

12+ English
A2+—B1
Graded Reader

Elena Nikolskaya

Small Actions. Strong Results

A Practical Guide to Real Change

Two audio versions for each chapter

Male voice · American accent

Female voice · British accent

FROM THE SERIES

**Progress in English
& Progress in Life**

Elena Nikolskaya
Small Actions. Strong Results.
A Practical Guide to Real Change

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Аннотация

Build stronger English through ideas you can use. Designed for adult learners at A2+–B1, this book combines clear texts, audio practice, vocabulary in context, comprehension work, and short tasks in one coherent learning journey. It helps readers develop language confidence while turning small actions into real results.

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Small Actions. Strong Results

A Practical Guide to Real Change

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Reader and Level Note

This book is for adult learners of English from A2+ to B1 who want to read clear nonfiction and use one idea in daily life. Optional Challenges ask you to compare, explain, or change an idea and offer additional practice. You can use the book alone. Teachers, groups, and reading clubs can use the guidance near the end of the book.

The written text uses American English. Each chapter also has two audio versions: one read by a male narrator with an American accent and one read by a female narrator with a British accent. Both recordings follow the same chapter text.

You do not need to understand every word on the first reading. Focus on the main idea first, and return to difficult words later.

If You Would Like Support

You can use this book on your own. If you would like help understanding the material or practicing your English, you can study with Elena Nikolskaya, the author of this book and an English teacher. She offers individual English lessons and corporate English training.

Use the [Telegram bot](#) to book a lesson or ask about training for your company.

Introduction

Some plans look simple on a quiet evening. The next day, an early message arrives, a child needs help, or your shift changes. You have less energy than you expected. Soon the plan feels hard, and you may think, “The problem is me.”

Often, the plan and the real day do not fit. The plan may be too large, or the time, place, tools, or support may be wrong. This does not mean that you are lazy or weak. You may need a plan that fits the situation better.

In this book, you will do two things. You will read short nonfiction texts in clear American English, find the main idea, notice useful language, and answer questions from the text. The book is designed for learners of English from A2+ to B1. An Optional Challenge gives you a slightly harder question when you want one. At the same time, you will follow one small, low-risk project from the first idea to a final review. Use My Project Record for your notes, so each chapter can build on the last.

Safety / skip / change the task: Treat the project as an experiment, not a promise that you will change. If a field does not fit your project, write N/A (not applicable). You can also use a made-up example, pause, or stop. Choose an ordinary action that is mainly under your control: prepare one item, begin one short task, or change one non-essential digital habit. Keep medical or mental-health conditions, substance- or food-related behavior,

personal safety, and serious legal or financial issues outside My Project Record. In those situations, professional or safety support comes first.

You do not need a perfect day. Open Chapter 1 and choose a place to start.

How to Use This Book

The first time you use this book, read it in order. Keep one Project Record, and let each chapter add to the same small, low-risk project.

To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose the section for your chapter or Reading Check. Match the question numbers or activity names. Open questions show one possible answer; your words may be different. Use the self-check to compare your ideas. To return, use the table of contents to open your chapter and Questions or Mini Task. You can also save your place with a bookmark if your reading app has this option.

1. **Read once:** Go through the chapter without stopping at every new word. Follow Maya's example and look for the main idea. Mark only words that block meaning.

2. **Read again:** Return to it more slowly. Notice the situation, action, result, and limit. Check whether your first understanding changed after the second reading.

3. **Listen to the chapter:** Each chapter has two audio versions: one read by a male narrator with an American accent and one read by a female narrator with a British accent. Both recordings follow the same chapter text. Choose the version you prefer, or listen to both to compare pronunciation.

4. **Notice useful words:** Study the target words after meeting

them in the text. Say the example aloud, notice the part of speech, and write one short sentence.

5. Use the Key Takeaway: Explain it in your own simple English. Keep the claim small: the idea may help in some situations; it is not a promise.

6. Answer the questions: Read the question itself first. Use the chapter to find evidence. For open answers, use the sentence frame and self-check.

7. Try the Optional Challenge: Use it when you want a harder question. You may skip it and continue with the main activities.

8. Update My Project Record: Open My Project Record near the end of the book, before the Answer Key. You can also download it in two formats: a [printable PDF](#) for writing by hand or an [editable Word document](#) for typing your answers. Each Mini Task names the section you need. Complete only the named fields. You do not need to fill in the whole record at the beginning. If a field does not apply, write N/A (not applicable).

9. Remember, then check: Come back later. Before you open the chapter again, try to remember the main idea and two useful words. Then check the chapter. You can do this after one day, one week, or at another time that fits your schedule.

If you prefer to keep the answers beside the book, use the free Answer Key & Self-Check Guide (PDF). Open it on another device or print only the pages you need. All answers are also in this book. [Download the Answer Key & Self-Check Guide](#)

(PDF).

Using the Table of Contents and Downloads

Use the book's table of contents to move between chapters, Questions, Mini Tasks, My Project Record, and Answer Key. The checking instructions name the section you need. Links to both audio versions for each chapter, the Telegram bot, [printable PDF](#), [editable Word document](#), and ZIP archive open external resources and require an internet connection.

[Download both audio versions for all ten chapters \(ZIP\).](#)

Before You Start: Reading Check

This short Reading Check gives you a starting point. At the end of the book, you will read a different passage designed to be similar in length and difficulty. You will answer the same types of questions. Comparing the two checks can help you notice whether reading feels easier and how your understanding and confidence have changed.

1. Read the passage once without a dictionary or translation tool.
2. When you finish, answer the five questions without looking back at the passage.
3. Record your confidence and how the reading felt before you check the answers.
4. To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Then choose Answers — Before You Start: Reading Check.

Reading passage

Daniel starts work at a repair shop at nine each morning. Before customers arrive, he checks messages and opens the daily schedule. One Monday, the schedule shows three jobs at the same time. Daniel wants to answer every message and solve everything quickly. Then he reads the schedule again and marks the most urgent repair. He calls one customer and agrees on a

later time. Next, he prepares the tools for the first job. The shop is still busy, but Daniel knows what comes first.

At lunch, he notices that two messages are unanswered. He writes them on a short list for the afternoon. His day is not perfect, yet the work feels easier to manage. A clear order helps him use the time he has.

Reading Check

1. What is the main idea? Options: Daniel must answer every message immediately. / Daniel creates a clear order for a busy day. / Customers do not accept changes to the schedule.

2. Which repair does Daniel mark?

3. Put these actions in order: prepare the tools; write unanswered messages on a list; call a customer.

4. In this passage, what does urgent mean? Options: needing attention first / easy to finish / arriving later than planned

5. Daniel answers every message before lunch. True or false?

To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Before You Start: Reading Check. To return, open Before You Start: Reading Check in the table of contents.

Correct answers: _____ (0—5 after checking)

Confidence before checking: _____ (1—4)

Confidence scale: 1 = I understood very little; 2 = I understood some parts; 3 = I understood the main idea and most details; 4 = I understood the main idea and almost all details.

Reading felt: difficult / manageable / easy

Part 1 — Start Small and Make It Work

Part 1 helps you turn a broad goal into an action you can try and check. You will choose one small action and make it easier to start. If an ordinary, low-risk habit gets in the way, you can test one small change to it. Then you will repeat the action and record what happened. The chapters build on one another, so keep using the same Project Record. By the end of Part 1, you will have tried the action several times and collected some real information. This is not proof, a grade, or a judgment about you.

Chapter 1 — Choose One Small Action

Listen to this chapter:

[US English · male voice](#)

[UK English · female voice](#)

Reading: Identifying a goal, an action, and a clear end you can see and check

Action and language: Writing one small, specific action and choosing when to try it

Optional challenge: Comparing two actions on an imperfect day

A Goal Is Not an Action

On Tuesday morning, Maya opened her laptop to a screen full of messages, meeting notes, and a long task list. She wanted to start her workday with less confusion. The goal gave her direction, but it did not tell her what to do first. She could not put “less confusion” on her desk or mark it as finished.

Why was it still hard to begin? A broad goal can include many possible actions. Maya could answer messages, read her meeting notes, or choose a task from the list. Each action might help, but her goal did not tell her which one to take.

Writer Anne Lamott tells a story about her brother, who could not see how to start a large school report. Their father gave him

one piece of advice:

Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.

— Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird*

The report was still large, but the advice helped him focus on one small part. A small action can do the same for a broad goal. It answers a useful question: Where can I begin?

A goal names a change that matters to you. An action gives you something to do now. Maya used her broad goal to choose one action. Before she opened non-urgent messages, she would write one work priority on a sticky note. The priority was the task she needed to do first. The note could not organize her whole day, but it could make that choice easier.

In *Getting Things Done*, David Allen calls a next action “the next physical, visible activity.” Here, *physical* means something you can actually do, not just think about. Maya’s goal was to start her workday with less confusion. Her next action was to write one work priority.

Maya chose one part she could do. Her plan included both the broad goal and one clear action.

“Improve my English” and “organize my home” are goals. “Read one page after breakfast” and “put the papers from one shelf into a folder” are actions. These actions do not describe every step that comes later. They give you something specific to try on an ordinary day.

Make the Action Specific

A specific action answers three questions: What will I do? How much will I do? When or where will I do it? Maya wrote, “I will write one priority on a sticky note before I open non-urgent messages.” The verb is *write*, the amount is *one priority*, and the moment is *before she opens non-urgent messages*. She can check every part.

These details make the action clear before Maya opens her messages. When the time comes, she does not have to decide again how to start her workday with less confusion. She has already chosen the task, the amount, and the moment.

Research on planning suggests that a plan connecting a situation with a specific action can help some people move from wanting to act to doing it. The plan does not guarantee a start, but it gives a ready answer to one question: What will I do first?

A realistic action fits the time, energy, and control you have. It should not depend on a perfect morning or on another person who has not agreed to help. If the first idea is too large, make it smaller. “Study for two hours every evening” may not fit a busy week. “Review five words after lunch” is a more realistic start.

If Maya has an early meeting, she has less time than usual. Writing one priority may fit, even on a difficult morning. It gives her one clear task to begin with.

A small action still needs a purpose. Deleting one random

email is easy, but it may not support Maya's goal. Writing one priority does. A useful first action is specific and connected to what matters. It is small because Maya will do one limited thing, not because the goal is unimportant.

Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer studied people doing work they cared about. They found a connection between small steps forward and how people felt about their work. Their study did not cover every kind of goal. Here, the idea is limited but useful: choose a small step that supports something important to you.

Know When the Action Is Complete

Maya chose one action: write one priority on a sticky note. The action is complete when one specific priority is on the note.

A clear end gives the action a limit. Maya does not need to plan the whole day or feel fully organized. She only needs to check whether one priority is on the note.

The action can be complete even when the rest of the workday is difficult. Maya checks only whether the note has one priority. She does not use this action to judge the whole day.

The record should describe what Maya did. "I wrote one priority before opening non-urgent messages" is clear. "I felt good about the start" describes a feeling and can mean different things. The record can include both the action and the feeling, but they are not the same.

After Maya completes the action, she can point to one part of the plan that she has actually done. This does not prove that she will reach the goal, but it gives her a place to continue from.

A small action may make the start easier, but it cannot guarantee a larger result.

For now, you need a direction, one action, and a clear end. Write your goal and one small action in My Project Record. Choose when you will try it first and when you will pause for a Progress Check. At that check, you will look at several attempts and decide what to keep or change. Chapter 2 will help you make the same action easier to start.

Key Takeaway

A goal gives direction. One small, specific action shows you where to begin. Choose an action that is realistic and has a clear end you can check. When you complete it, your plan has a visible start and you have a place to continue from.

Goal



One Small Action



How You Will Check It



First Attempt

Vocabulary

goal (noun)

a result or change that you want *Example:* My goal is to start my workday with less confusion.

action (noun)

something that you do *Example:* Writing one priority is a clear action.

specific (adjective)

clear and exact, not general *Example:* Choose a specific time and place.

check (verb)

to look at something to see if it is correct or complete *Example:* I can check the note after I write the priority.

realistic (adjective)

possible in your real situation *Example:* Five minutes is realistic for my busy morning.

direction (noun)

the general way that you want to move or develop *Example:* The goal gives the project direction.

Words to review:

- plan
- change
- start

Questions

Optional Warm-Up

Which is easier to see: a broad goal or one completed action? You may answer with one phrase.

Question 1

What is the main difference between a goal and an action?

Question 2

What will Maya do before she opens non-urgent messages?

Question 3

In the phrase “a realistic action,” does realistic mean possible or perfect?

Question 4

Complete the sentences using the word bank. Use every option once.

- a. A ____ names a result or change that you want.
- b. Something that you do is an ____.
- c. A clear and exact idea is ____.
- d. I can ____ the note after I write the priority.

e. A plan that fits my real week is ____.

f. A goal gives the project ____.

Word bank: goal, action, specific, check, realistic, direction

Question 5

Write one goal and one action that supports it. Make sure you can see and check the action. Say how you will know when it is complete.

Frame: My goal is _____. My action is to _____ [how much] [when or where]. The action is complete when _____.

Example: My goal is to read more in English. My action is to read one page after breakfast. The action is complete when I reach the end of one page.

Self-check: I named a goal, used an action verb, said how much I will do, and included a time or place. I can say exactly when the action is complete.

Optional Challenge

Compare two possible first actions for the same goal. Which action is more realistic on an imperfect day, and why?

Your answer should:

- compare two actions.
- name one real limit.
- explain which action is easier to see and check.

Question 6

Use the words **plan** and **start** in one sentence about Maya's project. You may look back at the Introduction and Chapter 1.

To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Chapter 1: Choose One Small Action. Match the question numbers. For open answers, use the example and self-check. To return, open Chapter 1, then Questions, in the table of contents.

Mini Task: Start Your Project Record

After Chapter 1, use the book's table of contents to open My Project Record. Find Section A in Blank Record — Fill It In as You Read. Use the five steps below.

1. **Project Name:** Choose a short working name that will help you remember the project later. Maya calls her project *A Clear Start to My Workday*.
2. **Goal:** Name the low-risk change you want. The goal gives the project direction. You will write the action in the next field.
3. **One Small Action:** Write exactly what you will do, how much, and when or where. Keep the action small enough for an ordinary day. Make sure you can tell when it is complete.
4. **First Attempt:** Choose the date or situation for your first try.
5. **Progress Check:** Choose a point after several attempts

when you will look at what happened and decide what to keep or change. Your goal may still be in progress at the Progress Check.

Example Record: Maya's Project

1. Project Name

A Clear Start to My Workday

2. Goal

Start my workday with less confusion.

3. One Small Action

Before I open non-urgent messages, I will write one work priority on a sticky note.

4. First Attempt

Wednesday at my usual workplace.

5. Progress Check

After four attempts or at the end of one week.

Your Turn: Complete *Section A of My Project Record*. If you like, use the frame below to write the same information as a short paragraph.

Optional Paragraph

My project is called [project name]. My goal is [goal]. I will [one small action] [when or where]. The action is complete when [clear end]. My first attempt will be [date or situation]. I will check my progress after [number of attempts or time period].

Optional challenge: Write one thing that may make the action harder on an imperfect day. Do not solve it yet; Chapter 2 will use it.

Self-check

- I gave the project a short name.
- My action supports my goal.
- The action is small enough for an ordinary day.
- I said how much I will do and when or where I will do it.
- I can say exactly when the action is complete.
- I chose a first attempt and a Progress Check.

What happens next: In Chapter 2, you will keep this action. You will learn how to choose an event that tells you when to begin, name a barrier, and build a simple setup.

To check your project, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Chapter 1: Choose One Small Action, then find Chapter 1 · Mini Task. Compare your work with the example and self-check. Your project may be different. To return, open Chapter 1 and Mini Task: Start Your Project Record in the table of contents.

Chapter 2 — Make It Easy to Start

Listen to this chapter:

[US English · male voice](#)

[UK English · female voice](#)

Reading: Identifying a signal to start, a barrier, and a setup

Action and language: Describing one simple setup that makes an action easier to start

Optional challenge: Comparing two setups and explaining one advantage and one disadvantage for each setup

See the Start

Maya kept the action she chose in Chapter 1: write one priority on a sticky note before opening non-urgent messages. On Wednesday, she opened her laptop and saw the notifications first. The sticky notes were out of sight in a drawer, and there was no pen beside her. She opened the messages instead.

Maya looked at the moment before her action. Opening the laptop was her **signal to start**: the event that told her when to begin. However, the signal did not make both choices equally easy. The notifications were visible. Her sticky notes were hidden.

Maya had to search and make another choice before she could begin the useful action. She could open a message immediately.

A hard start is not always a motivation problem. Sometimes another action is simply easier to see or reach.

Motivation and self-control can change from day to day. Maya did not need to wait for a perfect mood or prove that she wanted the goal enough. She could change what was ready at the start.

BJ Fogg's behavior model has three parts: motivation, how easy the action is, and a prompt. In this chapter, the Signal to Start is the prompt: it tells you *when*. A setup can make the first move easier. This is one way to think about the start, not a promise that the action will happen.

Remove One Barrier

A **barrier** is something that makes an action harder to start. It may be a needed item that is missing, an object that is hard to reach, an unclear instruction, or a first step that is too long. Maya's barrier was specific: the pad and pen she needed were out of sight or missing from the desk.

Before the change, Maya opened the laptop, saw the notifications, remembered the sticky notes, searched the drawer, found the pad and a pen, and returned to the laptop. With each extra step, she could move to something else.

Maya prepared what she needed. She placed the pad and pen beside her laptop and hid non-urgent notifications until she wrote the priority. This removed the need to search and made the chosen first step easier.

Duckworth, Gendler, and Gross explain that people can sometimes support self-control by changing a situation before a difficult choice. The idea will not fit every situation. Maya's prepared desk is one small example.

Not every barrier is under your control. You may share a room, work different shifts, use equipment that belongs to someone else, or need an accessible setup. Choose only a change that you are allowed to make and that respects other people's limits. If you cannot change the space, leave it as it is. A personal note, a bookmark, or a quiet reminder may still help.

Build a Simple Setup

A **setup** is a small arrangement that puts needed things or conditions in place. The three ideas have different jobs. A signal says *when* to begin. A barrier names what gets in the way. A setup says what will be ready or what will change before the action.

Before she left on Wednesday, Maya prepared for Thursday. The next morning, the materials were beside her laptop, and the screen did not show non-urgent notifications before she wrote the priority. She still had to choose and write it. The setup did not do the work, but the useful items were visible and within reach on a difficult morning.

A useful setup supports the same action from Chapter 1; it does not create a new goal. Before an online lesson, a learner can prepare the materials and open the correct page. Before a home

task, a person can put one needed item where the task will begin. If the usual place changes, a calendar reminder may work better than an object left on one desk.

Choose a setup that fits your real environment; the same one will not work for everyone.

Complete Signal to Start, Barrier, and Setup in your Project Record. Put one part of the setup in place now if you can. In Chapter 3, you will check whether an ordinary pattern competes with the action at the same moment. If no suitable pattern fits, keep the Chapter 2 setup.

Key Takeaway

A hard start is not always a motivation problem. A signal tells you when to begin; a setup puts what you need in place; and removing a barrier can make the first step easier.

Barrier



Make One Small Setup Change



Easier Start

Vocabulary

signal (noun)

an event or sign that tells you when to begin an action *Example:*

Opening the laptop is Maya's signal to start.

barrier (noun)

something that makes an action harder to start *Example:* A pad hidden in a drawer was a barrier.

setup (noun)

an arrangement that makes the start of an action easier
Example: The sticky notes and pen are part of her setup.

prepare (verb)

to make something ready before you need it *Example:* I prepare my materials before the lesson.

environment (noun)

the place and conditions around you *Example:* Maya changes her work environment by moving the sticky notes and hiding non-urgent notifications.

Words to review:

- action
- start
- check

Questions

Optional Warm-Up

What small object can make a familiar task easier to start?

Question 1

What does Maya change in this chapter: her goal, her action, or the conditions around the action?

Question 2

Put the steps in Maya's planned order: write one priority, open the laptop; open non-urgent messages.

Question 3

In "I prepare my materials before the lesson," is prepare a noun or a verb? What becomes ready?

Question 4

Complete the sentences using the word bank. Use every option once.

- a. A sign that tells you when to begin is a ____.
- b. A missing item that makes the start harder is a ____.
- c. The sticky notes and pen beside Maya's laptop are part of her ____.
- d. I ____ my materials before the lesson.
- e. The place and conditions around me are my ____.

Word bank: signal, barrier, setup, prepare, environment

Question 5

Choose one event that tells you when to start your action, one barrier, and one setup for your Project Record.

Frame: My signal to start is _____. One barrier is _____. My setup

is to ____ before I begin.

Example: My signal to start is opening my laptop. One barrier is that the pad of sticky notes is out of sight in a drawer. My setup is to put the pad and a pen beside the laptop before I begin.

Self-check: I kept the same action from Chapter 1, named a clear signal and a real barrier, and planned one simple setup.

Optional Challenge

Compare two possible setups for the same action. Explain one advantage and one disadvantage for each setup.

Your answer should:

- keep the same action.
- compare two setups.
- name one advantage and one disadvantage for each setup.

Question 6

Complete the sentence with action, start, and check: I keep the same ____, make the ____ easier, and ____ the result later. You may look back at Chapters 1 and 2.

Remember Chapter 1 Words

Without looking back at the Vocabulary section in the previous chapter, match each definition with an item from the word bank. Use every option once. Then check.

- a. A result or change that you want.
- b. Something that you do.

- c. Clear and exact, not general.
- d. To look at something to learn if it is correct or complete.
- e. Possible in the real situation that you have.
- f. The general way that you want to move or develop.

Word bank: goal, action, specific, check, realistic, direction

To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Chapter 2: Make It Easy to Start. Match the question numbers or Remember Chapter 1 Words. For open answers, use the example and self-check. To return, open Chapter 2, then Questions, in the table of contents.

Mini Task: Update Your Project Record

Use the book's table of contents to open My Project Record. Find Section B in Blank Record — Fill It In as You Read. Complete Signal to Start, Barrier, and Setup.

1. Continue with the One Small Action you wrote in Section A.
2. Name one event that tells you when to begin.
3. Name one barrier in your situation.
4. Put one part of the setup in place now, or write when you will make the change.

Example

One Small Action

Write one priority on a sticky note before opening non-urgent messages.

Signal to Start

Open the laptop.

Barrier

The pad of sticky notes is out of sight in a drawer.

Setup

Put the pad and a pen beside the laptop; hide non-urgent notifications until the priority is written.

Sentence frame: My signal to start is _____. One barrier is _____. My setup is to _____ before I begin.

Optional challenge: Write a second setup for a day when your usual place or schedule changes, and explain which setup you will use first.

Self-check:

- I kept my Chapter 1 action.
- My signal to start is easy to notice.
- The change I chose is under reasonable control.
- One part is in place now, or I wrote when I will make the change.

Check later: At your next attempt, note whether your signal happened and which step became easier. Chapter 3 adds an optional step only if a low-risk pattern competes with the action.

To check your project, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Chapter 2: Make It Easy to Start, then find Chapter 2 · Mini Task. Compare your work with the example and self-check. Your project may be different. To return, open Chapter 2 and Mini Task: Update Your Project

Record in the table of contents.

Chapter 3 — Change

One Everyday Habit

Listen to this chapter:

[US English · male voice](#)

[UK English · female voice](#)

Reading: Identifying a signal to start, an automatic action, and a replacement

Action and language: Describing one optional, low-risk pattern test or recording N/A

Optional challenge: Comparing reduce and replace options in one situation

Notice a Low-Risk Pattern

Maya had her sticky notes and pen ready, but a different action still came first. When she opened her laptop, she automatically checked a non-urgent message app. The check was not planned; it followed a pattern with three parts: signal, action, and result. Opening the laptop was the signal to start, opening the app was the action, and losing the first few minutes was the result. The pattern described what happened, not who Maya was. Once the three parts were clear, she could see one place to test a change.

An automatic action can happen with little planning and still be useful in another situation. Maya needed messages later in the

day. Her test focused only on the first non-urgent check because it competed with writing her priority.

Use this chapter only for an ordinary, low-risk pattern. It does not apply to a dangerous, addictive, health-related, or clinical problem. This part is optional. If no low-risk pattern blocks your project, write N/A and keep the setup from Chapter 2. That is a complete project choice; you do not need to invent a problem.

Test One Small Reduction

Maya could reduce one part without trying to change everything. A short wait gave her time between the signal and the usual action, so she could look at the sticky notes and choose what came next. To reduce means to make an amount or number smaller. For the first non-urgent app check, she would wait five minutes before opening the app.

The number was part of Maya's short experiment, not a rule for everyone. A different reader might close one unused browser tab before beginning a work task or move one distracting object away from a study page. The test should be small, easy to check, and begin after the same signal.

Maya's short test covered one moment. It did not ask her to stop checking every future message. After seeing the result, she could change the test. If it did not help, she could stop, return to the Chapter 2 setup, or choose another low-risk option.

Try a Safe Replacement

Another choice is to replace one part of the pattern. To replace means to put a different action in the same place. Maya chose a safe alternative: after opening the laptop, she would look at the sticky notes before opening the message app. Because the new action followed the same signal, she knew when to use it. The alternative also supported her project.

A useful alternative fits the moment. For a signal at a desk, the replacement should also work there. It should not create a larger problem, ignore an urgent alert, or break a safety or workplace rule. You are testing an ordinary action, not proving that one method works for every habit.

Add the optional pattern to your Project Record. Write the signal to start, the automatic action, and the result. Then choose one small test: reduce how often the automatic action happens, or replace it with another action. If there is no suitable pattern, mark N/A and strengthen your setup instead. Chapter 4 will help you repeat the main project action several times.

Key Takeaway

A low-risk pattern gives you one place to test a change. Reduce how often the action happens, replace one part, or record N/A when no suitable pattern blocks the project.

Low-Risk Pattern?



Reduce or Replace One Part



Test or Record N/A

Vocabulary

pattern (noun)

events and actions that happen in a similar way more than once

Example: Maya notices a pattern when she opens her laptop.

automatic (adjective)

happening with little or no planning *Example:* The app check felt automatic.

reduce (verb)

to make an amount or number smaller *Example:* She will reduce the number of non-urgent checks.

replace (verb)

to put a different thing or action in the place of another *Example:* She will replace the first app check with a look at the sticky notes.

alternative (noun)

another possible choice *Example:* Looking at the sticky notes is a safe alternative.

Words to review:

- signal

- setup
- action

Questions

Optional Warm-Up

Can two different actions begin after the same signal?

Answer yes or no; a personal example is not required.

Question 1

What two kinds of small tests does the chapter offer for a low-risk pattern?

Question 2

Put Maya's pattern in order: lose the first few minutes; open the laptop; check the non-urgent app.

Question 3

In “automatically checked,” the adverb automatically is the adverb form of which adjective?

Question 4

Complete the sentences using the word bank. Use every option once.

- A signal, action, and result can form a ____.
- An ____ action happens with little planning.

c. Make one number smaller: ____ it.

d. Put a different action in the same place: ____ it.

e. Another possible choice is an ____.

Word bank: pattern, automatic, reduce, replace, alternative

Question 5

Choose one low-risk competing pattern connected to your existing project, or write N/A.

Frame: When ____, I often _____. The result is _____. I can reduce how often I do it by ____ / replace it with ____ / mark N/A.

Example: When I open my laptop, I often check a non-urgent app. The result is that I lose the first few minutes. I can replace the first app check with a look at my sticky notes.

Self-check: I either wrote N/A or named the signal, action, and result for one low-risk pattern. If I named a pattern, my test changes one part and supports my original project.

Optional Challenge

Explain why the replacement can follow the same signal. Name one situation in which the test would not be useful or safe.

Your answer should:

- connect the replacement to the same signal.
- explain how it supports the existing project.
- name one safety, urgency, control, or usefulness limit.

Question 6

Complete the sentence with signal, setup, and action: If no low-risk pattern blocks my ____, I keep my ____ and use the same ____. You may look back at Chapters 1—3.

Remember Chapter 2 Words

Without looking back at the Vocabulary section in the previous chapter, match each definition with an item from the word bank. Use every option once. Then check.

- a. A sign that tells you when to begin an action.
- b. Something that makes an action harder to start.
- c. An arrangement that makes the start of an action easier.
- d. To make something ready before you need it.
- e. The place and conditions around you.

Word bank: signal, barrier, setup, prepare, environment

To check your answers, open the book's table of contents and find Answer Key. Choose Answers — Chapter 3: Change One Everyday Habit. Match the question numbers or Remember Chapter 2 Words. For open answers, use the example and self-check. To return, open Chapter 3, then Questions, in the table of contents.

Mini Task: Update Your Project Record

Use the book's table of contents to open My Project Record. Find Section B in Blank Record — Fill It In as You Read.

Complete Optional Competing Pattern, Choice, Small Change to Try, and Stop or Change the Test If.

1. Check whether one ordinary, low-risk pattern competes with the project action from Chapters 1—2.
2. If yes, write its signal to start, automatic action, and result you can check. If no, write N/A.
3. Choose one small test for one part of the pattern.
4. Write when you will stop, adapt, or return to the Chapter 2 setup.

Example

Optional Competing Pattern

Open laptop → check non-urgent app → lose the first few minutes.

Choice

Replace.

Small Change to Try

Look at the sticky notes before the first non-urgent app check.

Stop or Change the Test If

Stop or change the test if it hides an urgent alert or does not help the project.

Sentence frame: My signal to start is _____. I often _____. The result is _____. I will reduce how often I do it by _____ / replace it with _____ / write N/A. I will stop or adapt if _____.

Optional challenge: Explain why your choice fits this situation better than the other choice.

Self-check:

- I kept the same project.
- I named the signal, action, and result of an ordinary, low-risk pattern, or I wrote N/A.
- I changed only one part of the pattern.
- I wrote a stop or adapt condition.

Check later: During the first Chapter 4 attempt, note whether you used the reduce/replace branch or N/A. Review whether the test was useful after several attempts, not after one difficult moment.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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