

No one ever said that behavior change was easy! Think about all of those times that you wanted to start going to the gym regularly, or getting to sleep earlier, or eating healthier... For most people, the list could go on and on and that's because it is hard to stick with new behaviors. That said, setting a routine can help you make and keep desired behavior changes.

Here are some tips for setting a routine and sticking with it:

Make a schedule - Planning is one of the most important things that you can do when starting a new routine. Setting a schedule for completing the new behavior you are looking to incorporate into your routine is a great way to get started. This may be as simple as putting time on your calendar, which creates a reminder and dedicates time to actually do the new activity.

Set a reminder - For most people, a calendar reminder alone isn't enough. Setting a reminder on your phone or placing a written prompt in a prominent place in your home can be an easy way to ensure that completing the new activity doesn't slip your mind.

Remain flexible - All too often people decide to start new activities, but when they miss a few times or they aren't able to fit the activity in when they had planned, they decide to give up. This pitfall can be avoided by allowing some flexibility. It's okay if you are unable to practice the new activity every day or if you have to adjust your schedule if things aren't working out as you had expected.

Be realistic - As you know, starting a new activity has many challenges. On top of that people tend to pile unrealistic expectations upon themselves. This can make the new activity feel like a burden and weigh on your morale. It takes both time and self-compassion to make new activities a permanent part of your regular routine.

Make an accountability plan that works for you - Everyone's a bit different when it comes to being held accountable. Some people like to have another person hold them accountable, while others like to remain accountable only to themselves. There is no "right way" to do this, it really depends on what is best for you. If you are unsure, experiment with some different accountability techniques. Here are a few that you may want to try:

1. You can set a milestone and give yourself a reward when you achieve it.
2. You can ask a friend or loved one to check-in with you about your progress.
3. You can make a chart to tally each time you complete the activity and be able to see your progress over time.