

The Habit of Starting by Leo Babauta

The biggest reason people fail at creating and sticking to new habits is that they don't keep doing it. That seems obvious: if you don't keep doing a habit, it won't really become a habit. So what's the solution to this obvious problem? Find a way to keep doing it

When you look at it this way, the key to forming a habit is not how much you do of the habit each day (exercise for 30 minutes, write 1,000 words, etc.), but whether you do it at all. So the key is just getting started.

Let me emphasize that: the key to forming a habit is starting each day.

What do I mean by starting? If you want to form the habit of meditation, just get on the cushion each day. If you want to form the habit of running, just lace up your shoes and get out the door. If you want to form the habit of writing, just sit down, close everything else on your computer, and start typing.

Form the habit of starting, and you'll get good at forming habits.

How to Start When You Face Resistance

Form the habit of starting — easier said than done, right? What happens when you wake up and don't feel like doing yoga or your beach body exercise DVD?

Let's first take a look at why you don't feel like starting. It's usually for one or both of these reasons:

*You are comfortable with what you're doing (reading online, probably), and the habit is less comfortable (it's too hard). We cling to the comfortable.

*It's too difficult to get started — to do the habit, you have to get a bunch of equipment out of your garage, or drive 20 minutes to the gym, or go get a bunch of ingredients, etc.

Those are the main two reasons, and really they're the same thing.

So the solution is to make it easier and more comfortable to do the habit, and easier to get started. Some ways to do that:

*Focus on the smallest thing — just getting started. You don't have to do even 5 minutes — just start. That's so easy it's hard to say no.

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□□*Prepare everything you need to get started earlier. So if you need some equipment, get it ready well before you have to start, like the evening before, or in the morning if you have to do it in the afternoon, or at least an hour before. Then when it's time to start, there is no barrier.

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□□*Make the habit something you can do where you are, instead of having to drive there.

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□□*If you have to drive or walk somewhere, have someone meet you there. Then you're less likely to stay home (or at work), and more likely to go — and going there is the same thing as getting started. This works because you're making it less comfortable to not start — the idea of leaving a friend waiting for you at the gym or park is not a comfortable one.

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□□*Tell people you're going to do the habit of starting your habit every day for 30 days. Having this kind of accountability motivates you to get started, and makes it less comfortable not to start.

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□□*Start with the easiest version of the habit, so that it's easy to start. For example, if you want to form the habit of reading, don't start with Joyce, but with Grisham or Stephen King or whoever you find fun and easy to read. If you want to start yoga, don't start with a really challenging routine, but an easy series of sun salutations.

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□□*Make it as easy as possible to start, and hard to not start. Tell yourself that all you have to do is lace up your shoes and get out the door, and you'll have a hard time saying no. Once you've started, you'll feel good and probably want to continue (though that's not a necessity).

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□□The start is a sunrise: a moment of brilliance that signals something joyful has arrived. Learn to love that moment of brilliance, and your habit troubles fade like the night.