

# CREATE A HABIT SCORECARD

## What are habits?

**Habits are automated behaviors that we've learned from experience.**

When we repeat a behavior many times it becomes habit and happens automatically.

In James Clear's words: "A habit is a behavior that has been repeated enough times to become automatic."

### 1. **Make a list of your daily habits on the next page**

List all things you do on a daily basis and without thinking such as waking up, brushing your teeth, checking your phone, taking a shower, drinking coffee, etc.

### 2. **Look at each behavior and ask yourself if it is a good, bad or neutral habit.**

- If it is a good habit (i.e. it will benefit you in the long run), write "+" next to it.
- If it is a bad habit (i.e. it will have a negative outcome in the long run), write "-" next to it.
- If it is a neutral habit, write "=" next to it.

### 3. **Be aware of your habits**

There is no need to change anything at first. The goal is to simply notice what is actually going on. Observe your thoughts and actions without judgment or internal criticism.

The idea is to get you to recognize your habits and acknowledge the cues that trigger them. This will make it easier to discover which habits you should change and respond in a way that benefits you.



# YOUR IDENTITY

## Your habits shape your identity and vice versa

There are three layers of behavior change:

- a change in your outcomes (i.e. what you get or achieve)
- a change in your processes (i.e. what you do)
- or a change in your identity (i.e. what you believe)

Your current behaviors are simply a reflection of your current identity. The way you behave is a mirror image of the type of person you believe that you are (either consciously or subconsciously). If you want to change your behavior you need to first change your identity (i.e. change the things you believe about yourself).

**The most effective way to change your habits is to focus on who you wish to become, not on what you want to achieve. Make the habit part of your new identity.**

“It is a simple two-step process: Decide the type of person you want to be. Prove it to yourself with small wins.”

“Ask yourself, “Who is the type of person that could get the outcome I want?” Then be that person.

“The real reason habits matter is not because they can get you better results (although they can do that), but because they can change your beliefs about yourself.”

Describe the person you are now in the first column of the table below. Categorize your descriptions into positive beliefs and negative beliefs.

	Who am I today?	Who do I want to be?
Positive Beliefs		

Negative Beliefs		

Sit somewhere quiet and visualize the person you desire to be. Describe this person in the second column above.

Evaluate the negative beliefs described above. List up to three negative beliefs about yourself in the table below. For example, I don't have the willpower to change my eating habits. Mark the negative beliefs that are based on how others perceive you but you do not believe to be true. Describe how you will change each belief.

Negative Beliefs	Describe three negative beliefs about yourself.	How will you change each belief?	Is this belief a result of how others perceive you? Is it true?

List the habits you need to develop or break in order to be the person who you described that you want to be.

Prioritize these habits.

Select the habit that you want to work on first. Ideally, this habit should be one that won't take much effort but will create the greatest impact over time.

The habits I need to develop in order to be the person I want to be	Order of Priority

## THE HABIT YOU ARE GOING TO CHANGE

Think of a new habit that you find difficult to develop or an old habit that you cannot get rid of but one that will result in a change in your life. Ideally this should be the habit that you ranked top priority on the previous page.

This workbook will help you develop or change that habit.

Describe the change you want to make.

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How will your life improve if you are successful?

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List the challenges that you have experienced in the past when you tried to develop this habit.

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Why will it be different this time? How can you overcome obstacles you encountered in the past?

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## BREAK THE HABIT INTO SMALL COMPONENTS

Break the habit into small components.

*For example, if you want to develop healthy eating habits, you may decide what you will eat, how often you will eat, when you eat, how you make your food, what food you keep in your home, etc.*

For each component, identify small changes you need to make to ensure success.

Habit:	COMPONENTS	CHANGES YOU NEED TO MAKE



## HOW ARE HABITS FORMED?

<b>Habit:</b>			
<b>Cue/Trigger</b>	<b>Craving</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Reward</b>

**Every habit is subject to the same process.**

Not all habits are good for us, but the process is the same for both good and bad habits.

Use the table above to describe the cue, trigger, response and reward for the habit you have chosen to focus on.

### Trigger

Habits begin with a cue, or a trigger to act. For example, walking into a dark room, cues you to perform an action that will enable you to be able to see.

### Craving

Next comes a craving for a change in state. In our example, to be able to see.

### Response

Then comes our response, or action. In our example, flicking the light switch.

### Reward

The final step in the process, and the end goal of every habit, is the reward. In this example, being able to see your surroundings. If the reward satisfied you then a positive feedback loop is formed. This tells

your brain, next time this cue happens do the same thing to get the same reward. If you follow this cycle often enough it starts happening without thinking about it. That is the basis of habit formation.

Do you habitually drink coffee every morning? Waking up is your cue, triggering a craving to feel alert. Your response is to drag yourself out of bed and make a cup of coffee. Your reward is feeling alert.

Use the table on the previous page to describe the cue, trigger, response and reward for the habit you have chosen to focus on.

# HOW TO BUILD NEW HABITS

There are four laws of behavior change:

## 1. 1st Law - Make it Obvious

Make your cues as obvious as possible, and you'll be more likely to respond to them.

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, you can change your environment to encourage better habits. If you want to exercise more often then leave your running shoes and gym clothes somewhere where you won't miss them.

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.

Don't spend time in tempting situations. It's easier to avoid temptation than to resist it.

What can you do to make it obvious:

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### USE HABIT STACKING

Identify a habit you already do every day and then stack your new behavior on top. This is called habit stacking. For example, I will do yoga right after I brush my teeth every morning.

How can you use habit stacking to combine your new habit with an existing habit?

After [current habit] \_\_\_\_\_, I will [new habit]  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 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 new habits you must have a clear plan of action. Don't say, "I'm going to start working out," and simply hope that you'll

follow through. Instead, say "I'll work out on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 7 AM 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.

My Plan of Action

WHEN	
WHERE	
WHAT	

## 2. 2nd Law - Make it Attractive

Humans are motivated by the anticipation of reward, so making habits attractive will help you stick to them.

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. That is why planning a vacation is so enjoyable and part of the fun.

We can use this to our advantage when trying to form new habits. If we make a habit something we look forward to, we'll be much more likely to follow through and 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 in general or a specific program that you enjoy when you are on the treadmill.

How can you make your habit attractive?

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How can you use temptation bundling to your advantage?

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After I [new habit] \_\_\_\_\_, I will [reward]

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### 3. 3rd Law - Make it Easy

If you want to build a new habit, make that habit as easy to adopt as possible.

We will naturally gravitate toward the option that requires the least amount of work. Therefore, making behaviors as easy as possible is important to turn them into habits. Create an environment where doing the right thing is as easy as possible. James Clear gives a few tips to make habits seem easier in the long term.

#### **FOCUS ON REDUCING FRICTION**

If you want to do something, then make sure that the supplies are available so that there's no friction involved. For example, if you want to go for a run, then keep your running gear out. If you don't want to waste time on your phone, then don't keep it nearby while you are working or simply turn it off. Doing so will introduce enough friction to ensure you only use it when you need to.

I will:

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## THE TWO-MINUTE RULE

“The Two-Minute Rule states, ‘When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do.’”

This is another way to make any new activity feel manageable. The rule recognizes that simply getting started is the first and most important step toward doing something. If you want to start running then commit to running for two minutes only. Once you start running, you will probably keep going.

I will:

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### **MAKE YOUR HABITS IMMEDIATELY SATISFYING TO HELP YOU CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR.**

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. For example, when we workout every day we will eventually get fitter but we don't see the change every day. On the other hand, bad habits often do have immediate satisfaction such as the enjoyment from eating chocolate.

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 to save for something you really want. 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.

## HOW TO BREAK BAD HABITS

The laws above related to developing a new habit. The following related to getting rid of an old habit.

### 1. Make your cues invisible

We all have cues that trigger certain habits. The buzz of your phone, for example, is a cue to check your messages. If you find yourself wasting a lot of time on social media or on your phone then move your phone away while you are working or put it on silent.

The best way to resist temptation is to avoid it. How can you make the triggers for your bad habits invisible? For example, if you want to change your eating habits then don't keep junk food at home or in your office.

I will:

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### 2. Make your bad habits unappealing

Focus on the benefits of avoiding your bad habits to make them seem unattractive.

“Habits are attractive when we associate them with positive feelings and unattractive when we associate them with negative feelings. Create a motivation ritual by doing something you enjoy immediately before a difficult habit.”

I will:

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### 3. Make the bad habit as difficult as possible

#### FOCUS ON INCREASING FRICTION

For example, if you don't want to waste time on your phone, then don't keep it nearby while you are working or simply turn it off. Doing so will introduce enough friction to ensure you only use it when you need to.

I will:

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### **USE THE TWO-MINUTE RULE**

You can use the two-minute rule to make refraining from something seem manageable. For example, if you are trying to diet and have a craving for chocolate, do something you enjoy for two minutes. The chances are your craving will be over after two minutes if you don't act on it immediately.

I will:

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### **USE A COMMITMENT DEVICE**

This is a choice you make in the present that locks in better behavior in the future. For example, if you want to save money, then you enroll in an automatic savings plan.

"Using technology to automate your habits is the most reliable and effective way to guarantee the right behavior."

I will:

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## **4. Make your habit unsatisfying**

The most important rule for behavioral change is to make bad habits unsatisfying. This can be difficult since bad habits often have immediate satisfaction such as the enjoyment from eating chocolate even if they are unsatisfying in the long run.



## ATTACH SOME IMMEDIATE SATISFACTION TO AVOIDING A BAD HABIT

For example, each day that you don't do your bad habit, put a dollar (or however much you decide on) into a 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.

I will:

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## SUMMARY

The Four Laws of Behavior Change

To Form a Good Habit	To Break a Bad Habit	How can you do this?
Make it obvious	Make it invisible	
Make it attractive	Make it unattractive	
Make it easy	Make it difficult	
Make it satisfying	Make it unsatisfying	

# MINDFULNESS

## Autopilot

Sometime we react to certain things automatically without giving them much thought. For example, when you are trying to develop good eating habits you might eat junk food without thinking about it.

One of the ways to prevent this is by mindfulness. Make an effort to be present during the times you would otherwise be on autopilot.

Describe a bad habit that you do subconsciously or automatically because it has become habit?

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Describe how this makes you feel.

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What can you do to avoid acting on autopilot?

I will:

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List ways on how you can keep yourself mindful and aware of your habits.

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## YOUR ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

One of the factors that influence our behavior and our habits is our environment. Visual cues strongly influence our behavior which is why stores position items that they want us to purchase at eye level. Habit formation begins with a cue. Therefore, if we want to influence our behavior and change our habits we should arrange our environment so that we see the things related to the habit we want to develop. For example, if you want to exercise more then put your workout gear somewhere where you will see it. If you want to eat more vegetables then put them at eye level in your fridge.

How can you arrange your environment to help you develop your habit?

I will:

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What can you do to make your cues visible?

I will:

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Go ahead and arrange your environment. Describe the changes you made.

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## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

### The Role of Family and Friends in Shaping Your Habits

“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.”

“If a behavior can get us approval, respect, and praise, we find it attractive.”

Look for people who succeeded in developing the same habit and learn from their experience.

I will:

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List the things you can do or change. For each item on your list, mark what you consider manageable and identify what will make it work. For example, if you need a list of exercises that you can do then add a list of simple exercises that you enjoy doing. You can add a link to a YouTube video for each workout.

I will:

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## MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

A habit tracker is an effective technique to keep your habits on track since one of the most satisfying feelings is the feeling of making progress. "Habit trackers and other visual forms of measurement can make your habits satisfying by providing clear evidence of your progress."

James clear suggests that you never miss twice. If you miss one day, try to get back on track as quickly as possible.

Mark the habit tracker below. Don't break the chain. Try to keep your habit streak going for as long as possible.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1												
2												
3												
4												
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6												
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## HABIT CONTRACT

A habit contract is a good framework to keep your habits on track since it imposes negative consequences if you fail to do so.

Use the habit contract below. In the habit contract, you will commit to doing something and you will identify specific habits that will help you reach that goal.

You then set up penalties for not doing those things. Once you have completed it, sign it and get two people you respect to sign it as well. Choose people who you will not want to disappoint or lose face in front of if you don't do what you commit to doing.

# HABIT CONTRACT



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**My goal is**

\_\_\_\_\_

**To reach this goal I will do the following:**

(for each habit, state what you will do, when and where)



- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Penalty: If I do not do the things above then**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature