

Learning Tip:

# The Science of Habits

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# The Science of Habits

Habits are...

- ▶ automatic, preprogrammed “zombie” routines the brain runs with little conscious control.
- ▶ related to chunking: strengthened neural pathways formed by repeated practice.
- ▶ an energy saver that frees our mind for other tasks.

# The Science of Habits

The anatomy of a habit:

- 1. The Cue:** A stimulus that triggers the habitual action. Can be linked to people, places, time, feelings, or events.
  - ▶ E.g., your phone's ringtone when you get a text.
  - ▶ Takeaway: Expose yourself to helpful cues and avoid cues that trigger bad habits.
- 2. The Routine:** The action sequence you perform when the cue occurs.
  - ▶ E.g., you pick up your phone and open the message app.
  - ▶ Takeaway: Plan specific routines; replace bad routines with small, concrete alternatives (don't rely on willpower alone).
- 3. The Reward:** The immediate benefit the brain expects after the routine.
  - ▶ E.g., the quick pleasure or social connection from reading a message.
  - ▶ Takeaway: Identify the true reward behind a habit; adjust rewards to reinforce desired behaviors or remove rewards to break bad ones.