# Find Your One Loop

## Why One Loop, Not a List

You already know the habits you hate. The problem is that you've tried to fix all of them at once, and each failure confirmed the story that you can't change. This workbook is built on one rule: pick a single loop, study it for 21 days, and let the rest wait. A loop is a three-part chain — cue, routine, reward — that fires on autopilot. Your job this chapter is not to break it yet. Your job is to name it precisely enough that you can't hide from it.

## Step 1: Write Down Every Habit You Hate

Open a blank page. Set a timer for three minutes. List every behavior you'd like to stop or swap, without judging it. Examples: "scroll TikTok in bed," "eat chips after dinner," "check email before coffee," "buy lunch instead of packing it." Aim for at least five entries. Don't rank them yet.

## Step 2: Pick the One With the Clearest Starting Moment

Read your list and ask one question for each item: "Can I name the exact moment this usually starts?" Keep the habit with the clearest, most repeatable trigger. If two tie, pick the one that costs you the most time or money per week. Concrete example: Marcus, a 34-year-old accountant in Columbus, Ohio, listed six habits. He narrowed it to "scrolling TikTok in bed" because the start moment was unmistakable — the alarm goes off at 6:15 a.m., he reaches for the phone on the nightstand, and the app opens before his feet touch the floor. That loop costs him roughly 40 minutes a morning, or about 4.7 hours per week. He chose it over "buying lunch" (costs $12 x 5 days = $60/week) because the lunch habit had no single clear trigger — sometimes hunger, sometimes boredom, sometimes a coworker's invite.

## Step 3: Write Your One-Sentence Loop Statement

Fill in this exact sentence: "When [cue], I do [routine], and it gives me [reward]." You won't know the real reward yet — that's Chapter 4. For now, write your best guess. Marcus wrote: "When my alarm goes off at 6:15 a.m., I open TikTok in bed, and it gives me a few minutes of not having to think." That sentence is now his single target. Not "be more productive." Not "use my phone less." One loop.

## Step 4: Define the Exact Start Moment

"Exact moment" means a specific time, place, and physical trigger, not a mood. Vague: "when I'm tired." Specific: "when the alarm rings at 6:15 a.m. while I'm still under the covers with the phone within arm's reach." Write yours in this format: Time + Place + Physical trigger. If you can't fill all three, observe for two days before locking it in. Do not pick a moment you have to guess at.

### Step 5: Set Your 21-Day Window

Pick a start date and write the end date 21 days later. Avoid starting during a travel week, a major deadline, or a holiday. Marcus started on a Monday, February 3, and ended February 23. He told no one except his wife, and he put the dates on the fridge.

### Step 6: Record a Baseline Number

Before changing anything, count the current cost for three days. Minutes per day, dollars per week, or reps per day — pick one unit and stick with it. Marcus tracked TikTok time for three mornings: 38, 44, and 36 minutes. Baseline average: 39.3 minutes per day. That number becomes your proof that change happened. Without a baseline, you'll feel like nothing improved even when it did.

### Step 7: Name the Replacement You Want (Preview Only)

You are not building the replacement today, but you must name the direction. Write one sentence: "I want to swap this loop for [new routine]." Marcus wrote: "I want to swap TikTok in bed for drinking a glass of water and reading one page of a book." Keep it small. If your replacement is "go to the gym for an hour," you've picked a second habit, not a swap.

### Common Mistakes

- **Picking the most shameful habit.** Shame makes you vague. Pick the one with the clearest trigger, even if it feels trivial. A clear loop you can map beats a dramatic loop you can't.
- **Choosing a habit with no single start moment.** "Snacking all day" has no cue to map. Narrow it to "eating chips at 3 p.m. at my desk" or pick a different habit.
- **Listing outcomes instead of behaviors.** "Lose weight" is not a loop. "Eat a second helping at dinner" is.
- **Starting on a Monday because it feels symbolic.** Symbolism doesn't survive a bad week. Pick a window you can actually complete.
- **Skipping the baseline.** "I'll just know when it's better" is how people quit at day 9.

- **Telling everyone.** Social pressure adds a second loop (performance) on top of the first. Tell one person, or none.

## Checklist

- I listed at least five habits I want to change.
- I picked the one with the clearest starting moment.
- I wrote my one-sentence loop statement (cue, routine, reward guess).
- I defined the exact start moment as Time + Place + Physical trigger.
- I set a 21-day window with start and end dates on my calendar.
- I recorded a three-day baseline number.
- I named a small replacement direction in one sentence.

## Do Today

Set a three-minute timer right now. List five habits. Circle one. Write the sentence: "When [cue], I do [routine], and it gives me [reward]." Put the start and end dates on your calendar before you close this chapter. Everything else in this workbook depends on that single sentence being specific and true.