



7 Simple Habits That Will Change Your Life

I've spent years trying out mind hacks to improve my life. I've kept a journal, a planner, an online planner, dozens of to-do lists, alarms, reminder, text messages, forms to track my progress... You get the idea.

Most of them failed. It's why I'm sitting in a coffee shop writing rather than finishing up my law degree like a good boy...

A few habits stuck out as habits that really changed my life. These are all things I'm doing today. The older ones are true game changers, and you know this by the fact that I'm still doing them (like habit #1).

This list is hardly exhaustive. I wrote some 20 habits, then cut out most of them to give you something more actionable. Some will work for you and some won't. Try em out. Fail a few times. Curse my name with your fist raised in the air. I don't care. I just want you to enjoy life and give back a little. So read on, and let me know if it's helpful.

1. Write 5 things you're grateful for



Bubbles!

A closely related one is journaling for 3 minutes about something positive that happened within 24 hours. This simple habit is powerful. Every moment in our life, we're focusing on just a few things.

We can take a positive, neutral, or negative focus. By listing things you're grateful for, you're training your brain to recognize all the blessings in your life. Studies show that being happy can increase your effectiveness by up to 50%. Happiness is not a condition of our environment, but rather a choice that we have control over. By sticking to this habit, you'll start to have more control over your level of happiness in your life.

By having a journal to write the things you're grateful for, you'll easily transition into more journaling. It's powerful to have a running tally of what's going on in your life. You can reflect on things you loved, how you want to improve the next day, and write down things you want to remember. All of that gets much easier when you have this habit down. It takes away the fear of staring at a blank page.

As you do this habit and stick with it, you might experience profound joy and understanding. I remember being on a flight back to Minneapolis one year. I could not get over how beautiful everything looked. I stared at my napkin, overwhelmed by the labor of love that created that small sheet of paper. Kids and babies laughed and played around me. I felt so grateful to be around so much life. I started crying, blessed to be able to experience such joy. The more I felt my gratefulness, the more I cried. I felt truly free. It was one of the most powerful experiences of my life. And it all started with this habit.

Here's a [TED talk](#) going into the importance of happiness.

2. Take breaks



It's all too much...

My first semester of law school sucked. I sat around the library until 2 or 3am most nights. I had a deep fear of not getting my work done for class. Slacking off came with consequences. Some professors called on students randomly, looking for the few who failed to do the reading.

Little did I know that I hurt myself more by trying to do it all. Every day I kept a very tight schedule and made a resolution in my mind. *You're not leaving until you get all your reading done*, I told myself. Every time, it felt like a huge task. I procrastinated on it. Subconsciously, I gave myself all day to work on my readings. This made it easier to put my work off. I hopped onto YouTube, thinking I'd just work after this... one... video... 10 videos later, I convinced myself I'd watch just... one... more... You know where the story goes.

Staying up so late, I felt tired and confused the next day. I missed class. This made working harder the next day. It resulted in a downward spiral.

Everything changed my second year. I committed to quit at 7pm every single day. No matter how much work was left. I never took work home, except for 1 or 2 times I needed to write a paper. During my time at the library, I studied so much better. I used the time I had, since I knew I had limited time. It's definitely a bit nerve-racking. But you give yourself, your brain, and your body a chance to rest and recover. Then you're firing full force the next day.

It's one of the best ways to stop a downward spiral immediately and turn it around.

During the day, I also limited the time I spent on a single task. First I tried working for an hour and 20 minutes straight. That was too long. Now I sit for no longer than 50 minutes, then take a 10

minute break. It seems so counter intuitive. But what matters with your work is not how much time you put in. What matters is the quality of the time, THEN getting more time out.

Anyways, take breaks. Make time to stop working. Now, I spend Saturdays eating junk food and watching YouTube videos. Having a dedicated junk day makes it easier to spend more energy focusing the rest of the week.

3. Keep a running list of articles you love

I read articles all the time. I get confused about where to save article I love. I saved them as bookmarks. Made folders. Shared them. It got way too messy and confusing.

So I created an [article sheet](#). Articles I love go straight into the sheet. The link goes first, then a short blurb about the article from my memory. This tests my knowledge and forces me to reflect on what I read. Only the most important parts of the article are written down. The blurb sinks the article deeper into memory. Searching the list becomes easier with the blurb. It's a lot better than clicking on random links and reading everything again.

When I've got someone I want to share some useful info with, I just go back to my list and scroll through to pick something relevant and helpful for them. Life is much better with this database of knowledge at your fingertips. You'll love it once you start.

4. Ask 5 powerful and life-affirming questions every morning

We think by asking ourselves questions. Some questions bring us down and break us. *Why me? Why am I failing over and over again? Why am I so stupid?* No matter who asks themselves those questions, they'll have a hard time coming up with a positive response.

What are 5 things I'm grateful for? What small things can I do today to make this a day that I'll remember forever? What's one thing I can do today that will impact the people in my life and change their lives for the better? Even if you're having a crappy day, you'll come up with great answers. That's cuz these are great questions.

You can write them down on a sheet of paper, and keep it next to your bed. Tape it on the wall even.



There's no pressure to have perfect questions the first time. Think of some emotional states you want. Passion, excitement, gratefulness, focus. Then, come up with questions that encourage that emotional state. Spend a few minutes coming up with questions. Cross them off and make new ones. If you come across an amazing question, write it down somewhere and replace an older one.

Answering the questions every morning will put you in a powerful state. As you stick with it, your mind starts thinking of those questions and answers subconsciously. Watch as your life expands.

5. Write down 10 ideas every day.

Ideas are the currency of our economy today. They spread, change lives, and continue growing with each share. Having great ideas is a powerful ability.

I'm probably just speaking out of my ass (I am). But there's a frikin' [global conference](#) around spreading good ideas, so there.

Stop making excuses about not having good enough ideas. Instead, exercise your idea muscle to make it stronger.



The exact moment I decided to do this... Click [this](#) for the video.

James Altucher does this. Grab 100 waiter pads. You can write 10 ideas on each page, and fill one up every day. Over the following months, you'll be able to come up with better and better ideas. When someone's wondering what type of business to work on, you can start yelling out ideas. Solar-powered battery pack! Build a bear for laptops! App to track your word count, no matter what you're writing! Customer feedback app!

Or you can just yell. Either one works.

6. Read 1 page a night

Everyone wants to read more (to the best of my knowledge). We make huge goals and then wonder why we never follow through. The problem is they're too damn big.

With reading, I started reading seriously again when I made the decision to read every time I went to take a dump. Weird as it sounds, I read much more.

You don't need to take books with you into the bathroom. But having 5 minutes carved out each night to read one page will turn reading into a habit. Over the course of a few weeks and months, you'll wonder how you lived without reading each night. You'll have the habit down, and can focus on improving your reading speeds at that point.

7. Apply the 80/20 rule

Each Sunday for an hour, I ask myself the following. *What are 20% of my actions or people that lead to 80% of my happiness and positive outcomes? What are 20% of actions or people that lead to 80% of my unhappiness and bad outcomes?* For each question, I come up with a list of about 10-11 things. There's no limit or minimum. I just feel comfortable with that amount.

I go back over the list and write out what I need to do to keep each item going or improve it. *How can I turn it into a system?*

After reviewing the list, I pick 1 or 2 from each to focus on, and create a system around it.

Last time I did this, I created a clear morning routine. Normally I wasted time in the morning by not knowing what I needed to do next. During the exercise I thought through my actions in the morning. I wanted to do meditation, answer my powerful questions, and visualize success. I also wanted to workout, take vitamins, and have a protein shake within 30 minutes of waking up. Then I needed to take a shower and get ready.

Three actions became clear. The meditation, questions, and visualizing needed to happen first thing as I woke up, in my bed. Then, I needed to drink protein within 30 minutes, giving me 20 minutes for the first 3 steps. After that, I could work out, and then take my vitamins as a treat and rest. Working out scared me and took a lot of time since I didn't know what workout to do. So I wrote out another sheet with a work out for each day. This way I balanced my workout. Changing the workout became as simple as changing the sheet. This ensured I saved time and gave each workout my all without having to worry about missing any muscle groups.

The next logical step was getting ready for the day. I wrote out the final three steps of taking a colder shower, getting ready, and then doing my paath. Having three actions with 3 steps each made it much easier to look at and digest every morning. Typed it up, printed it, and cut the sheet into three pieces. I taped the first one on the foot of my bed, the workout one on a cupboard in the kitchen (near the protein), and the final one next to my closet. This gave me a single place to look for each action. Within the next two weeks, I easily flowed through my morning routine. I hardly needed the steps since my mind memorized them from seeing them all the time. Now, within 2 hours of waking up, I'm fully dressed, worked out, meditated, and have visualized success in any endeavor I might be trying out. It's amazing what a little time spent thinking can do...

There's a lot of info here. Some of these took years to develop. As I focused on setting up systems, habits became much easier to implement over the course of a few months or weeks.

If you want to adopt any of these habits into your own life, try following these steps:

WARNING! BEFORE trying these steps, you need the belief you can. Having a strong self-image is cornerstone to success. Even if you believe you can't, lie to yourself that you can. Keep telling yourself you're capable until you believe it. That alone will make this exercise much more effective.

1. Download this article, print it, then email it to a friend
2. Choose one habit to focus on for 21 days
3. Think about when and where you'll practice it. EX: read 1 page before sleeping, in bed... Do an 80/20 analysis on Sunday at home at 5pm... etc.
4. Think through what might keep you from keeping up with the habit, and remove any possible blocks. EX: with reading, you need your book by your bed. For the 80/20 analysis, you need a document on your computer to write in.
5. Set up some tracking mechanism. Lift.do has a great app to use to keep track. Or you can just re-visit it by putting a reminder in your calendar 21 days out.

And that's it! These are suggestions to get you started. You'll probably fail. When you fail, keep trying. Figure out what went wrong, and give it another shot.

The most successful people fail more than most people ever try. So get to failing.

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Say hello! Send me an email at Sukhneet@artofchange.co and let me know how I can help.