



HOW TO DESIGN A MORNING AND
EVENING RITUAL THAT SETS
YOU UP TO WIN

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Introduction



Do top executives manage time the same way? That was the question *Inc. Magazine* aimed to answer by asking founders from eight notable brands (including Slack, Shark Tank, Ipsy, and Reddit) to track how they spent each hour for one day. Not surprisingly, there were some vast differences. However, one notable common thread emerged.

Every executive reported blocks of time reserved each day for key priorities. For one, it was an hour of morning strength training and a breakfast smoothie. Another maintains a mid-day “walking meeting” in the park to discuss product concepts with their Creative Director. Yet another reserves certain evening hours for school pick-ups and dinner with their kids.

Each executive carved out space every day—at the same time, in the same place—to do something important. In other words, they’re using daily rituals to accomplish what matters most.

Most of us have heard or read about the importance of daily rituals. Yet, we still tend to underutilize them. Often, that's because we underestimate their power. By eliminating the need to remember and sequence the steps you're taking, rituals deliver three powerful benefits:

- They free up your creativity.
- They clean up your mistakes.
- They speed up your work.

Like the pregame rituals followed by professional athletes, daily rituals are a series of actions that set you up to win. This is perhaps most true of morning and evening rituals.

A morning ritual allows you to begin your day with focus, clarity, and direction. Rightly designed, it ensures you win in key life domains—like your health or your intellectual growth—before you've even begun your workday. Similarly, an evening ritual allows you to finish your day with a sense of resolution and an unburdened mind.

Are you experiencing those results? If not, it's likely because your rituals have developed organically rather than being designed intentionally.

5 Steps to Design Winning Morning and Evening Rituals:

It's easy for us to accumulate daily activities, like default settings. But those defaults are rarely optimal. They lack intentionality and usually contain some—maybe even several— counterproductive elements. But anyone can design morning and evening rituals that power success by following these five steps.

Step 1. Acknowledge you already have morning and evening rituals

I'm not asking you to adopt something new. This is not something to place on top of your already busy life. We're just talking about reengineering your existing routines. Start by looking closely at your morning and evening activities. What takes up the minutes from when you first wake till you leave for work? What are actions you follow before hitting the pillow at night?

For morning it might be an alarm at a certain time, coffee, quiet time, working out, and the news. For evening it might be a walk, catching up on social media, email, or watching Netflix. Whatever the exact components and sequence—positive or negative—I bet you'll notice you have the outlines of a ritual in place already.

Step 2. Document your existing morning and evening rituals

What are the key components of your existing morning and evening rituals? You've already thought through them. Now, write them down. I did this for my golf ritual. Being very detailed, I was able to identify nine different components to my ritual.

It's important that you document your existing morning and evening activities.

Why? We can't improve what we can't see.

Write them down on the next two pages:

Existing Morning Activities

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



Existing Evening Activities

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



Step 3. Evaluate whether you're getting the results you want or not

Once you have visibility, you can choose which components stay, which go, and which need to be added. If your current ritual is producing the results you want, great! But my guess is, you suspect your results could be better.

The good news is that we have agency and can change our habits to better serve the ends we want to accomplish.

“Whenever we want to produce intentional change in our life, we need to start with the end and work our way back. If we're clear on where we're going, it's easier to chart the course.

Ask yourself, “**How do I want to feel when I’ve completed my morning and evening rituals?**”

Write down the answer for each because this is your new target.

Morning 

Evening 

Step 4. Reengineer your current morning and evening rituals

Now, study the components and their arrangement to see what can change to get you closer to your desired outcome.

Keep the good, scratch out the bad, and decide what's missing.

Maybe you're not exercising. Can you fit it in? Maybe you don't take time to be alone, reflect, or wind down at night? Can you add that?

These two rituals should be mutually reinforcing. Your evening ritual should make it easier to follow through with your morning ritual. What do you need to do before bed to make it easier to implement your morning ritual?

A couple "gimmies" might include setting out your exercise and work clothes and setting an alarm to go to bed on time.

Identify the time each component takes and arrange them in the most effective sequence for you. (Remember this trick: Adding new behaviors to old habits can make them easier to implement.)



MORNING RITUAL	
Activity	Time
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
Total Time	

Possible Activities

EVENING RITUAL	
Activity	Time
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
Total Time	

Possible Activities

Step 5. Implement your new ritual

Cue the Nike slogan, and start the new routine first thing tomorrow. You'll never get it perfect, so don't worry about that. Just get started and try to dial it in as you go. The important thing is to implement your ritual, experiment, try something new, and just see how it works for you.

Conclusion

You don't have to slavishly follow the same ritual. Rituals become dead and lifeless when we lose sight of the goal and we just go through the motions. Your morning and evening rituals are living routines with an end in mind. They can be changed, updated, revised, and tweaked as necessary. If your rituals aren't helping you produce the results you want, don't be afraid to rework and adjust them.

Nine times out of ten, if your morning isn't great, the rest of your day is sure to suffer as well. It's like lining up a drive. Get sloppy and unfocused, and you can watch that ball banana off course and land in the rough. Nobody serious about the game does that. And it's the same for our morning and evening rituals.

I've been using and fine tuning my rituals for years. It's essential to the success I experience. And with a little bit of work, it can be the same for you too.