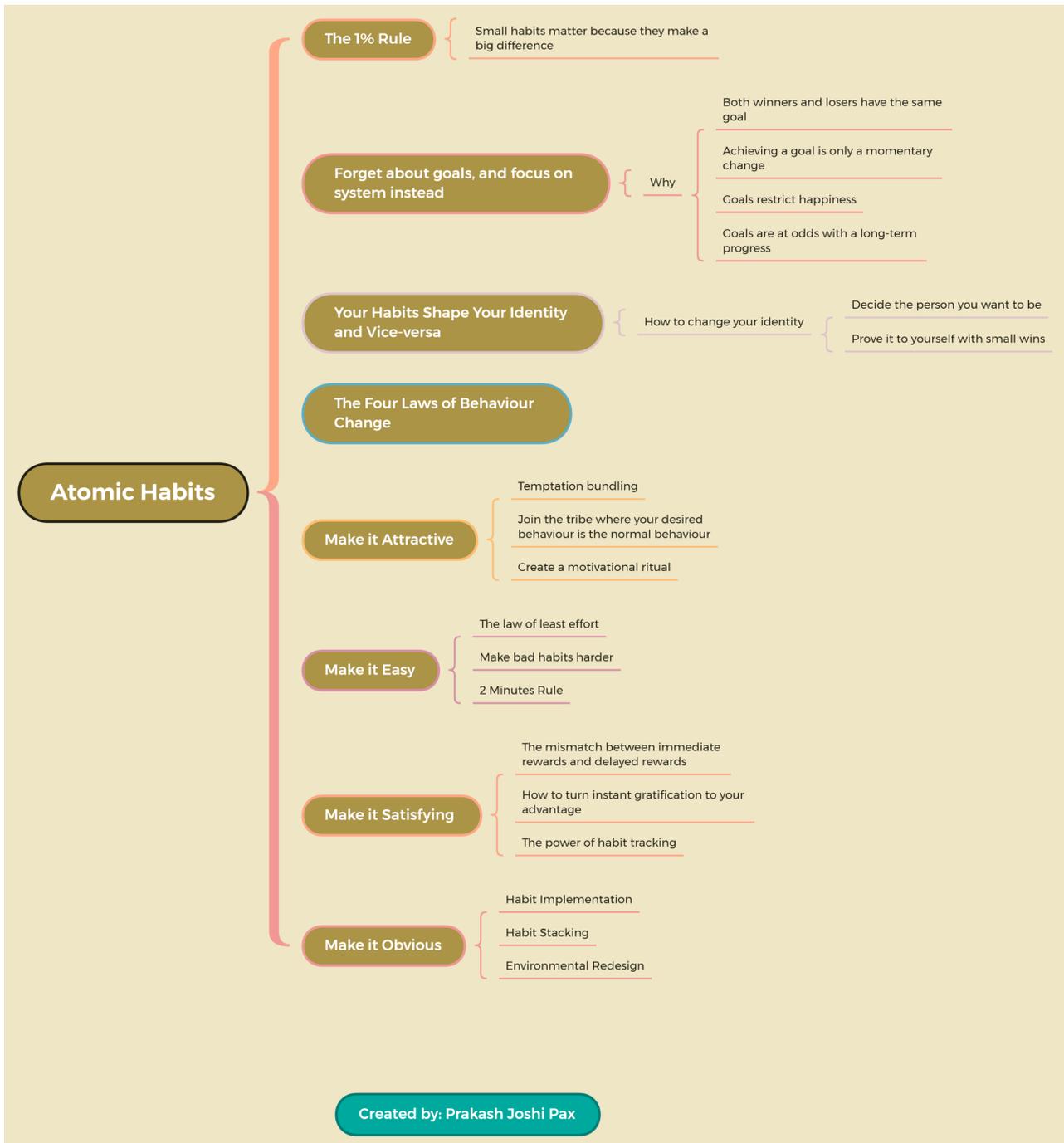


Atomic Habits By James Clear: Book Summary(+PDF)

An easy and proven way to build good habits and break bad ones



The book under 3 sentences

Atomic Habits explores various aspects of habit building: how habits are formed, how to break bad habits, and develop new ones. You'll find wisdom and practical advice front, center, and at the end of this book on how to to create and change

your habits in a way that is easy to understand and apply. There is no one right way to create better habits, but this book describes the most effective ways that the author has found through a lot of research and self-practice.

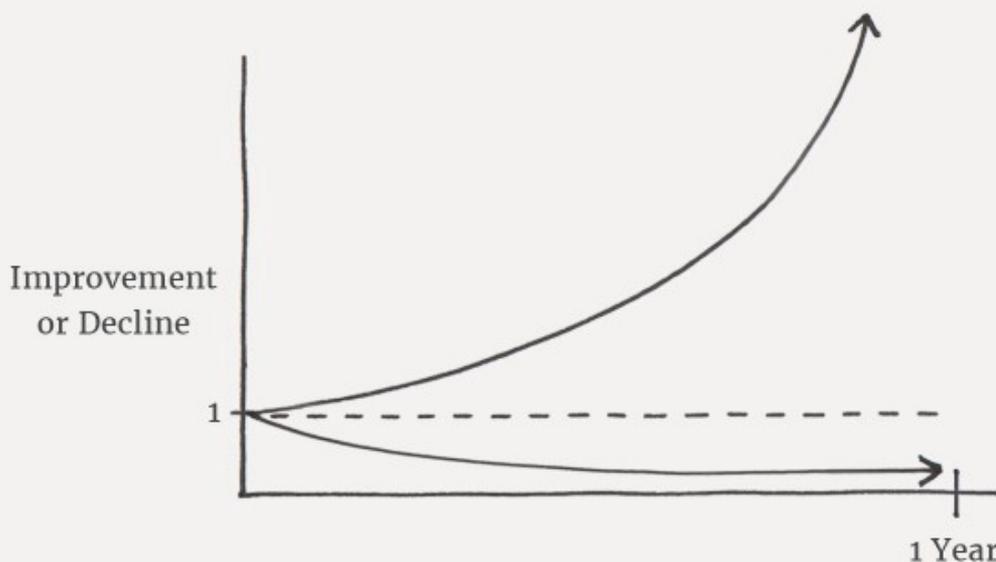
Who Should Read This Book

For anyone who is struggling with bad habits and wants to change their habits, it's a must-read. You'll figure out everything you need by the end of this book about habit building.

Book Summary: Atomic Habits

The Power of Tiny Gains

$$\begin{aligned} 1\% \text{ better every day} & \quad 1.01^{365} = 37.78 \\ 1\% \text{ worse every day} & \quad 0.99^{365} = 0.03 \end{aligned}$$



JamesClear.com

source: Jamesclear

Small Habits Matter Because They Make a Big Difference

The author tells the story of a British cycling team and how the philosophy of tiny marginal improvement in everything they do makes them champions. This gave 5 tour de France victories in 6 years where previously they hadn't won any in the past 100 years. This philosophy, the author calls it **the 1% rule**.

The 1% rule states that habits compound as you repeat them over a long time. They don't seem to make any difference on any given day but the impact they make over a few months or years is enormous. It is only when looking back two, five, or perhaps ten years later that the value of good habits and the cost of bad ones becomes strikingly apparent.

The slightest change in your habits can guide your life in a very different direction. *Making a choice that is 1% better or 1% worse seems insignificant at the moment but it determines the difference between who you are and who you could be.*

Bad habits can destroy you just as easily as good habits can build you up. So, it's important to know how habits work and how to design them in your life.

Forget About Goals, Focus on System Instead

Goals are the results you want to achieve and systems are about the processes that lead to those results. Goals are good for setting direction, but systems are what helps in making progress.

Most people around the globe are obsessed with goal setting. And, it's not the right approach. Here's why you should shift your focus from goals to the system instead:

- **Both winners and losers have the same goal:** Every player wants to win the game. Everyone wants to be successful. All of them set goals, but not all of them achieve them. Therefore, goals are not what separates the winners from losers. It is the implementation of the system of continuous small improvements that makes a difference between a loser and a winner.
- **Achieving a goal is only a momentary change:** Achieving a goal only changes your life for a moment. When you chase the outcome instead of its root level, you only make temporary changes. But in order to improve for good, you need to solve the problems at the system level.

- **Goals restrict happiness:** Most people fall into this trap of making goals and letting them restrict their happiness. They say, “Once I achieve this, I’ll be happy”. But you don’t have to isolate happiness only for the future. It makes no sense to restrict your satisfaction to one scenario when there are many paths to success. *When you focus on the system and fall in love with the process rather than the outcome, you don’t have to wait to give yourself permission to be happy.* You are always happy doing things you love and working towards your goal.
- **Goals are at odds with long-term progress:** People who have goals work really hard for them. And once they accomplish that goal, they stop taking action or training. The goal is no longer there to motivate them. So, people revert to their old habits once they accomplish their goals. The purpose of setting goals is to win the game. The purpose of building systems is to continue playing the game. Once you commit yourself to the system, you are set out on a journey of continuous improvement.

| You don’t rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your system.

Your Habits Shape Your Identity and Vice-Versa

Most people struggle with changing their habits because they are trying to change the wrong things. There are three layers of behavior change i.e. outcome, processes and identity. The outcome is concerned with changing your results. Processes are concerned with changing your habits and systems and identity is concerned with changing your beliefs.

| Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe.

These all three-level are important in their own way but the problem is the direction of change. Most people start the behavioral change by focusing on what they want to achieve. This leads us to outcome-based habits which results in temporary changes only. A better way is to focus on building identity-based habits.

When you go this way, you start by changing the underlying beliefs about yourself. One can convince you to go to the gym, eat healthy a few times but if you don’t shift the belief behind the behavior, the improvements will not last long.

True behavior change is identity change. And the behavior will not stick with you until it becomes a part of who you are.

- The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to become a reader
- The goal is not to run a marathon, the goal is to become a runner

- The goal is not to write a book, the goal is to become a writer

How to Change Your Identity

Your identity emerges as a result of your habits. You are not born with any preset beliefs. They form as you grow, as you learn, and as you live. Whatever, you believe your identity is right now, you believe it because you have proof of it.

If you write every day even when you don't feel like it, you have evidence that you are committed to writing. If you go to the gym even when raining, you have evidence that you are committed to fitness.

The more you repeat your behavior, the more you reinforce your identity associated with that behavior. The most practical way to change who you are is to change what you do. It is a simple two-way process:

- Decide the type of person you want to be
- Prove it to yourself with small wins

| Your habits shape your identity, and your identity shapes your habits.

How Your Brain Builds Habits

There are 4 steps to building a habit. They are cue, craving, response, and reward. They are the backbone of every habit and your brain runs through these steps in the same order each time.

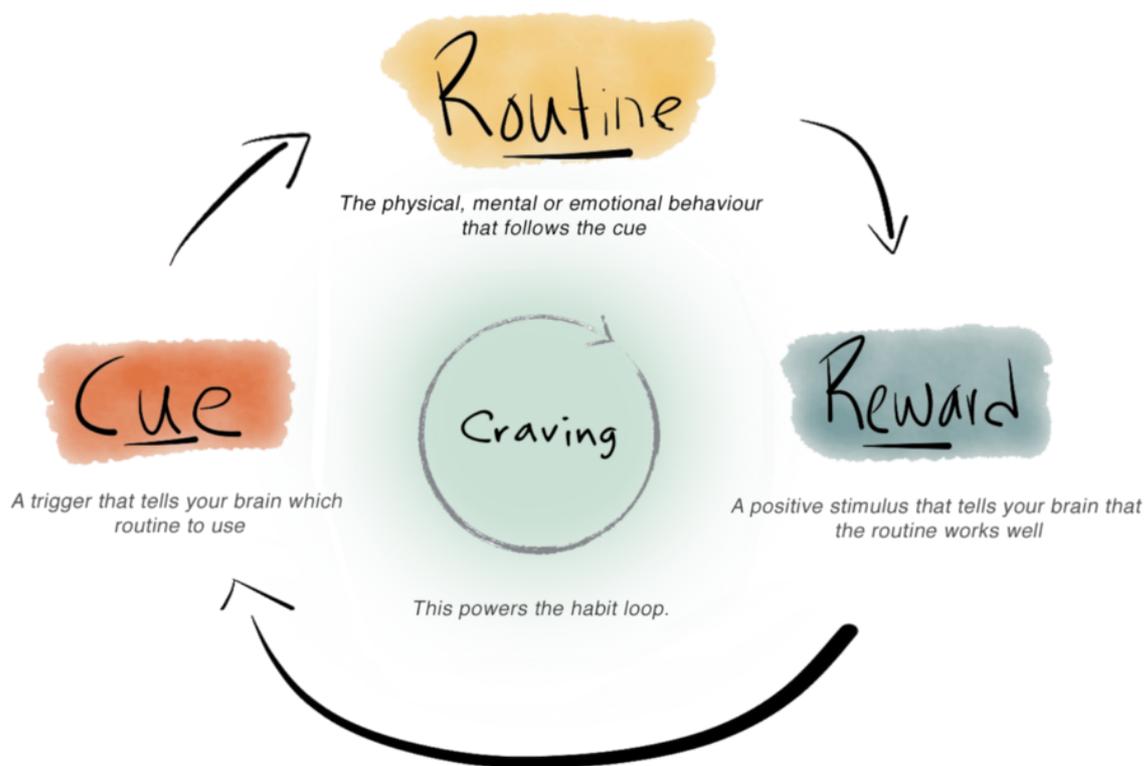
Cue is something that triggers your brain to initiate a behavior. Your mind is continuously analyzing your internal and external environment for hints of where rewards are located. Because the cue is the first indication that we're close to a reward, it naturally leads to a craving.

Cravings are the motivational force behind every behavior. Without craving a change, we have no reason to act. What you crave is not the habit itself but the change in state it delivers. *You do not crave smoking a cigarette, you crave the feeling of relief it provides.* Every craving is linked to a desire to change your internal state.

The third step towards habit building is the **response**. It is the actual habit you perform that can take the form of thought or action. Whether a response occurs or not depends on how motivated you are and how much friction there is between you and the behavior.

Rewards are the end goal of every habit. The cue is about noticing the reward. The craving is about wanting the reward. The response is about obtaining the reward.

These four stages: cue, craving, response, and reward are best described as **habit loops**. They form an endless cycle running every moment you are alive.



Source: [Steemit](#)

The Four Laws of Behaviour Change/ Habit Formation

Cue, craving, response, and reward influence nearly everything we do each day. James Clear, the author of the atomic habits transformed these 4 steps into a practical framework that we can use to design good habits and eliminate the bad ones. This framework is called the four laws of behavior change. It provides a simple set of rules for creating good habits and breaking bad ones.

Make it Obvious

One of our greatest challenges in changing habits is maintaining awareness of what we are actually doing. The process of behavior change always starts with awareness. *You have to be aware of your habits before you can change them.*

Pointing-and-calling is one of the effective methods that you can use to raise your awareness. It is a method of actively saying what you are doing or pointing out things you are doing. It raises the awareness from a non-conscious habit to a more conscious level by verbalizing your actions. **It may seem silly but it works incredibly well.**

Here are some tips to make the habits more obvious:

Habit implementation

Habit implementation is a plan you make beforehand about when and where you will act. You intend to implement a particular habit. There are different cues that trigger a habit but time and location are the most common ones. And implementation intention leverages both of these cues. The formula for creating habit implementation is:

“When situation X arises, I will perform response Y.”

Here are some examples:

- I will meditate for one minute at 7 a.m. in my kitchen.
- I will exercise for one hour at 5 p.m. in my local gym after work.

Many people think they lack the motivation to perform certain activities but what they actually lack is clarity. Research has shown that people who make a specific plan for when and where they will perform new habits are more likely to follow through.

Habit stacking

Habit stacking is one of the best methods to build a new habit. You identify a habit you currently do and add a new habit you want to build on top of it. The habit stacking formula is:

“After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].”

Here are some examples

- After I pour my cup of coffee each morning, I will meditate for one minute
- After I take off my work shoes, I will immediately change into my workout clothes.

Environmental redesign

The most common form of change is not internal, but external. Your habits will always change depending on the room you are in and the cues in front of you. *Most actions we take every day are not shaped by a purposeful desire, but*

rather by the most obvious option.

You don't always have to be the victim of your environment, you can also be the architect of it. Here's how you can redesign your environment for success in building habits

- If you want to make a habit a big part of your life, make the cue a big part of your environment. Making a better decision is easy and natural when the cues for good habits are right in front of you.
- Change your environment because it is easier to build new habits in a new environment because you are not fighting against old cues.
- Don't depend on willpower and self-control alone. Disciplined people don't have a sheer amount of willpower and self-control. They are just better at structuring their lives in a way that they spend less time in tempting situations.

The most practical way to eliminate a bad habit is to reduce the exposure that causes it and building a good habit is to make the cues that causes it more obvious.

Make it Attractive

The reason why you crave junk and fast food is that it's more attractive. All of these things have been enhanced in one way or another, if only with additional flavoring. Every year food companies spend millions if not billions of dollars just to discover the most satisfying level of crunch in a potato chip or the perfect amount of fizz in soda.

Here are some tips you can use to make your habits more attractive

Temptation bundling

All of our cravings occur due to a neurochemical called **dopamine**. Every action is taken because of the anticipation that precedes it. It is the craving that leads to the response. We need to make our habits attractive because it is the expectation of a rewarding experience that motivates us to act in the first place. You can use a strategy called temptation bundling to make your habits more attractive or unattractive.

Temptation bundling works by linking an action you want to do with an action you need to do. You can use temptation bundling with habit stacking to make it more effective.

Here is the formula:

- After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [HABIT I NEED].
- After [HABIT I NEED], I will [HABIT I WANT].

Join a Tribe where your desired behavior is the normal behavior

Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, bond with others, and earn the respect and approval of our peers. We don't choose our earliest habits, we imitate them. We follow the scripts given to us by our close ones.

The culture we live in determines which behaviors are attractive to us. We mainly tend to adopt the habits of three social groups: the close (family and friends), the many (the tribe), and the powerful (those with status and prestige).

When you join a group or culture where your desired behavior is normal behavior, it makes it easy to build new habits. *It works because the normal behavior of the tribe often overpowers the desired behavior of an individual.*

| If a behavior can get us approval, respect, and praise, we find it attractive.

Create a motivational ritual

When you binge-eat or light up or browse social media, what you really want is not a potato chip or a cigarette or a bunch of likes. **What you really want is to feel different.** You learn to predict that checking social media will help you feel loved or that watching YouTube will allow you to forget your fears.

Habits become more attractive when we associate them with positive feelings. This single mindset shift can help you make your habits more attractive.

Every time you are trying to build a new habit, change how you say about it. **Instead of saying 'you have to', say 'you get to'.** This changes your feeling of seeing new habits as a burden and turns them into opportunities.

These little mindset shifts aren't magic but they help to change the feeling you associate with a particular habit. You can take it a step further to create a motivational ritual. You simply practice associating your habits with something you enjoy, then you can use that cue whenever you need a bit of motivation.

Make it Easy

If you want to master a habit, the key is to start with repetition, not perfection. As Voltaire once wrote, "The best is the enemy of the good." The secret to building a long-lasting habit is walking slow but never walking backward. Following are some tips to make your habits easier:

The law of least effort

Human beings are lazy by nature. We tend to do what is more convenient. We naturally gravitate towards the option that requires the least amount of work if we have to decide between two similar options.

Habits like scrolling on our phones, checking email, and watching television steal so much of our time because they can be performed almost without effort. They are remarkably convenient.

So, if you want to build good habits, you have to redesign your environment in such a way that doing the right habit is the easiest. If you want to build a habit of reading every night before bed, try to keep your phone in another room before having dinner. This creates less friction for reading books and more friction for using your smartphone.

Redesigning your environment to make the execution of your habits easier is key to building good habits.

Beat Procrastination Using 2 Minutes Rule

When you dream about making a change, excitement and motivation take over and you end up trying to do too much too soon. Even when you know you should start small, it's easy to start too big.

You can start building new habits more effectively by using 2 minutes rule, which states. "When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do."

The point of 2 minutes rule is to master the habit of showing up. As you master this skill, the first two minutes simply become a ritual at the beginning of a larger routine.

We rarely think about change this way because everyone is consumed by the end goal. But one push-up is better than not exercising. Reading one page is better than not reading at all.

Whenever you are struggling to stick with a habit, you can employ the two-minute Rule. It's a simple way to make your habits easy.

Make Bad Habits Harder

Sometimes success is less about making good habits easy and more about making bad habits hard. This is the inversion of the third law of behavioral change; make it easy.

The best way to break a bad habit is to make it impractical to do.

Increase the friction between you and the habit until you don't even have the option to act.

Make it Satisfying

Feelings of pleasure—even minor ones like washing your hands with soap that smells signals that tell the brain: “This feels good. Do this again, next time.” Pleasure teaches your brain that behavior is worth remembering and repeating.

You learn what to do in the future based on what you were rewarded for doing (or punished for doing) in the past. Positive emotions cultivate habits. Negative emotions destroy them.

The Mismatch between Immediate Reward and delayed rewards

It made sense for our ancestors for placing a high value on instant gratification. Our brains evolved to prefer quick payoffs to long-term ones. The world has changed much in recent years, but human nature has changed a little.

Unlike the old ages, in our modern society, many of the choices you make will not benefit you immediately. You now live in a delayed-return environment because you can work for years before your actions deliver the intended payoff.

Our brains have evolved to value the present more than the future. This is why even when smoking can kill you in ten years, you do it because it reduces stress and ceases your nicotine craving now. Overeating is harmful in the long run but it fulfills your appetite now.

Put another way, the costs of your good habits are in the present. The costs of your bad habits are in the future.

We are wired in such a way that most people will spend all of their days chasing quick hits of satisfaction. The road less traveled is the road of delayed gratification. But, often success in any field is due to the result of delayed gratification.

How to turn instant gratification to your advantage

The vital thing in getting a habit to stick is to feel successful even if it's in a small way. The feeling of success is a signal that your habit paid off and that the work was worth the effort.

When starting, you need a reason to stay on track. This is why immediate rewards are essential. The ending of any experience is vital because we tend to remember it more than other phases. You want the ending of your habit to be satisfying. Every time you perform a habit, tie it to an immediate reward.

The power of habit Tracking

Habit tracking is another way to make your habits stick. It is powerful because it leverages multiple Laws of Behavior Change. It simultaneously makes a behavior obvious, attractive, and satisfying. Habit tracking works because:

- It creates a visual cue that can remind you to act
- It is inherently motivating because you see the progress you are making and don't want to lose it
- It feels satisfying whenever you record another successful instance of your habit.

Habit tracking works best when you combine it with habit stacking that we discussed earlier. Here's the formula: *After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [TRACK MY HABIT].*

THE 4 LAWS FOR BUILDING / BREAKING HABITS



Building Good Habits	Breaking Bad Habits
1. Make it obvious	1. Make it invisible
2. Make it attractive	2. Make it unattractive
3. Make it easy	3. Make it hard
4. Make it satisfying	4. Make it unsatisfying



Source: [Reading.graphics](https://www.readinggraphics.com)

Conclusion

Sometimes a habit will be hard to remember so you'll have to make it obvious. Sometimes you won't feel like starting a habit and you'll need to make it more attractive. And many times, you may find that a habit too difficult to build and you'll have to make it easy. And sometimes, sometimes when you don't feel like sticking with a habit, you'll have to make it more satisfying.

With these 4 laws of habit change, you have a set of tools and strategies that you can apply to build better systems, develop good habits, and break the bad ones.

And with the 1% rule of continuous improvement, you will build a system to improve and refine yourself every day. This will lay a foundation for your success.

| 1% daily improvement= 100% certainty of future success.

