

# Elastic Habit Product Manuals

*“Seventy percent of success in life is showing up.”*

– Woody Allen

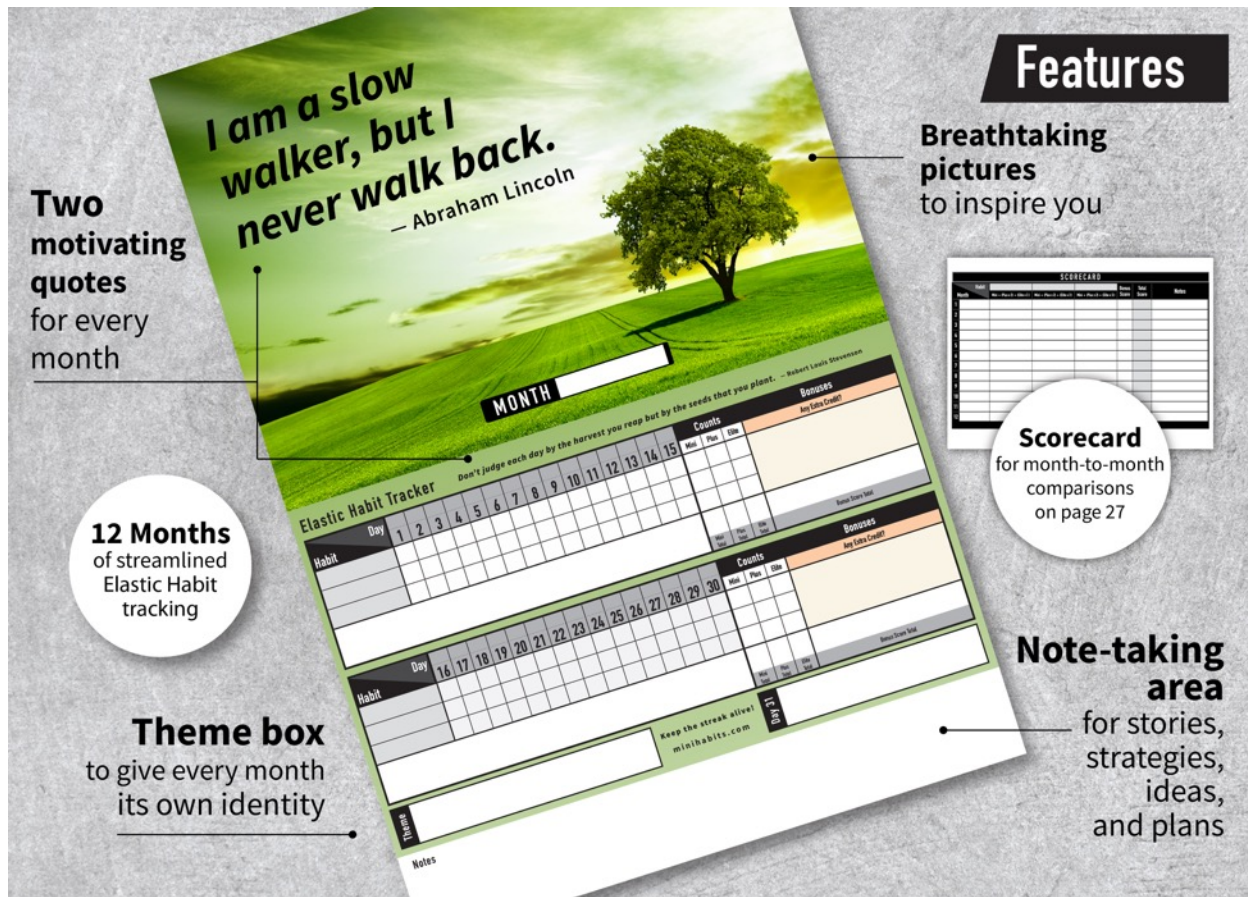
I’ve spent more than ten thousand dollars going through multiple redesigns to perfect the tools I’m about to share with you.

If you want to use items you currently have like a standard monthly calendar, I will also offer my best advice for Do-It-Yourself solutions. If you use DIY solutions instead of these official tools, just be aware they will require more maintenance since they aren’t designed for this unique strategy.

These products show the strategy and tactics of *Elastic Habits*. You’ll see the powerful flexibility, exciting possibilities, and seconds-per-day maintenance. Speaking of that, too many habit journals require 20 minutes of answering trite questions to “help” us do 20 minutes of work. While there are lots of options and customization involved in *Elastic Habits*, you can maintain the system in less than 20 seconds a day.

A habit strategy this impactful and unique needs a tracking system that can accommodate it. That didn’t exist, so I made it. The *Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar* is customized for the strategy in this book, and it’s the first product we’ll look at

# Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar



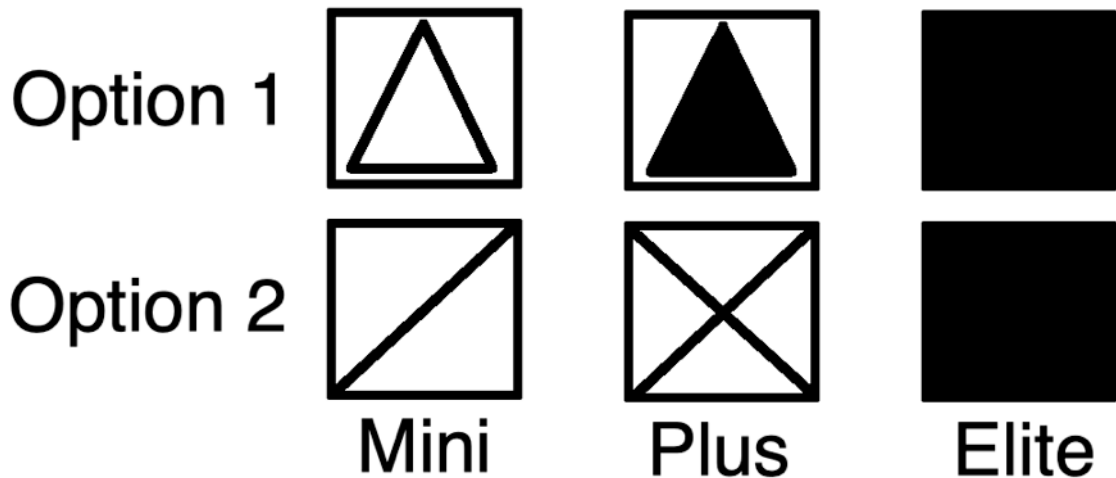
Tracking is the most important part of habit formation because it fosters consistency. If your tracking system is inadequate or you don't use one, you have little chance of sustained success. Tracking is your accountability, encouragement, and momentum all in one.

The *Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar* can track three habits at a time for a full year. It's better than other habit trackers in a few ways.

**1. There are *three* tiers of success, adding some much-needed variety to the habit formation process.** Instead of the same check mark or X every day, you can mark the tracking calendar with color-coded stickers or symbols. If you use stickers, the color scheme is green for Mini, Silver for Plus, and Gold for Elite. No two months will be the same!

I'll reiterate what I wrote in step 6 about tracking.

The official Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar is designed for 3/8" colored round stickers (both are sold on [minihabits.com](http://minihabits.com)). After you complete a habit, *use the colored sticker that corresponds to the level you did* (green for Mini, silver for Plus, and gold for Elite). The stickers are the same size and shape, suggesting they are equal "wins" in many ways. Or you can use symbol progression.



### **Iterative Success**

If you use a marker and mark your box green for Mini, but later in the day you unexpectedly get Elite, well, your box is already green with no easy way to change it.

Using stickers, you can simply put the gold sticker *over* the green one to replace it. Similarly, the symbols above are iterative sequences that allow you to add to your current win if desired. It's important to allow for iterative upgrades in your notation because it leaves you with the opportunity to get surprise upgrade wins, which I can assure you are inspiring and delightful occurrences.

If you want to use a standard calendar, you can use stickers or symbols on the sides, top, or bottom of each day's box to correspond to your elastic habits. For example, make fitness the top left, reading the middle left, and

voice training the bottom left. It's not as clean as the official tracker and lacks the scoring component, but it has the advantage of integrating into your current calendar.

It takes about 20 seconds to fill in your three habit boxes with a sticker or symbol each day. That's the only "daily maintenance" this system requires!

Objective #1 is to fill the spot. Objective #2 is to achieve higher levels. The power of elastic habits is its flexibility. If you get too focused on reaching the large goal and won't accept anything less, you're missing out on the power of flexibility. All-or-nothing thinking kills progress! If your notation is smart, it won't make one level seem vastly inferior to another, which will help you prioritize consistency, yet you will still reward yourself for bigger wins.

**2. It contains two inspirational quotes and a new design every month.**

If you track habits on a regular calendar, the notation, look, and feel are always the same. The tracking calendar is different every month. Plus, you can start tracking your habits on *any month* (not just January).

**3. It is completed 15 days at a time.** When I created the first version of the Elastic Habit Tracker, it showed all 365 days of the year on one page. When I got it back from the printer, I knew I had made a mistake. It was overwhelming. The idea was to give a satisfying overview of a long winning streak. Instead, I felt stressed about having to fill in all of those blank days. One successful day felt irrelevant and small in a sea of empty spaces.

After further experimentation, I found that 15-day segments were ideal. Fifteen days was long enough to feel satisfying when completed and short enough to feel doable. Each day felt like significant progress.

With this tracking calendar, you'll be rewarded with a checkpoint every 15 days to "seal" your accomplishment and prepare for the next 15 days. You can add your 15-day scores together to get a monthly score, so you still get all the benefits of monthly tracking and month-to-month comparisons.

**4. It has a scoring system.** Typical habit tracking is on/off. Because our elastic habits have three levels of winning, we will have *varying* success. With the scoring system, you will know exactly how well you're doing each day, each week, and each month. Let's look at the simple scoring system.

The scorecard is found on the last page of the *Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar*.

SCORECARD						
Habit				Bonus Score	Total Score	Notes
Month	Mini + (Plus x 2) + (Elite x 3)	Mini + (Plus x 2) + (Elite x 3)	Mini + (Plus x 2) + (Elite x 3)			
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

With the scorecard, you can see how each individual habit progresses from month to month, how you progress overall from month to month, and how habits compare to each other. Unlike other habit systems, this enables you to see precisely how you're doing, and *to what degree* you are succeeding.

It works as follows: Every 15 days, you count your wins at each level for each habit. Then you calculate the total points those wins are worth (Mini = 1, Plus = 2, Elite = 3). I analyzed the value of each habit, and the most obvious choice—1, 2, 3—was the best one mathematically to accurately match the value of each win. Elite habits earn 3 times as much as a Mini habit, which is significant, but three points isn't that much more than one point on an absolute level. It's a perfect balance.

But that's not all! In order to make this more fun and to help guide your perspective, there are also bonus points you can achieve.

## Bonuses

Bonuses can encourage and reward you for overachievement. The most important bonus is the Habit Master bonus—it gives twice as many points as the next highest bonus! To get this bonus, all you need to do is complete the entire 15-day period without missing any habits on any day. It’s named “Habit Master” because not missing days is how habits are formed and mastered. This bonus should encourage you to use the system as intended, which is to fill in tough or busy days with Mini wins instead of zeros, and do better than Mini whenever you can. Here’s a list of the bonuses. These may change.

## Special Achievements

- Double Down (1 Point): Meet the Elite requirement twice over in one day for one habit
- Perfect Day (2 Points): Any day with all Elite wins
- Hot Streak (3 Points): Any streak of 3+ consecutive Elite wins for one habit
- Unfreakinbelievable (5 Points): Any streak of 7+ consecutive Elite wins for one habit

## 15-Day Period Bonuses

- Specialist (3 Points): 10+ Elite wins for one habit this period
- Big Hitter (3 Points): 15+ total Elite wins this period
- Juggernaut (10 Points): 23+ total Elite wins this period
- Habit Master (20 Points): Zero misses this period (may use patch)

The one bonus I suggest you always use and aim for is the Habit Master bonus, because it correctly puts your focus on showing up every day. If you show up in some capacity every day, good things will happen. I promise you that. You might have days of unimpressive Mini wins, but staying in the game will give you the opportunity for huge wins later.

For something that takes just a couple of minutes to fill out, the scorecard adds a considerable amount of entertainment to the process of building life-changing habits. But it’s not *just* for amusement. A standardized scoring system quantifies *exactly* how well you did for each habit, how well you did for the 15-day period, and, later, how well you did for the month. Then you can analyze your progress and make adjustments to see if you can beat your best scores. There are areas

numerous places to write notes, so you can connect your scores to the different circumstances and strategies of that time in your life.

## Evaluating Your Performance

If you decide to incorporate scoring, the first metric to look at, *always*, is consistency. Did you do *something* every day? Did you fill every box with a sticker or other mark of completion? If so, you've succeeded and can be very proud of your effort. It is crucial to remember this as you go along in your journey and reach higher heights. Consistency is the base of success with this strategy—once you lose that, you come undone. When skipping days becomes normal, you need to regroup.

There are seven months with 31 days, and these days are special in the *Elastic Habits* system.

The objectives of elastic habits are freedom, autonomy, and flexibility. For all of these reasons, whenever you encounter a 31st day, it's free. By standardizing each month's tracking at 30 days (two 15-day periods), we allow for exact month-to-month comparisons and open up some fun options for that occasional extra day.

If it's the 31st day of the month, you can do whatever you want with it. This means that you can take the whole day off, but there are some other enticing options to consider. Here they are.

### Day 31 Options

**February Reservoir:** February, the poor month, got shorted at only 28 days. Since we keep score in 15- and 30-day increments, February doesn't get a fair chance to score favorably against her 30- and 31-day siblings. If you want to bolster your February score to make it your *best month*, you can use any and all of your 31st day accomplishments toward it! Thus, if you start in March and complete every 31st day in February's honor, you'll have a whopping seven scored days to add to your February total. Lucky February then has 35 days, which is how she can go from the weakest month to the strongest!

**Make-up Day:** Something crazy happened on the 17th. I know. You missed a couple of habits that day. Lucky you! It's December, which has 31 days! You can use your day 31 to cover up that blemish as if it never happened. *Day 31 can substitute for any missed habit or day that month.*

**Business as Usual:** You may find that, even with the complete freedom to skip a full day, you want to keep your streak going. There's something special about having the ability to rest on your laurels but pushing yourself anyway. Other than adding to February's total, you don't get credit for doing day 31 that month, which is a good opportunity to prove you understand the true value of doing these beneficial behaviors (not for the score, but for yourself). The 31st is still a day, so technically, you would need to do your habits if you want to keep a days-in-a-row streak alive. If you do take the day off and claim your 97 days-in-a-row streak on social media anyway, that's fine. It's technically not true if you skip a day 31, but within the structure of *Elastic Habits*, skipping day 31 does not invalidate your winning streak!

**Free Day:** After crushing it for 30 days straight, you deserve a break, right? Well, you've got one on day 31 if you want it. It's also worth noting that missing one day will never threaten your habit formation. It's missing two days in a row or frequently missing days that starts a new trend in the wrong direction. Otherwise, a single skipped day is an insignificant aberration in your sea of successful days.

I used the free day one month after three months of doing my habits every day. It was very odd. I almost had to fight myself to not do my habits. After seven months, I tried to take a free "Day 31" and still did my habits because I forgot my plan to skip them. That's the power of habit! If you take a day off, it will give you a chance to see how powerfully your habits are progressing. If you find yourself itching to get them done or even doing them without thinking, as I did, you've actually changed your brain and formed a habit!

Whether you miss a full day or a single habit in a single day, the *Elastic Habits* strategy offers you the opportunity for redemption. Life is crazy enough to make us miss even the easiest target (Mini) occasionally. While building winning streaks is crucial, a single miss now and again won't hurt. Just don't let it become a pattern.

One way to deal with a missed day is to use the 31st day of the month, as just discussed. If it's a 30-day month, you have another option. To deal with the occasional miss, you get one "patch" per 15-day period. This feature doesn't merely allow or encourage you to get over your mistake; *it entices you to get back on track.*



## How a Patch Works

The patch is activated by writing “Patch” in the Bonuses section of your tracker. You’re only allowed one per period, so be careful! The patch allows you to complete today any habits that you missed on a previous day.

If you don’t use a patch, this is what it might look like if you miss a habit.

Day 9: Plus

**Day 10: MISSED**

Day 11: Mini

Day 12: Elite

Day 13: Plus

You have a gaping hole in your winning streak on day 10! Ack! But you can “patch it.” A patch can only be applied AFTER you meet your normal habit requirements that day for the missed habit.

Example: Piano practice (Mini = 1 minute, Plus = 15 minutes, Elite = 35 minutes)

On day 11, you sit down at the piano and practice for one minute. Check! You’ve now completed day 11’s requirement for piano. Then you remember, “Oh no, I forgot to practice Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata yesterday!” Since you’ve already completed day 11, you are eligible to use your patch for day 10. You practice an additional 15 minutes to earn a Plus win for the 10th. Now it looks like this.

Day 9: Plus

**Day 10: Plus (Patched)**

Day 11: Mini (15 extra minutes of practice today changes Day 10 to Plus win)

Day 12: Elite

Day 13: Plus

If you use a patch, you no longer have that gap.

The most valuable bonus, mentioned earlier and worth a staggering 20 points, is called Habit Master. You only get it if you don’t miss a single habit in the 15-day period. It’s the most lucrative bonus because nothing is more important than consistency. If you forget to do a habit and use a patch to fill the gap, it keeps you eligible for this bonus. The system rewards consistency because that’s the foundation that will get you the most Elite wins in the long term!

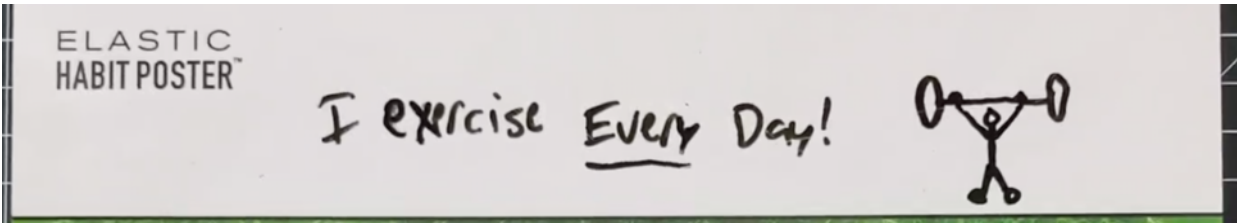
For more on the *Elastic Habits Tracking Calendar*, such as how to use the theme box, scoring, and for video examples, visit **[minihabits.com/tutorials](https://minihabits.com/tutorials)**.

# Elastic Habit Poster 2.0



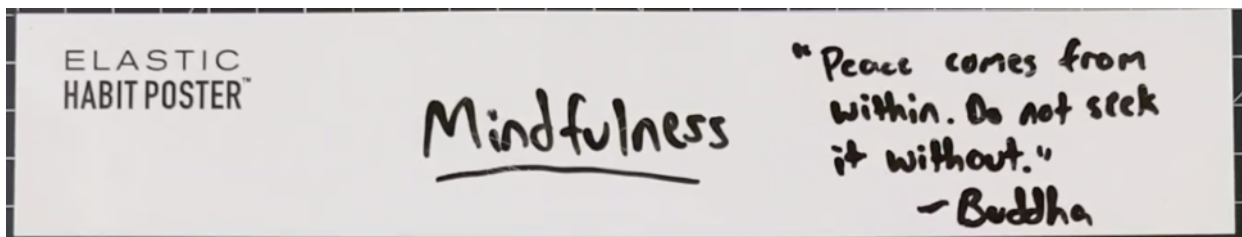
The Elastic Habit Poster 2.0 is the best way to display your elastic habits. Each poster is designed to display a single elastic habit and gives you complete flexibility to display one to eight lateral options per level. The poster is laminated for use with wet or dry erase markers.

The top of the poster gives you ample space to describe your habit. There's enough space to turn your habit into a statement. I recommend stating your objective in a psychologically compelling way. I use the consistency template below, since that inspires me the most. I take pride in doing my most important habits *every day*.

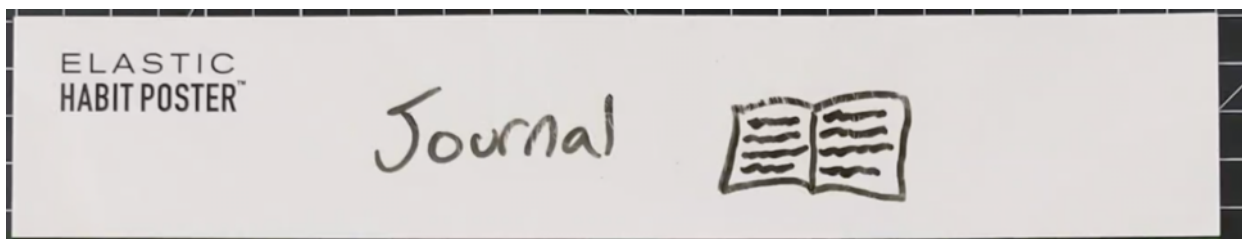


- **Identity statement:** “I am a \_\_\_\_\_!” (runner, writer, musician, etc.)
- **Consistency statement:** “I \_\_\_\_\_ every day!” (exercise, practice guitar, meditate, etc.)
- **Action description:** “\_\_\_\_\_” (reading, running, writing, etc.)

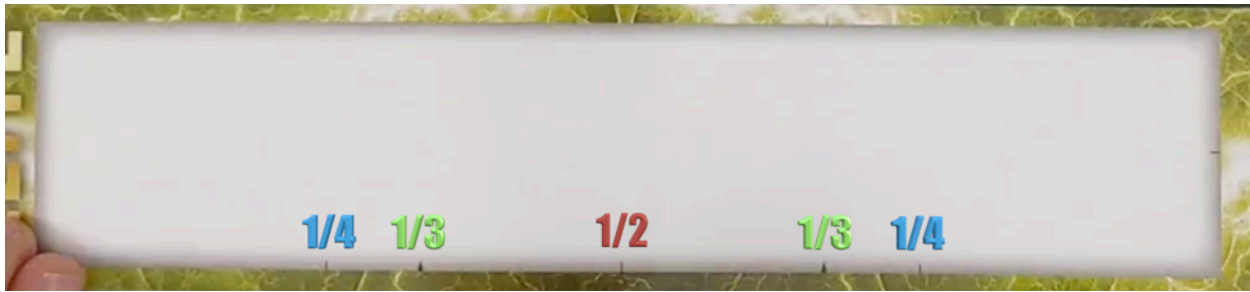
The identity statement is a powerful public declaration to yourself (and anyone else who might see the poster) that you are [a runner]. The consistency statement is a promise and declaration that you will do some amount of [running] every day. Or, if you prefer, you can simply write the action you wish to perform in the box—running, reading, healthy eating, and so on.



You can draw pictures. You can write quotes. You can customize it to your liking. And at the bottom of the top box, you can even label the habit columns below.

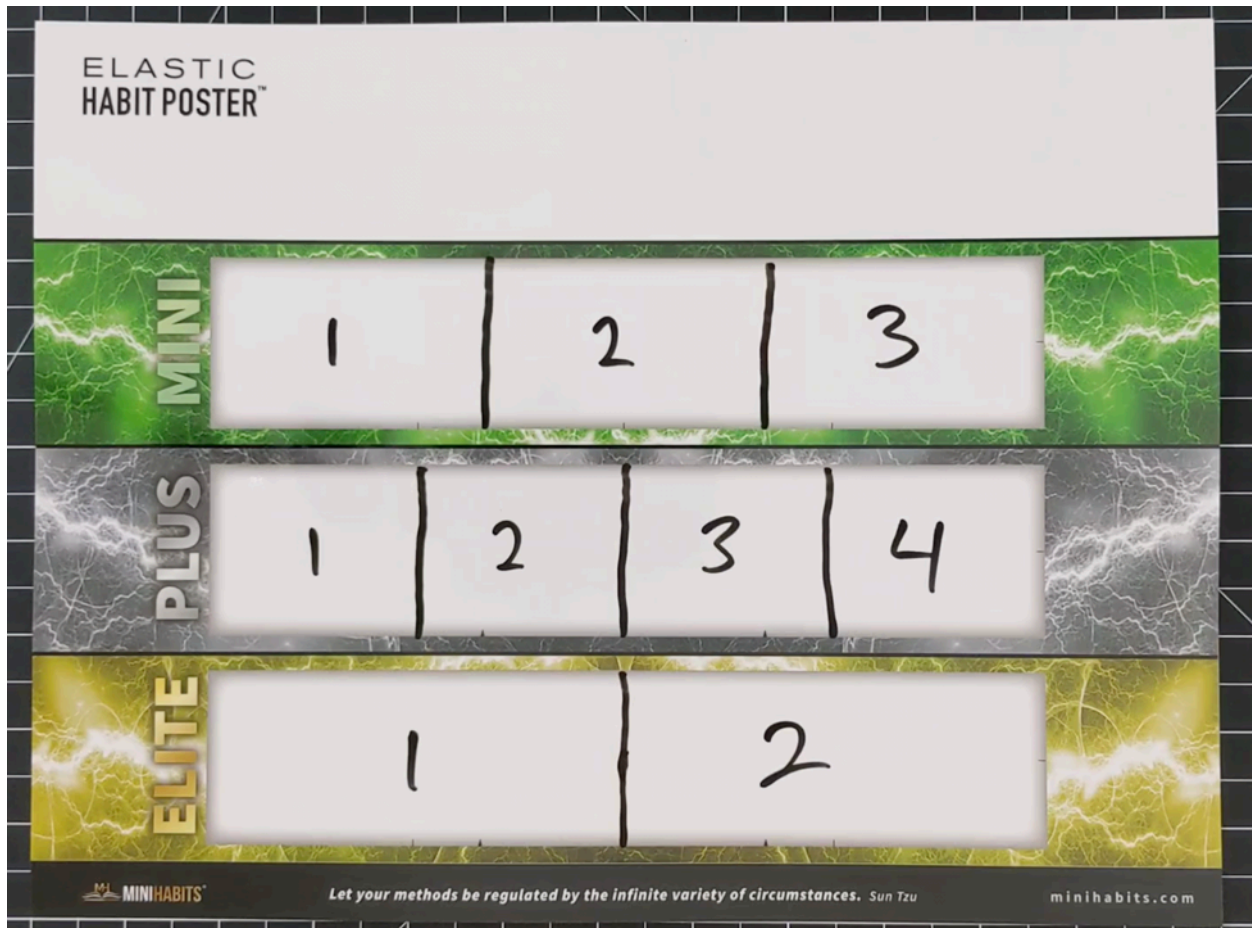


The poster features marks on the bottom to let you design each level. I can't overstate how game-changing this is for usability! Here's how it works.



If you draw a line straight up from the small triangles at the bottom, it will create three sections (for three lateral options). Triangles have three sides, so it's intuitive. If you want two sections, simply draw a line up from the middle marker. For four sections, draw up from the middle and outer markers for exact quarter sections. On the righthand side there is an additional marker, which can bisect the box again for even more sections. And, because it's dry erase, you can always erase it and change the structure of your elastic habits.

It's important and exciting to note that this can be done with each level! That means you can have different numbers of lateral options for each vertical tier.



As you can see, you can completely customize your elastic habits, shaping them exactly to your preferences. Selectively narrowing and expanding vertical tiers opens up a whole new world of possibilities!

An elastic habit is clearly more advanced than the typical “do X every day” habit, but look at how simple it is to execute it. All you have to do is pick one of your options each day. It’s advanced in its strategy and development of tiered options, but very simple in execution.

To give you a few ideas of what you can do, I’ll show you some templates and examples.

Given the ability to increase or decrease lateral options at each level, we can powerfully guide our behavior. Let’s start with the power of one. By defining just one win condition at one of the levels, we can create very interesting dynamics.

## **The Strong Floor Template**

This template lets you define exactly where your floor is by defining only one Mini level win condition. If you set 3+ Mini win conditions, they might vary in difficulty and meaning. By having just one, you say, “This behavior at this intensity is my floor. I will always do this much or better.” Then you can utilize several Plus and Elite options to entice you to do more of that behavior or others. This template is best for habits in which there is a single core behavior that must be done.

### Example: Journaling

<b>MINI</b>	Write 1 Sentence	
<b>PLUS</b>	Write 1 Paragraph	Write 1 Sentence + Review 1 Week of entries
<b>ELITE</b>	Write 1 Page	Write 1 Paragraph + Review 1 Month of entries

Journaling is best done daily. It doesn't have to be a huge amount. It can be one sentence. But you can also review previous entries as a meaningful part of journaling. Save those for the upper level wins, some of which combine writing and reviewing.

### The Silver Standard Template

This is a smart template that gives you an “assumed” moderate goal. Some people may struggle to decide between options with elastic habits, so this template gives you a single go-to option, with other options if you don't want to do the main one for any reason. Since it's at a moderate level, it shouldn't give you too much pause for being too big or too small, especially since you always have the freedom to upgrade or downgrade it as necessary.

The silver standard has just one plus-level option, and it's the option you will first aim for on any given day. Above and below it, you have easier and harder options, respectively. This way, you'll expect to get a decent win every day as a rule. If you need a break, you can move to an easier Mini win, with several options for that. And if you want to do something extra, you also have a few options for Elite wins.

### Example: Exercise

<b>MINI</b>	3 Push-ups	10 Bodyweight Squats	2 minutes of Stretching
<b>PLUS</b>	Go to the gym		
<b>ELITE</b>	Home Workout 1 hour	Gym for 1 Hour	

If you really want to build the going-to-the-gym habit, you can set a single Plus-level goal of showing up at the gym. Then, you can set at-home exercise options at the Mini level, for days you can't make it for whatever reason. And set a few stretch goals for once you arrive at the gym—such as time exercised, specific workout programs, or even home workouts (which can be just as intense as the gym).

### The White Whale Template

In *Moby Dick*, the sailor Ahab is obsessed with hunting a massive white whale named Moby Dick. From this story has come the concept of your “white whale,” that one thing that you must conquer, even though the challenge seems insurmountable at times. With the White Whale Template, you only have one Elite target. It is your white whale. If you are going to earn this level, it's going to

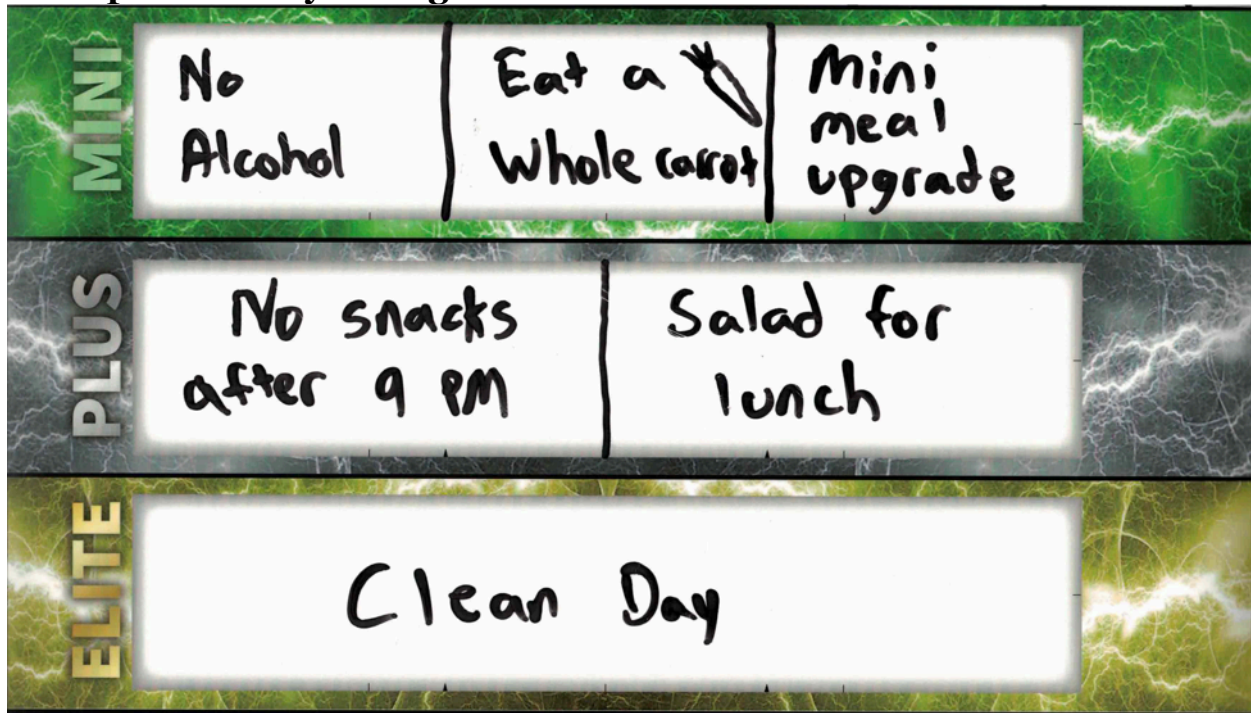


be this one thing. Nothing else can match it.

To help you in your quest to slay that Elite whale as often as you can, you'll have several Plus and Mini options for support. These are still valuable parts of your journey, but this template really puts the spotlight on that whale! And really, that's what these one-win strategies do—they emphasize a single behavior as very important.

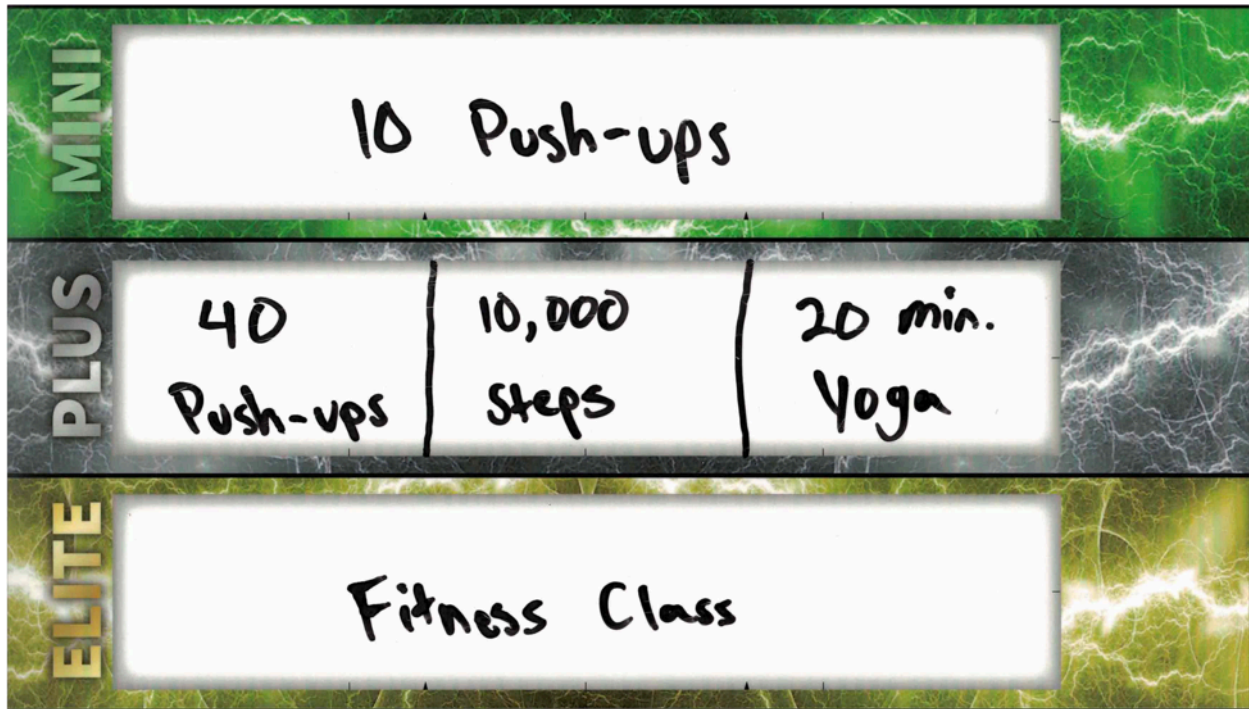
This one is fun because it makes the Elite level stand apart as extra special and exciting, kind of like a massive white whale!

**Example: Healthy Eating**



There are a number of ways you could do this, depending on your approach and goals. In this example, Elite victory is gained with a “clean day,” defined as no added sugar, processed foods, or alcohol consumed. And then you can have several Plus and Mini goals with smaller accomplishments to aim for.

Those are the one-win templates. You can even have one win condition in two levels. Maybe you have one condition for Mini and Elite and a few Plus options in the middle for flexibility, as in this example below.



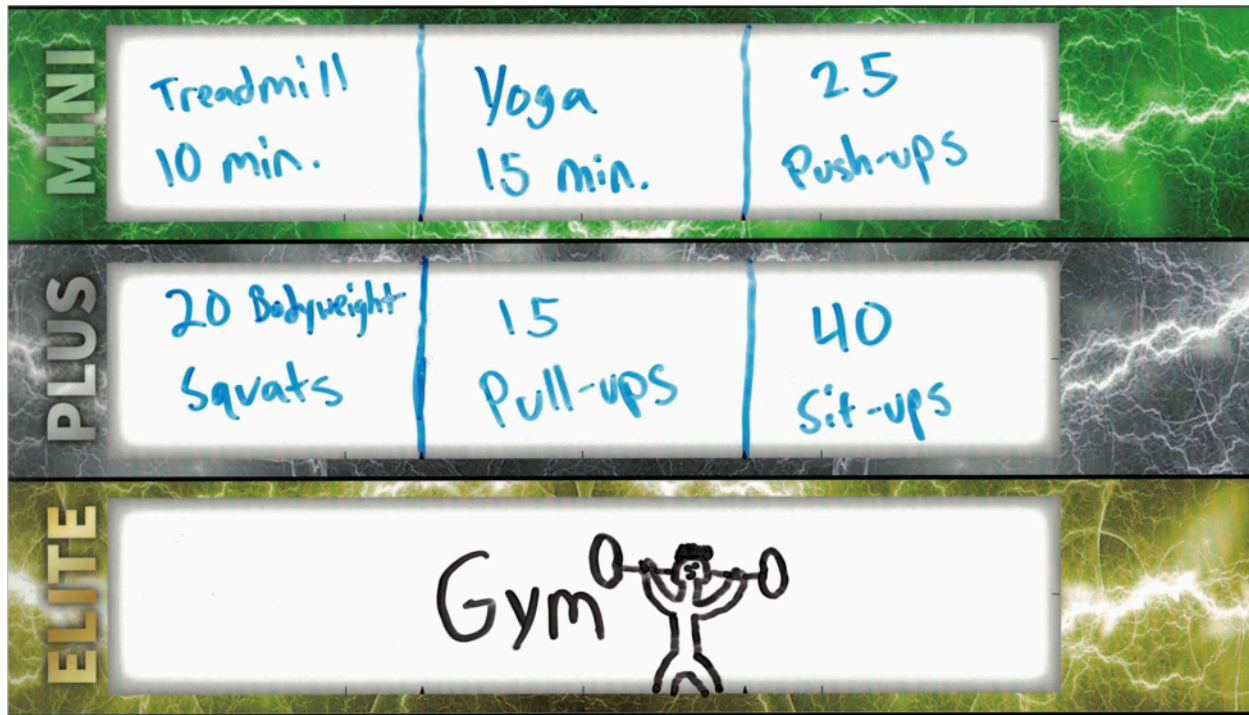
### **The Habit Pool Template**

The idea with habit pools is to not tie behaviors to any level, but instead add a group of moderate-easy behaviors into a giant pool. If you complete one, it's Mini, two is Plus, and any three is Elite. To do this with the poster, I recommend using a different color marker to visually differentiate a habit pool habit from your other elastic habits. And you can also label it in the upper box.

### **Example: Exercise Habit Pool**

<b>MINI</b>	Treadmill 10 min.	Yoga 15 min.	25 Push-ups
<b>PLUS</b>	20 Bodyweight Squats	15 Pull-ups	40 Sit-ups
<b>ELITE</b>	50 Jumping Jacks	Dance to 3 songs	Walk 5,000 steps

A habit pool ignores levels. Do any one of these for Mini, any two for Plus, and any three for Elite. If you want to make it really interesting, you can pool part of your habit. For example, maybe you have one Elite option of going to the gym, but make Mini and Plus a pool where one gets Mini and any two gets Plus (but for Elite, you must get to the gym).



What? No, the bar is going BEHIND his head.

### Further Notes

This is the best habit system in the world. Not only can your habits adapt to you every single day, but you can design them with your specific lifestyle in mind. The options are limitless.

In some cases, it's useful to *limit* the verticality of a lateral option. For me, going to the gym is always an Elite level victory. Whenever I go to the gym, I always work out intensely, so it doesn't make sense for me to have lower-level options for the gym. But that's specific to my behavior when I arrive at the gym.

On the other side of the spectrum, I could set a Mini-level-only win condition of buying a new book for my reading habit. Buying interesting books is an essential part of the reading process that involves some research, and yet, I'm certainly not going to give myself a Plus or Elite level win for buying more books. It would only make sense to give myself Mini level credit for taking that small step to purchase something to read, because researching and buying a book to read is about the same difficulty as reading two pages of a book (my other Mini win condition).

Don't feel that when you create a win condition, it must be adapted to all three

levels. Only do that when it makes sense and benefits you!

With so many options for habit design with the Habit Poster 2.0, how do you choose what to do?

**1. Start with a broad habit.** What do you want to do? Exercise? Read? Write? Journal? Clean your home? Organize your digital life? Start a hobby? Learn a new skill?

**2. Determine the end goal.** What is this habit going to accomplish for you? Where do you want to go with it? What's the ideal outcome?

**3. Based on responses to the first two questions, list the fundamental and supplementary tasks of the habit.** Fundamental tasks are the only ones you should use for any of the single-win condition templates we discussed earlier. They work well alone because they are fundamental to the habit and are therefore worthy of the spotlight. Supplementary tasks have value, and may even be necessary for the habit in smaller doses, but they aren't useful as your primary focus.

For playing guitar, practicing with your fingers is fundamental. You can read every guitar lesson book in the world, but if you don't practice it with your own hands, you won't be able to do it! Music theory and things like that could be considered supplementary tasks.

For exercise, you might determine that aerobic training is fundamental if your goal is heart health and weight management. Or maybe weightlifting is your fundamental goal for strength and body-building. Then other forms of exercise could supplement that. Or you might want well-rounded fitness—in which case a large number of exercise options are fundamentally relevant to your goal.

If a task is supplementary, try to pair it with other supplementary tasks at whatever level(s) you place it. Give yourself options. You can also pair

fundamental and supplementary tasks together. But these are guidelines more than rules. You might put a supplementary task as your only Mini win condition just to make sure it gets done to some degree, and then focus on your fundamental tasks at the Plus and Elite levels.

**4. With your list of behaviors, decide your win conditions, one at a time.** Start with the Mini level and choose what behavior(s) at what intensity will earn you a Mini win. Then move to Plus and Elite. Alternatively, choose one of the templates discussed earlier and see if it works with your habit. The ideal structure of your elastic habit will depend on your specific goals for the habit.

I understand this can seem overwhelming because of the literally infinite possibilities of elastic habit design, but let me clarify how easy this is. If you want, you can set one win condition for each level. That's the simplest elastic habit and it can work very well. I recommend starting simply and building from there. Don't add extra options just because you think you "should."

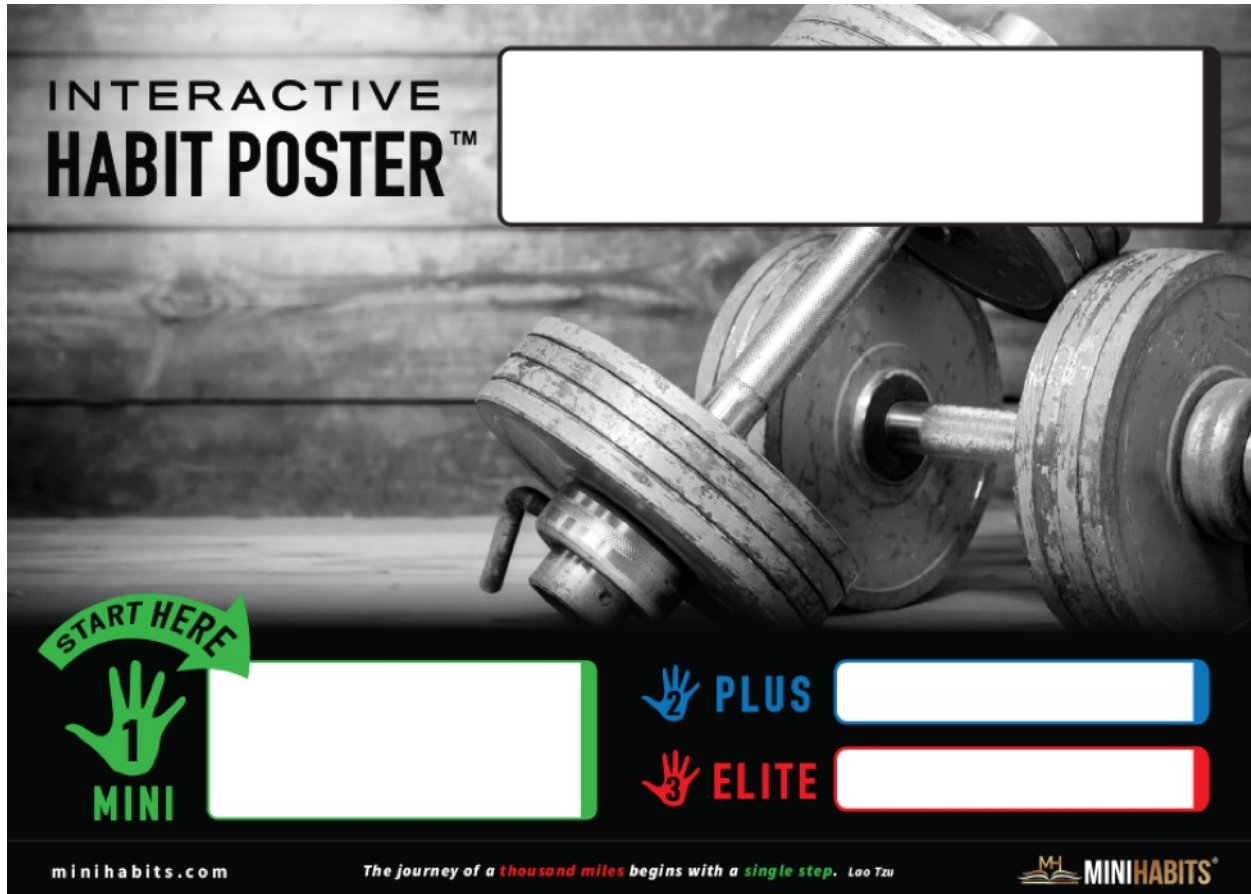
If it's been a month and you've never done one of your options, consider removing or revising it. Dead weight in the form of unused options won't help much.

Finally, don't feel like you need to figure everything out at the very beginning. These posters are dry erase. Use your eraser as much as you want to restructure your habits to work for you. This isn't a cookie-cutter method, because *you can customize it to your exact goals and your exact life*. That's why it's going to work better than anything else you've ever tried. Once you optimize it, you're going to wonder why you didn't have this sooner.

It will take some time to figure out what works best. And you will get new ideas as you go. But it's a very fun process and it never gets stale, because elastic habits can change themselves as much as they change you (significantly!).

You can buy these posters at [minihabits.com](http://minihabits.com). If you prefer to do it yourself, you can simply use a whiteboard. The posters have some advantages over the whiteboard, such as the perfect division marks and the fact that they're specifically designed for this.

# Interactive Habit Poster (Limited Edition)



Interactive Habit Posters are used to display one elastic habit. They sacrifice the flexibility of the Elastic Habit Poster 2.0 for style. You have less room to write your options, and in return, get a large, beautiful picture to represent your habit.

There are 25 different themes. These posters are laminated for wet and dry erase marker usage, allowing you to edit your poster as much as you want.





You can fill in your lateral and vertical options in the Mini, Plus, and Elite boxes. Review Part Five if you don't yet know your vertical and lateral options.

Once you've filled in your poster, put it on the wall in a place you'll see every day. If you have a "command center" where you organize your life, that's the right place. For me, that's in the bedroom. For others, it might be near their desk or on the refrigerator with their calendar. I bought a giant magnetic whiteboard to display my habit posters, tracker, and any other daily to-dos or notes.

I recommend the Habit Poster 2.0 in general over these, but Interactive Habit Posters work well for simple habits and for those who want to try out slap contracts (covered next).

People are generally more successful at showing up to work than they are at pursuing personal goals. We adhere to the work contract—we show up, work, and we get paid for it. Why is it any different with personal goals?

*You are the arbitrator.* When it comes to your personal goals, you can *always* break your agreement as if it never existed. Even if you set up a punishment for non-compliance, you can then break *that contract*. No matter what you do, you have the freedom to not comply without direct consequences. You are the all-powerful arbitrator in your personal life, and you know it.

Given our personal power to cancel pursuits on a whim, it's a challenge to do beneficial things that we resist doing. We often try to set up a sort of boss/employee relationship to ensure our success, but in the long run, we still change our minds and do what we want.

To fix this, you can create a likable arbitrator to hand your executive power to temporarily. That arbitrator is your habit poster, and the way to make deals using it is through slap contracts.

Slap contracts are optional, and in practice, I find myself interacting with my posters this way only about 10–20% of the time. It's a nice option to have when you're on the fence and want to commit to doing something.



## How the Slap Contract Works

Once two parties sign a written contract, it's official and *legally binding*. It becomes real, strong, and formidable. Wouldn't it be great if powerful words like that could describe our commitment to our goals?

**A slap contract is a simple gesture that signals your absolute intention to take a particular action right now.** Like written contracts, a slap contract is meant to be serious and binding, but it's a contract with yourself. In practice, it's done by simply touching (or lightly slapping) the habit poster on your wall. I'm aware that it sounds silly, but you've got to try it!

Here's how it works: By making contact with the poster, be it a slap, "bro fist," flick, or any other kind of touch, you declare your intention. Each "slap" of the poster commits you to the next highest level.

- 1 slap: Mini level
- 2 slaps: Plus level

3 slaps: Elite level

You can also slap the poster *after* you complete an action to celebrate.

Disclaimer: I am not responsible for any damage caused from slapping your poster too emphatically. Slap at your own risk! Use this technique to solidify your intention and make it tangible. It's a lot stronger than simply thinking about doing the behavior.

**My Slap Story:** I had been crushing my habits lately, hitting the Elite level consistently on multiple habits, and I found out that one of my favorite video game series had a Japanese-only game that had been translated to English. So I excitedly thought, "I've been doing well, I'm going to take a break. I'll make this a Mini-level day so I can play this game."

I read a mere three pages of *On Writing* by William Zinsser to satisfy my two-pages reading requirement. You can slap the poster beforehand to declare your intention **or** you can slap it afterwards to celebrate its completion. I was excited to have met my requirement so easily and eager to play the game. In my excitement, I quickly slapped the poster *twice* to celebrate my easy win. Twice? Oops! That meant I had to read the rest of the chapter (because two slaps is a Plus level commitment, which means reading at least one chapter).

I found the situation amusing because it "forced" me to read a little bit more than I normally would have, but it was my own doing, so I couldn't complain. Poster interactions always feel fair. If you don't want to be on the hook for the action, you simply don't touch the poster. If you do touch it, then you must follow through.

### **Poster Interaction**

**I recommend that you only create a slap contract the instant before you begin to execute it.** When your hand contacts the poster, your very next step needs to be in the direction of that action. No skipping. No excuses. You must do it after that. It's best done this way to preserve your trust in the process.

If it's running, get your shoes on in the next minute and walk out the door. If you touch that poster, you are on the hook. You'll find that it's more empowering than draining to make a self-contract. I find that it's comforting in a way to know that the action will be done when I activate a contract. It removes any doubt and ambiguity that I might not show up. If you make your contract too early and

something affects your ability to execute, you may lose trust in it.

Slap contracts are not confining or restrictive because they're completely choice-driven. *You* are the one who activates the contract. It's not from a goal you set two months ago. It's not a part of a rigid program you're following to get ripped abs "in only 7 days." It's you. In the same way that I accept all of the contracts I've signed for my books, you'll accept these contracts because *you* activate them. If you don't want to do the action, don't activate the contract. It's that simple. And since these contracts will be optional, you'll never have guilt, shame, or paralyzing pressure about (not) doing them.

### **The Importance of the "Handshake"**

As many others have written before, it can help to write down your intentions somewhere—on a white board, on your calendar, etc. Slap contracts take this concept to another level, and here's why.

Writing something down on a board MIGHT be enough to set your intention, but you still have to take a few steps to "seal" that intention. Why? *We've all written things down and not done them.* That reduces our trust that writing something down means it will absolutely be done. That's nothing close to a legally binding contract. The other issue is that writing something down doesn't mean anything unless we consciously note that writing "Read a page in a book" on the whiteboard means that we intend to do it. We still have to assign meaning to the words.

This is an opportunity to create more powerful intentions. You will see the poster and know what it offers. Your brain will know exactly what it means when you touch or enthusiastically slap the poster. You're in. You're doing it.

### **Contract Troll (Toll)**

There's one more way to use a habit poster—as a contract troll.

The contract troll gets its name from the classic story of the troll on the bridge, requiring a toll for people to pass. I have a pull-up bar in my bathroom doorway (the bar prevents the door from closing, but I live alone, so I don't need to close the door); every time I leave the restroom, I require myself to pay a "toll" of at least two pull-ups (or substitute five push-ups). I require it when I'm leaving as opposed to entering because if I have to use the restroom, I don't want to have to do pull-ups first.

Consider setting up small “tolls” for certain actions in key places. Exercise is a likely application—push-ups or pull-ups—but there are other creative ideas. For example, maybe you require yourself to have a “shot” of water every time you open the fridge or enter the kitchen. Have a small water glass nearby, and then quickly fill it up and drink it. That’s an easy way to increase your water intake.

# The Habit Star



The Habit Star is a fun and versatile habit tracker. It's separate from the core *Elastic Habits* system; it fills other habit tracking needs.

The Habit Star has 31 numbered tabs centered on a circular base. The tabs fold back, which represents completion of that number or day. The tabs will stay back if the center of the star is affixed to the wall and/or by placing small Velcro

stickers to the tabs (I sell these, too). When a tab is folded behind, the green back side can be seen through a diamond-shaped cutout, which gives a visually satisfying “success” mark.

As for what to put in the box, you have several options. You can draw a baby dinosaur to represent your paleontology studies. You can make it cryptic if it relates to a bad habit you don’t want to advertise (My Habit Star says “freedom” to represent what I’ll gain by abstaining from a bad habit).

### **1. Track a behavior for the month.**

Every month has 31 days or fewer. Thus, each numbered tab represents one day of the month. If you make it all the way through day 31 without missing a day, your star will become a cool-looking circle!

You can track good or bad habits this way. For good habits, fold down the tab for any successful day. It’s important to note that the Habit Star lacks vertical flexibility, so try to use it for on/off habits such as brushing your teeth or flossing that have a low “ceiling” but are still important.

For bad habits, fold down a tab for each day that you do NOT do the bad habit. Since the tabs are green and denote success, you want to associate folding them down with doing the right thing. It’s really satisfying!

Did you go a full day without eating added sugar? Put the tab down! Other bad habits you could target with the Habit Star are biting your nails, eating out, smoking, drinking, or spending more than two hours on social media. Your options are endless, and because the Habit Star is interactive and visual, you’ll feel greater satisfaction as you break bad habits.

Each morning, I get up and think about yesterday. If I succeeded in avoiding my bad habit, I put the next tab down. You can just as well do it for good habits. If I did the bad habit, I can either leave the tab up or try to start over with a new streak. Whether you start over or not depends on your goals. Breaking bad habits can be difficult, so you might go into it with the perspective of seeing how many days out of the month you can win (allowing for mistakes) instead of letting one mistake derail you.

Alternatively, mark the tab down before the day begins as a precommitment. If you succeed, leave it down. If you don’t, flip it back (this is additional motivation



to stick with it!).

### **2. Track a streak (good or bad habit), starting whenever.**

You don't have to use the start of a month to start a streak with the #1 tab. Make any day your "day one" of a new behavior pattern. This is my preferred use of the habit star, and, specifically, I like to use it for keeping tabs on bad habits since I use the *Elastic Habits* system for good habits. If it's already the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, you can start tracking on that day.

### **3. Track on/off days for a behavior, starting whenever or monthly.**

There are some behaviors, such as eating certain foods or drinking alcohol, that you might not want to cut out of your life completely, but moderate instead. Or maybe it's a behavior that you do want to eliminate eventually, but not immediately. For a bad behavior that you want to limit, put the tab down on days you succeed, and leave them up on ones you don't. At the end of the 31 days, you'll see exactly how many times you did (not) do that behavior.

This works with good habits as well. Target behaviors that you don't want or need to do every day, but that are great when you can do them. For me, that would be eating "mega salads." They are superbly healthy, but I don't want to require that I have one every day. Still, I might want to encourage myself to make them more frequently, and tracking them on a Habit Star can encourage that. Also, my dentist wants me to floss more. But I personally don't think it needs to be done daily, so I can track the days I do it with a Habit Star.

### **4. Count reps and "laps" (day).**

Next to my pull-up bar, I have a Habit Star on the wall. I like to do pull-ups throughout the day sometimes, and instead of keeping track in my head, I can use the Habit Star to keep count.

Here's how it works: if I start off with a set of eight pull-ups, I put down the #8 tab. Later, if I do four more, I'll pull the #8 tab back up and flip down the #12 tab. Once I make it around the star, I'll keep the #1 tab down to remind myself that I've completed "one lap" around the star. It's really fun and encourages me to do more than I would otherwise. Sometimes I go for 100 reps, which is three laps around the star (93 reps) plus seven more.

### **5. Count reps (week or month).**

Maybe you want to eat more carrots, but you don't necessarily want to demand

that you do it every day. You might eat three carrots on one day, and none the next. In this case, you might want to count how many (full-size) carrots you eat in a month (or week or any amount of time you desire). As with the pull-ups, simply flip the tab that currently represents the number of carrots you've eaten in total. In this case, you won't reset the count at the end of the day; you'll keep the count for the entire week or month or whatever period of time you deem best.

When you flip a tab down, the number is no longer visible, but you can easily tell what number you're at by looking at the surrounding numbers. Or simply flip the Habit Star over and you'll see all of the folded-down numbers.

### **Conclusion and DIY Idea**

The Habit Star can track or count anything. Best of all, it's reusable. After each period of 31 days, you can mark that you've completed one month and reset the star for the next one.

If you want to try a DIY solution, I can tell you that the idea for this product came from posters with the phone number tabs you can pull off. You know, the ones you see on electrical poles? You could cut a piece of paper into 31 tabs, number them, and tear them off as you complete them. It won't look as pretty as the Habit Star and won't be reusable, and you'd have to write 1– 31 each time, but it could still be worthwhile!

If you're interested to see a demonstration of the Habit Star, visit **[minihabits.com](http://minihabits.com)**.