

OFFICIAL WORKSHOP COMPANION

The Focus Advantage Workbook

Your follow-along guide to the science of starting — and staying — focused.
Complete the exercises during the workshop to build your personal S.T.A.R.T.
system.



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SECTION 01

Key Concepts: The Science of Starting

Before we build your system, you need to understand the three facts behind "I can't get started." Fill this section in as Part 2 of the workshop covers it.

The Novelty Hijack

Your dopamine system is built to chase **unpredictable, personal, new** signals — which is exactly what a notification is, and exactly what a textbook is not. When your phone buzzes mid-paragraph, you don't choose to look. The wiring chooses for you. Willpower never had a vote.

The Switch Cost

Task-switching doesn't just interrupt you — it taxes your **working memory for minutes afterward, not seconds**. Researchers at UC Irvine found it takes an average of **23 minutes** to fully return to a task after a single interruption. "It was just one text" is never just one text.

The Laptop Paradox

The device your homework needs runs two incompatible modes: **single-tasking** (writing, solving, reading) and **browsing mode** (tab-flipping, skimming, checking). Your brain can't hold both at once — every "quick check" hands the wheel to the wrong one. The fix isn't a different device; it's a designed setup (blockers, single-tab discipline, notification schedules) — Part 4.

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Think of yesterday. Be honest — this stays on your device.

WHAT I TELL MYSELF I'LL DO (E.G. "START BIOLOGY AT 4PM")

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED BETWEEN 4PM AND 5:30PM

THE SINGLE MOMENT IT WENT OFF-TRACK



SECTION 02

Activity 1: Your Distraction Audit (Summary)

The full audit is its own worksheet — do it before the workshop if you can. Here, capture the headline findings.

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

List your five most frequent interruptions, and tag each one: **Remove** (it goes), **Reduce** (it shrinks), **Redirect** (it gets a scheduled slot).

1. INTERRUPTION + TAG (REMOVE / REDUCE / REDIRECT)

2. INTERRUPTION + TAG

3. INTERRUPTION + TAG

4. INTERRUPTION + TAG

5. INTERRUPTION + TAG

The One-Sentence Rule

For every item above, finish this sentence: *"When it appears, I will ___ instead."* An interruption without a pre-decided response always wins. A pre-decided response at least gets a fair fight.



SECTION 03

Activity 2: Build Your S.T.A.R.T. System

The core of the workshop. Build each step for *your* subjects, space, and worst habits — we'll do this together in Part 3.

S

Stage — prep the space *before* you sit down

If the environment is decided in advance, it can't be negotiated at 4pm when your willpower is lowest.

WHERE MY PHONE WILL LIVE DURING BLOCKS (DISTANCE BEATS DISCIPLINE)

MY 60-SECOND DESK RESET (CLEAR SURFACE, WATER, MATERIALS OUT)

MY LAPTOP SETUP (BLOCKER ON? HOW MANY TABS ALLOWED?)

T

Trigger — a fixed 2-minute ritual that always precedes work

Same opening move, every time. Starting stops requiring a decision — the ritual makes it automatic.

STEP 1 OF MY RITUAL (E.G. FILL WATER BOTTLE)

STEP 2 (E.G. PHONE TO ITS HOME + DO-NOT-DISTURB)

STEP 3 (E.G. OPEN WORKBOOK, WRITE TODAY'S ONE GOAL)



A**Activate — a first task deliberately too small to fail**

The 2-minute rule: the first task takes two minutes and has an obvious "done". Momentum does the rest.

MY "TOO SMALL TO FAIL" OPENERS (ONE PER SUBJECT)

R**Repeat — short blocks with real breaks**

"Study for 3 hours" is a wish. A block length is a system.

MY BLOCK LENGTH + BREAK LENGTH (E.G. 25/5 OR 50/10)

WHAT MY BREAKS WILL NOT CONTAIN (HINT: NO FEEDS)

BLOCKS PER EVENING, REALISTICALLY

T**Track — a visible log, so momentum is seen instead of felt**

You can't feel progress accumulating. You can see a chain of ticks accumulating.

WHAT I'LL TRACK (BLOCKS DONE? TICKS? MINUTES?)

WHERE THE LOG WILL LIVE (MUST BE VISIBLE DAILY)



SECTION 04

The Start Contract

Same closing move as every Neurogenetics workshop: one visible commitment, made while the material is fresh. We fill this in during the final 6 minutes — don't skip it.

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Vague intentions produce almost no mental pull. Be specific. Write exactly what you will do.

STARTING TOMORROW, MY TRIGGER RITUAL RUNS AT ___ AND LOOKS LIKE:

MY FIRST "TOO SMALL TO FAIL" TASK WILL BE:

MY PHONE'S NEW HOME DURING BLOCKS:

MY BLOCKS AND BREAKS (LENGTH × NUMBER):

MY VISIBLE LOG LIVES AT/IN:

THE ONE INTERRUPTION I AM REMOVING COMPLETELY FOR 14 DAYS:

MY SIGNATURE

DATE

Remember:

Motivation gets you started. Systems keep you started. For the next 14 days, when you don't feel like it — run the ritual anyway. It only takes two minutes to find out.



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