

32-Day Commitment (II) - Change Habits

As we make and keep commitments, even small commitments, we begin to establish an inner integrity that gives us the awareness of self-control and the courage and strength to accept more of the responsibility for our own lives. By making and keeping promises to ourselves and others, little by little, our honor becomes greater than our moods. Stephen Covey

Purpose:

The "32 Day Commitment" activity helps a student change habits. The purposes are two-fold: 1) acquire new habits that will help the student succeed and 2) discontinue habits that are detrimental to college success.

Duration / Semester timing:

- This activity takes 32 days or longer to see results. It does not take much classroom time to monitor, however. The 32-day time is the result of research on breaking a bad habit or establishing a new habit - avoiding or repeating every day for 32 days has a high success rate in breaking or establishing the habit.
- The 'gotcha' is that a single miss causes the counter to restart at 1. Some users advocate a gentler restart (e.g., miss 2 in 5). Further, some activities don't recur daily, but the 32 days of concerted effort to make it happen on each possible occurrence is a good start on making a new habit (say exercise 3 days a week, or going to the tutoring center MWF).
- This activity takes 30 - 40 minutes to set up, assuming no other related activities are being done. If other related activities are done (e.g., calendar, next action list, action tracking), less time for explanation is required.
- Monitoring progress takes about 5-10 minutes each check. I do them at the end of a class period, and, since extra credit, only those participating stay around the last 5 minutes. This minimizes the impact on teaching time.
- Because of the long time for results, this activity needs to be done early in the term -- before the third week in the semester. Using the 32-day commitment right after the first quiz can provide a justification for the activity - combining it with a "course correction", especially if a significant number did not do well.

Description:

- Students identify good study habits and detrimental habits. Students examine their stud habits (and some life style habits) for 1) things they do that are conducive to studying, 2) things they could do better, 3) things to avoid doing that they currently do.
- Each student identifies one or more habits of theirs that they would like to change. These are written down on the "32-day commitment" form, and tracked daily for 32 days. Each student monitors their activity against the 32 day form, indicating if the activity was done that day or not.
- A student gets credit only if their partner from the class checks progress frequently (if class meets 3 or 4 days a week, before class is OK); sharing with someone else improves success rates on this activity.
- The teacher periodically reviews progress on 32-day form and assigns credit (or extra credit) for using the form to change behavior.
- Goal for each the partner checking and periodic reviews is honest reporting; if the student and partner note a 'restart', a new form may be needed.

Materials

List of good habits and poor habits (samples attached) & 32-day commitment form (attached)

Objective:

A completed form is evidence the student complete 32 days of exercising the 'new' habit (or avoiding the old habit). The hope is that the better habits are established for future semester, thus ensuring better success.

Procedure:

- First, an in class activity to identify good study habits and detrimental habits. This can be a homework assignment instead - with a read-out in class.
- Instructor hands out "top ten" or similar lists of actions (include resources that can be used regularly, like the math tutoring center). Students examine lists for 1) things they do that are conducive to studying, 2) things they could do better, 3) things to avoid doing that they currently do. The lists may get expanded by students, so some time for readout is needed.
- I find that teams of 3- 4 work well for a readout. If this was a homework assignment, a little time for the teams to consolidate items is needed. Each team reads out their top few things to start doing to improve their success, or stop doing because they hinder study.
- Second, each student identifies one or more habits of theirs that they would like to change. These are written down on the "32-day commitment" form.
- Third, each student is paired with a partner for regular progress checks. [The partnering may need to be changed as students drop out or to resolve any personality conflicts.]
- Each student monitors their activity against the list, indicating if the activity was done that day or not. Some activities may not be daily, so "NA" is appropriate. For example, the activity of going to the tutoring center 3 times a week

Assessment:

- Having a completed form with one or two new habits and one or two habits to avoid and a partner to review is the beginning. Partner reviews and Periodic reviews - check that dates are being marked success or oops and that restarts are noted. Partner initials near day he/she checked has partner agreeing that form updated (not assuring honesty).
- A student gets credit only if their partner checks progress almost daily (if class meets 3 or 4 days a week, before or after class is OK); sharing with someone else improves success rates on this activity. The teacher periodically reviews progress on 32-day form. I only check them 2 or 3 times during the semester.
- "Honest reporting" is the goal for both the partner checking and periodic reviews. If the student is starting, not following through, starting again -- that is evidence for the student to use to evaluate if the commitment is making

Sources & resources:

On Course I workshop, Skip Downing, pages 25 - 37 www.OnCourseWorkshop.com

See also calendar activity, tracking activity, next actions activity, and "IV Quadrant" activity, which can feed into this activity (identifying actions that need to be habits).

Sample actions for success/failure

1. Read the syllabus carefully, and look at it regularly	1. Ignore the syllabus
2. Read the text book and assigned articles	2. Don't ever purchase the text book
3. Attend every class on time	3. Miss more than 4 classes
4. Listen actively and take notes (using the note taking guides provided on the course website)	4. Come to class late
5. Participate in class discussions every session (in whole class discussions as well as small groups)	5. Daydream
6. Check the course website regularly	6. Do not participate in class discussions
7. Ask questions	7. Rarely or never check the course website
8. Take advantage of all the extra credit options	8. Never ask questions
9. Turn in all assignments on time	9. Do not take advantage of extra credit options
10. Use the study guides to prepare for quizzes	10. Miss multiple assignments, turn in assignments late
11. Read the scoring rubrics carefully before writing papers (extensive details on how papers are graded and writing tips available on website)	11. Do not prepare for quizzes
12. Review the Power Points posted on the course website	12. Do not read scoring rubrics on website prior to writing papers
13. Prepare for the Final ahead of time	13. Do not review power points on website
14. Keep their goals in mind and work hard	14. Do not prepare for the final till the last minute
	15. Forget that passing this class fits into their plan to achieve their goals
	16. Think they will pass without putting in effort

"Top Ten" strategies for success (and failure)**Best Study Practices**

1. Read assigned texts/handouts
2. Don't procrastinate
3. Pay attention to the organization of the text
4. Highlight key points/terms in text as you read
5. Review often!
6. Study with a study group
7. Get help before it's too late
8. Do homework assignments
9. Make an outline or take notes of your reading
10. Set aside a quiet place to study with few distractions

Best Ways to Study for a Test

1. Review and reorganize notes
2. Review text summaries and highlighted points
3. Get together with study partners (choose ones who are serious about succeeding)
4. Complete study guides
5. Ask questions you are unclear on before the exam/understand what is being tested
6. Make practice tests
7. Don't procrastinate
8. Read assigned texts/handouts
9. Make note cards
10. Eat well and get enough sleep

Thirty-two days is the length of time thought by some behavioral psychologists 40 to be necessary for creating a new habit or extinguishing an old one.

11. Best Things to Do in Class to Succeed

1. Ask questions and participate
2. Take notes that you can understand
3. Attend class
4. Pay attention (turn off cell phone)
5. Come prepared
6. Sit where you can see and hear the instructor
7. Tell instructor if you are having trouble with the way he/she is teaching
8. Get to know the instructor (go to office hours)
9. Read applicable text before class so you know what to expect
10. Eat well and get enough sleep

Best Resources to Help You Succeed

1. Instructor
2. Study partner for each subject (choose successful students)
3. Tutor
4. Library
5. Student Success Center
6. Teaching Assistants
7. Study Group
8. You - be proactive
9. Professionals in the subject
10. Select internet resources

Common Mistakes Students Make

1. Not attending class
2. Not taking responsibility for themselves
3. Procrastinating
4. Not asking questions when something is unclear
5. Not spending enough time studying (for every 1 hr in class, should study 2-3 hours outside of class)
6. Not getting help soon enough
7. Not taking notes
8. Not answering questions fully on homework and tests
9. Not completing assignments and being up-to-date on material
10. Being passive

32-Day Commitment - 1 of 2

Because I know that this commitment will keep me on course to my goals, I promise myself that every day for the next 32 days I will take the following actions and record each day's success: Name _____ Partner _____ Start/Restart Date _____

Actions	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

Same Actions	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Day 16
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

32-Day Commitment - 2 of 2

Same Actions	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

Same Actions	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28	Day 29	Day 30	Day 31	32
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

Partner _____