

# Atomic Habits

BY JAMES CLEAR

## 1

### CUE: MAKE THE HABIT OBVIOUS




**Get clear:** "At [Y:YY a.m.], when I am in [XYZ location], I will [XYZ]."

**Habit-stack:** Make a new habit easier by attaching it to an existing habit (like washing the toilet while the shower heats up).

**Prime your environment:** Drink more water by setting out water bottles.

Anne Thorndike, a doctor at Mass General Hospital in Boston, optimized how many people in the cafeteria chose water over soda. All they did was make water readily available in the environment, and soda sales dropped 11.4% while bottled water sales increased 25%. She merely added water, and put available water at more touchpoints. That was it. No coercion, no "please drink water" signs.



**Why "atomic" habits?**  
Because microscopic changes, over time, yield big results.



Consider British cycling in the 2000s. Coach Dave Brailsford used a concept called aggregation of marginal gains.



By looking for small, 1% improvements (wind resistance, tires, even proper hand-washing techniques to avoid illness), British cycling eventually became a championship powerhouse.



## 2

### CRAVING: MAKE THE HABIT ATTRACTIVE



**"Temptation bundle":** Stack the habit with something else you already enjoy. One programmer hooked up his Netflix to his bike so he could only binge-watch shows while exercising.

**Join social clubs** where difficult things are the norm. Social reinforcement makes even unpleasant things attractive.

**Ritualize it:** If you want to make a difficult task more appealing, create a ritual that gets you in the mood for it first.

## 3

### EASE: MAKE NEW HABITS EASY TO PERFORM



**Do it often before you do it perfect.** Use a "two-minute rule" to begin with habit-forming "reps." It's more important that you establish the habit before you optimize it.

**Get your reps in,** even if the habit is stupid-easy at first.

**Reduce friction.** Find any automation, elimination, or simplification that makes it easier to start your tiny new habit.



A photography professor tried an experiment. One set of students would be graded on the volume of pictures they produced. Another set of students would be graded on one, super-special photograph.

Invariably, the professor said, it was the *high-volume* group who ended up producing the best pictures. They'd had the most practice.

Start with volume. Optimize later.

## 4

### REWARD: MAKE YOUR NEW HABITS SATISFYING



**Create a personal "loyalty" program.** Every time you perform your habit, give yourself a visual sign of progress—think the way teachers give children gold stars.

**Measure your progress.** Habit tracking helps you calibrate your progress and gives you the rewarding feeling of momentum.

**Game-ify your progress.** Games addict us through level-ups and little "ding" rewards along the way. Use this power for good!

### The Jar Method



One stockbroker in Canada found a way to make his unpleasant sales calls rewarding: he'd set out two jars, one full of 120 paperclips. Every call he completed, he moved a paperclip to the other jar.



This made it possible to watch progress and feel a small "ding" of reward for each call. He stuck to the habit and was soon making six figures in his early 20s.



## For more...

Buy James's book:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Atomic-Habits-Proven-Build-Break/dp/0735211299>



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