

Make virtue repeatable

Translate values and intentions into repeated, observable conduct. This module teaches the chapter's philosophical argument, habit-loop model, diagnostic myths and thirty-day protocol while distinguishing evidence from moral rhetoric and sustainable practice from overreach.

4 lessons · approximately 6 hours, plus multi-day practice

How to use this workbook

Read the assigned manuscript first. This workbook contains accompanying teaching and invented cases, not a revision of the source. Attempt exercises before consulting the rubrics and explanations. Written work is self-assessed or discussed with a tutor; no secure examination, academic credit or certificate is implied. Use a clearly labelled fictional case when live practice or personal disclosure would be unsuitable. Links use the course's intended publication address; for offline review, open the supplied source PDF at the full-book page numbers shown.

- Distinguish values, intentions, repeated conduct and acquired disposition.
- Explain the Aristotelian mean and apply it to a bounded everyday decision.
- Map a habit loop and propose a safe, testable replacement routine.
- Evaluate myths and self-scripts without treating contextual barriers as moral defects.
- Design and audit a thirty-day virtue-habit experiment with honest lapse handling.

[Open the module and source reading links](#)

Lesson sequence

1. Distinguish declared values from dependable character
2. Map and redesign a cue-routine-reward loop
3. Challenge habit myths and choose a trainable virtue
4. Run a thirty-day habit experiment and resume after lapses

Distinguish declared values from dependable character

Allow approximately 80 minutes, plus any continuing activity.

Learning objectives

- Classify statements as values, intentions or observable habits.
- Use repeated conduct to assess a limited reliability claim without reducing a person to a moral label.
- Explain acquired disposition and the mean between deficiency and excess.

Assigned source readings

Opening Narrative Scene; Conceptual Frame: Habit as the Engine of Virtue; Aristotle on Habit, Desire, and the Mean

Full-book PDF pages 62–72. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 79–81

Full-book PDF pages 435–435. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 93–94

Full-book PDF pages 436–436. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Develop the argument

The week is the unit of evidence

The chapter opens with two constructed lives. Daniel speaks warmly about compassion, makes promises sincerely, shares causes and describes future improvement. Mara pays a bill, returns a promised message, attends to a friend, corrects her spreadsheet error and completes an unglamorous project session. The contrast is deliberately ordinary. Wright wants the reader to stop asking which person has the more impressive moral vocabulary and ask whose repeated conduct gives other people a reason to rely on them. The scenes are an argument through narrative, not a controlled comparison of real people.

Read the contrast carefully rather than turning it into a licence to condemn. Daniel's stated concern is not necessarily false; the chapter says he often means it. The problem is that concern repeatedly fails to become action. Mara's helpfulness is also not a requirement to accept every request, work every evening or ignore exhaustion. A dependable person can decline a request clearly or renegotiate a commitment early. The important evidence is whether their promises and choices fit what they can responsibly sustain.

Three layers that must connect

Values identify what matters: truth, friendship, responsibility or care. Intentions identify a proposed action: returning a call tonight or admitting an error. Habits identify the recurring response when an opportunity appears. These are connected layers, not interchangeable achievements. A value without implementation can remain aspiration. An intention can be sincere yet operationally weak. A habit can become reliable but still need ethical judgment: routinely concealing mistakes is a habit too.

The chapter's test is therefore more demanding than simply doing something often. Ask what value the behaviour serves, who experiences its consequences and whether it remains appropriate across contexts. A punctual arrival and a truthful correction are observable indicators of reliability and honesty; neither exhausts the whole virtue. A week of observations can support a modest claim about a pattern. It cannot establish someone's entire character, hidden motives or future conduct. Separate the evidence you possess from the identity story you are tempted to attach to it.

Aristotle: practice with judgment

Wright presents virtue as an acquired disposition: a stable tendency to act and feel appropriately, strengthened through repeated choices. The Aristotelian mean is not an arithmetic midpoint or an instruction to do half as much. Courage differs from both avoidance and reckless exposure to danger. Generosity differs from both hoarding and giving beyond one's responsibilities. What counts as proportionate depends on the relevant situation, resources and obligations. Repetition without this judgment can train the wrong response very efficiently.

The chapter also argues that feelings can change with practice. Initially a truthful conversation may be awkward; later, evasion may feel less acceptable than candour. Treat this as the book's account of development, not a guarantee that repeated effort removes fear or distress. The source notes distinguish fully developed virtue from merely forcing an isolated good act. For a learner, early effort still matters: difficulty in doing the right thing is evidence of work to be done, not proof that the action is worthless.

From moral rhetoric to a fair learning test

The Randian and Petersonian passages reinforce Wright's demand for rational self-cultivation and small repeated acts. They are interpretive philosophical lenses, not separate experimental confirmations. The course keeps the demanding question: what did you actually do with the value you named? It adds a disciplined limit: examine a defined behaviour and its effects before making a broad moral verdict.

A useful test has three parts. State a value in your own words, identify two ordinary opportunities to enact it, and specify evidence that would distinguish acting from intending. Include what a responsible refusal or repair would look like. The aim is neither a flattering self-description nor a public confession. It is a better fit between commitments, conduct and consequences. Assess the quality of that reasoning, not whether a learner adopts Wright's entire philosophical outlook.

Course-created case: a reliable volunteer rota

Invented for this course.

Imani and Leo both say they value community. Imani makes enthusiastic offers but misses two agreed library shifts without notice. Leo accepts one shift, arrives prepared and warns the coordinator early when a later date conflicts with caregiving.

1. Separate value from intention: both endorse community; their specific offers are intentions, not completed service.
2. Record only relevant conduct: two missed agreed shifts, one completed shift and one timely notice. Do not infer that caregiving is a lack of commitment.

3. Identify the habit worth building: check availability before accepting and put accepted shifts in a calendar immediately.
4. Apply proportion: dependable volunteering includes declining excess work; taking every shift could become irresponsible overcommitment.

The observations support a stronger current reliability judgment for Leo on this task. They do not prove that Imani lacks all concern or that Leo is a better human being.

Practice and evidence

1. Turn a declaration into observable evidence

Use one fictional or low-stakes personal value. Separate its value statement, two intentions and three actual or hypothetical behavioural observations. Explain one observation that would challenge your preferred self-description.

Deliverable: A 300-word evidence map with a value-intention-habit chain.

1. Choose a domain and state the limited period being examined.
2. Label each item by layer, avoiding motive claims.
3. Identify consequences for someone affected and one responsible boundary.

Layer accuracy · 3 points

Correctly distinguishes endorsement, planned action and repeated behaviour.

Evidence discipline · 3 points

Uses specific observations and states what they cannot establish.

Proportion · 4 points

Defines a responsible boundary and repair rather than unlimited availability.

2. Find the mean in an ordinary decision

Analyse a situation involving courage or generosity. Describe a deficient response, an excessive response and a reasoned appropriate response under specified constraints.

Deliverable: Three alternatives and a 200-word justification.

1. Specify stakes, resources and other obligations.
2. Explain why the mean is not simply halfway between alternatives.
3. Name what feedback would lead you to revise the action.

Distinct alternatives · 3 points

Alternatives genuinely show deficiency, excess and a justified middle.

Contextual judgment · 4 points

Reasoning weighs stakes and obligations rather than admiration.

Revisability · 3 points

Names relevant new evidence that could change the decision.

Reflection

Where does your description of a value currently contain more adjectives than observable commitments?

Formative self-check

Choose an answer before looking at the answer key. These questions are open practice, not a secure assessment.

1. A learner says, “I care about honesty and will correct the report tomorrow.” What does this establish?

- A. A stable habit of honesty
- B. A stated value and an intention, with conduct still to be observed
- C. Proof that the learner is dishonest
- D. Automaticity

2. A volunteer refuses a fourth weekly shift because it would break an existing care commitment. Which analysis best uses the mean?

- A. Any refusal is a failure of generosity
- B. Taking all shifts proves virtue
- C. A proportionate refusal may protect both responsibilities and sustainable generosity
- D. The right answer is always two shifts

3. Why does the chapter place so much weight on Mara correcting an unnoticed error?

- A. It is evidence of conduct aligned with honesty without an audience
- B. It guarantees she never lies
- C. It proves emotional concern has no value
- D. It means all errors must be publicised to everyone

Answer explanations

1. B — A stated value and an intention, with conduct still to be observed

The words express a value and a plan. A single plan does not establish a repeated pattern, and its incompleteness does not prove dishonesty.

2. C — A proportionate refusal may protect both responsibilities and sustainable generosity

The mean concerns fitting action to circumstances. Counting more shifts or mechanically choosing a midpoint misses obligations and capacity.

3. A — It is evidence of conduct aligned with honesty without an audience

The correction makes the value observable even without applause. It supports a specific inference; it does not prove total moral perfection or prescribe unlimited disclosure.

Map and redesign a cue-routine-reward loop

Allow approximately 80 minutes, plus any continuing activity.

Learning objectives

- Map the cue, routine, immediate reward and delayed cost of a recurring behaviour.
- Design a small replacement routine that answers the same cue.
- Distinguish explanatory metaphor, historical illustration and empirical evidence.

Assigned source readings

Habit Science: Automaticity, Loops, and Neural Paths; Figure 2; Case in Point: Anthony Trollope and the Mechanics of Habit

Full-book PDF pages 73–77. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 82–92

Full-book PDF pages 435–436. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 96–98

Full-book PDF pages 436–436. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Develop the argument

Locate the payoff that keeps the pattern alive

The chapter describes automaticity as a shift toward doing a familiar response with less deliberation. Its working model is cue, routine and reward. In the example, discomfort before a report is the cue; opening social media is the routine; temporary relief and novelty are the immediate reward. The delayed cost, unfinished work and increased pressure, is real but arrives later. A learner who records only the cost misses why the routine is attractive at the moment of choice.

Map an actual sequence rather than blaming a personality. “I am lazy” identifies no intervention point. “When I see the blank report at nine, I open a news tab and the uncomfortable feeling drops for a few minutes” gives a cue, an action and a possible payoff. The payoff is a hypothesis to test through observation, not an invisible fact you can simply declare. More than one cue or consequence may be operating. A simple loop is a useful teaching model, not a complete theory of every behaviour.

Build the alternative before the cue arrives

Wright's alternative to avoidance is a small approach action: open the document, send one necessary message or acknowledge one mistake. The same discomfort may still be present. The immediate reward does not have to be complete relief; it might be the visible completion of a first paragraph or the satisfaction of honouring a bounded commitment. For ordinary low-stakes tasks, the replacement should be specific enough to begin without another planning session.

Do not translate this into indiscriminate exposure to danger or a substitute for mental-health care. The course uses chosen, proportionate tasks such as drafting a short agenda. It does not ask learners to confront an unsafe person, ignore symptoms or seek panic. Before choosing a

replacement, identify whether the task is necessary, safe and within current capacity. A smaller action, assistance, a different time or a justified delay may be the responsible design. Deliberate practice differs from forcing an outcome regardless of consequences.

What the field-of-grass metaphor explains

The book compares repeated action to walking a track through long grass. Familiar routes become easier to follow; an alternative initially requires attention. This image helps explain why familiarity can masquerade as identity: an action can feel natural because it is well practised, not because it is right or immutable. The diagram at Figure 2 attempts to contrast an avoidance loop with a virtue loop. Its original labels are clipped and partly confusing, so reconstruct the conceptual sequence from the surrounding prose rather than treating the image as a precise scientific diagram.

The neuroscience language requires restraint. The chapter cites automaticity, habit, reinforcement and neural research in notes 82–92. These references are research leads, not evidence that every procrastination episode is cowardice or that a named virtue has a single neural pathway. “Neurons that fire together wire together” and the grass image are simplified teaching descriptions. They cannot establish a person's moral worth, predict a uniform timeline or show that every repeated act becomes effortless.

Routine supports output; output still needs judgment

Trollope is the chapter's historical illustration of scheduled work: a fixed writing period and a word target replace waiting for inspiration. The lesson is that a repeatable production process can support substantial output. The account is not a controlled experiment, and a word count alone cannot establish literary quality or prove that every writer should use the same schedule. Treat the reported details as the book's account unless you independently examine its historical source.

The notes also warn against a universal twenty-one-day habit rule. A reported average in one study does not become a personal deadline, and this chapter's thirty-day exercise is a useful observation window rather than a promise of completed automaticity. Evaluate your redesigned loop through opportunities attempted, actions completed, observed obstacles and output quality. If starting becomes easier but the work is inaccurate, retain the start cue and improve the method. Habit supplies reliable action; judgment determines whether that action serves the value you intended.

Course-created case: the unopened application

Invented for this course.

Sofia intends to update a professional application. At each planned session, uncertainty about the opening paragraph leads to twenty minutes of news browsing. She wants a safe, ten-minute starting routine.

1. Map the sequence: application tab and uncertainty are the cue; browsing is the routine; novelty and temporary relief are the suspected reward.
2. Choose a replacement: after opening the document, list three relevant achievements for five minutes and draft one rough sentence for five more.

3. Reduce friction before starting: keep the prompt and existing résumé together and close unrelated tabs.
4. Measure completion and quality separately: record whether the ten-minute routine happened, then review whether the draft answers the question.
5. Revise after observations: if searching for documents consumes the block, prepare them earlier rather than demanding more willpower.

The experiment tests a local starting method. It does not diagnose Sofia or guarantee that uncertainty will disappear.

Practice and evidence

1. Draw two competing loops

Map one ordinary recurring avoidance or distraction pattern and a deliberately chosen replacement. Include both immediate and delayed consequences.

Deliverable: Two labelled loop descriptions and a 150-word test plan.

1. Observe or use a fictional sequence with a specific cue.
2. Separate the routine from the feeling and the reward from the long-term cost.
3. Specify one safe replacement with a clear endpoint and likely payoff.

Loop precision · 4 points

Cue, action and consequence are distinct and plausible.

Testability · 3 points

States what observations could confirm or challenge the hypothesised payoff.

Appropriate replacement · 3 points

Action is bounded, purposeful and safe under stated conditions.

2. Audit a scientific-sounding explanation

Evaluate the claim: “Thirty days of this habit will rewire your brain and prove you are courageous.” Use chapter prose, Figure 2 and notes 82–98 to separate what is explained from what is overclaimed.

Deliverable: A 250-word claim audit with three labels: model, evidence lead and unsupported conclusion.

1. Identify the useful behavioural prediction.
2. Explain why a diagram or neural metaphor does not prove a moral judgment.
3. Rewrite the claim in defensible language and name what further evidence would be needed.

Claim distinction · 4 points

Separates behavioural model, source citation and unsupported guarantee.

Source fidelity · 3 points

Recognises the notes discuss varied timelines and does not invent findings.

Improved wording · 3 points

Offers a testable local claim without diagnosis or guaranteed transformation.

Reflection

Which immediate payoff must your replacement routine address if it is to compete with the old one?

Formative self-check

Choose an answer before looking at the answer key. These questions are open practice, not a secure assessment.

1. In “unease → news browsing → temporary relief,” which element is the routine?

- A. Unease
- B. The unfinished report
- C. News browsing
- D. The planned deadline

2. After thirty days the routine still requires effort, but it occurred on twenty-three scheduled opportunities. Which conclusion is justified?

- A. The learner has failed because habits must be effortless by day thirty
- B. The record shows repeated practice, while automaticity and quality require separate assessment
- C. The learner has permanently changed every aspect of character
- D. The original source must be false

3. What is the best use of the Trollope example?

- A. Proof that all creative work is determined only by word counts
- B. A reason to imitate his exact hours regardless of circumstances
- C. A substitute for checking the quality of output
- D. An illustration of regular production that can inform a locally suitable routine

Answer explanations

1. C — News browsing

The routine is the action performed. Unease is the proposed cue; relief is the immediate consequence maintaining the pattern.

2. B — The record shows repeated practice, while automaticity and quality require separate assessment

The thirty-day period supplies observations, not a universal completion deadline. Adherence, automaticity and quality are different questions.

3. D — An illustration of regular production that can inform a locally suitable routine

The account illustrates scheduling and consistency. It does not isolate causation or establish a universally optimal timetable.

Challenge habit myths and choose a trainable virtue

Allow approximately 80 minutes, plus any continuing activity.

Learning objectives

- Test spontaneity, authentic-feeling and fixed-personality arguments against observable consequences.
- Explain the overreach-collapse-identity-label cycle.
- Specify a habit with virtue alignment, repeatability, clear boundaries, a cue and a countable criterion.

Assigned source readings

Diagnostic, cultural sabotage; Myths that Devalue Systematic Virtue; Personal Sabotage: Scripts, Overreach, and Collapse; Constructive core; Building Virtuous Habits: The Protocol; Part A

Full-book PDF pages 77–86. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 note 95

Full-book PDF pages 436–436. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 103–107

Full-book PDF pages 437–437. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Develop the argument

Spontaneous is not the same as dependable

The first cultural myth says that genuine virtue must arrive unplanned. Wright contrasts an emotional donation with a recurring contribution and compares moral practice with musical practice. The logical target is the assumption that scheduling invalidates care. Planning a visit can be one way of protecting it from competing demands. An unplanned generous act can still be valuable; the point is that its emotional intensity does not establish a dependable pattern.

Test this myth by looking at the recipient's experience and the action's purpose. A reminder to return a promised call can help a relationship, but a checklist alone does not ensure attentive listening. Likewise, a recurring action may be inappropriate if circumstances change. The course therefore preserves both commitments: reliable repetition and continuing judgment. “Planned” is not evidence of insincerity, just as “spontaneous” is not evidence of wisdom. A good design makes meaningful conduct more likely while leaving room to respond to the actual person and situation.

Feelings and identity are information, not final verdicts

The second myth makes present feeling the sole judge of authenticity. The chapter argues that waiting to feel ready can postpone an apology, necessary conversation or difficult task indefinitely. A learner can acknowledge reluctance while choosing an action supported by reasons. This is different from pretending to feel something they do not feel. A truthful apology can identify an error and a repair without claiming a dramatic emotional transformation.

The third myth turns a behavioural pattern into destiny: being late becomes “I am simply a time-disaster person.” Wright's alternative is to test reminders, realistic travel estimates and earlier departure. This is a useful shift from verdict to design. It is not evidence that all differences in attention, energy, health or circumstance are voluntary. The responsible question is which part of the pattern is changeable through a practicable support or routine. If an external barrier remains, record it accurately rather than disguising it as either a moral failure or a convenient excuse.

Why dramatic resets can manufacture defeat

The personal scripts are familiar: previous attempts failed, discipline always fails, or structure destroys freedom. The chapter links them to an all-or-nothing overhaul. A person dissatisfied on Sunday promises an entirely new timetable on Monday, overloads existing capacity, misses several components, then treats the collapse as proof of permanent incapacity. The failed design becomes evidence for a condemning identity label, and the label discourages a more realistic attempt.

Break the cycle at the design level. Specify one change, reduce its minimum to a feasible action and compare what actually happens with the prediction. A failed attempt may reveal a poor cue, excessive scope, inadequate resources or genuine competing demands. It is not automatically proof that the learner did not care. The source notes reference research on commitment, behavioural scripts, self-control and expert practice; they also acknowledge debate around willpower research. Do not turn those citations into a settled theory that every failure results from depleted willpower or insufficient ambition.

Five tests for a trainable habit

Part A gives five practical tests. The action must embody a named virtue, be repeatable, have a defined beginning and ending, attach to a cue and permit a clear record. “Be more dependable” fails the operational test. “After I agree to a deadline, I enter the task and due date in my commitments list before leaving the conversation” is observable and tightly connected to reliability. It does not guarantee the work will be completed, but it establishes one important part of the process.

Choose a virtue through consequence and leverage, not glamour. Which repeated omission causes avoidable harm? Which small improvement could support several obligations? Keep the intervention within an appropriate domain: attention, preparation or truthful correction are useful starting points. The book's food and exercise examples illustrate boundaries; they are not universal health prescriptions. For this course, use a non-clinical example unless a personally appropriate plan already exists. A modest habit is not a miniature promise of perfection. It is a specific hypothesis about how repeated conduct can better serve a value.

Course-created case: the spectacular Monday reset

Invented for this course.

Ben wants to be a reliable project partner. After missing a draft, he plans six new morning activities and four hours of uninterrupted work daily. Three days later he says, “I always fail at discipline.”

1. Identify the script and its evidence: the plan failed, but the claim of permanent incapacity is broader than the observation.

2. Locate the design defect: several new demands competed for the same limited morning time.
3. Select reliability rather than a complete lifestyle overhaul: capture each agreed deadline and send an early progress update at a fixed weekly cue.
4. Apply the five tests: the action expresses the virtue, recurs, has endpoints, has a cue and can be checked.
5. Retain responsibility: Ben still needs to repair the missed commitment; redesign does not erase its effect on his partner.

A smaller protocol offers a better experiment while preserving accountability for what happened. It does not promise effortless change or excuse the original missed draft.

Practice and evidence

1. Cross-examine a limiting script

Choose one of the chapter's six myths or scripts. Write its strongest reasonable version, the evidence that supports it and the point where it overreaches.

Deliverable: A 250-word argument and a one-week behavioural test.

1. Distinguish a genuine concern from a sweeping inference.
2. Use one concrete example rather than a personality label.
3. Design a small test that could change your conclusion in either direction.

Fair argument · 3 points

Represents the concern accurately rather than mocking it.

Inference control · 4 points

Separates observed failure from claims of permanent identity.

Useful experiment · 3 points

Specifies an observable, bounded test with disconfirming evidence.

2. Pass the five habit tests

Transform “be more honest,” “work harder” or “be there for people” into one operational habit. Test it with a tired observer who must decide whether it happened.

Deliverable: A habit specification plus a five-test checklist and one revision.

1. Name the virtue and practical consequence.
2. Specify a reliable cue, action, amount and endpoint.
3. Describe necessary resources and a responsible boundary.
4. Explain one way completing the action could fail to serve the virtue, then refine it.

Operational clarity · 4 points

All five source tests are explicitly satisfied.

Virtue fit · 3 points

Explains the action's contribution and limits.

Feasibility · 3 points

Addresses capacity, necessary resources and possible overreach.

Reflection

Which explanation of past failure would change if you treated the attempt as a design to inspect rather than a verdict to defend?

Formative self-check

Choose an answer before looking at the answer key. These questions are open practice, not a secure assessment.

1. A person schedules a weekly call to an older relative. Someone says it cannot be genuine because it is scheduled. What does the chapter challenge?

- A. The assumption that spontaneity is necessary for sincere care
- B. The value of listening during the call
- C. All unplanned kindness
- D. The need to reconsider commitments

2. Which conclusion best follows from the collapse of an eight-part new routine?

- A. The person is incapable of any discipline
- B. The plan deserves investigation before drawing an identity-level conclusion
- C. Structure is always harmful
- D. The next plan must contain more goals

3. Which is the most operational reliability habit?

- A. Try to care more
- B. Become a different person this month
- C. After accepting a task, enter its agreed deadline in the commitments list before ending the conversation
- D. Feel less guilty about overdue work

Answer explanations

1. A — The assumption that spontaneity is necessary for sincere care

The myth confuses advance planning with insincerity. A scheduled call still needs attention and appropriateness, but its calendar entry does not invalidate it.

2. B — The plan deserves investigation before drawing an identity-level conclusion

A collapse supplies evidence about that attempt. Scope, resources and cues should be examined before concluding that all change is impossible.

3. C — After accepting a task, enter its agreed deadline in the commitments list before ending the conversation

This states a cue, visible action and endpoint. The other options describe aspirations or feelings that do not specify a repeatable act.

Run a thirty-day habit experiment and resume after lapses

Allow approximately 80 minutes, plus any continuing activity.

Learning objectives

- Build a thirty-day protocol linking one virtue to a cue, action, context, minimum and record.
- Distinguish missed opportunities, completed repetitions and interrupted plans.
- Respond to lapses through resumption and design revision rather than compensatory overload.
- Use a month of observations to make limited claims about behaviour and future adjustments.

Assigned source readings

Part B: Implementation, Habit Stacking, and Relapse; habit stacking; relapse and interruption; identity

Full-book PDF pages 86–91. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Exercises: Your First 30-Day Virtue Habit; Closing Synthesis and Aphorism

Full-book PDF pages 92–97. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 notes 99–102

Full-book PDF pages 436–436. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Chapter 2 note 108

Full-book PDF pages 437–437. Section links open the chapter at the relevant page.

Develop the argument

A statement that tomorrow can execute

The constructive protocol moves from a virtue to an instruction: after a reliable cue, perform a particular action for a bounded duration or amount. Then fix the context, prepare resources, set a minimum and draw a tracking grid. The chapter presents Part B twice, first within the discussion and then under a separate heading. The repeated passages reinforce one process; they are not competing programmes to complete separately.

Habit stacking attaches the new act to something already stable. Opening a laptop, finishing breakfast or putting away keys can be useful anchors if they actually occur in the learner's circumstances. A clock time is not automatically reliable for shift workers or caregivers. Choose an anchor that survives the likely week. The minimum is the floor for an ordinary difficult day, not a command to override illness or emergency. Set an appropriate interruption rule in advance, preserving the source's explicit recognition that travel, illness and other demands can disrupt practice.

Design the surroundings, not only the intention

The five exercise steps are virtue selection, habit definition, implementation planning, tracking setup and a commitment statement. Selection looks for consequential weakness or useful leverage. Definition makes the act visible. Planning specifies time, place, materials and obstacles. Tracking makes the result reviewable. The commitment statement links the new action to a direction of character development without pretending that writing a sentence creates the change.

Obstacles deserve concrete responses. A needed document should be ready; a distracting device can be placed elsewhere if this does not prevent necessary communication; a work block should not be scheduled where fatigue reliably defeats it. Boundaries with other people must respect shared responsibilities. “No interruptions” is not a responsible rule when you are the available caregiver or emergency contact. The design question is how to protect a practicable opportunity, including a fallback when necessary, rather than expecting an imaginary future self with unlimited control over the day.

Record honestly and shorten the return path

Wright recommends a binary record of completed action. Its purpose is to prevent memory from rewriting the month according to the current mood. For a habit scheduled only on weekdays, however, thirty calendar days do not mean thirty opportunities. The course therefore requires the schedule and interruption rules beside the grid. Each scheduled, applicable opportunity receives the agreed completion result; an unscheduled or genuinely unavailable opportunity is identified separately in the observation record. This is an explicit operational clarification, not a claim that the book supplies a full data dictionary.

The chapter's resumption rules are specific: do the next scheduled repetition rather than doubling the dose; after several misses, examine cue, scope and obstacles. A missed action and an abandoned month are different events. Resume without manufacturing a spotless history. Do not fill uncertain past days with reassuring guesses. If the planned minimum is repeatedly impossible, revise the method prospectively and record the change. The point is honest learning and dependable return, not loyalty to a badly designed number.

A month gives evidence, not a finished identity

The identity metaphor describes each repetition as a vote toward the person one is becoming. A vote is not an instant verdict. Twenty completed work starts demonstrate twenty starts; they do not establish universal diligence or erase an unkept promise elsewhere. The chapter's closing comparison projects how patterns might accumulate into trust over years. Treat those futures as illustrative trajectories rather than guaranteed promotions, friendships or recognition.

At review, examine completion across scheduled opportunities, resumption after lapses and whether the habit actually served its intended value. If returning calls became consistent but conversations were rushed, the next design must attend to quality and realistic commitments. If a tiny floor became easy, consider an appropriate extension rather than automatically adding several new habits. The thirty-day window is a starting experiment, not a scientifically fixed point at which virtue is acquired. Chapter 3 extends this work into a ledger that can track selected behaviours across cycles while keeping observations distinct from the stories attached to them.

Course-created case: a thirty-day follow-through experiment

Invented for this course.

Nadia wants to stop forgetting small work commitments. She chooses to capture each accepted promise immediately and review the list for five minutes after closing the workday calendar. Mid-month, a family emergency interrupts three workdays.

1. Define the unit: each accepted promise creates a capture opportunity; each ordinary workday creates a review opportunity. Keep those two measures separate.
2. Prepare the list and pen before the first day and specify what counts as a complete entry: task, recipient and due date.
3. Record the interruption accurately instead of marking three invented completions or treating the emergency as proof of poor character.
4. Resume the next scheduled review without tripling the duration; prioritise overdue commitments and communicate repairs where needed.
5. At month end, examine whether fewer commitments were missed, not merely whether the list was opened.

The method becomes useful when its marks correspond to better follow-through. The emergency informs interpretation without rewriting completed and uncompleted actions.

Practice and evidence

1. Build the thirty-day protocol

Create one low-risk, realistic virtue-habit experiment using all five source exercise steps. Include the exact cue, action, duration, setting, materials, obstacles, minimum and tracking rule.

Deliverable: A one-page protocol, a thirty-day grid and a concise commitment statement.

1. Select the virtue using consequences and leverage.
2. Specify scheduled opportunities and what counts as completion.
3. Prepare responses to two predictable obstacles and one genuine interruption.
4. Set a weekly review time and a prospective revision rule.

Complete design • 4 points

Includes every source step and an executable habit statement.

Honest measurement • 3 points

Makes scheduled opportunities and completion criteria unambiguous.

Sustainable execution • 3 points

Includes feasible minimum, boundaries and interruption/resumption rules.

2. Conduct a lapse-and-review simulation

Use a fictional thirty-day record with twenty scheduled opportunities: twelve complete, four incomplete, two genuinely unavailable and two unknown. Analyse the record without converting unknowns into success or failure.

Deliverable: A 300-word review, a next-cycle change and a rewritten habit statement.

1. Report counts and denominators clearly; distinguish adherence from missing data.
2. Propose two plausible explanations and identify what evidence would discriminate them.
3. Choose one method change and explain how you will assess it.
4. Describe the next repetition without a double-dose penalty.

Data integrity · 4 points

Preserves all four categories and avoids inflated success claims.

Diagnostic reasoning · 3 points

Considers alternative explanations and needed evidence.

Prospective adjustment · 3 points

Changes one identifiable design element and specifies how to test it.

Reflection

What exactly will you do at the next scheduled opportunity after a lapse, and how will you keep the record honest?

Formative self-check

Choose an answer before looking at the answer key. These questions are open practice, not a secure assessment.

1. After missing yesterday's ten-minute habit, what response best follows the source's relapse protocol?

- A. Do an hour today as punishment
- B. Abandon the month because the streak is broken
- C. Resume the next scheduled repetition and inspect the plan if misses persist
- D. Mark yesterday complete because the intention existed

2. A workday-only habit has twenty scheduled opportunities in a thirty-day calendar. Which denominator should inform its completion review?

- A. Thirty, regardless of the schedule
- B. The stated applicable opportunities, with interruptions and unknowns disclosed
- C. Only days the learner remembers succeeding
- D. The number that produces the highest rate

3. What is the most defensible month-end conclusion?

- A. I completed the specified routine more consistently and need to test whether it improves follow-through
- B. I am permanently virtuous
- C. This routine will work equally well for everyone
- D. Any future lapse will invalidate the month

Answer explanations

1. C — Resume the next scheduled repetition and inspect the plan if misses persist

The source prioritises resumption and adjustment. Punitive catch-up, abandonment and false marks undermine a sustainable record.

2. B — The stated applicable opportunities, with interruptions and unknowns disclosed

The criterion must match the schedule. Hiding missed or unknown observations creates false precision, while including unscheduled days misstates the experiment.

3. A — I completed the specified routine more consistently and need to test whether it improves follow-through

The record supports a limited behavioural conclusion and a further quality question. It does not certify a permanent identity or universal method.

Module assessment

Design, test and defend a reliable-action protocol

A fictional team coordinator sincerely values reliability but forgets promised reviews, starts tasks only when anxious about deadlines and plans a complete lifestyle reset after each miss. Design a thirty-day intervention that addresses one consequential pattern. Use a simulated first week containing a missed cue, an emergency and one completed but low-quality action to show how the plan would learn.

Required evidence

- A values-intentions-habits diagnosis with source anchors.
- A cue-routine-reward model and one bounded replacement habit.
- A complete thirty-day protocol and first-week simulated record, clearly labelled as invented.
- A review separating adherence, quality, circumstances and identity claims.

Assessment criteria

Faithful conceptual analysis · 5 points

Correctly uses the three layers, acquired disposition and proportion without global character judgments.

Executable intervention · 5 points

Connects one virtue to an observable action, reliable cue, minimum, resources and tracking rule.

Honest evidence · 5 points

Preserves missingness, emergencies and quality limits; does not invent empirical support.

Constructive recovery · 5 points

Resumes after lapses, changes methods prospectively and evaluates the effect on actual commitments.

Model response: consult after your attempt

A strong response would select dependable follow-through, not general self-perfection. It might identify promise-making as a cue and immediate capture of task, recipient and deadline as the action, then add a brief review at an existing workday anchor. The loop analysis should explain why avoiding an overdue message offers immediate relief while increasing later cost. The first-week record should show exactly which opportunities occurred, what was completed, what was interrupted and what remains unknown. A completed checklist entry is not the same as a useful review delivered to a colleague. The audit should propose one change, such as preparing the list before calls or reducing the number of promises accepted, and specify what improvement would count. A lapse calls for repair and the next feasible repetition rather than a larger punitive regime. The answer should treat Daniel, Mara and Trollope as illustrations, the grass image as a model, and the cited research as source references whose applicability must be checked. High marks depend on clear reasoning and testable design, not agreement that every omission constitutes a vice.

Source cautions and interpretation

- The complete chapter body and all thirty associated endnotes were read; no source tables are present. Original Figure 2 was inspected.
- Part B appears once as body text at b00860 and again as Heading4 at b00897; the course covers both without duplicating the learner programme.
- Figure 2 contains clipped or malformed labels; its arrows and text should not be treated as a scientifically exact diagram.
- Habit timelines, neural descriptions and psychological generalisations are the book's claims; cited sources were not independently verified for this authoring task. Thirty days is an experiment window, not a guaranteed automaticity deadline.
- The notes themselves flag marshmallow-test replication and ego-depletion debate; no universal willpower or delayed-gratification law is inferred.
- Binary tracking is clarified with explicit opportunity and interruption records so that missing data and unscheduled days are not misrepresented.
- Food, body and anxiety examples are not adopted as medical advice. Course exercises use low-risk tasks and accommodate illness, disability, caregiving and other genuine constraints.

Source coverage

Opening Narrative Scene

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action-feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 63](#)

The Sentimental “Good Person”: A Week of Intentions

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action-feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 63](#)

The Quiet Builder: Stable Habits Without Grand Declarations

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action–feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 65](#)

Conceptual Frame: Habit as the Engine of Virtue

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action–feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 68](#)

Philosophical undercarriage

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action–feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 70](#)

Aristotle on Habit, Desire, and the Mean

Narrative contrast, three layers, acquired disposition, action–feeling relation and proportion are taught and tested through the evidence map and mean exercise.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 70](#)

Habit Science: Automaticity, Loops, and Neural Paths

Automaticity, loop mapping, Figure 2, neural metaphor and Trollope example are explained with explicit limits and tested in a replacement-loop design.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 73](#)

Case in Point: Anthony Trollope and the Mechanics of Habit

Automaticity, loop mapping, Figure 2, neural metaphor and Trollope example are explained with explicit limits and tested in a replacement-loop design.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 77](#)

Diagnostic, cultural sabotage

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 77](#)

Myths that Devalue Systematic Virtue

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 77](#)

Personal Sabotage: Scripts, Overreach, and Collapse

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 80](#)

Constructive core

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 83](#)

Building Virtuous Habits: The Protocol

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 83](#)

Part A: Defining Virtuous Habits

All three cultural myths, three private scripts, overreach-collapse pattern and five habit criteria are diagnosed and applied.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 83](#)

Part B: Implementation, Habit Stacking, and Relapse

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

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Habit stacking: hitching new behaviour to existing rails

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

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Relapse and interruption: dealing with the human part

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

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Identity: casting votes for who you are

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 91](#)

Exercises: Your First 30-Day Virtue Habit

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

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Closing Synthesis and Aphorism

Both Part B presentations, stacking, lapse rules, identity metaphor, all five thirty-day exercise steps and closing trust/ledger transition are integrated into protocol and review work.

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Figure 2 - Cue → Routine → Reward

Original figure inspected; clipped and confusing labels are acknowledged. The correct conceptual sequence is reconstructed from source prose, without altering the book.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 74](#)

Chapter 2 — You Become What You Repeatedly Do (Notes 79-108)

All thirty endnotes were read. Relevant note ranges accompany lessons; research and philosophical attributions are distinguished from independently verified findings.

[Read source section: full-book PDF page 435](#)