



Worksheet

# Building New Habits

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# Building New Habits

## Worksheet

It takes time, effort, and dedication to create and build new habits. However, it's never too late to break bad habits and create new healthier habits in their place. If you're looking for some practical steps for creating and maintaining new habits, this worksheet can help get you started.

### **The purpose of this worksheet is to:**

- To introduce you to the differences between goals and habits and how they work together
- To help you understand how using habits is a way to encourage consistency and maintain progress
- To help you learn how to create a “habit plan” so you can establish and stick to new habits

### **Instructions**

Included you will find a “habit plan”. Use the instructions, examples and template provided to create your own plan. Once you have filled out your plan, we encourage you to keep it somewhere visible so you are reminded to work on your habit. Check on your progress each week, and make adjustments as required.

### **Goals are different than habits.**

Goals are outcomes, such as “getting healthy.” Habits are the actions you take to achieve a goal. For example, eating vegetables with each meal and exercising every day.

### **Start with small changes.**

Make incremental changes toward the behavior you want, and work your way up from there. Even if you improve at something only 1% every week, the changes that accumulate over months or years are massive.

### **Set yourself up for success.**

Make changes that encourage your new habit and discourage unwanted habits. If you would like to eat healthier, keep a bowl of fruit on the counter, and put unhealthy snacks out of sight.

### **Tie new habits to other activities.**

Make a plan using the format: “*After , I will .*” For example: “*After each meal, I will read for 5 minutes.*” This is a simple way to remember your habit each day and encourage consistency

### **Some progress is better than no progress.**

Even if you don’t have a lot of time or energy, do something toward building your habit. Too tired for a long walk? Walk for 5 minutes. Too busy to read a whole chapter? Read one page. Consistency builds habits.

## **Track your habit.**

Keep a journal, calendar, or spreadsheet to record your habit each time you practice. It can be satisfying to record your behavior, and to look back and see all the hard work you've put in. Plus, it can be motivating to keep a habit streak alive.

## **Get some support.**

Things always seem easier when we have someone to cheer us on. Tell someone about your new habit. Perhaps you and a friend can work towards building the same new habit together. Doing so creates accountability and makes it more difficult to back out of your commitment. Also, once others know you're working toward a goal, they may offer you the encouragement you need to stay motivated and focused.

## **Celebrate your successes.**

Healthy habits tend to have long-term benefits that take time to kick in. While you're waiting for these, give yourself immediate, small rewards to sustain motivation. Just make sure they don't contradict your goals.

## **Be kind (but firm) with yourself.**

We all have bad days, or even a bad week. It's okay to stumble. Be kind and patient with yourself. Give yourself permission to try, try, try again. Remember, just because things don't always work out the way you want, doesn't mean you have to lose sight of your goals. You can always change the plan - not your goals - to move forward.

## HABIT PLAN

Developing new healthy habits is an important part of working towards accomplishing our long-term goals. For example, the goal of “improving your health” cannot be achieved without creating and maintaining habits such as healthy eating or exercising.

**Creating a Habit Plan will help get you started.**

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Step 1: Connect your new habit to an existing habit.

Tying new habits to things you already do is an effective way to make them part of your routine. Instead of planning to “go for a walk later”, plan to “go for a walk right after dinner every evening”.

After existing habit, I will new habit.

#### Step 2: Reward success.

When you are successful, treat yourself to a small reward. Rewards should not contradict your habit (e.g. a big dessert for eating a healthy meal), and they should be something you can do regularly. Even small rewards will reinforce a new habit.

After new habit, I will reward.

### EXAMPLES

**Step 1:** After I brush my teeth at night, I will do 10 stretches.

**Step 2:** After I do 10 stretches, I will relax for 30 minutes.

**Step 1:** After I get on the bus to work, I will read for 10 minutes.

**Step 2:** After I read, I will listen to music.

\*Print off this sheet and create your HABIT PLAN

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Step 2: After new habit, I will reward.

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PRACTICE

**Step 1: Connect your new habit to an existing habit.**

After \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 2: Reward success.**

After \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_.

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