



A FREE WORKBOOK

The Virtues Workbook

Benjamin Franklin's Original System
for Building Character

DEvised IN PHILADELPHIA · 1726

benfranklinvirtues.com · Practice What Ben Practiced

Scan to start
tracking today



WHERE THIS CAME FROM

A twenty-year-old's very stubborn idea

In 1726, a young printer in Philadelphia decided he would try something almost nobody attempts on purpose: he would get better, on a schedule, by design.

“I wish’d to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN · THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

He called it “the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection.” He knew he’d fall short. He was right — he later admitted he never fully mastered even one of his thirteen virtues. But the attempt, he wrote, made him *“a better and happier man”* than he would otherwise have been.

He carried a small ivory notebook everywhere. Thirteen rows, one virtue each. Seven columns, one for each day. Every evening, a single question: where did I fall short today? A dot went in the box. Nothing more dramatic than that.

This workbook is that notebook, rebuilt for you. Thirteen virtues, in Franklin’s own words. A tracker you can fill in tonight. And if you’d rather your phone remember for you — that’s what the app on the last page is for.



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HOW IT ACTUALLY WORKS

Four moves, repeated for a lifetime

Franklin's system isn't complicated. Its power is that it's simple enough to actually keep doing.



1

Choose one virtue

Pick a single virtue to focus on this week. Let the other twelve run quietly in the background — you're not trying to fix everything at once.



2

Track the slips

Each evening, mark where you fell short — on any virtue, not just this week's. A dot is information, not a verdict.



3

Review the week

Sunday, count the marks. Fewer than last time on this virtue? Good. That's the entire measure of success.



4

Cycle through all 13

Thirteen weeks, thirteen virtues, one full pass. Fifty-two weeks a year means four honest attempts at every one.

A missed day isn't a failed system — it's one dot. Franklin's own notebook was full of them. Pick it back up tomorrow.

THE ARITHMETIC OF A YEAR

13

virtues on the list, in a fixed order Franklin chose on purpose

1

virtue held in deliberate focus per week — never more

52

weeks in a year, divided evenly into four full cycles

4

honest attempts at every single virtue, every year



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THE COMPLETE LIST · PART ONE

The 13 virtues, in Franklin's own words

01 Temperance

"Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation."

Clear the head before anything else can be built on top of it.

02 Silence

"Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation."

Say less, notice more. Most talk is just noise looking for an audience.

03 Order

"Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time."

Franklin's hardest virtue. A place for everything, and a time for everything.

04 Resolution

"Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve."

Decide once, then stop negotiating with yourself every day after.

05 Frugality

"Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e. waste nothing."

Spend on purpose. Waste nothing — not money, not time, not attention.

06 Industry

"Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions."

Time is the one asset that never comes back. Spend it like it matters.

07 Sincerity

"Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly."

Let your inside and your outside match. It's simpler, even when it's harder.



THE COMPLETE LIST · PART TWO

...continued

08 Justice

“Wrong none, by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.”

Justice isn't only what you avoid doing — it's the good you owe and don't skip.

09 Moderation

“Avoid extremes. Forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.”

The measured response usually outperforms the passionate one.

10 Cleanliness

“Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.”

Outer order supports inner order. A cluttered room, a cluttered head.

11 Tranquility

“Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.”

Don't spend your peace of mind on things that were never in your control.

12 Chastity

“Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.”

Moderation applied to a place most systems are too embarrassed to mention.

13 Humility

“Imitate Jesus and Socrates.”

Added last, after a friend pointed out his pride. Even Franklin needed the note.

Franklin ordered these deliberately — Temperance first, because a clear head makes every virtue after it easier to keep.



THIS WEEK

Your weekly tracker

FOCUS VIRTUE _____

Week ___ of 13

Virtue	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Temperance							
2 Silence							
3 Order							
4 Resolution							
5 Frugality							
6 Industry							
7 Sincerity							
8 Justice							
9 Moderation							
10 Cleanliness							
11 Tranquility							
12 Chastity							
13 Humility							

Mark a dot for every fault, on every virtue, every evening — not just the one you're focused on this week. The goal each week is simple: **fewer marks than last time.**



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TWO QUESTIONS A DAY

The bookends of Franklin's day

No app, no elaborate ritual — one question to open the day, one to close it. It's the part of his system that survived every other change he made.

☀ Morning

“What good shall I do this day?”

🌙 Evening

“What good have I done today?”

THIS WEEK, ONE LINE EACH

Day	Morning — today's good	Evening — today's good, done
Sun		
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		

Answer before you check your phone in the morning, and before you put it down at night. A few words is enough — under a minute, both times.



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START THIS WEEK

Three things to do before Sunday

1

Read all 13, pick one

Go back to pages 4–5. Choose whichever virtue feels most relevant right now — not the one you think you “should” pick.

2

Write your two questions somewhere you’ll see them

A sticky note on the mirror. A recurring phone reminder. It only works if it’s in front of you at 7am and 10pm.

3

Do tonight’s review, tonight

Don’t wait for Monday. Open the tracker on page 6 and mark today’s dots before you go to sleep.

“Well done is better than well said.”

POOR RICHARD’S ALMANACK · 1737

THAT’S THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Franklin ran this exact loop for years, one small notebook at a time. No new app to learn, nothing to configure — just the tracker on page 6 and the two questions on page 7. If you’d rather it ran itself, turn the page.

Continue — the app →



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IF PAPER ISN'T YOUR THING

Franklin's exact system, minus the ivory notebook

The Ben Franklin Virtues app runs everything on this page automatically — so the habit survives the weeks paper doesn't.

- ☀ **Morning & evening prompts** — Franklin's two questions, delivered right on schedule.
- 📅 **The full 13-virtue grid** — the same ledger from page 6, always on you.
- 🔔 **One weekly focus** — a gentle nudge toward the virtue you chose, all week.
- 📊 **A weekly review, built in** — so it happens on schedule, not "whenever you remember."
- 📈 **Progress you can actually see** — fewer marks, cycle over cycle, charted for you.



Scan with your camera to open the app page.

FREE ON THE APP STORE

1

Download

Scan the code above, or find "Ben Franklin Virtues" on the App Store.

2

Pick your virtue

Same 13, same order. Choose where you already started on page 4.

3

Get tonight's prompt

Your first evening review arrives on schedule — no setup required.



GET THE APP
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“Human felicity is produc’d not so much by
great pieces of good fortune that seldom
happen, as by little advantages that occur
every day.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Ben Franklin Virtues

PRACTICE WHAT BEN PRACTICED



More Franklin — essays on the
virtues, quotes, and his daily
method — at
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