

# Back to Routine

## A Fresh Start Guide for September (The Other January)

*“September is the other January—a clean slate, a fresh start, a chance to use new pencils, fresh notebooks, and begin again.”*

— GRETCHEN RUBIN

When September and back-to-school season arrive, the air seems charged with possibility and renewal. Even if you haven’t been in school for years, it’s a terrific time for self-evaluation and reflection. Whether you’re restructuring your days around school or not, take a moment to reset your routines and start new habits.

This guide will help you harness the power of September’s clean slate to create routines that support your happiest, most productive life.

Before you can establish new routines, you need to clear away the lingering tasks and clutter from summer. Complete a row (or the entire card!) to create space for your fresh start.

UNSUBSCRIBE FROM UNWANTED NEWSLETTERS	DELETE UNUSED APPS	MAKE A PILE OF SOME WORN-OUT T-SHIRTS, UNMATCHED SOCKS, ETC.	ANSWER A TRICKY EMAIL	BOOK TRAVEL FOR HOLIDAYS OR CONFIRM TRAVEL PLANS
SORT THROUGH ACCUMULATED MAIL	GET RID OF ANY PERSONAL-CARE PRODUCTS YOU DON'T USE	ADD A FUN ACTIVITY TO YOUR CALENDAR, TO LOOK FORWARD TO	SIGN UP FOR AUTO-PAY FOR A BILL	MAKE AN APPOINTMENT YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF
CLEAR OUT YOUR WALLET, BACKPACK, OR PURSE	JOT DOWN FIVE IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY GIFTS	<b>Gretchen Rubin</b> (Free space)	UNFOLLOW AND DELETE PODCASTS YOU DON'T LISTEN TO	CHECK THE SUPPLIES IN YOUR EMERGENCY KIT
IDENTIFY ONE CHANGE YOU CAN MAKE TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE	DONATE TO AN ORGANIZATION YOU'VE BEEN MEANING TO SUPPORT	BUY AN EXTRA: CHARGER, EARBUDS, READING GLASSES, ETC.	GET A LIBRARY CARD (you can check out print, digital, or audiobooks)	FORWARD THE HAPPIER PODCAST, AND RATE, REVIEW, AND FOLLOW
RETURN 10 MISPLACED OBJECTS TO THEIR PROPER PLACES	TAKE CARE OF ANY ITEMS THAT NEED TO BE RETURNED (by mail or in person)	CLEAN OUT YOUR CAR	SELL OR DONATE UNWANTED BOOKS	WASH YOUR CAR

## SECRETS OF ADULthood FOR GETTING BACK TO ROUTINE

“Habits are the invisible architecture of everyday life; we can change our lives by changing our habits.”

“We know if something important to us if it shows up in our schedule, our spending, and our space”

“Nothing is more exhausting than a task that’s never started.”

“What you do every day matters more than what you do once in a while.”

## Rebuilding Your Habits

The Strategy of Convenience is a powerful way to help make new habits stick. To put it simply, when something is convenient, we’re much more likely to do it. The reverse is also true: when something is inconvenient, we’re more likely to avoid it.

How can you make your routine easier to follow?

### Example Morning Routine Setup

- ♦ Lay out clothes the night before
- ♦ Prepare coffee maker or tea supplies
- ♦ Keep a water bottle by your bed
- ♦ Place your workout clothes where you’ll see them

### Example Evening Routine Setup

- ♦ Create a charging station for devices
- ♦ Keep a notepad by your bed for tomorrow’s to-dos
- ♦ Set up your space for the next day

## DESIGN YOUR SEPTEMBER ROUTINES

### Morning Routine

(Choose 3-5 elements):

- ☐ Wake up at \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Drink water immediately
- ☐ Make bed
- ☐ Exercise/stretch for \_\_\_\_ minutes
- ☐ Read for \_\_\_\_ minutes
- ☐ Journal/gratitude practice
- ☐ Healthy breakfast
- ☐ Review day’s priorities
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Workday Routine

(Choose 3-5 elements):

- ☐ Start work at \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Take breaks every \_\_\_\_ minutes
- ☐ Eat lunch away from desk
- ☐ End work at \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Transition ritual (change clothes, walk, etc.)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Evening Routine

(Choose 3-5 elements):

- ☐ Dinner by \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Put devices away at \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prepare for tomorrow
- ☐ Read before bed
- ☐ Lights out by \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Power of Habit Tracking

*"I manage what I monitor. So if something's important to me, I should figure out a way to monitor it."*

— GRETCHEN RUBIN

CHOOSE ONE HABIT TO TRACK THIS MONTH AND RECORD YOUR PROGRESS.

My September Habit:

WEEK 1	M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
Did it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 2	M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
Did it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 3	M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
Did it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 4	M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
Did it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 5	M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
Did it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## CELEBRATING YOUR PROGRESS

Remember: What we do every day matters more than what we do once in a while. If you miss a day or two, don't worry—what matters is getting back on track. Progress, not perfection, is the goal. **After completing your month of habit tracking, take a minute to reflect:**

How did it feel to have this routine?

What made it easier or harder to stick with?

How might you adjust it going forward?

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