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Grit: A Complete Guide on Being Mentally Tough

What is Grit?

Let's define grit. Grit is the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals. Sometimes you will hear grit referred to as mental toughness. Angela Duckworth, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests that grit is a strong predictor of success and ability to reach one's goals.

Duckworth's research on grit has shown that...

- West Point cadets who scored highest on the Grit Test were 60% more likely to succeed than their peers.
- Ivy League undergraduate students who had more grit also had higher GPAs than their peers — even though they had lower SAT scores and weren't as “smart.”
- When comparing two people who are the same age but have different levels of education, grit (and not intelligence) more accurately predicts which one will be better educated.

Step 1: Define what grit or mental toughness means for you.

For you, it might be...

- going one month without missing a workout
- delivering your work ahead of schedule for two days in a row
- calling one friend to catch up every Saturday this month

Whatever it is, be clear about what you're going after.

Step 2: Build grit with small physical wins.

So often we think that grit is about how we respond to extreme situations, but what about everyday circumstances?

Mental toughness is like a muscle. It needs to be worked to grow and develop.

Choose to do the tenth rep when it would be easier to just do nine. Choose to create when it would be easier to consume. Choose to ask the extra question when it would be easier to accept. Prove to yourself — in a thousand tiny ways — that you have enough guts to get in the ring and do battle with life.

Read more: The Proven, Reasonable and Totally Unsexy Secret to Success
(<https://jamesclear.com/habit-creep>)

Step 3: Build strong habits and stop depending on motivation.

Grit isn't about getting an incredible dose of inspiration or courage. It's about building the daily habits that allow you to stick to a schedule and overcome

challenges and distractions over and over and over again.

Mentally tough people don't have to be more courageous, more talented, or more intelligent — just more consistent.

Grit comes down to your habits. It's about doing the things you know you're supposed to do on a more consistent basis. It's about your dedication to daily practice and your ability to stick to a schedule.

Read more: [How to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones](https://jamesclear.com/habits)
(<https://jamesclear.com/habits>)

Examples of Grit

- **Mentally tough athletes** are more consistent than others. They don't miss workouts (<https://jamesclear.com/how-to-get-motivated>). They don't miss assignments. They always have their teammates back.
- **Mentally tough leaders** are more consistent than their peers. They have a clear goal (<https://jamesclear.com/are-you-living-an-urgent-life-or-an-important-one>) that they work towards each day. They don't let short-term profits, negative feedback, or hectic schedules prevent them from continuing the march towards their vision. They make a habit of building up the people around them — not just once, but over and over and over again.
- **Mentally tough artists, writers, and employees** deliver on a more consistent basis than most. They work on a schedule, not just when they feel motivated. They approach their work like a pro, not an amateur. They do the most important thing first (<https://jamesclear.com/time-management-tips>) and don't shirk responsibilities.

3 Articles on How I Develop Grit

- How to Fall in Love With Boredom and Unlock Your Mental Toughness (<https://jamesclear.com/in-love-with-boredom>)
- What I Do When it Feels Like My Work Isn't Good Enough (<https://jamesclear.com/self-judgment>)
- What I Do When I Feel Like Giving Up (<https://jamesclear.com/giving-up>)

Best Books on Grit and Mental Toughness

- Grit (<https://jamesclear.com/book/grit>) by Angela Duckworth
- Mindset (<https://jamesclear.com/book/mindset>) by Carol Dweck
- How Children Succeed (<https://jamesclear.com/book/how-children-succeed>) by Paul Tough

Want more great grit books? Browse my full list of the best self-help books (<https://jamesclear.com/best-books/self-help>).

All Grit Articles

This is a complete list of articles I have written on grit and mental toughness. Enjoy!

- World Chess Champion Garry Kasparov on How to Build Confidence (<https://jamesclear.com/kasparov-confidence>)
- How to Fall in Love With Boredom and Unlock Your Mental Toughness

(<https://jamesclear.com/in-love-with-boredom>)

- What I Do When I Feel Like Giving Up (<https://jamesclear.com/giving-up>)
- Bob Mathias on How to Master the Art of Self-Confidence (<https://jamesclear.com/self-confidence>)
- 6 Famous Artists Talk About What It's Like to Overcome Fear and Create Beauty (<https://jamesclear.com/overcome-fear>)
- Joseph Brodsky Explains Perfectly How to Deal With Critics and Detractors in Your Life (<https://jamesclear.com/joseph-brodsky>)
- What I Do When it Feels Like My Work Isn't Good Enough (<https://jamesclear.com/self-judgment>)
- Avoid the Second Mistake (<https://jamesclear.com/second-mistake>)
- Sisu: How to Develop Mental Toughness in the Face of Adversity (<https://jamesclear.com/sisu-mental-toughness>)
- Plan For Failure: Being Consistent Is Not the Same as Being Perfect (<https://jamesclear.com/plan-failure>)
- Treat Failure Like a Scientist (<https://jamesclear.com/failure-scientist>)
- What Every Successful Person Knows, But Never Says (<https://jamesclear.com/ira-glass-failure>)
- How to Chase Your Dreams and Reinvent Yourself (<https://jamesclear.com/reinvent-yourself>)
- How to Stay Focused When You Get Bored Working Toward Your Goals (<https://jamesclear.com/stay-focused>)
- Haters and Critics: How to Deal with People Judging You and Your Work (<https://jamesclear.com/haters>)
- The Fight is the Reward (<https://jamesclear.com/fight-reward>)

- 5 Thoughts on Overcoming Fear and Self-Doubt
(<https://jamesclear.com/overcoming-fear>)
- How to Be Confident and Reduce Stress in 2 Minutes Per Day
(<https://jamesclear.com/body-language-how-to-be-confident>)
- If You Commit to Nothing, You'll Be Distracted By Everything
(<https://jamesclear.com/mental-toughness-marathon-monks>)
- The Science of Developing Mental Toughness in Your Health, Work, and Life
(<https://jamesclear.com/mental-toughness>)
- Believe in Yourself (And Why Nothing Will Work If You Don't...)
(<https://jamesclear.com/nothing-will-work-if-you-dont-believe-in-it>)



Thanks for reading. You helped save a life.

Whenever you buy one of [my books \(https://jamesclear.com/books\)](https://jamesclear.com/books), join the [Habits Academy \(https://habitsacademy.com\)](https://habitsacademy.com), or otherwise contribute to my work, 5 percent of the profits are donated to the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF).

With each donation, AMF distributes nets to protect children, pregnant mothers, and families from mosquitos carrying malaria. It is one of the most cost-effective ways to extend life and fulfills my bigger mission to spread healthy habits and help others realize their full potential.

17077

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YEARS OF ADDITIONAL LIFE

9

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- Competitors in the National Spelling Bee outperform their peers not because of IQ, but because of their grit and commitment to more consistent practice.

(If you'd like more, I wrote about Duckworth's research here (<https://jamesclear.com/mental-toughness>)).)

A Video Explanation of Grit

This short TED talk by psychology professor Angela Duckworth explains the concept of grit and how it helps foster mental toughness in our everyday lives.

Grit: the power of passion and perseverance | Angela Lee Duckworth



How to Be Mentally Tough