Habit Building Guide

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Intro/TLDR;

Habits aren't worth shit. They've become this ridiculous, compulsory task, the purpose of which seems to be to make yourself feel guilty for missing a day, and so stressing yourself into ticking the boxes for a week or two until one blank box is enough to demoralise you into giving up.

Habits aren't for habits sake. Habits are for doing more of something you believe will make you happier in the long run. They're a good thing that hustle culture has turned shitty.

Do a thing, repeatedly, if you think it'll make your life better. Missing a day is fine. Cause it's not about repetition, it's about making your life better. You may as well keep going the next day, or the day after that.

The point of practising a habit is to make it easier for yourself to take an action that you believe enriches your life. It is to do the same thing routinely until it becomes second nature, so that we don't really need to think about doing the valuable thing.

Don't start a habit for the sake of the habit. Do it's because it makes life better. Do it repeatedly because the benefit is compounding. And acknowledge that sticking with shit is HARD. But you *want* to anyway, to make life better.

Habit Definition

Before we go any further, we need to be on the same page about what defines a habit.

The point of a habit is to develop an automatic action that takes little to no effort because of its familiarity, resulting in easy repetition of a valuable behaviour.

- A simple, straightforward activity
- Undertaken automatically
- As a result of repetition over time.

AND WHICH:

- Has a clear trigger
- That represents the instigation of an activity.

For example, 'working out', is not a habit, because it involves many more steps than is implied by the term, 'working out'. In reality you'll need to get ready, leave, travel, arrive, workout, leave, travel.

Any single one or two of those things might be able to be undertaken automatically, but one cannot say that 'working out' happened automatically when it takes so many steps to actually begin working out.

And by calling it a habit you're setting yourself up for failure because you will never get to the point where the action happens automatically (you will never just find yourself in the middle of a workout at the gym).

Once again, the point of a habit is to develop an automatic action that takes little to no effort because of its familiarity, resulting in easy repetition of a valuable behaviour. 'Working out' will never be that. Getting ready & leaving for the gym, however, could become a habit—and a very valuable one.

If you develop the automatic behaviour of getting ready and leaving for the gym first thing every morning, you'll probably end up working out a whole lot more—even if its not always a perfect workout. If you leave for the gym, you'll tick off your habit.

These will be the definitional foundations we'll work from throughout this guide.

Note: A habit is repeated through the *response* to the trigger. If you have responded to the trigger, you have reinforced the habit. Therefore you should mark the habit as complete for the day. E.g. Going for a walk after breakfast. If you begin the walk, **the habit has been reinforced**—whether you completed the walk or not.

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Your Why

Essential to this process is gaining clarity on *why* you're picking a habit--on the purpose for which you choose to build the habits you do.

If, '*doing **more** of something **valuable***', is the fundamental goal, the question arises—what makes a habit valuable? The answer is fairly straightforward. Impact.

What impact will the habit have in my life? What will this habit achieve for you, over time? How great will its impact be? Thus the purpose of the habit you're choosing to prioritise and track is essential. WHY do you want to make this activity a habit? How will it benefit you to make this a habit?

These are all questions you can ask to help identify whether the habit you're thinking about making is worth the time and energy that goes into developing consistency. Establish a clear **why**. *Why am a building this habit? Why do I want to be consistent with this?*

Without a clear vision of why you're giving attention to this thing, in the moments when developing consistency is more challenging you'll have nothing to prop you up and keep you moving. Habit-building shouldn't be taken lightly.

Be frugal with your habit-building. My recommendation is build no more than 2 at a time.

Choosing Habits

If the WHY underlying your habits is so important, and habits shouldn't be chosen lightly, how do you pick which habits are worth your time and energy?

This question can be answered by another simple question. *Which habit will do the best job of serving my why? Which will be MOST impactful?*

If you have a few ideas of what might work, my suggestion would be to give them all a go a few times; experiment to explore the value and impact of each. Beyond that, there are a few criteria you can use to figure out whether the habit you're thinking of is a good, impactful one—fit for purpose.

Criteria to assess a good habit:

- Doesn't require you to significantly change mode or context (leaving for the gym at X time, vs. just 'working out', which would require you to make it all the way to the gym just to tick the box).
- Has a specific trigger (you undertake the habit at 1:00pm, or when you when you wake up, or after a meal)
- Has a clear purpose or benefit in your life, that you can articulate confidently in one sentence.

The Cornerstone

The goal of habit-tracking is not to build a perfect routine. It is not to keep adding new habits because they make you feel productive or successful. The goal of habit-tracking is to help you build the neural pathways that result in you doing something with ease.

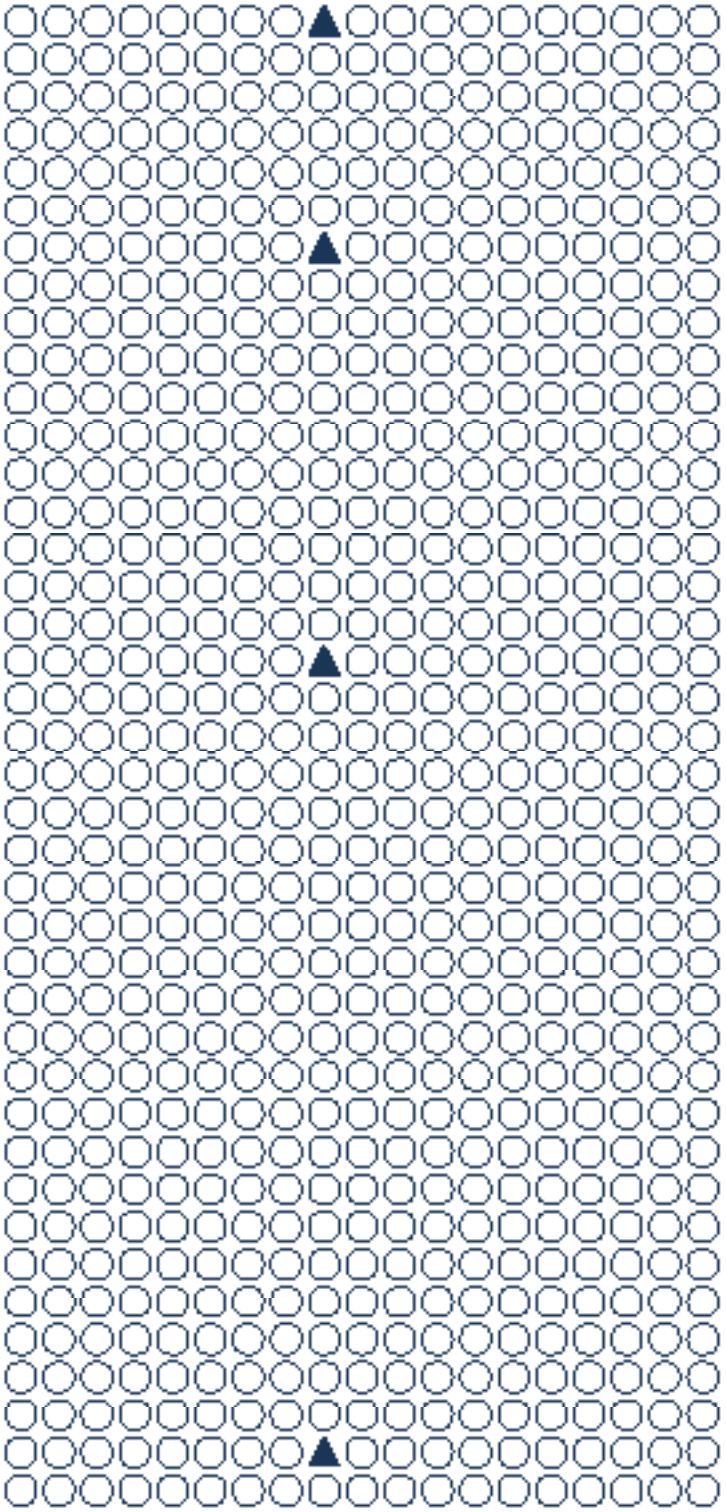
And why do we want to be able to do certain things with ease? **Because we feel they would benefit our life so much that its worth putting the effort in to make them a consistent part of our day.**

In other words, habit-tracking is a tool we use to help facilitate actions we feel would be beneficial. We use habit-tracking for habit-making, meaning the tracking serves a bigger purpose. It is not an end unto itself. And if we get so caught up in tracking the habits, and how consistent we're being, that in our perfectionism we *abandon* the habit altogether... well, then we've missed the point entirely.

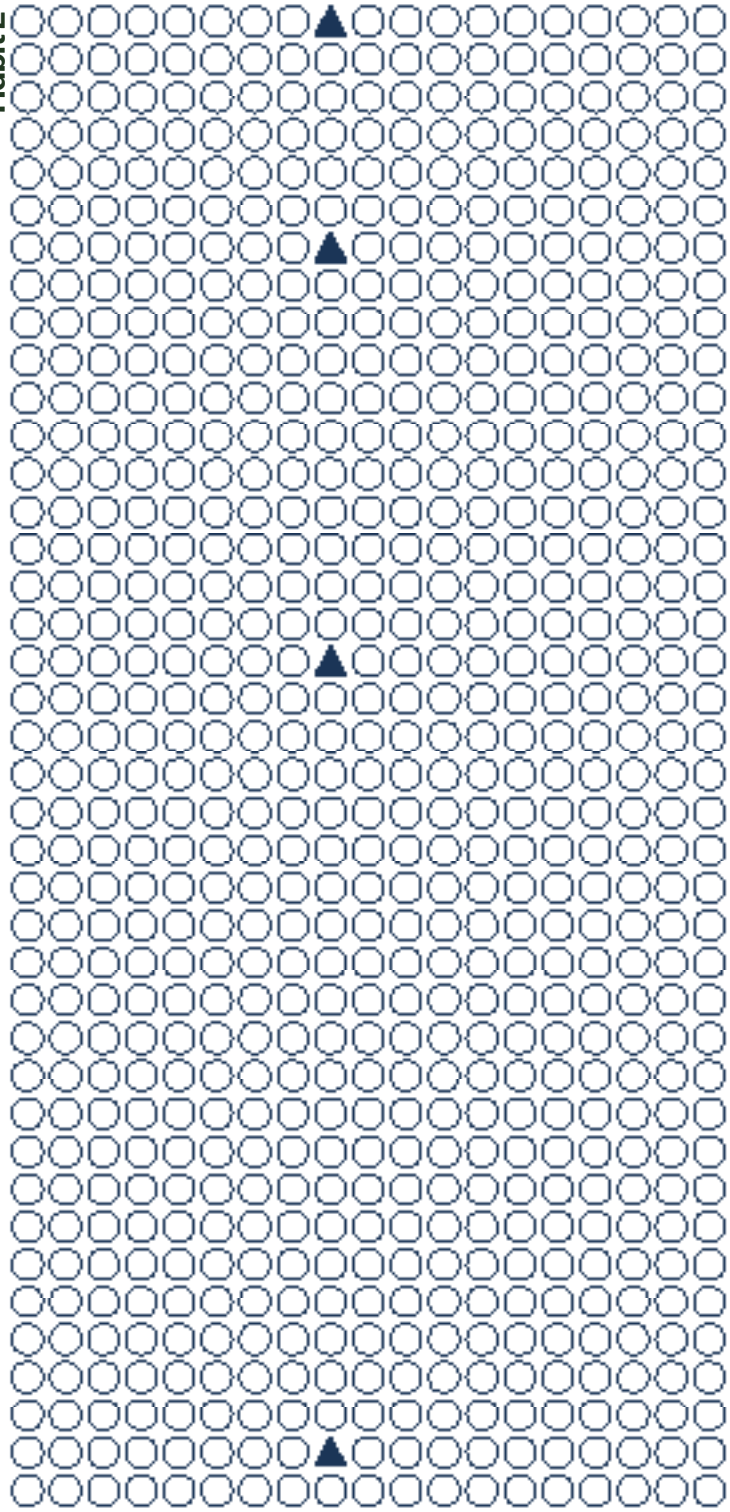
The goal was always just to do *more* of something *valuable*. This is your cornerstone. If your habit-tracking doesn't boil down to this, and your habit-building decisions aren't centred on this, you've forgotten why you came here in the first place.

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Habit 1



Habit 2



anti-failure habit tracking

Fill in one circle for each day you complete the habit (even if you perform the habit more than once a day).

Fill in additional circles according to your Streak Level (see graph below).

For each day you miss in a row, your streak level decreases by 1.

▲ = Difficulty Level Up. See document description (page 2) for more info.

If you haven't completed the habit once in the last 45 days, start over.

Each grid to the left is a separate habit. Recommended to develop only two habits, each of high impact and value.

Streak Level:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Days in a row:	3	10	19	30	43	58	75	95
Circles p/ day:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Difficulty Levels:

Difficulty Levels of building a habit:

Hard: ~8 Circles: I'm not in the habit, I don't trust myself, I'm stressed about failure. THIS IS HARD.

Very Hard: ~125 Circles: I'm not in the habit, I don't trust myself, I'm stressed about failure, I already want to give up, I believe this shouldn't be this hard, I'm tired of this. I'm not good enough. THIS IS VERY HARD.

Medium: ~250 Circles: I'm kind of in the habit, I guess I'm CAPABLE of doing this, but I often don't *feel* like it and it's tiring! And I'm bored! THIS IS LAME.

Low: ~500 Circles: I guess this is a habit... but there are sometimes days I really don't want to do it. And there are days when I haven't been able to and it's made me want to give up. I'm good at it, but it's not really hard. At worst it's boring sometimes, but other times I feel motivated and pleased. The longer I've done this the more often that has been.

Easy: ~1000 Circles: This is who I am. This is what I do. If I don't do it my identity doesn't change. I will return to it because it is who I am.

Good Habits

- Gratitude phone call after lunch
- Specific breakfast mealtime
- Bedtime ritual starting at a time
- Healthy snack jar when feeling snacky
- Reading on the train
- Make weekly task list on Sunday afternoon
- Write daily to-do plan before dinner
- Re-write big goals down when you wake up
- Listen to a useful audiobook when cooking
- Practice one guitar riff after completed tasks

Mediocre Habits

- Working out (Too many tasks in one)
- Journalling (Be specific. About what? When?)
- Meditate (Be specific. When? What kind?)
- Complete to-do list (meets NO habit criteria)
- Drink 3L of water (All at once?? No trigger, multiple tasks, completion dependent.)
- Practice guitar (What specifically? When?)

Missed Days

You are going to miss days. That is inevitable. There may also be periods where you stop for a period of weeks or months. The challenge is continuing when you have.

This habit tracker has been designed to make that easier, by not visualising the missed days. However, it will still be a challenge not to catastrophise and give up altogether.

Unfortunately, the best I can offer as advice on this front is to remember that you are doing this to make your life better, because you perceive these habits as highly valuable. NOT because you must. NOT because you 'should'. Because you want to. So continue doing the thing you want to do when you remember to do it, and have grace for yourself when you forget.

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