

Your Ultimate Guide For Waking Up Early

It took me four years of researching, experimenting, and a lot of excuses, to finally reach a point where waking up early as a habit is under my command, but it was worth it.

I presume the reason why you are reading this article is that you've tried to develop the same habit (probably more than once) and for some reason failed.

Luckily, you don't need to go through this again by yourself; you have me and my learning lessons.

Without a doubt, the habit of waking up early had the biggest impact on my life, because it allowed me to focus several hours on myself and my primary goals, which had an incredible influence on every area of my life.

And if you develop it, it will have the same result on you and your life.

The importance of waking up early has been acknowledged by many successful individuals, such as:

Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO — 4:30 AM

Richard Branson, founder, and chairman of the Virgin Group — 5:45 AM

Michelle Obama, FLOTUS — 4:30 AM

Tim Cook, Apple CEO — 4:30 AM (not waking up, he starts sending emails at this hour)

Howard Schultz, Starbucks CEO — Before 5:00 AM

Jack Dorsey, Twitter Co-founder — 5:30 AM



Left — Indra Nooyi | Middle — Richard Branson | Right — Michelle Obama



Left — Tim Cook | Middle — Howard Schultz | Right — Jack Dorsey

And many other incredible people.

Before we get to the meat of this article, please stop for a moment and be honest with yourself:

Is this one of the articles which you will bookmark and get back it when you have the time?

If the answer to this question is YES, go ahead bookmark it and skim the article, you will probably find a useful tip or two (and save some time).

“A year from now you may wish you had started today.” — Karen Lamb

But if you are ready to commit and establish a habit of waking up early, then I've got you covered.

So called, 5 AM Club was over glorified in the last couple of years, but waking up early doesn't mean waking up at 5 AM.

I am not saying you cannot do it, but I am saying that maybe you shouldn't. At least, not before you consider your current lifestyle.

One of the reasons why it took me four years to stabilize this habit, is because I didn't bear into consideration **my way of life** (then as a student), now as an entrepreneur.

Deciding an hour when you want to wake up depends on your current activities and responsibilities. Such as work (or university), family (do you have kids, a spouse or not), social circle, hobbies, traveling (flying) and other.

Getting up at 5 AM or 6 AM is extremely challenging if you are working night shifts as a doctor, or if you are a student that has to pull a lot of all-nighters and has a lot of parties.

Or if you are flying a lot, and you spend most of the days jet lagged, that its physically painful to consistently wake up at the same hour.

So, to determine when would be the ideal time, ask yourself the following:

Based on my current activities, both in personal and professional life, when would be a perfect wake-up hour?

Now you have a number in mind, let's go to real strategy.

As you know, waking up early has nothing to do with the alarm clock, but it has everything to do with these elements:

Your Goals & Mindset

Your Evening Routine

The Quality Of Your Sleep

Waking Up & Your Morning Routine

Let's go one at the time.

1. Your Mindset & Your Goals

“Mind over Mattress” — Robin Sharma

We, humans, are creatures of instant gratification.

And because of that, you will try to find any possible excuse to sleep in. Especially in the first several days of the habit.

The biggest thing you need to know is that you will have to sacrifice a lot, particularly in the first month. And you have to be prepared for it.

You will have to pass on a couple of parties, you will experience energy drops and your productivity will suffer, at least in the beginning.

And you will need to lose the idea that you are a not a morning person, that's just a myth.

You need to put yourself in the first place. And you do that by setting goals.

There are two reasons why goals are important:

Goals motivate us

Having goals gives us the boost, whenever we want to surrender to the infamous snooze button.

The more emotion you add to your goal, the bigger the leverage will be. Not only for waking up but for everything else in your life.

Goals dictate our activities

There are goals, and there are systems.

Each one of your goals has a set of activities that need to be done, to achieve your goal.

Take a look at [this article](#) about systems.

An example would look like this:

Goal: I have lost 5kg (10pounds) by 1.4.2017

Systems: Eating less than 2000 healthy calories a day (without sweets, snacks, and junk food) + Physical activity: Cardio 2x week (swimming or running) + weight lifting 2x week + yoga for stretching.

I can go more into details, but now it's your turn.

Set top 3 goals for the next year, and for each one of them what systems do you need to follow.

Once you have them, let's get down to how to create your evening routine.

2. Your Evening Routine

Most people think that waking up early begins in the morning, which is far from the truth.

First, you need to set yourself for success the night before. And there are several ways you can do that.

Stop using technology before your sleep time

Exposing yourself to too much blue light (from your smartphone, tablet, or computer) before bed has a negative influence on the quality of your sleep.

That's why 1–2 hours before you go to bed, go into so-called “Amish Hour,” turn off everything, and focus on yourself.

Prepare for the next day

Instead of having to decide on these things in the morning and losing precious willpower and decision-making ability, decide on it the night before.

Here are three things you should think about:

What are your top priorities for tomorrow?

What clothes you will wear tomorrow?

What meal can you plan for tomorrow?

Evaluate day and picture your ideal morning

Time goes by fast, and if you don't stop and reflect on things that are important to you, you will miss a lot of them.

That's why always ask yourself what worked today? What kind of progress did you make? What are you grateful? What made you happy?

And then picture your ideal morning. This alone will influence your motivation to stay awake and stay away from the snooze button.

Read

With our busy schedules, it's challenging to find enough time to read, but when you eliminate technology, you will easily find 30 minutes you can dedicate to reading. Whether or not it's for personal or professional growth.



3. The Quality Of Your Sleep

Most of us go through life without knowing what affects our sleep and what we can do about it to make it better.

To maximise your sleep quality, these are the things you should have in mind:

Stop the stimulants

At least six hours before you go to sleep, you should stop drinking coffee and alcohol, because it will mess with your sleep.

You can drink green tea and water, which are a much better substitute.

Avoid eating big meals

They'll burden your digestive system and lower your sleep quality.

Instead have a small snack, like nuts and glass of milk, so you don't wake up hungry.

Drink one glass of water

Since you are about to sleep for 6–8 hours straight, your body will need a lot of hydration; that's why you should drink at least one glass of water.

If you have been drinking, make that at least two (and one when you wake up).

Avoid exercising before sleep

Exercising less than 3 hours prior bedtime can keep you awake. So try to do it earlier or in the morning.

Set right conditions

Find a quality mattress and pillow. Sleep in a dark and silent room (you can wear a sleep mask and have Melatonin as a supplement).

And pay attention to the room temperature, preferably you would want to sleep in a colder room (which for me in Malaysia is close to impossible).

Go to bed at the same time

At the beginning going to bed at the same time will be challenging because your body will operate on the old rhythm, and that's why you should go to sleep when you are tired.

After several days you will start to feel tired towards the end of the day, and then you can sleep more consistently.

Optimise your sleep

By "optimising sleep," I mean that you should find the perfect time you should go to bed each night, and discover the ideal time you should get up to maximise energy and health.



While you sleep, you go through cycles of sleep states. The first state in a sleep cycle is light sleep, followed by deep sleep and a dream state referred to as REM-sleep. A full sleep cycle lasts about 90 minutes (1.5 hours) and is repeated several times each night.

It would look something like:

1.5 hours > 3 hours > 4.5 hours > 6 hours and so on.

Of course, you will not be able to hit it exactly to the minute, but over the time you will get better.

4. Waking Up & Your Morning Routine

At this point, we've covered almost everything that's indirectly related to

waking up early.

Now you have to decide which of these two strategies you want to try:

The “Dive In” method

As the title says it, you go directly to desired hour, and you try to maintain it from there.

This strategy is possible, but you have to keep in mind that sudden changes will affect your energy drastically.

The “Gradual” method

The most efficient method for changing the time you wake up is to do it gradually — 10–15 minutes earlier for 1–3 days until you feel used to it, and then lower it down. If you get up at 8 a.m. generally, don’t suddenly change it to 6 a.m. Try 7:45 a.m. first. Maintain for a couple of days, and then go to 7:30.

This will take some time, but the effects on your energy will be minimal, plus it’s the most enjoyable and it has a lower chance of failure.

Just have in mind one thing, if you tend to change time zones often, it might be more challenging for you.

Once you decide which one is right for you, there are several things you should keep in mind.

Find an alarm that suits you

“To snooze or not to snooze that is the question”

— *Everyone*

Your day shouldn’t start with a melody that scares you or annoys you; that beats the whole point of this habit.

You should find a song that has a slow transition, and that brings out positive moods (note: it might happen that you end up disliking the melody).

My personal choice is the motivational speech from the video “Rise and Shine” — which you can find on this [link](#).

Note: in the first couple of weeks, set the alarm clock away from the bed, so you have to stand up to get it.

Get accountability

There is probably someone you know; that already has a habit of waking up. Ring that person up and ask them whether or not they can help you out.

All you need to do is send them a message or give them a call 10–15 minutes after you wake up. That’s it.

Gamify the process with the Seinfeld Method.

Famous comedian Jerry Seinfeld, said that he has a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page, and it's on a prominent wall. And a red marker.

He said for each day that I do my task of writing, I get to put a big red X over that day. "After a few days, you'll have a chain. Just keep at it and the chain will grow longer every day. You'll like seeing that chain, especially when you get a few weeks under your belt. Your only job next is not to break the chain. Don't break the chain!"



His net worth is an estimated 820 million dollars; that can tell you a lot.

This method works, and its fun, especially when you keep it up for a while.

Have a sudden waking activity

You need something that will throw you out of your sleep mode.

First, drink a glass of water. Then go, wash your face and brush your teeth (you can floss as well if that's your thing).

Stretch, and make your bed. Open your window and let the light in (this won't work if you are getting up at 5 AM, but some fresh air will do you good).

WARNING: Don't check email, news, social media, blogs — zone out.

There will be plenty time later on to do this, but morning belongs to you.

Have something you are looking forward to.

For me it's making coffee.

It became somewhat of a ritual, that after I am done making the bed and brushing my teeth, I make the coffee and sit on the balcony, think about my goals and read a book.

Morning activities

What you will do in the morning depends on your goals and the systems you need to follow to accomplish them.

But the main rule is: whatever your activities are, focus on one hour at the time.

Trying to establish 3 hours of habits in the morning (for working out, reading, watching a course, painting, and working on your passion projects), even though it might be possible, it will overwhelm you, and it can lead to failure.

Here are some of the suggestions:

Setting and evaluating goals

Physical activity (working out, running, swimming, yoga)

Meditation

Reading (or watching courses)

Working on your passion project or your primary business/career

Spending time with your loved ones (partner, kids)

Preparing food (that you planned out day before)

But if you are looking for more, take a look at [this article](#).

Note: you might experience energy drops in the first couple of weeks. But that's normal until your body adjusts to the new schedule.

Pro tip: if you experience a sudden drop of energy, take a 20–30 minute nap during the day.

It will happen that sometimes you don't wake up when you planned, and it usually happens that we are disappointed and it destroys the rest of the day. Don't worry, be happy for the extra sleep and focus on the next important thing, tomorrow just improve.

Frequently Asked Questions



What about weekends?

This depends on your personal preference. In the beginning, when you are still developing a habit, I would be consistent and wake up on the weekends.

Later, when your practice becomes stronger, you can indulge in one or two additional hours.

How many times can I skip waking up early?

When you are trying to develop this as a habit, be careful with how many times you skip, because if you go 2–3 days in a row, it will be difficult to go back to waking up early.

But at the moment you go 30 days with consistent behavior, you will see the full benefits of it, and then even if you miss 2–3 days, it will be easy to go back, because you've gained the leverage over yourself and you know how important this is to you.

What happens when I travel or change the environment?

This is always tricky.

First, don't be too harsh on yourself. Try to stick with your habits, but if you can't just do your best to do the activities you want.

Here you can find an actual guide on how to [maintain your habits when traveling](#).

What about a sudden party?

Those are the best. Just have fun. Don't force yourself to wake up at the exact hour, and just sleep how much you need and improve tomorrow.

Final Takeaway

If you are reading this, congratulations for sticking with me till the end.

The next step is for you to try it out. And remember, this is a long game, so start small.

Just 1% better every day, and soon you will see how it will drastically influence every area of your life.

Call To Action

If you want to increase your productivity and eliminate procrastination, check out my free guide called: "***The Ultimate Productivity Cheat Sheet.***"

[Click here to get the guide right now!](#)

PS: you will find the tip about making the most out of "Your Dead Time" fascinating!