

Premise - Atomic Habits is not an academic research paper, but an operating manual. It synthesises the best ideas on habits in a way that makes them highly actionable.

It starts by setting out the **Fundamentals of habits**, explaining why and how tiny changes make a big difference under the headings of:

- **The Surprising Power of Atomic Habits**
- **How Your Habits Shape Your Destiny**
- **How to Build Better Habits in Four Easy Steps**

It then provide practical advice on **how to create good habits and break bad habits** using the **Four Laws of Behavioural Change**:

1. **Make it Obvious**
2. **Make it Attractive**
3. **Make it Easy**
4. **Make it Satisfying**

It concludes by outlining **Advanced Tactics** - how to go from being merely good to being truly great.

The Surprising Power of Atomic Habits

An atomic habit is a regular practice or routine that is not only small and easy to do, but also the source of incredible power – a component of the system of compound growth.

The ultimate purpose of habits is to solve the problems of life with as little energy and effort as possible. We convince ourselves that massive success requires massive action. However, success is the product of daily habits, not once in a lifetime transformations.

Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. The same way that money multiplies through compound interest, the effect of your habits multiply as you repeat them.

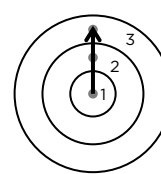
What matters most is whether your habits are putting you on the path towards success – you should be more concerned with your trajectory than with your results.

How Your Habits Shape Your Identity (and Vice Versa)

The most effective way to change your habits is to **focus not on what you want to achieve, but on who you wish to become**. Your identity emerges out of your habits; every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs and to upgrade and expand your identity.

There are three layers of behavioural change: a change in your outcomes (3), a change in your processes (2), or a change in your identity (1). With identity based habits, the focus is on who you wish to become.

Identity-Based Habits



Please forward this summary to friends / colleagues for their private educational purposes.

Obviously, I still recommend that you purchase and read it plus other seminal books I've summarised, including ...

Happy reading,

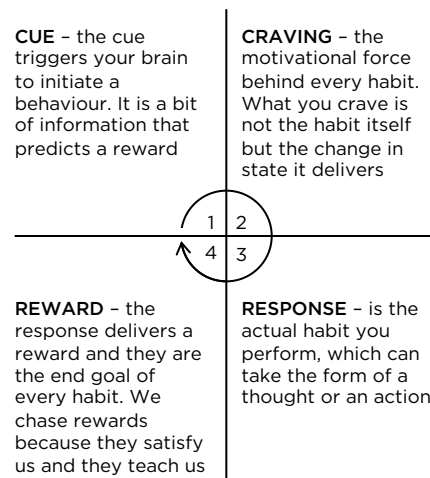
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How to Build Better Habits in Four Easy Steps

The process of building a habit can be divided into four simple steps: cue, craving, response and reward. This four-step process is the backbone of every habit, and your brain runs through these steps in the same order each time.

The Habit Loop



The four stages of habit are best described as a feedback loop. They form an endless cycle that is running every moment you are alive. This 'habit loop' is continually scanning the environment, predicting what will happen next, trying out different responses, and learning from the results.

The author has transformed these four steps into a practical framework that we can use to design good habits and eliminate bad ones

The author refers to this framework as the **Four Laws of Behaviour Change**, which provides a simple set of rules for creating good habits and breaking bad habits.

Each law can be thought of as a lever that influences human behaviour. When the levers are in the right positions, creating good habits is effortless. When they are in the wrong positions, it is nearly impossible.

The key to creating good habits and breaking bad ones is to understand the fundamental laws and how to alter them to your specifications. Every goal is doomed to fail if it goes against the grain of human nature.

The Four Laws of Behaviour Change and suggestions on how to create good habits and break bad habits are outlined on the right.

The Four Fundamental Laws of Behaviour Change

	The 1st Law Make it Obvious	The 2nd Law Make it Attractive	The 3rd Law Make it Easy	The 4th Law Make it Satisfying
How to create a good habit	<p>The process of creating good habits starts with awareness: you need to be aware of your habits before you can change them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Habits Scorecard to become more aware of your behaviour: a) list out your habits; b) ask yourself how they will benefit you in the long-term Note: you don't need to change anything, just notice what is going on; • Use implementation intentions: "I will [behaviour] at [time] in [location]"; • To pair a new habit with an existing habit, you can habit stack: "After [current habit], I will [new habit]"; and • Design your environment to make the cues of good habits obvious and visible. 	<p>The more attractive an opportunity is, the more likely it is to become habit-forming. It is the anticipation of a reward, not the fulfillment of it, that gets us to take action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use temptation bundling: Pair an action you want to do with an action you need to do; • Place yourself in an environment and culture where your desired behaviour is the norm, and where you already have something in common with the group; and • Create a motivation ritual: do something you enjoy immediately before a difficult habit. 	<p>Human behaviour follows the Law of Least Effort: we will naturally gravitate toward the option that requires the least amount of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce friction by decreasing the number of steps between you and your good habits; • Prepare your environment to make future action easier; • Master the decisive moment by optimising the small choices that deliver outsized impact; • Downscale your habits until they can be done in two minutes or less: When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do, e.g. "Run three miles" becomes "tie my running shoes"; and • Automate your habits by investing in technology and onetime purchases that lock in future behaviour. 	<p>We are more likely to repeat a behaviour where the experience is satisfying.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use reinforcement: give yourself an immediate reward when you complete your habit: Select short-term rewards that are aligned with your long-term vision and the habit you're trying to form (e.g. don't reward yourself with cake for going to the gym). • Use a habit tracker: a visual form of measurement can make your habits satisfying by providing clear evidence of your progress: Keep track of your habit stream and 'don't break the chain' • Never miss twice: when you forget to do a habit, make sure you get back on track immediately.
How to break a bad habit	<p>Make it invisible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce your exposure to the cue that causes bad habits to eliminate it, e.g. if you can't get any work done, leave your phone in another room for a few hours. 	<p>Make it Unattractive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe your mindset: highlight the benefits of avoiding your bad habits to make it seem unattractive. 	<p>Make it Difficult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase friction by increasing the number of steps between you and your bad habits; and • Use a commitment device (a choice you make in the present to lock in better behaviour in the future): Restrict your future choices to the ones that benefit you. 	<p>Make it Unsatisfying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get an accountability partner: ask someone to watch your behaviour; and • Create a habit contract: a verbal or written agreement in which you state your commitment to a particular habit, and the punishment that will occur if you don't follow through, making the costs of your bad habits public and painful.

Advanced Tactics

To take your habits to the next level – to go from being merely good to being great:

- Choose habits which align with your natural abilities, and play a game which favours your strengths
- Work on tasks that are right on the edge of their current abilities – this is when you will experience peak motivation (the Goldilocks Rule).

As the greatest threat to success is not failure, but boredom which occurs when habits are not challenging.

- Reflect and review regularly – this allows you to remain conscious of your performance over time

While the upside of habits is that we can do things without thinking, the downside is that we stop paying attention to little errors.

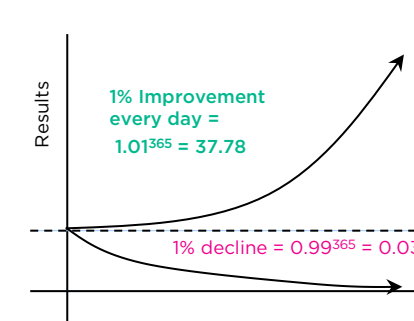
In Conclusion

The Holy Grail of habit change is not a single 1% improvement, but a thousand of them. It's a bunch of atomic habits stacking up, each one a fundamental unit of the overall system.

Success is not a goal to reach or a finish line to cross. It is a system to improve, an endless process to refine.

The secret to getting results that last is to never stop making improvements. It's remarkable what you can build if you just don't stop.

The Impact of 1% Better Every Day



The effects of small habits compound over time. For example, if you can get just 1% better every day, you will end up with results that are nearly 38 times better after one year.

BUILDING SYSTEMS, NOT GOALS

Focusing on the overall system, rather than a single goal, is one of the core themes of the book. Atomic habits are little habits that are part of a larger system – the building blocks of remarkable results.

The prevailing wisdom claims that the best way to achieve what we want is to set specific, actionable goals. However, goals are about the results you wish to achieve. Systems are about the processes that lead to those results. Goals are good for setting a direction, but systems are best for making process.

A handful of problems arise when you spend too much time thinking about your goals and not enough time designing your systems:

Problem 1: Winners and Losers have the Same Goals

Goal setting suffers from a serious case of survivorship bias. It isn't the goal that propels a person to success. The goal has always been there – it's only when people implement a system of continuous small improvements that they achieved a different outcome.

Problem 2: Achieving a Goal is Only a Momentary Change

Achieving a goal only changes your life for a moment. We think we need to change our results, but the results are not the problem. What we really need to change are the systems that cause those results. In order to improve for good, you need to solve problems at the systems level. Fix the inputs and the outputs will fix themselves.

Problem 3: Goals Restrict your Happiness

The implicit assumption behind any goal is: "Once I reach my goal then I'll be happy." The problem with a goals-first mentality is that you're continually putting happiness off until the next milestone. A systems-first mentality provides the antidote. When you fall in love with the process rather than the product, you don't have to wait to give yourself permission to be happy. You can be satisfied anytime your system is running. And a system can be successful in many different forms, not just the one you first envision.

Problem 4: Goals are at Odds with Long-Term Progress

The purpose of setting goals is to win the game. The purpose of building systems is to continue playing the game. True long-term thinking is goal-less thinking. It's not about any single accomplishment. It is about the cycle of endless refinement and continuous improvement. Ultimately, it is your commitment to the process that will determine your progress.