



5 Minute Habits The 21 Day Challenge

Hello and welcome to the 21 day challenge.

Background

The underpinning concept is that we can make significant improvement in our lives by using small periods of time regularly and effectively.

For over 12 years I provided a daily email service to a worldwide audience, helping to improve people's speaking skills and confidence. I was blown away by the results that people gained simply by spending one minute a day on it.

Using the same concept, I've also published several books that offer daily 5-minute brain training exercises, and short conversation starters.

Feedback

"I never thought that 5 minutes a day can have such an impact, and only in 16 days. I am suddenly going into a totally new direction"

"I certainly demonstrated to myself that a great deal can be achieved within three weeks, once the momentum is under way. This is something to remember, to continue, and to transfer and to use in my life."

"I cannot put into words how much it has helped me."

"I am now a far more confident person in my work which has some really good flow on effects."

"I have become more confident and I do not sit back in the corner now."

One of the benefits of adopting a positive habit, no matter how small, is that you are doing *something* rather than doing nothing, or going with a flow that isn't working for you. Action brings motivation, and motivation brings more action. You can be unstoppable if you want!

The habit(s) you choose may be large or small, you don't need to do anything big if you prefer not to; anything that starts to move you in the direction you want to go is beneficial. And remember that you probably won't solve a sizeable issue within a few weeks; don't aim for perfection, aim to improve.

Habit

Adopt a 5-minute habit (or habits) a day for 21 days. Choose your own habit(s) or look through the ones suggested on the next page.

- Choose a start date and an end date 21 days later
- Choose a habit or habits that you would like to adopt. If none of the suggested habits fit, or you feel there is one that will better suit you, then go with that
- Feel free to do as many as you like. You can choose different ones on different days
- If you miss a day, don't worry. You can carry on a bit longer than the 21 days
- You may find that you get an outcome you are happy with before the 21 days
- Keep a log of what happens – for example, the habits you chose; if you adapted them; the reactions you got; any changes that took place; the thoughts you had during the process; the challenges; the good parts; the overall results; and anything else you noticed ([See log sheet on website](#))
- If you'd like to share your findings with me at the end of the 21 days I'd be interested to hear

Go well!

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Suggestions for habits

Topic	Suggested habits/activities
Work/business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear out your inbox• Increase your work knowledge by reading a blog or article or listening to a podcast• Write a short blog post• Enhance your network by writing a recommendation for someone on LinkedIn
Personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think of something - or some things - that scare you and face one a day: make that appointment with the dentist; look at your bank statement; book those swimming lessons; resign from the committee; tackle that discussion with your partner...• Learn a language• Do a brain training exercise
Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan! Spend 5 minutes planning one fun activity a week for you and the children• Plan time out for yourself• Plan time for you and your partner
Aging parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research the support available—there are lots of useful articles online - then make a plan. This could include: doing a mind map of all the ways you could help your parents; arranging a time (with siblings if suitable) to have ‘the conversation’ with them; connecting with your parents on a regular basis ...
Health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare healthy snacks that are easy to grab and eat so you avoid grabbing something less healthy• Do a brisk walk before you eat to speed up your metabolism• Move every part of your body daily: stretch your mouth, rotate your neck, shoulders and arms and continue through all parts of the body• Go on the treadmill, jog on the spot or walk up and down stairs• Write a weekly meal plan
Beauty and image style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spend several days researching beauty and image styles that you may like to adopt• Watch short videos on, for example, how to do your make up• Sort out your wardrobe—give away items you no longer want; plan on more suitable items you’d like to get; try different combinations of items you already have...
Marriage and relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place notes in places where your partner will come across them – for example in their pocket, on the sun visor in their car, in their backpack, in their tool box, in a book they are reading• Send them an ‘I love you’, ‘Looking forward to seeing you this

- evening' or similar text
 - Send them an e-card or a real card
 - Spend 5 minutes when you wake up sharing your thoughts and plans for the day
 - Simply give them a compliment and/or say something you appreciate about them. It's common for marriages to be lacking in compliments and appreciation. A "Thanks for making the children's breakfast this morning" could make a huge difference
 - Sit down with them for 5 minutes when you both are home from work and share the highs and lows of the day Do a chore for them that makes their life easier, for example doing the washing up; tidying their wardrobe; cleaning their shoes; sewing on a button; organising an appointment for them
- Time management
- Spend 5 minutes near the start of the day or the night before planning your day, to make it run as smoothly as possible
- Friendships
- Reconnect with someone you haven't been in touch with for a while – email, message, text or call them
- Peace, relaxation and mindfulness
- Take time off from the busy, information-overloaded world by spending 5 minutes to reflect, by journaling, writing, thinking, drawing ...
 - Listen to a 5 minute YouTube meditation
- Money management
- Work out some rules for yourself eg "Each time I'm about to buy something I'll ask myself it it's necessary and the best use of my finances"; "Each time I'm going to do something to save money I'm going to think through if it will *really* save me money"
- Creating a passive income
- Read an article every day for 20 days on creating a passive income; on the 21st day write down your plan
- Increasing your speaking skills
- Practise your impromptu speaking skills—details on the last page
- Success thinking
- One of the biggest causes of failure is inaction. Each day check if you are choosing avoidance behaviour rather than action, and make a plan to *do* something. In the words of Franklin Roosevelt "Above all, try something"
- Being part of a community
- Work out what you would like to get out of being more involved in the community; Work out what you can offer and/or what skills you would like to develop
 - Check out community groups and initiatives in your area; research a different one each day
 - c) Make contact with those you are interested in

How to Make a New Habit Stick

Spend some time before you start, to make sure you've got things lined up so you can stick to your chosen habit(s). Many distractions present themselves regularly so set yourself up in a way that gives you the greatest chance of success.

- Work out why you want to do it and what your desired outcome is
- Build your habits into your usual schedule – work with what you do rather than against it, which will make you more likely to succeed. For instance, if you usually check your email first thing, then you could send your partner a daily e-card straight afterwards; if you sit down and relax before making the evening meal, you could also include a 5-minute meditation
- Plan the habit(s) into your day. Assign a time or times to do them. If you don't plan them in, they are less likely to happen – it's often why people's habits fade away early on
- Give yourself a way to remember to do them, for example set a reminder on your phone; wear something different such as a ring; use a habit tracker online or on your phone
- Motivate yourself to continue by using a calendar, and putting a large X or X's (one for each habit) every day. You'll start to see a line of X's and not want to break the chain
- Visualise the process not just the outcome. For example, if you want to speak up more confidently at meetings, you could make arrangements to, say, read out the minutes of the previous meeting each time. Visualise yourself doing this, getting more confident each time
- Find a way to make yourself accountable – for example let other people know what you are doing and ask them to check your progress, or share your plans with others on your blog. Once you put it out there you feel more obliged to do it
- Find ways to feel more motivated, for example by asking someone to start a new habit with you. If you have a blog, maybe some of your blog readers will want to join you
- Be aware that it's unlikely to be plain sailing through all the 21 days, and mentally prepare yourself for this. Some days it will be challenging, some days you'll feel like you are making no progress, or even going backwards. That's OK ... that's how things work!
- If you start to find reasons for not doing the habit, see what is stopping you and at what point it occurs. For example, I used Wii Dance at home and used to put on my jazz dance shoes to do it. But they weren't easy to put on, the laces weren't long enough, and each time I took them off the insole came out; so even though I enjoyed the dance aspect, I stopped doing it. Then I decided to use trainers instead which were easy to put on and take off, and had longer laces. Sometimes something small can make a big difference

Increasing your speaking skills: Impromptu speaking

Impromptu speaking is something we do on a daily basis, and something we may not give much thought to. If you feel would like to speak with more impact, it's worthwhile putting in some practice.

The Canadian humourist Stephen Leacock wrote about a man who 'flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions'. Sometimes people give impromptu responses like this! They fling themselves into a response without having given any thought to what they are going to say, and their thought process and subsequent speaking goes 'in all directions'.

A way to avoid this is to pause for a couple of seconds before you start speaking. Pausing will provide two main benefits. Firstly, it will give you a chance to work out the rough outline of what you are going to say, and secondly when you are responding to a question or comment, it will give others the impression that you are going to give a considered response. People will give more consideration to what you say.

During the pause it is useful to work out the 'end point' of what you are going to say, along with a rough overview of the ideas you want to present. If you do this, you will avoid starting to talk without a direction to go in. You will be able to speak 'in a straight line' which will significantly reduce the waffle and stop you going off on a tangent. It won't happen straight away, but 21 days' worth of practice will be very helpful.

Here are 21 practice topics:

1. Do ghosts exist?
2. Do you think there are life forms on other planets?
3. What's the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?
4. What's the best piece of advice you've received?
5. Do you worry about money?
6. Why does poverty exist?
7. Is marriage an outdated institution?
8. Your views on de facto relationships
9. Your neighbour's five-year-old child comes to see you and says "What was it like in the old days?" How would you reply?
10. Your neighbour's 10-year-old child comes to see you and says, "What was school like when you were my age?" How would you reply?
11. What does the word 'disability' conjure up for you?
12. Does the government do enough for people with disabilities?
13. What would you do if you discovered your best friend had stolen money from his/her workplace?
14. What would you do if you found your friend's personal diary in his/her kitchen while they had gone out briefly to the corner shop?
15. Are the house prices in your area going up or down?
16. How easy is it to find a property to rent in your area?
17. Why are children fascinated by dinosaurs?
18. Where is your ideal place for a holiday?
19. Should Sunday be a day of rest?
20. Is the world a 24 hour-a-day society?
21. Would you like to be a teenager again?