

HABIT STACKING

97 SMALL LIFE
CHANGES THAT
TAKE 5 MINUTES
OR LESS



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8 Elements of a Habit Stacking Routine

Element #1: Each Habit Takes Less Than Five Minutes to Complete

Each habit within your habit stacking routine takes less than five minutes to complete. This means that each task is simple and doesn't require a major time commitment, making it easy to finish and move on to the next habit. Five minutes is 0.35 percent of your day. Just one-third of one percent of your day will help you create a habit that results in long-term change and benefits. A great example of a quick one-minute habit is collecting all your loose change and adding it to a change jar or sending a text message to a friend that you haven't connected with in a while.

Element #2: It's a Complete Habit

A complete habit is an action that cannot be built upon. For example, exercising is a habit that can be built upon. Exercises change, increase or decrease, and develop over time. This is not the point of a habit within habit stacking. Each habit is a full action completed in a short amount of time— like making your bed . It is basically the same action every day and doesn't vary much in the time it takes to complete.

Element # 3: It Improves Your Life

Habit stacking is done with the purpose of improving your life in a positive way. The positive changes that come along with habit stacking are reflected specifically in one of seven areas: productivity, relationships, finances, organization, spirituality/ mental well-being, health/ physical fitness and leisure.

Element #4: It's Simple to Complete

Since each habit takes less than five minutes to complete, it's natural that none of the habits are complicated or rigorous. The simplicity of each habit allows you to complete it and move on to the next habit, sticking to the routine and making a lot of positive changes quickly and efficiently. Each habit takes only a few small steps to complete.

Element #5: It Takes Less Than 30 Minutes

Your complete habit stacking routine should take up just 15 to 30 minutes when you string all of the quick actions together. If you're new to habit stacking, start by focusing on habits that add up to around 15 minutes of your day. This will help you avoid being overwhelmed and ensure you complete all of your habits. With a 15-minute routine, it's possible for you to complete anywhere from three to thirty small changes. Even if you add new habits, it's important to keep your routine to less than 30 minutes. If you create a routine lasting longer than 30 minutes, there's a chance it will take too much of your time, making it difficult to complete every habit on your list.

Element #6: It Follows a Logical Process

Your habit stacking routine should flow like a well-oiled machine. You complete each action, moving from room to room quickly and consistently. If you take breaks in between actions, you are wasting both

time and energy. This could prevent you from not completing the entire routine. The whole process should be like a production line, with constant action until all the habits are complete. Every time you complete the routine, it will get easier and become more habitual, resulting in many positive life changes over the course of the next few weeks or months.

Element #7: It Follows a Checklist

Habit stacking isn't meant to be a guessing game, or to be improvised on a day-to-day basis. It should be a set of actions done the same way, in the same order, each day. The best way to make sure this happens is to have the habits written down in a checklist. That way, you always know which task comes next and feel a sense of accomplishment as you get through each item on your list. Checklists do much more than keep people organized; they also increase productivity.

Element #8: It Fits Your Life

It's important to leverage your day when it comes to habit stacking. Take advantage of your location and the time of day when it comes to your habits. Energy is usually at its peak during the first part of your day, which means you should be completing habits that inspire or excite you about the day ahead. A great example is sending an inspirational quote or story to a loved one. It takes energy to find such a piece of content and decide who to send it to, but this habit is highly rewarding and will help you kick off your day feeling great and ready to tackle all the following habits you have in your routine.

Well, there you have it— all the important elements of habit stacking. You must take all these elements into account when creating your habit stacking routine because they all work together to ignite positive life changes. Because all of the elements work together, you need to include them all in a productive and successful habit stacking routine. The right structure of a habit stacking routine is the foundation for constructive, valuable habits that result in positive changes.

Now that you understand how habit stacking works, let's go over the specific small changes you can add to your routine. I've classified them according to seven specific areas:

1. Productivity
2. Relationships
3. Finances
4. Organization
5. Spirituality and Mental Well-being
6. Health and Physical Fitness
7. Leisure

Productivity (Small Changes #1 to #17)

Productivity is simply a measure of your work efficiency during any given day. While there are many time-consuming habits that can help you get things done, it is possible to make small changes that will positively impact your level of efficiency.

#1. Drink a Large Glass of Water

#2. Schedule Your Day and Prioritize Your Tasks

#3. Focus on Your Three Most Important Tasks

#4. Turn Tasks into Manageable Steps

#5. Create Accountability by Telling Others

#6. Reward Yourself for Task Completion

#7. Remove Distractions Before Working

#8. Clear Your Desktop

#9. Play Music or White Noise to Improve Focus

#10. Do the Hardest (or Most Unappealing) Task First

#11. Commit to a Very Small Goal

#12. Work in Small Blocks of Time

#13. Track Time for Different Activities

#14. Use the Two-Minute Rule (If a task will take you two minutes or less to do, deal with it immediately and move on.)

#15. Capture Every Idea (Keep a notepad on your desk so you're always ready to jot down thoughts as they come to you while you're working.)

#16. Write a Done List

#17. Review Your Goals

Relationships (Small Changes #18 to #31)

Our relationships give meaning to our lives. Whether it's a significant other, family member, child, friend or potential dating partner, it's important to spend time proactively working on these relationships. The truth is, it's easy to allow your relationships to decay in the pursuit of other goals. We often feel like there's not enough time to connect with others, but you'll find it's not hard to add a few relationship-building activities to your daily routine.

#18. Return a Call or Text Message

#19. Text Something Encouraging (Think of someone who might need a bit of encouragement during the day. Simply write a short message wishing them luck and letting them know you're thinking of them.)

#20. Make a Lunch or Dinner Date

#21. Give a Compliment

#22. Check Your Social Schedule (Don't double-book appointments or schedule too much or too little time for your appointments.)

#23. Make a Connection on Facebook or LinkedIn

#24. Talk to Like-Minded People on Social Media

#25. Share Something Inspiring

#26. Meet Someone New

#27. Research a Fun Activity

#28. Do an Activity That Makes You Happy

#29. Spend Time in Someone Else's Shoes (If you have some conflict with a family member, co-worker or friend, think about how the other person might be feeling. Try to think of something you can do to help out. By making an effort to understand someone else's point of view, you will learn how to communicate effectively with other people.)

#30. Learn a New Joke

#31. Leave a Note (Leaving a note for a friend, family member or co-worker is a little action that goes a long way. Finding a note is a surprise that can brighten someone's day and show the other person that you went out of your way to make him or her smile. This is a great way to strengthen relationships.)

Finances (Small Changes #32 to #44)

Improving your financial situation requires discipline and deliberate action. Really, when you think about it, the money you keep largely depends on the choices you make on a daily basis. Fortunately, making smart financial choices doesn't always require that much of your free time. In fact, there are a number of small actions you can take every day to make improvements to your current situation.

#32. Transfer Funds (Take a look at each bank or credit union account you have. Write down how much money you have in each account. Decide whether or not you need to transfer funds from one account to another to spend or pay bills.)

#33. Read a Personal Finance Article

#34. Put Loose Change in a Jar

#35. Write Down Yesterday's Expenses

#36. Count Your Cash

#37. Unsubscribe from Junk Email and Catalogs

#38. Find Coupons for Necessities

#39. Pack a Meal, Coffee or Snack

#40. Find Something Free to Do

#41. Set a Daily Spending Limit

#42. Plan Your Daily Errands

#43. Turn off Lights and Appliances

#44. Do Comparison Shopping Online

Organization (Small Changes #45 to #60)

Never underestimate the benefits of being organized. Completing a few daily de-cluttering actions helps stay organized and better focused on the important things.

#45. Fix Your Broken Windows (You may not have any broken windows, but you probably have a number of small things that add to your stress levels if you don't address them early on. Some common "broken windows" include: ** Dishes in the sink ** Cluttered mail ** Unsorted laundry ** Messy kitchen ** Trash that needs to be taken out)

#46. Make the Bed (Starting off your day by making the bed sets a great tone for the whole day.)

#47. Clear off a Countertop (or the Top of Your Dresser)

#48. Put Away Three Things (One of the best ways to stay organized is to make sure every item in your home or office has a designated place and that it is returned to that place each time you are finished with it.)

#49. Find Something to Sell (or Give Away)

#50. File Receipts, Mail or Bills

#51. Throw Something Away (Clutter often comes from items that we no longer use but refuse to throw away.)

#52. Organize Digital Clutter (Log on to your computer. Move desktop icons, organize documents in folders or move one file that you no longer need to the recycling bin. Don't forget to empty the recycling bin to fully complete this action.)

#53. Check for Expired Food or Coupons

#54. Clean One Thing

#55. Collect Dirty Laundry

#56. Check for Items to Replace or Replenish

#57. Wipe off One Surface (Dust and dirt are clutter too.)

#58. Sign up for One Paperless Initiative (Compile a list of companies that send you bills or statements on a monthly basis. Call or visit each company's website to request paperless communication.)

#59. Add to the Recycling Bin

#60. Practice a "Getting in the Door" Routine (Disorganization often happens because we don't have a system for where to put things when walking through the door. A great way to keep a house free from clutter is to create a designated spot where you put specific objects the moment you get home. Think of everything you take with you to work, the gym and other activities. Then designate a specific spot where you put every object that's taken out of the house. This includes items such as your car keys, wallet, purse, laptop, briefcase, shoes, books, coins, cell phone and gym clothes. Simply take a few minutes to put these items in their designated spot.)

Spirituality and Mental Well-being (Small Changes #61 to #75)

Some people are very religious, while others like to focus on their overall mental health. Regardless of what you "believe," you can develop a number of habits that can make you feel energized and in touch with the world around you.

#61. Speak Words of Affirmation (Make eye contact with the mirror as soon as you wake up in the morning. Repeat mantras or positive sentences out loud.)

#62. Compile a Gratitude List (Every day, write down three things you are grateful for or three things that make you happy.)

#63. Listen to Your Favorite Song

#64. Get in Touch with Nature

#65. Drink a Calming Beverage

#66. Perform Stretches Every Morning

#67. Practice Mantra Chanting (mantra just refers to chanting or "voicing" your positive thoughts aloud.)

#68. Take Time to Play (Create a morning routine of play with your kids, friends or pets. If you don't have someone with you, you can even play games on your tablet or cell phone. Some of these games can be rather addictive, so make sure you set a time limit.)

#69. Practice Simple Grooming (Pampering has internal as well as external benefits because taking the time to take care of yourself helps boost your self-image.)

#70. Look at Pictures (visual stimulation can have a direct effect on how we perceive things.)

#71. Flex Your Muscles (Stand in front of the mirror while contracting your main muscles one by one.)

#72. Keep a Journal (We should all take some time out to gather our thoughts and reflect on what is happening in our lives.)

#73. Serve Others (Helping others does wonders for our well-being, and even more so when they show their appreciation.)

#74. Practice Spirituality (When practicing any form of spirituality, the body is centered and focused on what is good, pure and just in this world. Prayer and meditation both have the mind and body focused on a single task, which allows you to feel in balance with yourself, nature and a higher power. Find something that helps you create peace of mind while having these moments of silence.)

#75. Read an Inspirational Passage

Health and Physical Fitness (Small Changes #76 to #85)

Unfortunately, there's not a lot you can do to improve your physical fitness in only five minutes. Usually you'll need to dedicate at least 30 minutes per day to this activity. What you can do with a habit stacking routine is to add a few small changes that support your overall health and physical fitness goals. That way, when you do exercise or sit down to eat, you'll achieve maximum results with each activity.

#76. Weigh Yourself Every Day (I know this isn't something you want to hear, but weighing yourself on a regular basis can help you establish clear health and fitness goals.)

#77. Maintain a Food Journal

#78. Jump Rope (Jumping rope is ideal when you don't have time to go to the gym in the morning. It's a full-body workout, it helps with blood circulation, it has less impact on your joints than jogging, it's inexpensive and you can do it anywhere.)

#79. Take Daily Vitamins (Vitamins are essential because they strengthen the immune system, increase alertness and help your body get essential nutrients.)

#80. Meditate (Meditation is about maintaining focus on one thing (such as your breathing or the sounds of the ocean) and blocking out any other distractions.)

#81. Make an Antioxidant Smoothie (you might want to do a Google search to find one or two that match your personal preferences.)

#82. Eat Other Nutritious Foods (prepare or pack something healthy to give you a positive lift for the rest of the day.)

#83. Have a Mint (Mints do more than just freshen your breath. The reason you want to add mint to your intake is because it increases mental alertness, acts a natural stimulant and helps prevent memory loss.)

#84. Brush Your Tongue

#85. Microwave Your Sponge (wet your sponge and then put it in the microwave for a total of 30 seconds. Remove it (use gloves because it might be hot) and you'll have eradicated most of the germ-carrying bacteria.

Leisure (Small Changes #86 to #97)

Developing new habits doesn't always have to revolve around self-improvement. Instead, you can make small changes that connect to your interests and personal passions.

#86. Get Outside (Spending even a few minutes outside whenever you get the chance can do wonders for your physical and mental health. Go outside and get some fresh air whenever you can.)

#87. Read a Few Pages of a Nonfiction Book (you with multiple benefits. Regular reading gives your brain a workout, improving concentration and slowing down age-related mental decline. Nonfiction books have the added bonus of increasing your general knowledge, improving your analytical thinking skills and giving you the opportunity to learn something new in just a few minutes a day.)

#88. Write Down 3 Things You're Thankful For

#89. Read a Summary of The Day's World News

#90. Learn a New Word

#91. Perform a Random Act of Kindness

#92. Read a Wikipedia Article (to expand your general knowledge, spark new ideas and hobbies, and become a more interesting person.)

#93. Watch a Short TED Talk or Inspiring Video

#94. Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

#95. Listen to an Upbeat Song

#96. Spend a Few Minutes Cuddling Your Significant Other/ Child/ Pet

#97. Do a Quick Doodle or Sketch

8 Steps for Building a Habit Stacking Routine

The key to habit stacking is to stick to the routine instead of the individual habits. You want to automatically flow from one action right into the next action without thinking about each individual

component. That's why it's important to develop the habit of following the routine. When you're able to perform the habits without breaks or hesitation, that's when you know you've built a powerful habit stacking ritual. It is with this new routine that your life will begin to change. Each day that you flawlessly complete your new habit stacking routine is another day that you're improving multiple areas of your life.

Step 1: Pick a Time and Location

All habit stacking routines revolve around a specific location, time of day or combination of both.

** In the morning at home: Think about what you would like to accomplish before you even leave the house, and how it can be added to your routine.

** The first part of the workday at the office: If you are most motivated in the beginning of the workday, this is a great time and place for a habit stacking routine.

** The end of the workday at the office: The end of the workday is actually a great time for a habit stacking routine because it is a good way to finish out your day on a positive note.

** In the evening at home: This time works well because it gives you the opportunity to complete habits that will end your day and prepare you for the next day.

** At the gym while you're working out: you could add habits such as stretching, practicing meditation, drinking a healthy smoothie and weighing yourself. All of these could be done in the 10 to 15 minutes after you've finished exercising or lifting weights.

** During travel or on the road: Taking advantage of this time is a great way to get a lot done in a short amount of time that would otherwise be wasted.

** On your lunch break: Instead of wasting 30 minutes or an hour of your lunch break sitting in your break room, you can change your life.

Step 2: Build One Routine at a Time

There are varying opinions about how long it takes to build a new habit. Some people say a week, others say 21 days and a few say as long as three months. It really isn't important how long it takes you to build a new habit. What's important is to focus on adding one habit routine at a time. It's impossible to add multiple routines all at once. The process is too complicated and your willpower will revolt because you're asking it to do too much. In other words, you won't be able to succeed in the long term. Let's take a quick look at ego depletion to help support this step. Ego depletion is a person's diminished capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings and actions. In other words, our willpower works like a muscle and it weakens throughout the day, since it's used constantly. We all have a limit to our willpower, and once we've reached the limit, it becomes very difficult to focus. The reason you should focus on one routine at a time is because it reduces the amount of depletion on your willpower. My advice is to focus on a new routine for a month before making any changes or additions.

Step 3: Start with “Small Wins”

When it comes to your habits, start with the ones that are easiest to do so you will feel a sense of accomplishment that will make starting and completing the next habit easier.

Step 4: Create a Logical Checklist

All the habits should work together and flow into each other seamlessly.

Step 5: Have a “Reason Why”

The best way to make sure you don't quit a habit stacking routine is to have a reason why behind each individual action. This reason should be genuine and important to you.

Step 6: Be Accountable

People often fail at completing their habit stacking routines because it's just easier for them to not do them. That's why it's important for you to be held publicly accountable. There are a variety of ways for you to do this, including posting your progress on social media accounts, telling friends and family members about your habit stacking or using an alarm on your phone to trigger you to start your routine each day.

Step 7: Create Small, Enjoyable Rewards

Completing your habit stacking routine is an accomplishment and it should be rewarded as such.

Step 8: Focus on Repetition

Repetition is key for the first 30 days of habit stacking. It's imperative that you stick to your routine, even if for some reason you have to skip one or two individual habits. Repetition of the routine builds muscle memory to the point where you follow the routine, each day, without fail. Now, it's not the end of the world if you miss the occasional day. This happens to everyone. But you must never, ever miss two days in a row of completing your routine. And if you do miss a day, it's more important than ever to make sure you complete at least part of your routine the next day. The better developed and more powerful your habit stacking routine, the more you stand to benefit from it. Habit stacking is a way to get a lot done and make positive changes in your life. If there are any positive changes you've wanted to make, this is a great way to get it done. A good routine is compact, connected and beneficial in your life. However, even the best routines can and will be interrupted. It should come as no surprise to you when a routine gets thrown off because of something that life throws at you. Luckily, you will know how to handle it. It's important to know how to handle the common pitfalls of a habit stacking routine because knowledge is power. The more you know about all the elements of habit stacking, the more successful you will be.

How to Choose a Trigger for Your Habit Stacking Routine

The most important part of a habit stacking routine is getting started. That's why it's important to attach it to "trigger," which is an action or event that generates the beginning of your routine.

Choose a Habit Trigger

Just as you built your routine piece by piece, you want to look at the characteristics of a trigger so you can choose one that will help you take action. For instance, when choosing a trigger keep these conditions in mind:

An event or action can be used as a trigger.

It should be easy.

It should be automatic like a timer going off or a certain time of day.

New habits are not the best triggers.

A trigger should be something you're used to doing every day.

Create the Trigger-Habit Connection

The key to making it stick is repetition.

Set Yourself Up for Success

With your habit stacking routine and trigger chosen, don't let anything stand in your way. Before you begin, make sure you're properly prepared for what lies ahead. Depending on your habits and goals, think about the time and equipment that's needed and make sure they're ready to go. If your focus is productivity, then you need to consider a few things before getting started:

- An earlier bedtime providing for more free time in the morning
- Buying and setting up any required filing system
- Finding the right apps or software to manage your time
- Writing down important tasks in order of priority
- Planning for your reward

Habit Stacking Disruptions and Challenges: What to Do?

Strategy 1: Have an If-Then Plan

Disruptions to your routine will happen— that's just a fact. It is okay to accept these disruptions without getting discouraged because they are to be expected. Always be prepared to forgive yourself for the disruption and move on. You might have to stop your routine for a bit, but instead of getting down on yourself for not following through, turn those feelings into motivation to complete your routine the next day.

Strategy 2: Know Your Triggers

Of course, to create an if-then plan, you need to know your triggers. Understand your bad triggers, which are the distractions and bad habits that make you slip up and negatively impact your habit stacking routine. Keeping track of your negative habits will help you develop your routine.

Strategy 3: Reduce Overall Expectations

There's a fine line between the pressure you need to complete your routine and putting too much pressure on yourself. Too much pressure can actually cause a negative reaction, which is exactly what you don't want. Instead of taking on too much and trying to complete more than is realistic, focus on the minimum, but make sure you focus on the habits that are most important.

Strategy 4: Start Small (Again)

Starting over can be discouraging, but it is imperative when it comes to a habit stacking routine . If you need to start over, start small. Focus on a few small habits first to get back into your routine. The more you perform these small habits, the better you will get at starting and completing them. Look for small wins and concentrate on sticking to your routine instead of focusing on the length of the routine. Then, when you have a firm grasp on your routine, you can add more habits to it . Don't forget to never miss more than one day of your routine, though.

Check out this applications that could help you:

<https://www.lift.do/>

<http://www.fitday.com/>

<http://www.myfitnesspal.com/>