

How Long Does It Take to Create a New Habit?

They say it takes 21 days to create a new habit. That's kind of a weird idea though, isn't it? It doesn't take that long to form a bad habit. And sometimes no matter how hard we try, it takes us a lot longer to form a new and positive habit.

So how long does it really take to create habits that are good for our lives?

The answer is that it depends. It depends on your mindset and how big of a change it is from your normal routine. If your daily habit is eating a bowl of ice cream at night and you switch from regular ice cream to a lower-calorie option like frozen yogurt, it probably won't take long to form that new habit because the change is not that drastic. To give up sweets altogether may take much longer.

The same applies to writing. If you are not in the habit of writing every day now, the first week may be difficult for you—but you CAN get through the tough beginning. If you're writing every weekend now or at least four times per week, then shifting to writing a little every day may not be as difficult.

While every person will face a different experience with creating a new habit, here are a few basic keys to keep in mind:

1. It's easier to make a new habit than get rid of an old one. Keep telling yourself this, especially when sneaking in bits and pieces of writing time seems strange to you. It's better than not writing at all.
2. Whenever possible, try to replace an old habit with a new one. If you work out regularly, use that time to also think about your book plot or think about ways you can streamline some tasks so you have more time to write. Combine things as best you can to start new habits.
3. Habits will form faster if you stick to the same time and environment each day. Instead of going for a walk whenever, keep your sneakers next to the door and schedule your walk every day at 6pm. The same thing applies to writing. Find your ideal productive time and set aside time on the calendar for that, and try to manage more in the day if possible.
4. Remind yourself of WHY you're forming this new habit. Writing every day leads to a book you can sell. Exercise and eating right leads to better health. Keep the end game in mind.