Flip Flip Flip the BIT

convert failure into success,
one tiny win at a time

WATCH THE FIRST LESSON:

Breaking Down the Myth of the Big Fail / Big Win

>> Watch Now

The First Exercise

Now that you know how habits work — cue, behavior, reward! — it's time to start thinking about how *you* can design new habits that'll help you flip those micro-fails to micro-wins.

The first step: *Spot and break* down your existing habits.

You need to learn how to notice and de-chunk behaviors which are, at this point, totally automatic... totally rat-brain. It sounds easy, but de-chunking can be quite tough the first few times you try! After all, you're trying to dredge things out of automatic scripts that run all day, every day.

So let's start with some neutral, everyday habits that have very little to do with your work and therefore little to no emotional payload.

Consider these three quotidian events:

1. Waking up in the morning
2. Sitting down at your computer for the first time each day
3. Walking in the door to your home after running errands or coming home from work

Each one of these is actually a set of complex behaviors — and they're not even always the *same* set of complex behaviors. Your waking-up behavior will be different on a day you have an early morning flight, and your walking-in-the-door routine will be different on a day you're loaded down with groceries. But the complexity doesn't stop there. Rarely do we consider just how many steps it takes to make a cup of coffee, or to operate the shower!

Thanks to chunking, our incredibly efficient brains naturally smush them all together into one seemingly simple event.

That's great for sparing brain cycles… but *terrible* for when you want to make a change.

That's where your first exercise comes in.

De-chunk your routines

For this first exercise, your challenge is take those three everyday routines and write down *explicitly* what your habitual behaviors are. Use the worksheet on the following page.

It will seem deceptively easy, but don't rush! Try to think about your actions as a set of instructions for someone else to follow exactly. How does one action lead to the next? What actions do you take most consistently, as if you were on autopilot?

WORKBOOK

De-chunk Your Routine

When you wake up in the morning, you…

When you sit down at your computer for the first time that day, you…

When you walk through the door of your home after being out, you…

How Did You Do?

Here's a good example routine sent to us by a reader:

When I walk in the door to my home, I...

1. Close the door
2. Lock it twice
3. Put my bag on the floor
4. Take off and hang up my jacket
5. Take off my shoes
6. Pick up my bag and carry it to my desk
7. Put my wallet and keys onto their place on my desk
8. Plug in my phone
9. Put my laptop and assorted cables from the bag onto the desk
10. Put my notebook and my pen from the bag onto the desk
11. Put the bag on the floor

As you can see on the following page, it's close, but not perfect! There's room for improvement.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

When I walk in the door to my home, I…

1. Close the door
2. Lock it twice ← 2 locks should be 2 steps
3. Put my bag on the floor
4. Take off and hang up my jacket
5. Take off my shoes ← where do they go? wherever?
6. Pick up my bag and carry it to my desk
7. Put my wallet and keys onto their place on my desk ← where were they?
8. Plug in my phone ← get phone from pocket, find cable, plug it in where…?
9. Put my laptop and assorted cables from the bag onto the desk ← unzip the bag, reach in, which cables…?
10. Put my notebook and my pen from the bag onto the desk
11. Put the bag on the floor ← same place, or wherever it falls?

Imagine you were playing that old game, “Robot” — and you had to give extremely precise instructions to a blindfolded friend in order to win. *That’s* how precise you want your routines to be for de-chunking!

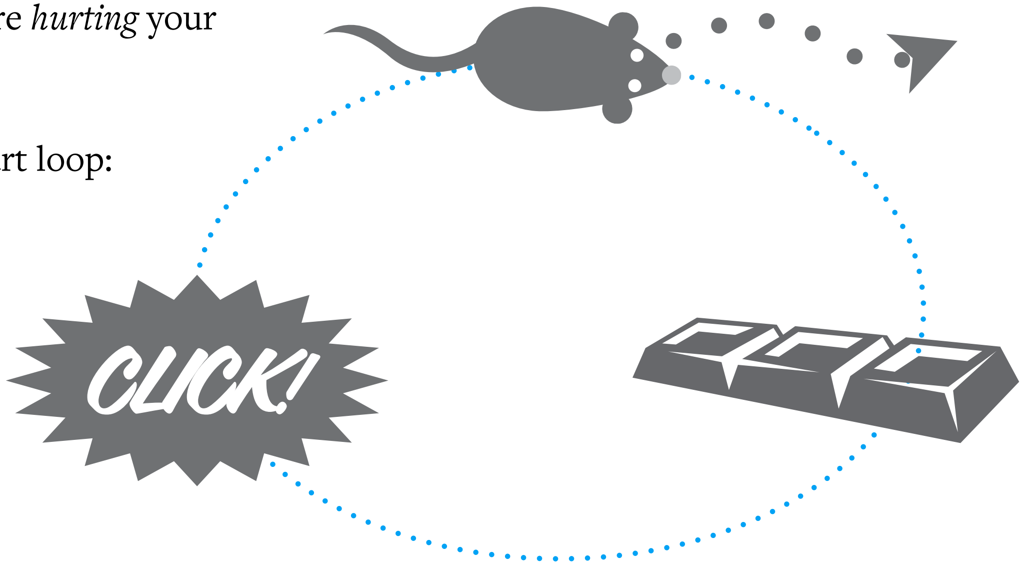
So, how does your de-chunking compare? When in doubt, go back and add more detail!

WATCH THE SECOND LESSON:

Habits: Making and Breaking

>> Watch Now

The Second Exercise



In the last exercise you identified habit loops that were *hurting* your ability to achieve the things you want to achieve.

Now you know that every habit is based on a three-part loop:

- **A cue** (or trigger) that starts the sequence
- **A routine** that you carry out instinctively whenever that cue happens
- **A reward** (tangible or emotional) which is achieved by completing the routine

And now you also know that when you repeat the same thought-demanding task again and again, it eventually becomes an automatic response to the trigger. Otherwise known as a *habit!*

And you know that habits are the domain of the rat brain — the efficient brain, that does things for you automatically, sparing you mental effort and energy.

Which is fantastic, when the habit is a good thing!

But when the habit *isn't* a great thing? It's time to figure it out, so you can replace it with one that will do great things for you.

Identify your micro-fail habits

Your second challenge is to identify three automated loops which have sabotaged you in the past. Include all three parts: the cue, the routine, *and* the reward.

Here's an example to get you started. It *might* sound familiar :)

Cue: Have a great idea!

Unsuccessful Routine: Fantasize elaborately

Reward: Feel smart & capable

And here's another example that will likely feel familiar...

Cue: "I know this already."

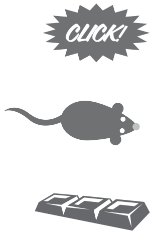
Unsuccessful Routine: Skip ahead instead of taking notes or doing the exercise

Reward: Feel like you're making progress

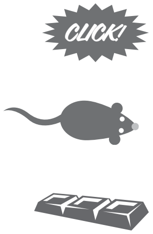
Not all rewards are feelings-based, but a *remarkable* number of ineffective (aka fail) habits have feelings-based rewards. Understanding your cue, routine, *and* reward — using the following workbook — is the first step to replacing that bad habit forever!

WORKBOOK

De-chunk 3 Fail Habits



INCREASES FAILURE BECAUSE...



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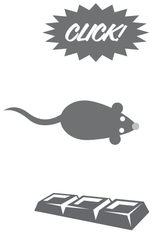


INCREASES FAILURE BECAUSE...

How Did You Do?

If you're having a hard time identifying your fail habits, take heart! That makes *perfect* sense. The whole point of habits is that they happen "above your clearance level" — you aren't aware of them *by design*. That's your brain trying to save you the conscious thought. Naturally, that makes it harder to notice what you're doing!

Here's a great trick to getting unstuck:

Set alarms for a few times a day when you'll be working, or thinking about your project. Ideally, try to choose "odd" times when you're likely to be in the middle of something, e.g. 9:35 am, 11:38, 1:42 pm, etc.

Each time the alarm goes off, pause and ask yourself…

1. What am I doing? (there's a 40% chance you're in a habit routine!)
2. How did I start doing this? (cue)
3. Why am I doing this? (reward)
4. And finally: Is this habit working to my benefit or do I want to change it?

This will help you develop the mindfulness & awareness you need to examine your automatic habits!

SOME POTENTIAL FAIL HABIT TRIGGERS

1. thinking that SUCCESS or FAILURE is a big monolithic thing
2. “I don’t like videos”
3. “I’ll remember that”
4. “I already know this” / that’s just common sense
5. Have an exciting idea! (drop your learning/practice and go twiddle)
6. “This doesn’t apply to me”
7. Seeing someone else has “already done” what you’re working on
8. “I’ll do that later”
9. See an article, tweet, etc. about someone who’s having great success
10. Feel uncertain about what you should do next
11. You hit a certain point in the project/time commitment

If you’re really stuck, here are some fail habit triggers I’ve seen a lot! What else have you seen, done, heard, felt, thought of, or avoided that triggered a habit that is holding you back?

The Third Exercise

Now comes the fun part! It's time to take those *fail habits* and turn them into *win habits*. When you're attempting to break bad habits, it's tempting and natural to try to "just not do it." Which is why most attempts fail! The habit loop is too strong to overcome. In a war between you and your brain, your brain will win.

The winning strategy is this: Work *with* the habit loop, instead of against it. Take the **same** cue but find a *better* routine that will still deliver the **same** reward. Change just the middle of the loop.

Here's an example of changing *just the routine* from fail to win:

Cue: Have a great idea!

Unsuccessful Routine: Fantasize elaborately, give into the thrill

Successful Routine: Write the idea down for safe-keeping

Reward: Feel smart & capable

The reward still works because: The greatest reward of having a great idea is the way it makes you feel. Unfortunately, the *routine* associated with the great idea->great feeling often leads to distraction, devaluing your current work, and hopping from project to project without finishing anything.

But, by designing a system where you can catch and save all those great ideas for future use, you can 1. Enjoy the experience of brilliant brainstorming, and 2. Feel smart and capable as you use a system to ensure you keep your eye on the prize! Feel *extremely* satisfied at how well your new routine works to build up your success.

Net result: No more distractions. No more project-hopping. Keep your eye on the prize!

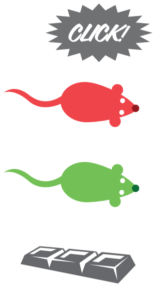
Design a better routine

Now it's your turn. Take the 3 ineffective habit loops you identified in the last exercise, and design a better routine — a better set of actions to take — for each one, using the workbook on the following page.

Remember: The cue and reward must stay the same! And be as specific as humanly possible!

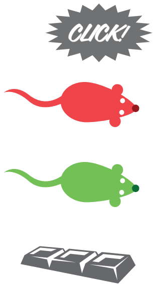
WORKBOOK

Design Routines to Win



INCREASES SUCCESS BECAUSE...

THE REWARD STILL WORKS BECAUSE...



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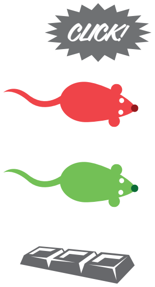


INCREASES SUCCESS BECAUSE...

THE REWARD STILL WORKS BECAUSE...

How Did You Do?

Here are a couple of good examples sent to us by readers:

Cue: I put the last clean dish away after dinner...

Unsuccessful Routine: Sit in front of TV and try to put in some work on projects (personal, work, 30x500) while watching TV at the same time

Successful Routine: Go into home office and work on projects for at least 15 minutes (hopefully longer) before watching TV

Reward: Feel like I'm making progress; watching the shows I like

Reward still works because: I will feel like I'm making progress, even more so! And I will be able to focus more on the TV I like, too.

what is a specific physical or emotional manifestation of this feeling…?

"I load up Reddit"
"I shop for new domain names"

Cue: Feel overwhelmed by the large number of pending things to do.

Unsuccessful Routine: Start exploring something new and abandon the task (with excuse of learning something new)

Successful Routine: Break large tasks in to smaller chunks which could be accomplished in less than an hour's effort.

Reward: Feel relieved of the pressure of pending tasks, feel good about learning new thing (also compensates for the guilt of abandoning tasks).

Reward still works because: I will be relieved from the (imagined) pressure of huge, insurmountable task. I will get satisfaction by completing small tasks.

Don't forget, the *robot rule* still applies! Your cues especially should be as specific as possible, because "feel overwhelmed" is a little too vague to hook a behavior to. How can you recognize that cue is happening? *I feel an overwhelming urge to do something else*, or *I find myself loading up Reddit*...

Putting Your New Habits to Work

Just writing down your new routine won't make it magically embed itself into your brain. No — for that, you'll have to practice! Every time you catch yourself doing the old, unproductive habit loop, and substitute an unsuccessful behavior with a successful one, you will make it easier and easier to do the right thing in the future.

Here are a few other ideas you should try to make your new habits stick:

- Create a visual trigger: Place a note or picture that will remind you, in the place you are most likely to be triggered for the old, unsuccessful loop
- Journal. At the end of each day, write down what went well and what could be improved. Stick to the impersonal facts, no recriminations or guilt!
- Use a tool to help you, like Sweep! You've got a 3-month free personal trial, so why not use it?
- Celebrate! Habits expert BJ Fogg says that the more obnoxiously you celebrate the successful execution of a productive habit, the more easily it cements itself in your brain. So do a little dance and cheer yourself on, no matter how silly it feels.
- And whatever else you do… *don't* guilt yourself. Guilt is its own trigger, and it never triggers anything good. If you do the new routines and you get what you want, great. If you don't do the routines, all that happens is that you have not made progress today. That's okay. Life is one big learning opportunity. Try again next time!

Congratulations!

You made it through Flip the Bit!

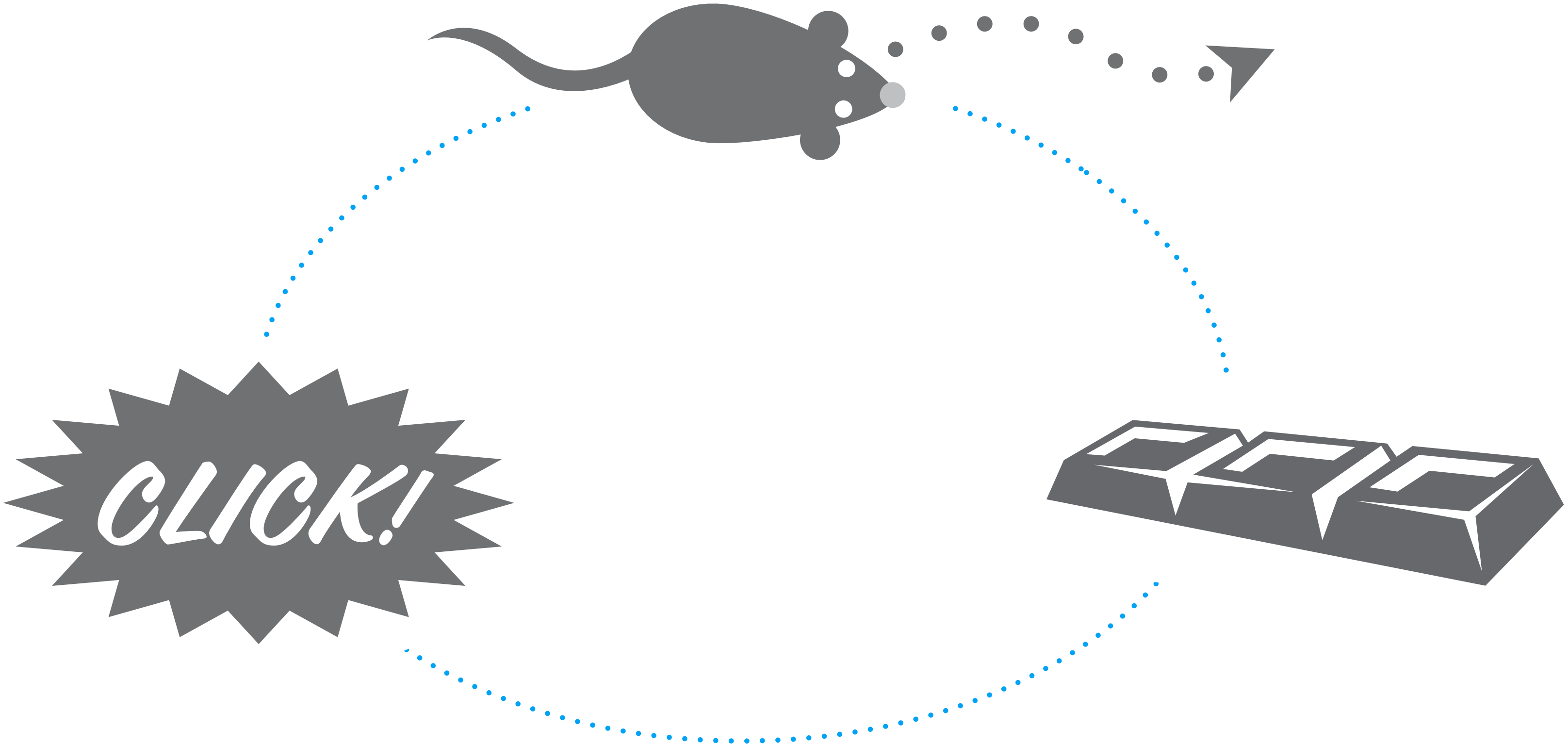
We're working to expand this book + video course with more examples, more exercises, and more research. We'd *love* to hear how you're using it.

What fail habits have you identified?

Which ones have you attempted to flip to win habits?

How has that worked for you?

Please **drop us a line** :)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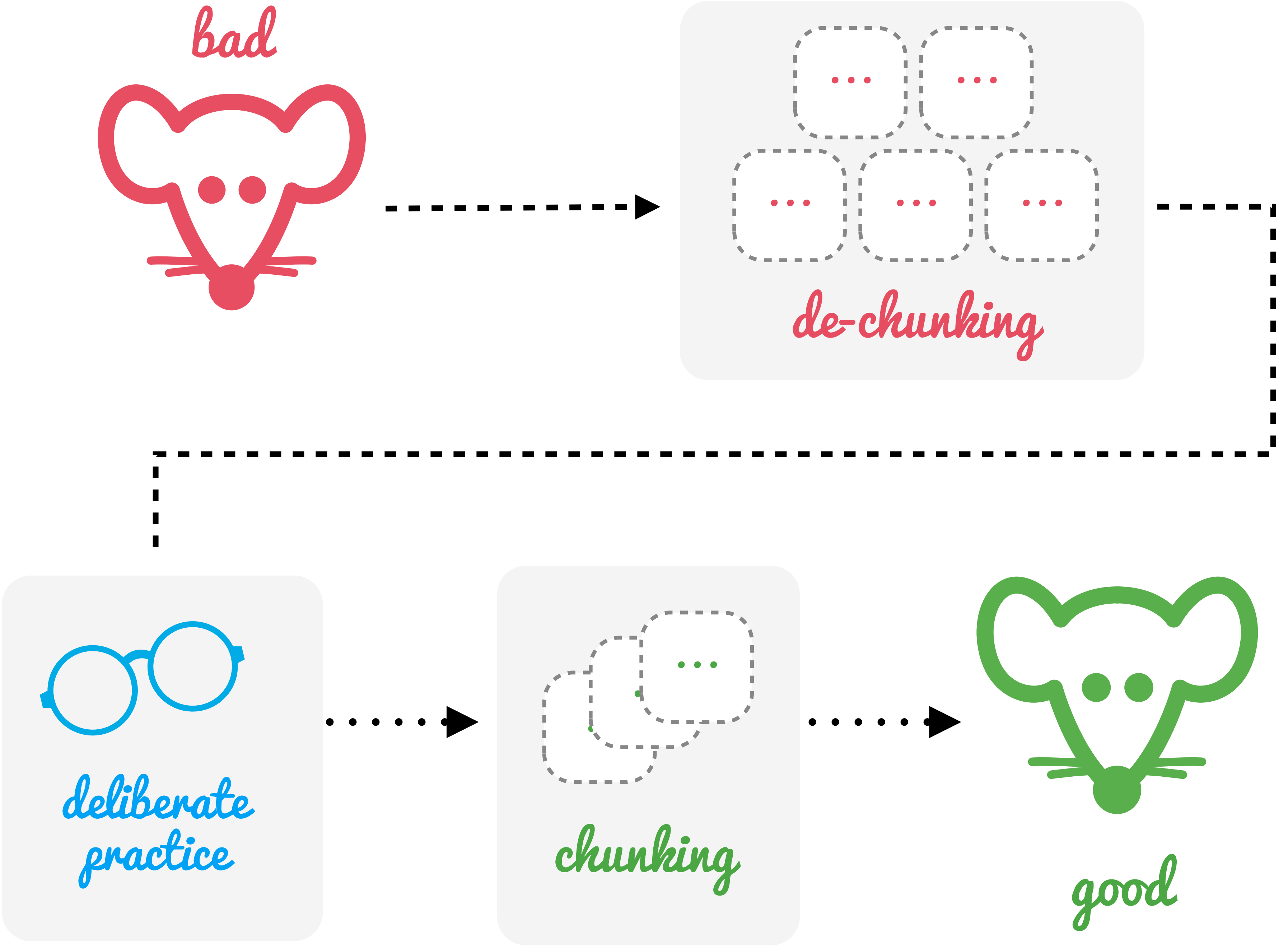

bad

de-chunking

deliberate practice

chunking

good