

Learning and habit planner

One small habit, one clear cue, and a plan for remembering what you learn

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How this planner works

Habits tend to form when the same action is repeated in the same situation, until the situation itself starts to prompt the action. How long this takes varies widely between people and between habits: in one well-known study it ranged from a few weeks to several months. So this planner does not count down to a finish line. It helps you start small and keep going.

1. Choose one small habit

What would you like to do more regularly? Make it specific.

Example: review my English vocabulary.

2. Pick a clear cue or starting point

Link the habit to something that already happens every day, at a fairly fixed time or place.

After I _____, I will _____.

Example: After I pour my morning coffee, I will open my vocabulary notebook.

3. Make the action manageable

Start with a version so small that you could do it even on a busy or tiring day. You can always do more.

Example: Look at three words and say their meanings aloud before checking.

If something gets in the way

If _____, then I will _____.

Example: If I am travelling, then I will do it on my phone straight after breakfast.

4. Track your progress

Tick a box on each day you do the habit. Missing a day is normal; what matters is starting again the next day. In the habit study mentioned above, missing an occasional day did not noticeably slow things down.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Notes
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								
Week 6								
Week 7								
Week 8								

A note on promises

You may see claims that you can “rewire your brain” in a fixed number of days. Learning does involve changes in the brain, but there is no reliable countdown. Small, steady practice is what this planner supports.

5. Retrieval practice: learning by remembering

Retrieval practice means trying to recall information from memory instead of simply reading it again. Close the book, write down or say what you remember, then check what you missed.

Many experiments, in classrooms and laboratories, have found that practising retrieval leads to better long-term memory than spending the same time re-reading. It often feels harder than re-reading. Researchers think this effort is part of why it helps, so feeling unsure does not mean it is not working.

Try it

1. Learn or read something.
2. Put it out of sight.
3. Write, sketch or say what you remember, or explain it to someone else.
4. Check and correct anything you missed.
5. Repeat on later days, using the plan below.

6. Plan spaced reviews

Spreading reviews over several days usually helps long-term memory more than repeating everything in one session. There is no single perfect schedule. The intervals below are a reasonable starting point; adjust them to your timetable and to when you need to remember the material.

Suggested: review 1 the next day · review 2 about 3 days later · review 3 about 1 week later · review 4 two to three weeks later

In each review box, write the date and how much you recalled without looking: A = almost all, M = most, S = some.

What I am learning	First learned (date)	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	Review 4

This planner is for you. Nothing you write here is sent to us.

References

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