

Di S S S STAKES: THE CARROT AND THE STICKK

**“It’s not because things are difficult that we dare not venture.
It’s because we dare not venture that they are difficult.”**

—SENECA, ROMAN PHILOSOPHER, MID-FIRST CENTURY AD

If you were to sum up the last 50 years of behavioral psychology in two words, it would be: “logic fails.”

No matter how good a plan is, how thorough a book is, or how sincere our intentions, humans are horrible at self-discipline. No one is immune. The smartest, richest, and most dedicated people abandon commitments with disgusting regularity.

But what if you *truly* want to get something done? In this book, your goal will be cooking dinner twice a week. Is there a way to create an Odysseus Contract, so named because Odysseus had his sailors tie him to a mast to resist the temptation of the Sirens? Can you failure-proof your decision?

For hints, we can look at auction behavior.

BIDDING WARS, WINNING PERSONAL BETS

Answer me this: would you work harder to earn \$100 or avoid losing \$100? The smiley optimist says the former, but if research from the Center for Experimental Social Science at New York University is any indication, fear of loss is the home-run winner.

Experimental groups given \$15 and then told the \$15 would be rescinded if they lost a subsequent auction routinely overbid the most. Groups offered \$15 if they won weren’t nearly as “committed.” Participating economist Eric Schotter explained the results:

Economists typically attribute excessive bidding to risk aversion, or the joy of winning.

What we found is that the actual cause of overbidding is a fear of losing, a completely new theory from past investigations.

Coming back to our cooking resolution, we can use technology to our advantage: stickK.

Dean Karlan, an economics professor at Yale, came up with the idea of opening an online “commitment store” in 2006. This evolved into stickK, which he cofounded based on the principle that creating incentives and assigning accountability are the two most important keys to achieving a goal. If you don’t fulfill your commitment with stickK, it automatically tells your friends and opens you up to endless mockery. Peer pressure is good!

But that’s not all. You can also set up an “anti-charity,” an organization you so despise that you’d rather slam your head in a car door than donate to them. If you don’t fulfill your commitment, your funds are wired automatically. Based on stickK’s goal completion percentages from 2008–2011, we find that the success rate with no stakes is 33.5%. Once we add stakes like an anti-charity, that success rate more than doubles to 72.8%!

Ah, loss aversion. How I love thee.

The upshot: you gotta put your money (or reputation) where your mouth is. This works

well beyond auctions. Everything from weight loss to quitting smoking is fair game.

A goal without real consequences is wishful thinking. Good follow-through doesn't

depend on the right intentions. It depends on the right incentives.

Set up the stickK, and I'll provide the carrots.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS?

In this book, we build in accountability with group dinners. If you'd like additional insurance, which I suggest, here's what to do:

1. Sign up for stickK or a similar service like egOnomics Lab, and introduce cash stakes before starting. "If I don't hit [goal], I'll mail a check" doesn't cut it. Your commitment is cooking just two meals per week!
2. Pick your "anti-charity." If you prefer the tried and true, the top-yielding anti-charities on stickK, in descending order, are:
 1. The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum
 2. Americans United for Life
 3. NRA Foundation
 4. Institute for Marriage and Public Policy
 5. NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation

I have no political association with any of the above. Them's just the facts, ma'am. Feel free to pick anything that gets your knickers in a twist.

3. Choose an amount that is painful to lose. If you're serious, at least 1% of your annual pretax income is a good starting point. This means:
 - \$50,000 → wager \$500 or more.
 - \$75,000 → \$750 or more.
 - \$100,000 → \$1,000 or more.
 - \$1,000,000+ → send a check for at least \$10,000, made out to "The Tim Ferriss Post-FMOF²⁹ Lifestyle Assurance Foundation," directly to: 123 Smith St., c/o Santa Claus, North Pole, Arctic Circle, FIN-96930. I'll hold on to those for safekeeping.

The good news: if you don't perform, most of the charitable donations are tax-deductible.

²⁹ Fifteen Minutes Of Fame.

Ca F E COMPRESSION: CHEAT SHEETS FOR ANYTHING

“I am sorry for the length of my letter, but I had not the time to write a short one.”

—BLAISE PASCAL, FRENCH MATHEMATICIAN, PHYSICIST, AND INVENTOR

“Thirty years ago my older brother, who was 10 years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he’d had three months to write. It was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother’s shoulder, and said, ‘Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.’”

—ANNE LAMOTT, *BIRD BY BIRD: SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON WRITING AND LIFE*

Any subject can be overwhelming.

Magazines have to fill editorial space month after month with “new” recommendations, the 24/7 news cycle of the web needs garbage to plug the voids, and the result is predictable: clashing recommendations, uncertainty, information deluge, and opting out.

To stem the tide, I have a constant checkpoint posted over the walkway into my atrium: Simplify.

Above the sign rests the beautiful and brutal Nepalese *khukuri*, a curved knife symbolic of the legendary Gurkha military regiments. Field marshal Sam Manekshaw, former chief of staff of the Indian Army, was quoted as saying: “If a man says he is not afraid of dying, he is either lying or is a Gurkha.” Famous for withstanding hardship with laughter, for recognizing that perfect conditions are impossible, the Gurkha war cry was “*Jai Mahakali, Ayo Gorkhali!*” (“Glory be to the Goddess Kali [the Hindu goddess of power], here come the Gurkhas!”)

The blade is in my home to remind me of the importance of *decision*. The word *decision*, closely related to *incision*, derives from the meaning “a cutting off.”

Making effective decisions—and learning effectively—requires massive elimination and the removal of options.



THE HOLY GRAIL OF THE ONE-PAGER

The easiest way to avoid being overwhelmed is to create positive constraints: put up walls that dramatically restrict whatever it is that you're trying to do.

In the world of work, a task will swell in complexity to fill *the time* you allot it, a phenomenon often referred to as Parkinson's Law. How does so much get done just before you leave for holidays? All the items lingering on your to-do list for weeks or months? It's the power of the clear and imminent deadline.

Though vastly simplified, in the world of cooking, Le Chatelier's Principle is invoked to remember that a gas will expand to fill the size of its container.

So . . . all we have to do is create a tiny container: the wonderful one-pager.

The goal here is to make something intimidating unthreatening, so you don't quit. You have the rest of your life to seek out and master the exceptions, to be comprehensive, if you want.

I use two different types of one-pagers:

1. The first is the **Prescriptive One-Pager**, which lists principles that help you generate real-world examples. In short: "Here are the rules."³⁰
2. The second is the **Practice One-Pager**, which lists real-world examples to practice that indirectly teach the principles.³¹

Both of these are tremendously valuable, and we'll look at each in turn.

First, let's create a prescriptive one-pager for almost all of the recipes in this book. Ready? Just turn the page.

³⁰ This is known as a *deductive* approach to teaching. I explain the rules of grammar, and you create the sentences, for example. Think of "dead" grammar, presented out of context, to remember *deductive*.

³¹ This is known as an *inductive* approach to teaching. I give you the real-world examples (sample sentences), and you pick up the principles (grammar) by spotting patterns.

GEORGE GERMON ON THE POWER OF SIMPLICITY

George Germon (co-owner of the famed Al Forno restaurant) recounts an experience that he says he'll never forget.

"I was visiting some people in England who had a four- or five-year-old daughter. They weren't around, but I was in the kitchen and the little girl pulled a chair over to the stove and started heating up a pan, saying she was going to make tomato soup," he remembers.

After getting the little girl's assurance that her parents allowed her to do so, Germon says he watched her heat some butter in the pan, then take out a knife and cutting board and chop some tomatoes. She cooked the tomatoes in the butter for about 3 minutes, and then added a little salt and a little cream. "Would you like some?" she asked Germon, who politely replied, "Sure!" Once he tasted it, Germon says he was absolutely floored. "It was unbelievable," he says. "I couldn't believe that something tasted as good as it did with so few ingredients."

Al Forno's menu features a potato soup that's equally simple. "It has just four ingredients: potatoes, onions, butter, and water. That's it," says Germon. "And when our cooks first made it, they kept asking, 'What's the next step?'" Johanne Killeen remembers, "They found it impossible to believe that anything wonderful could result from four ingredients!"

PRESCRIPTIVE ONE-PAGER FOR COOKING

Just follow these rules:

PROBE IT

Use a probe thermometer for just about everything. You'll never need to guess if something is done or not again. Whether the perfect cup of coffee or the best steak you've ever had, this is your key to the kingdom. (page 186)

TOP IT OFF

For entertainment or conversational value, offer one of the following as a topping at the table:

- Edible green tea leaves (eatgreentea.com)
- Lemon or "Buddha's hand" zest (using Microplane)
- Crickets, roasted and placed in a pepper grinder; they taste nutty. (page 306)

JUST STEAM IT

Just steam vegetables: Put ½" of water in a pot, throw in the veggies, cover, and leave for 15 minutes on a burner set to high. Squeeze lemon juice on them just before serving. Note: Almost all vegetables are done when you can slide a fork, held between thumb and index finger, into them easily.

350

Set the oven at 350°F (180°C). But what about roast chicken, squash, or brownies? Doesn't matter. Setting the oven at 350 will work more than 90% of the time. Just use the probe thermometer and cook all proteins (steak, chicken, etc.) until the internal temperature reaches 140°F (60°C), and yank 'em when the alarm goes off.

MAKE IT PRETTY

To make your served food look pretty and "restaurant-made":

- Sprinkle sliced almonds (they should look like flakes, not chippings), *pepitas* (pumpkin seeds), or chopped chives on top. Beeeaa-utiful.
- Stack things atop or against each other on the plate: make the food look tall. You can cheat by cutting a paper coffee cup in half around the equator and using the top half as a cylinder: put food in, press down slightly, then remove the coffee cup.
- Buy or make pesto (page 212) and follow photos on the opposite page before "plating" your food (putting cooked food on the plate).

HERB PAIRINGS

For each type of protein, there is a spice or herb that will never fail you. (Don't forget to add Maldon sea salt.)

- Fish → fennel or dill
- Beef → rosemary
- Pork or lamb → rosemary
- Lamb → mint
- Eggs → tarragon (tarragon goes with little else, but it's miraculous on eggs)
- Non-protein bonus: tomatoes → basil

GO COLD

If you need an appetizer for a group and want to minimize stress, always go cold: make gazpacho in advance (takes 10 minutes) and leave in the fridge until ready. (page 208)

ADD INSURANCE

Add one or more of the following to make anything delicious:

- Montreal steak rub
- Prosciutto—it's already cooked, unlike bacon
- Guacamole
- Ghee
- Thyme

AND... THAT'S IT

You'll make awesome stuff, and nothing should be overcooked or undercooked. Congrats! You are now cooking better than at least 50% of the people in the entire U.S.!

If you ever feel overwhelmed while reading this book, just return here.

CUT HERE ✂

PRACTICE ONE-PAGER FOR KNIFE SKILLS

When you are an autodidact—learning a subject solo—practice one-pagers are wonderful for self-testing and keeping motivated.

Knife skills are a major failure point for aspiring cooks. Blades are scary, and most how-to guides make using a knife seem like cardiac surgery. I have an entire shelf of books dedicated to cutting techniques, from mincing to julienning (oh, and the French again!). It's enough to make anyone throw in the towel.

Instead, I'll point you to a single recipe that takes 10 minutes to cook, such as Moules Marinière on page 324. Take a peek at it. As you flatten the book out, I put an arm around your shoulder and say, "See this? *This* is your goal for knife skills. Once you can make this one recipe, you're set for millions of recipes! In fact, unless you want to get really fancy, you won't need additional knife skills for the rest of your life!"

Cool, right? Reassuring and confidence building? Absolutely. It's a clear target, achievable and easily flipped to when things seem complicated. Having that finite brass ring in mind is why you'll succeed where 99 out of 100 fail. You are not flailing through a rain forest of information with a machete; you are a sniper with a single bull's-eye in the crosshairs: mussels.

But, as Mr. Miyagi would say, "Afta, afta..." We'll get you there in due time.

Just remember ABC—Always Be Compressing. It's the key to low-stress, high-speed learning.

BONUS: HOW TO MAKE A PRETTY PLATE



Plop a circular dollop on the side of a plate.



Use the back of the spoon to smear the pesto across in one motion and one line. It should look something like a comet.



Put your food on top of, or on either side of, the comet. Serve.

RELEVANT: THE SLOW-CARB DIET ONE-PAGER

THE SLOW-CARB DIET HAS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FOLLOWERS WORLDWIDE

The *4-Hour Body*, which debuted at #1 on the *New York Times* Best Sellers List, launched it into the mainstream. Almost all of the restaurants I visited for this book had at least one chef on the SCD, and devotees include everyone from A-list actors to Super Bowl NFL players. Even the staff of the hit show *Intervention* has used it to lose hundreds of collective pounds.

If you follow the SCD for the next month, it's not unreasonable to expect to lose 10–20 lbs of fat. This is true even without exercise. As one follower put it, "You lose ounces in the gym, but you lose pounds in the kitchen."

To give you a nudge, nearly all of the recipes in this book are 100% slow-carb compliant. Besides cheat day delights, of course (see Rule #5).

THE FIVE RULES OF THE SLOW-CARB DIET

RULE #1

Avoid "white" starchy carbohydrates (or those that can be white). This means no bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, or grains.

RULE #2

Eat the same few meals over and over again, especially for breakfast and lunch. You already do this; you're just picking new default meals.

RULE #3

Don't drink calories.
Exception: 1–2 glasses of dry red wine per night is allowed.

RULE #4

Don't eat fruit. Generally speaking: Fructose → glycerol phosphate → more body fat. Five hundred years ago, your ancestors probably didn't eat oranges in December. Get vitamin C from your veggies.

RULE #5

Take one day off per week and go nuts. I recommend Saturday, often nicknamed "Faturday" by followers.

THE MEALS

Build each of your meals from the list below, picking one item from each of the three groups. I've underlined the choices that produce the fastest fat loss for me:

PROTEINS

Eggs

Chicken
(breast or thigh)

Fish

Beef
(preferably grass-fed)

Pork

Lamb

LEGUMES

Lentils

Black beans

Pinto beans

Red beans

Soybeans

VEGETABLES

Spinach

Mixed vegetables
(including broccoli, cauliflower, or any other cruciferous vegetables)

Sauerkraut, kimchi
(I typically eat a few forksfuls first thing in the morning before cooking my eggs.)

Asparagus

Peas

Broccoli

Green beans

CUT HERE ✂

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Eat as much as you like. There is **no** calorie counting whatsoever on the SCD. And **keep it simple**: pick three or four meals and repeat them for at least the first two weeks. Here are a few of my recurring meals:

BREAKFAST (HOME)

Three scrambled whole eggs, lentils, and spinach (microwaved or steamed).

LUNCH (MEXICAN RESTAURANT)

Grass-fed organic beef, pinto beans, mixed vegetables, and extra guacamole.

DINNER (HOME)

Salmon (from Trader Joe's), asparagus (or lentils), and Coconut Cauliflower Curry Mash (page 154).

TIPS AND TRICKS

Still having trouble? The below will fix at least 75% of all starting and stalling problems:

Try the "30 in 30" rule.

Eat 30 g of protein within 30 minutes of waking up. Recall that my dad was prone to skipping breakfast. Once he implemented "30 in 30," his monthly fat loss more than tripled, from 5.5 lbs/month to 18.75 lbs/month(!). For fat loss, my favorite breakfast is whole eggs, spinach, and lentils. If you're in a rush, unflavored whey protein (which I mix with Athletic Greens) or a less-than-ideal Myoplex (which my dad used) will still do the trick.

Eat more protein.

Get at least 20 g of protein per meal. This is most critical at breakfast.

Drink more water.

If your liver is burdened with dehydration, it won't metabolize body fat well. Down more agua and/or unsweetened iced tea.

If you have to ask, don't eat it.

"But, but... can I eat plantains?" No. "But, but... what about Ezekiel bread or steel-cut oats?" Nope. Stop stalling. If you eat the way that made you fat, you will remain fat—period. Don't use incomplete information as an excuse for inaction.

EXTRA CREDIT

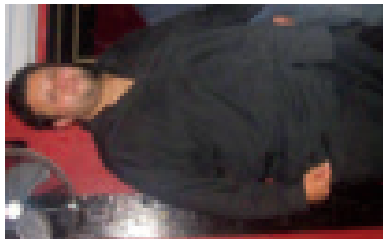
For detailed fine-tuning (ideal meal spacing, managing diet soft drinks, etc.) related to the SCD, refer to *The 4-Hour Body*, which covers it all.

To read case studies of individuals who've lost 150+ lbs, see fourhourchef.com/100.

The 4HBTalk forum at 4hbtalk.com is also active and helpful. Join the discussion and share your experiences.

And when you lose more than a few clothing sizes, just remember to put on a bit of Gotu Kola cream to minimize stretch marks, as Olympic strength coach Charles Poliquin recommends.

RICARDO



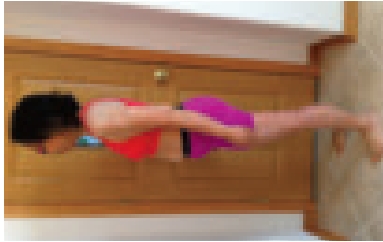
Before: 410 lbs. After: 246 lbs.

MARIE-PIER



Before: 34% body fat. After: <20% body fat.

MARIA



Before: Size 24+. After: Size 4 petite (125+ lbs lost).

COMPRESSION

24 SKILLS YOU CAN ACQUIRE IN 48 HOURS

“Acquire” in this context means learning the fundamentals and having fun doing so.

Think video is best for physical skills, anything involving motion? Maybe. But there are cases where the static word forces the teacher to *think* about logical progression more than a casual YouTuber.

For you to compare different media and your own learning style, the 24 skills are broken down into:

- One book (a must-read, even if you have no interest in the subject matter).
- Eight videos.
- Four step-by-step lessons from Instructables (text and pictures).
- Eleven multimedia lessons from me (all across the board).

Enjoy.

ONE BOOK — GOLF SWING

1) Ben Hogan’s Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf by Ben Hogan

fourhourchef.com/ben-hogan

The most perfect how-to book I’ve ever read, and I don’t play golf! I still reread this short 128-page book at least once a year to refine my teaching. It was a godsend when I injured my Achilles tendon years ago and ended up immobilized at a driving range. This is how I aspire to teach.

EIGHT VIDEOS

In each video, consider: What makes its approach helpful or confusing? How is the sequencing helpful, and what is omitted that shouldn’t be? When do words (spoken or written) help or hurt?

2) How to Fold a T-Shirt in Two Seconds

fourhourchef.com/fold-shirt

3) How to Juggle Three Balls

(Note the isolation and sequencing)

fourhourchef.com/juggle

4) How to Make a Rose Out of a Napkin

(This is pure gold on dates. Wait for your companion to head to the bathroom and present this upon his or her return.)

fourhourchef.com/napkin-folding

5) How to Throw a Knife (or Fork, or Anything Sharp)

fourhourchef.com/knife-throwing

(Just to get you interested)

fourhourchef.com/knife-throwing2

(Technical breakdown)

6) How to Fold a Fitted Sheet and Impress Your Mom

fourhourchef.com/fitted-sheet

7) How to Learn the First 100 Signs in American Sign Language (ASL)

fourhourchef.com/sign-language

(Random: did you know that people learn foreign vocabulary faster when they are simultaneously learning sign language?)

8) How to Do the *Bloodsport*/Kung Fu Coin Grab

fourhourchef.com/coin-grab

9) How to Perform the Poco Card Sequence

fourhourchef.com/card-sequence

FOUR STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTABLES**10) How to Make DIY Shot Glasses Out of Ice (Blue!)**

fourhourchef.com/shot-glasses

11) How to Peel a Banana Like a Monkey

fourhourchef.com/banana

12) How to Create a Vegan “Egg”

(A foreshadowing of SCI, inspired by Wylie Dufresne)

fourhourchef.com/vegan-egg

13) How to Make a Cardboard Moose-Head Wall Hanging (A foreshadowing of WILD)

fourhourchef.com/moose-head

ELEVEN FROM ME**14) How to Read 300% Faster in 20 Minutes**

fourhourchef.com/speed-read

15) How to Tie the Perfect Tie Every Time

fourhourchef.com/tie

16) Basics of Pen Tricks, à la Japanese High-Schooler

fourhourchef.com/pen-tricks

17) How to Perform the Kettlebell Swing—One Move for Maximum Fat Loss

fourhourchef.com/kettlebell-swing

18) How to Travel the World with 10 lbs or Less

fourhourchef.com/travel-light

19) How to Hack Your Sleep in Five Steps

fourhourchef.com/sleep-hack

20) Public Speaking—How I Prepare Every Time

fourhourchef.com/public-speaking

21) Prepping for Warren Buffett—The Art of the Elevator Pitch

fourhourchef.com/elevator-pitch

22) How to Ski Powder—15 Tips for Learning in 24 Hours

fourhourchef.com/ski-powder

23) How to Design a Million-Dollar Business in a Weekend (Really)

fourhourchef.com/business

24) How to Create a Global Phenomenon for Less Than \$10,000

fourhourchef.com/global