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HAPPY
New Year

RESOLUTIONS MADE EASY

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Habits are the backbone of consistent progress toward goals, and understanding the science of habit creation can help accelerate and sustain success. According to research published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, forming a habit takes an average of 66 days, though the timeline varies depending on the behavior's complexity. Habits form through a neurological process called the habit loop, consisting of a cue, a routine, and a reward. Neuroscientific studies, such as those from *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, show that repeated actions create neural pathways, reinforcing the behavior until it becomes automatic.



Implementing new habits effectively requires deliberate design of the habit loop. First, identify a clear cue—a specific time, place, or preceding action that triggers the habit. For example, setting workout clothes next to your bed cues morning exercise. Second, establish a routine that aligns with your goals. Keep the routine manageable to reduce friction, such as committing to 10 minutes of exercise instead of an hour initially. Lastly, tie the routine to a meaningful reward, whether intrinsic (feeling accomplished) or extrinsic (a treat or relaxation). Over time, the brain associates the cue with the reward, making the routine automatic.

To sustain habits and achieve goals faster, leverage strategies like habit stacking and tracking. Habit stacking, a method popularized by James Clear in *Atomic Habits*, involves pairing a new habit with an existing one, such as meditating after brushing your teeth. Tracking habits, as suggested in studies like those from the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, enhances motivation by providing visual proof of progress. Additionally, start with small, achievable steps to build momentum, gradually increasing the habit's complexity. By understanding the science of habit creation and implementing these strategies, you can consistently make progress toward your goals with less effort over time.

