

SIMPLE RULES FOR BUSINESS

Achieve more by focusing on less

CONTENTS

Why bother with Simple Rules?

Mindset & Personal Growth

- [Simple Rules for Success](#)
- [Simple Rules for Decision Making](#)
- [Simple Rules for Managing Risk](#)
- [Simple Rules for Productivity](#)
- [Simple Rules for Creativity](#)
- [Simple Rules for Problem Solving](#)

Communication & Influence

- [Simple Rules for Communication](#)
- [Simple Rules for Presenting](#)
- [Simple Rules for Public Speaking](#)
- [Simple Rules for Storytelling](#)
- [Simple Rules for Copywriting](#)
- [Simple Rules for Advertising](#)
- [Simple Rules for Networking](#)

Business & Leadership

- [Simple Rules for Business](#)
- [Simple Rules for Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Simple Rules for Brand Building](#)
- [Simple Rules for Negotiating](#)
- [Simple Rules for Leadership](#)
- [Simple Rules for Hiring](#)
- [Simple Rules for Scaling a Business](#)

Why bother with Simple Rules?

"The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak." - Hans Hofmann

Let's be honest.

Modern work life can be overwhelming, and it can feel like there's a never-ending list of things you must be competent in.

The good news is that there's a way to navigate these choppy waters using simple rules.

Why?

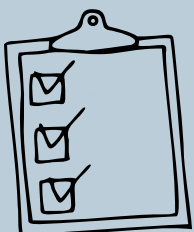
Because, for almost anything in life, a handful of rules cover about 90% of what you must do to become better than average.

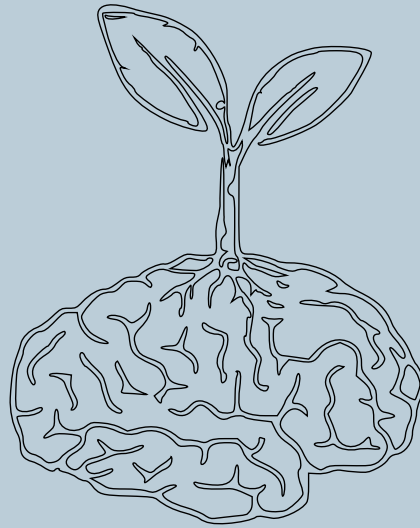
You can call them 'simple rules', and this booklet contains a series of them covering everything from leadership to scaling a business.

We've chosen three for each because...well...three is the magic number.

Feel free to drop the ones you don't think work for you and replace them with ones that suit you better.

As the wise Bruce Lee once said, *"Take what is useful and discard the rest"*.





Mindset & Personal Growth

Simple Rules for Success

"Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines, practiced every day." - Jim Rohn

Success can mean different things to different people, but whatever it is you're aiming for, getting the following right is 90% of the work. That, and a bit of luck, of course! 😊

1. Focus

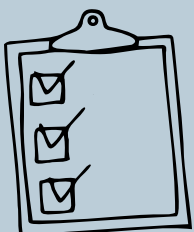
To be successful at something, you need to make it your focus. This means saying "no" to most other things and protecting your time on the one thing you want to succeed at.

2. Think long-term

Incredible things take time. Anyone promising you the opposite is probably trying to sell you something. YouTube influencers were looking at you. Be patient, focus on your long-term goal and learn from the inevitable challenges you will face on your journey to the top.

3. Take risks

There is a strong connection between the number of risks you are prepared to take and your likelihood of success. If you study the life of anybody who became successful, you will find that they made several risky decisions. Like him or love him, Mark Zuckerberg got it right when he said, *"The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks."*



Simple Rules for Decision Making

"The only thing you have control over that can influence the way your life turns out is the quality of your decisions." - Annie Duke

You make thousands of decisions a day. Most of them are trivial, but some are important. That's why it's helpful to learn how to make better ones. After all, your decisions go a long way in determining how your life turns out.

1. Don't let your emotions hijack your decisions

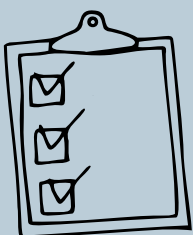
Avoid making decisions when you feel tired, stressed, or in an altered state. You make the best decisions when you're emotionally detached but not disinterested. This is the origin of the phrase 'sleep on it'.

2. Understand that not all decisions are equal

The more small decisions you need to make, the less likely you are to get the big ones right. For this reason, it pays to develop good habits and automate as many small, repeated daily decisions as possible. Doing so frees up your mental energy for when judgment is required most.

3. Seek the counsel of wise friends

You see the world through your particular lens. For this reason, it's crucial to seek the opinions of intelligent friends to help illuminate your thinking biases and avoid overlooking essential factors.



Simple Rules for Managing Risk

"Risk is what's left when you think you've thought of everything." - Carl Richards

Taking risks makes life interesting. It's also a prerequisite for achieving success. However, some risks are more significant than others, and many aren't worth taking! To make sure you stay on the right side of risk, keep the following in mind when making important decisions:

1. Don't risk what you can't afford to lose

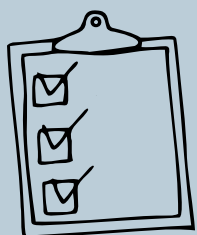
Survival is the aim of the game, so don't bet the farm. Remember, every action in life carries risk, but placing your life savings on black is not the sort of risk you should be taking.

2. Think probabilistically

You will never have all the information available to make a perfect decision. Therefore, you must think about the likelihood of something happening. Lighting a cigarette in the middle of a gunpowder factory is a bad idea, regardless of whether you live to tell the tale.

3. Be aware of your mood when assessing risk

People make crazy decisions when they're tired, hungry or in love. Knowing this means it's a good idea not to make crucial decisions when in a 'hot' emotional state.



Simple Rules for Productivity

"Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work." - Stephen King

Some amount of procrastination is natural. However, don't you want to avoid the scenario where nothing gets done? Here are a few essential ways to vanquish laziness and boost productivity.

1. Break big tasks down into smaller ones

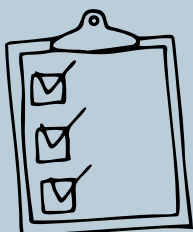
How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. A big reason why you put so many tasks off is that they seem too overwhelming to accomplish. The trick is to break them down into parts and tackle them in steps.

2. Plan each day the night before

If you don't take charge of your time, someone else will. Planning your day the night before and blocking out time to do your most essential tasks ensures that you spend time doing what's most valuable. Say 'no' to anything not necessary.

3. Do the demanding jobs first

The most demanding jobs require the most effort, so they get done when you have the most energy. It's essential to leave the easy stuff for when you feel less fired up.



Simple Rules for Creativity

"Creativity is a wild mind and a disciplined eye." - Dorothy Parker

There's a formula for coming up with ideas. Follow these three steps to strengthen your creative muscles and avoid the tyranny of the blank page.

1. Gather as much info as possible

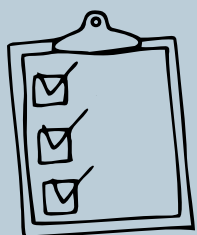
Find out as much as possible about as broad a set of topics as possible. After all, creativity is about connecting dots, so the more dots you have, the more potential connections you can make.

2. Ask as many questions as you can

More often than not, nobody has asked the obvious questions, so don't be afraid to ask them. Also, the more questions you ask, the more likely you are to uncover something interesting.

3. Let the unconscious mind do the rest

Now that you've done all the hard work following rules one and two, it's time to take a break. Stop thinking about the problem, and let your unconscious mind do the rest. The answer will come in the shower. Or the bath if that's more your thing.



Simple Rules for Problem Solving

"Solving problems using rationality is like playing golf with only one club." - Rory Sutherland

Every day, you face problems. Some of these might cause you significant anxiety or harm. The good news is that nearly all issues can be overcome by following a few simple rules.

1. Clearly define the problem

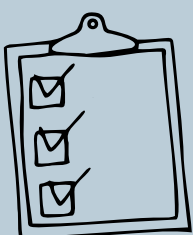
Defining the problem is the most critical part of the problem-solving process. You must address the root cause of the issue instead of the symptom(s). Failing to do so can result in unintended consequences that worsen the situation.

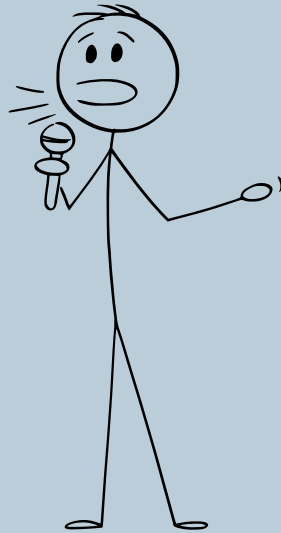
2. Look for existing solutions

Before you devote hours of your life to finding a solution to your problem, research first to find out if someone else has solved the same or a similar problem in the past - no need to reinvent the wheel, my friend.

3. Try different solutions

Solutions that sound good on paper don't always work in reality. So, you must try different approaches to your problem until you find the best solution. It truly is a game of trial and error!





Communication & Influence

Simple Rules for Communication

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." - George Bernard Shaw

Being a great communicator confers several advantages. Keep the following in mind as you hone your communication skills.

1. Keep your message simple

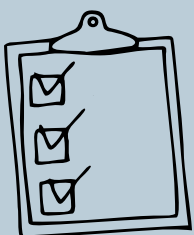
Work out what you want to say and then find the fewest words to communicate it. The simpler the message, the more likely your audience will remember it.

2. Make it clear

You may think you're clever using complex terminology and fancy words, but if your ultimate goal is understanding your message, you're playing the wrong game.

3. Repeat it until understood

Even if your message is clear and straightforward, saying it once is not enough for your entire audience to remember it. It's why you see the same adverts running over and over again.



Simple Rules for Presenting

"It takes one hour of preparation for each minute of presentation time." - Wayne Burgraff

It's not the best idea that wins; it's the most well-presented one. If you want to give your ideas the best chance of succeeding, learn how to present them well. The following tips are worth applying.

1. Don't present; tell a story

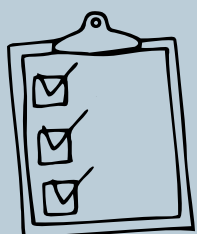
Watch any TED talk. The speaker always starts with a good story. Why? Because we are hardwired for stories. It's the medium through which we passed on ideas long before we invented writing. The better the story, the more you have your audience's attention. Oh, and get out from behind the dias if there is one.

2. Keep your slides simple

Your brain is lazy and likes to conserve energy. Therefore, it filters out anything that is 'cognitively effortful', like lots of text, complicated charts and endless rows of data. So what can you do? Guy Kawasaki's '30/20/10 Rule of PowerPoint' is a good place to start.

3. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

The property industry's three most important words are 'location, location, location'. When presenting, they are 'rehearse, rehearse, rehearse'. Knowing your stuff well keeps you calm, which makes you a better presenter. It also means you can focus on maintaining eye contact with your audience because you won't need to look at your slides constantly.



Simple Rules for Public Speaking

"There are certain things in which mediocrity is not to be endured, such as poetry, music, painting, public speaking." - Jean de la Bruyere

Most people are terrified of speaking in public, which is a shame because it's a valuable skill to learn. The biggest thing to overcome is your fear. The following can help.

1. Speak clearly and slowly

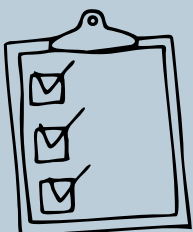
When you speak in a rushed and convoluted manner, it gives the impression that you lack confidence and don't understand your subject matter. Slow your roll down.

2. Project confidence

The mind-body connection works both ways. Assuming a confident stance with open body language sends the brain a signal that you are relaxed.

3. Use a little humour

When used correctly, humour is excellent for gaining trust and likability. These qualities make what you say more believable and more memorable.



Simple Rules for Storytelling

"We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories." - Jonathan Gottschall

Storytelling is the most effective way to communicate your ideas. Why? Because people will remember the story long after they've forgotten the facts. It's a skill that pays dividends if you remember these few points.

1. Make your audience care

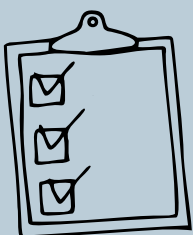
People pay attention to stories they identify with. So, your story needs a relatable character who goes through a transformation. Seeing something of themselves in the story helps readers empathise with the moral of your story.

2. Have a beginning, a middle and an end

Good stories observe the Three-Act structure. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The first part involves setting the scene and the cast of characters. The second part creates a challenge to overcome, and the final part is the resolution.

3. Create tension

A good story keeps you on your toes by having a few twists and turns along the way. Think about ways you can build tension in your story without overdoing it.



Simple Rules for Copywriting

"Never forget who it is you're talking to and write as you speak. Don't preach, don't show off and never be boring." - Alan Parker

Learning how to write compelling copy gives you an enormous business advantage. It's why big brands pay a fortune for advertising agencies to write their ads. Follow the rules below to level up your copywriting skills.

1. Use simple words

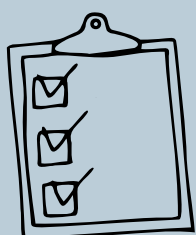
Reading takes effort, so your job as a writer is to make it as easy as possible for your audience to read your writing. Using fancy words might boost your ego, but they won't make life easier for your readers.

2. Be concise

As William Zinsser said, *"Examine every word you put on paper. You'll find a surprising number that don't serve any purpose."* Use as few words as possible to communicate your point and edit ruthlessly.

3. Be interesting

Human beings are a curious species. We constantly seek new information to improve our lives and immediately discount anything we think is boring or overly familiar.



Simple Rules for Advertising

"Advertising may be described as the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it." - Stephen Leacock

The average person receives thousands of advertising messages a day. Your brain would explode if it tried to pay attention to them all, so only the best ones make it through. Follow these tips to make sure your ads are among them:

1. Get noticed

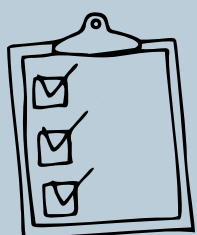
It's the most critical rule for good reason. Your advertising must be interesting enough for your intended audience to notice it. Don't make it dull, and like everything else. Add a cat on a bicycle eating edamame if you must!

2. Inform

Now that you have their attention, you must tell your audience the relevant information. What do they need to know? Make sure you use clear language and remove any irrelevant fluff.

3. Persuade

Finally, what can you say to convince them to take action? What is the problem your product solves for them so brilliantly? Which words will make your message the most persuasive? If you're looking for inspiration, try reverse-engineering ads that have been effective in the past.



Simple Rules for Networking

"Networking is more about farming than it is about hunting. It's about cultivating relationships." – Ivan Misner

1. Give before you take

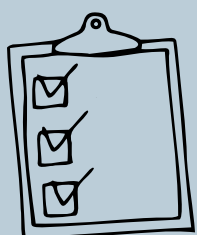
Look for opportunities to help others without the expectation of immediate return.

2. Follow up consistently

Create a system to maintain connections over time rather than only when needed. It could be as simple as adding their birthday to your calendar.

3. Be genuinely curious

Ask thoughtful questions and listen more than you speak. You have two ears but only one mouth.





Business & Leadership

Simple Rules for Business

"If you really look closely, most overnight successes took a long time." - Steve Jobs

As anyone who has done it will tell you, building a successful business takes time. There's an almost endless list of things you could do to grow it, and knowing where to focus your efforts is a constant challenge. Below are some straightforward rules to follow:

1. Listen to your customers

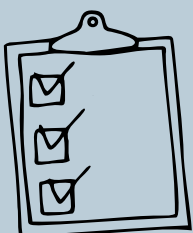
Your vision for your business and how your customers interact with it can be widely different. Listening to their feedback and continuously improving your offering will help ensure long-term success.

2. Revenue is vanity; profit is sanity

A significant revenue figure doesn't explain how well a business performs. It could have a high turnover, but at the same time, its costs could wipe out any cash gained. For this reason, your goal should always be to chase profit, unless you're a Silicon Valley VC-backed startup!

3. Watch your cash flow

Most businesses fail for the same reason: they run out of cash. Ensuring you have enough money each month to cover your costs and make a little profit will help you avoid financial ruin. One helpful tip is to set aside separate pots for different monthly expenses so they are considered, and you have no nasty surprises.



Simple Rules for Entrepreneurship

"I didn't want to work a regular 9 to 5 job, so I started my own business. Now I work 24/7." - Douglas A. Boneparth

Like most things worth doing, entrepreneurship is a mix of highs and lows. You're always thinking about your company, where it's going, and how it's getting on. Doing these three things will help you stay on track:

1. Have a clear vision

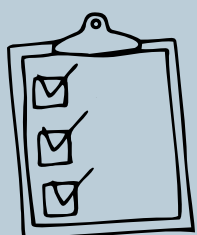
It's hard to get to where you want to go if you don't know the destination. Therefore, being clear about what you're trying to achieve is fundamental. With clarity, it will be easier to make decisions and motivate others.

2. Think creatively

As an entrepreneur, you will have limited resources compared to established businesses. Learn to see constraints as a challenge rather than an insurmountable barrier. You'll soon realise that your ability to think creatively gives you an edge over your competition.

3. Be patient and persistent

There's nothing success likes more than a patient and persistent person with a clear vision and an ability to think creatively. Entrepreneurship is a roller coaster ride, but you will get there in time if you chip away at your goals and stay the course. And don't repeat the same mistakes!



Simple Rules for Brand Building

"Products are made in a factory but brands are created in the mind." - Walter Landor

It's no coincidence that the world's most valuable companies invest heavily in their brand. The reason? A strong brand allows a company to charge a premium for their product or service. The key rules for building a brand are below.

1. Be different

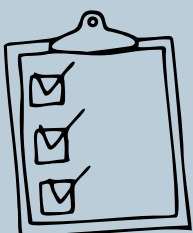
Your brain has an effective filtering mechanism for the thousands of messages that bombard you daily - it only pays attention to things it hasn't seen before. Getting noticed is the first rule of branding, so make sure you don't look and behave like the rest of your category.

2. Be consistent

If you think of a brand as a person, imagine what feelings you experience when that person starts behaving inconsistently.

3. Have recognisable assets

Most of your brain is devoted to visual processing, which means images stick in your brain better than words. Therefore, it is essential to get instantly recognisable brand logos, fonts, and colours right.



Simple Rules for Negotiation

"A negotiator should observe everything. You must be part Sherlock Holmes, part Sigmund Freud." - Victor Kiam

Put simply, negotiation is a means of getting what you want from others. It is one of the most valuable skills you can develop because it applies to any aspect of life. Everyone can benefit from being a better negotiator.

1. Remember that negotiation is about people

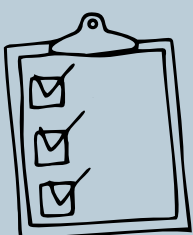
Avoid seeing your negotiating counterpart as the problem. Instead, make them feel like partners helping you shape a favourable outcome instead of the enemy you are trying to outwit. Attack the problem, not the person!

2. Be flexible on the outcomes

Avoid coming to the table with a fixed idea of your desired outcome. Instead, allow for discussing a range of potential solutions. It ensures you don't end up in a battle back and forth with each party repeating their favoured resolution without any attempt to find a workable compromise.

3. Listen carefully

Listen carefully to your negotiation partner's words, imagining yourself in their shoes. This may uncover opportunities for a mutual agreement that didn't seem possible initially.



Simple Rules for Leadership

"The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet." - Theodore M. Hesburgh

Despite popular opinion, leadership is a skill that anyone can improve. While you might not set out to be a leader, you will inevitably become one at some point as you progress in your career. In addition, learning how to lead well will make your life much easier.

1. Clearly and regularly articulate the vision

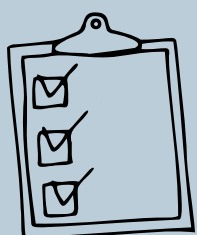
A leader's most crucial role is frequently articulating the organisation's vision. Getting everyone else to follow in the same direction is difficult without a clear vision. It's surprising just how many leaders fail to adhere to this point.

2. Do what you say you will

People will follow someone they trust. Therefore, as a leader, you must always follow through on what you say. Trust is quickly lost when your actions don't match your words.

3. Learn to delegate effectively

You cannot do everything yourself. Great leaders can delegate tasks and trust people to carry them out to the best of their ability.



Simple Rules for Hiring

"If nobody asked questions, then we would never learn anything." - Brandon Sanderson

As you progress in your career, you must hire new team members. It's a vital job that many employers don't properly prepare for. To avoid making this mistake, consider the following before taking on someone new:

1. Listen carefully during the interview

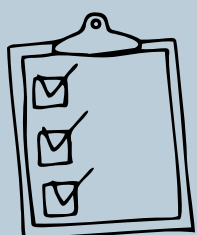
You have one mouth but two ears. So once you've asked a question, focus on what the interviewee is saying and listen attentively. You might miss something crucial if your attention is elsewhere.

2. Be clear about your hiring criteria

A checklist of what you're looking for in a candidate will prevent you from making a hiring mistake. Checklists rule. And don't be afraid of taking your time. Airbnb spent five months interviewing people before hiring its first employee, but it only hired two people in its first year.

3. Pay them for a one-off project

Many candidates look good on paper and interview well, but don't work out in practice. A final test worth running is paying them for a one-off project that shows how they think and operate. Try before you buy, as they say.



Simple Rules for Scaling a Business

"There are no straight lines in nature or business." - Verne Harnish

Not everyone will need to scale a business, but you can apply the same principles to most jobs to free up time for the more important stuff. Anyway, if you do need to scale your business, you will need to master the following:

1. Eliminate

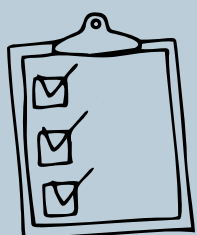
Try to get rid of anything that uses resources for no benefit. For example, as a company grows, it creates many processes and procedures. Some of them are useful; the rest hamper progress. To use a gardening metaphor, do some pruning.

2. Automate

Don't waste your time doing the same simple tasks repeatedly. Identify what they are and then find a way to automate them. After all, there's an app for everything.

3. Delegate

You can't do everything yourself. Nobody can. As your business grows, you must get comfortable delegating work to others. At some point, this will include outsourcing tasks to other companies.



"Take a simple idea and take it seriously." - Charlie Munger

