FREE INVESTOR MINI COURSE

Tips on Better Trading Habits

A free 12-lesson investor mini course from GlobalMarkets24Hours

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WELCOME

Why Habits Beat Strategies

Most trading education focuses on strategies — which indicator to use, which setup to trade, which stock to pick. Far less attention is paid to habits: the repeatable routines and disciplines that determine whether any strategy is actually executed well. Yet research on trader performance consistently points to behaviour, not strategy selection, as the biggest differentiator between accounts that survive and accounts that don't.

This mini course covers twelve practical habits used by disciplined traders and long-term investors — drawn from the same themes taught by the most respected market-education resources. Each lesson explains the habit, why it matters, and how to put it into practice this week. Nothing here requires special software, a large account, or advanced mathematics — just consistency.

Work through one lesson at a time. At the end of each lesson you'll find action steps you can apply immediately.

What's inside

LESSON 1 OF 12

Trade With a Written Plan

A trading plan is a short written document that defines what you trade, when you enter, when you exit, and how much you risk. The key word is written. A plan that exists only in your head is renegotiated in real time by whichever emotion is loudest at the moment — usually fear or greed.

A useful plan does not need to be long. One page is enough: the markets and sessions you trade, the setups you take, your maximum risk per trade, your maximum daily loss, and the conditions under which you stop trading for the day. The plan's job is to make decisions before the market pressures you into making them badly.

Professional trading desks enforce this externally — risk managers set limits and traders operate within them. Individual traders have no risk manager, so the written plan has to play that role. If you cannot summarise your plan in a few sentences, you do not yet have one.

Action steps

- Write a one-page plan covering: what you trade, entry criteria, exit criteria, risk per trade, and daily loss limit.
- Read the plan before every session — it takes thirty seconds and resets your intentions.
- If you break the plan, log it. Patterns of rule-breaking tell you more than any indicator.

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Keep a Trading Journal

A trading journal records every trade: the setup, the reasoning at entry, the emotion you felt, the exit, and the result. Over time it becomes a database of your own behaviour — and your behaviour, not the market, is what you can actually improve.

The most valuable entries are often the uncomfortable ones: trades taken out of boredom, exits made in panic, positions sized too large after a winning streak. Without a journal these moments blur into vague impressions. With one, they become measurable patterns you can correct.

Review the journal weekly. Look for repeated mistakes, times of day when your decisions degrade, and setups that consistently lose money. Many traders discover that eliminating their worst recurring mistake improves results more than finding any new strategy.

Action steps

- Log every trade the same day: setup, reason, emotion, exit, result. Two minutes per trade is enough.
- Add a screenshot of the chart at entry — memory rewrites history, screenshots don't.
- Do a 15-minute weekly review and write down one specific behaviour to fix next week.

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LESSON 3 OF 12

Risk a Fixed, Small Percentage Per Trade

Position sizing is the habit that keeps you in the game. The widely cited guideline is to risk no more than 1–2% of account capital on any single trade — meaning if the trade hits your stop-loss, you lose at most 1–2% of the account.

The mathematics of loss recovery explain why this matters. Lose 10% and you need 11% to recover. Lose 50% and you need 100%. Small, controlled losses are recoverable; large ones are not. Sizing consistently also removes a major emotional variable — every trade carries similar weight, so no single outcome feels catastrophic or euphoric.

The calculation is simple: risk amount divided by the distance between entry and stop gives you position size. A $10,000 account risking 1% ($100) on a trade with a $2 stop distance buys 50 shares. This means position size flows from the stop — not from conviction, excitement, or the desire to make back a loss.

Action steps

- Pick a fixed risk percentage (1% is the common starting point) and apply it to every trade without exception.
- Calculate position size from the stop distance before entering — never after.
- Never increase size to 'win back' a loss. That single habit ends more accounts than any bad strategy.

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LESSON 4 OF 12

Manage Emotions With Rules, Not Willpower

The two most expensive emotional patterns in trading are revenge trading — immediately re-entering after a loss to win the money back — and euphoria sizing, where a winning streak leads to oversized positions right before the streak ends. Both feel completely rational in the moment.

Willpower is unreliable under stress, so disciplined traders replace it with mechanical rules: a mandatory pause after any stopped-out trade, a hard daily loss limit that ends the session, a rule against adding to losing positions. The rule does the resisting so you don't have to.

It also helps to plan the losing case before entry. If you know where you exit and what it costs before you click buy, a loss becomes a planned business expense rather than a surprise attack — and planned expenses don't trigger revenge.

Action steps

- After any losing trade, step away from the screen for a fixed time — even five minutes breaks the revenge impulse.
- Set a daily loss limit (for example 3%) and stop completely when it's hit. The market reopens tomorrow.
- Decide your exit and its cost before entry, so losses are planned rather than reacted to.

Respect Session Timing and Volatility Windows

Markets do not behave the same way all day. The first hour after a major exchange opens tends to be volatile and fast; midday sessions are often quiet and prone to false signals; overlaps — such as when London and New York are both open — concentrate liquidity and directional movement.

Trading the same strategy at 9:35 AM and 12:30 PM New York time is effectively trading two different markets. Many traders improve simply by restricting themselves to the windows where their approach actually works and standing aside the rest of the day.

Scheduled events matter as much as sessions: economic data releases, central bank announcements, and earnings reports routinely cause sharp moves and widened spreads. Knowing the calendar is a habit, not a talent — check it every morning before the session begins.

Action steps

- Identify which market sessions and overlaps are active during your trading hours (our live dashboard shows this in real time).
- Check an economic calendar each morning and note the times of high-impact releases.
- Track your results by time of day in your journal — most traders find their edge lives in a surprisingly narrow window.

Build a Pre-Market and Post-Market Routine

Professional traders bracket every session with routines. Before the open: review overnight moves in other regions, check the economic calendar, note key price levels, and confirm the plan for the day. After the close: log trades, review decisions, and prepare a watchlist for tomorrow.

The pre-market routine prevents improvisation. Decisions made calmly before the open are consistently better than decisions made while prices flash. The post-market routine converts each day into feedback — without it, experience accumulates but learning doesn't.

Neither routine needs to be long. Fifteen minutes before and ten minutes after is enough for most individual traders. The value comes from doing it every single session, not from its length.

Action steps

- Write a pre-market checklist of five items or fewer, and run it before every session.
- Spend ten minutes after each close journaling and building tomorrow's watchlist.
- Do the routine even on days you don't trade — the habit is the asset.

LESSON 7 OF 12

Trade Less, Not More

Overtrading — taking marginal setups out of boredom, impatience, or the feeling that sitting still is wasting time — is one of the most common habits separating losing accounts from winning ones. Every extra trade adds spread costs, commission, and another opportunity for an emotional mistake.

Selectivity is a skill that compounds. If your plan defines an A-grade setup, then a day with zero A-grade setups is a zero-trade day, and a zero-trade day that follows the plan is a successful day. Waiting is a position.

A practical filter: before entering, ask whether you would explain this trade to a skeptical colleague with a straight face. If the honest answer is 'I was bored' or 'it looked like it was moving', the trade fails the filter.

Action steps

' Set a maximum number of trades per day and treat hitting it as a hard stop.

' Grade every setup A/B/C in your journal — then check how much money the B and C trades actually made.

' Reframe no-trade days as wins when the plan called for no trades. Score yourself on discipline, not activity.

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Set Realistic Expectations and Keep Learning

Unrealistic expectations cause more damage than bad analysis. A trader expecting to double an account in months will take oversized risks, abandon working strategies after normal losing streaks, and chase whatever moved yesterday. Consistent modest returns, compounded and protected by risk control, are what durable performance actually looks like.

Losing streaks are a statistical certainty, not a signal of failure. A strategy that wins 50% of the time will produce five consecutive losses roughly once every 32 sequences — a trader who abandons every system after four losses will abandon systems that work. This is why the journal and the fixed risk percentage matter: they let you survive variance long enough to evaluate honestly.

Finally, treat learning as ongoing. Markets change regimes — volatility rises and falls, sessions shift character, correlations break. The habits in this course are durable precisely because they are about your behaviour rather than any single market condition. Master the habits, and strategies become testable experiments rather than emotional rollercoasters.

Action steps

- Judge yourself over batches of 20+ trades, never trade by trade.
- Expect losing streaks and predefine how you'll respond (reduce size, review journal — never revenge trade).
- Re-read this course quarterly and honestly grade yourself on each of the twelve habits.

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Know the Four Emotions That Destroy Accounts

Behavioral-finance research and every major trading-education curriculum converge on the same four emotions as the primary destroyers of trading accounts: fear, greed, hope, and regret. Each one has a signature behaviour. Fear makes you exit winners early and skip valid setups after a loss. Greed makes you oversize, overstay, and chase moves that have already happened. Hope makes you hold losers past your stop 'because it will come back.' Regret makes you re-enter impulsively to fix a missed opportunity — the mechanism behind FOMO (fear of missing out).

The practical insight is that these emotions cannot be eliminated — they are wired in. What can change is whether they reach your order ticket. Every rule in this course — the written plan, the fixed risk percentage, the daily loss limit, the pause after a stop-out — is ultimately a firewall between one of these four emotions and the buy/sell button.

A useful habit is naming the emotion in your journal at the moment of each decision. Traders who label the feeling ('entered on FOMO after watching it run for 20 minutes') build self-awareness far faster than those who only record prices. Over a few weeks, your journal will show you which of the four is your personal account-killer — most traders have one dominant weakness, and knowing yours is half the defence.

Action steps

- Add an 'emotion at entry' and 'emotion at exit' field to your trading journal and fill it in honestly.
- Identify your dominant destructive emotion after 20 logged trades — then write one specific rule that blocks it.
- When you feel urgency ('I have to get in NOW'), treat the urgency itself as a signal to pause — urgency is FOMO wearing a disguise.

Build and Maintain a Focused Watchlist

Professional traders don't scan the entire market every morning — they work from a watchlist: a short, curated set of securities they know well and monitor continuously. A focused watchlist turns the overwhelming universe of thousands of stocks into a manageable handful whose normal behaviour you actually understand, which makes abnormal behaviour — the thing worth trading — recognisable.

A good watchlist has two layers. A core list of names you follow for weeks or months, whose typical daily range, liquidity, news cadence, and earnings dates you know. And a daily list of two to five names showing a specific reason to act today — an earnings reaction, unusual volume, or a technical level from your plan. The daily list is rebuilt every evening as part of your post-market routine.

The discipline benefit is as important as the informational one: a watchlist is a pre-commitment device. If a ticker isn't on the list you built calmly the night before, you don't trade it today. That single rule eliminates most impulse trades — the stranger stocks you'd otherwise chase at 10:15 AM because they were moving and someone mentioned them.

Action steps

- Keep a core watchlist of 10–20 names you genuinely follow, and a daily list of no more than 5.
- Rebuild the daily list each evening with a written one-line reason for every name on it.
- Adopt the rule: not on last night's list, not traded today. Log every violation in your journal.

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LESSON 11 OF 12

Measure What Matters: Win Rate, Expectancy, and Trade Quality

Most traders judge themselves on the only number their broker shows them — profit and loss. But P&L over a small sample is mostly noise. The habit that separates systematic improvers is tracking the statistics underneath: win rate (percentage of trades that profit), average win versus average loss, and expectancy — the average amount you make or lose per trade, combining both. A 40% win rate with average wins twice the size of average losses is a profitable system; a 70% win rate with occasional huge losses is a losing one.

Professional-grade journals also track how trades behave while open. Maximum favourable excursion (MFE) is the furthest a trade moved in your favour before you closed it; maximum adverse excursion (MAE) is the furthest it moved against you. Consistently large MFE with small realised profits means you're exiting winners too early. Consistently deep MAE on winning trades means your stops are tighter than your entries deserve. These two numbers turn vague feelings ('I always sell too soon') into measurable facts.

You don't need software to start — a spreadsheet with entry, exit, stop, high and low while open, and result is enough. Review the statistics monthly over batches of at least 20 trades. Change one variable at a time, like a scientist, and let the numbers — not your mood after yesterday's trade — tell you whether the change worked.

Action steps

- Track win rate, average win, average loss, and expectancy in a simple spreadsheet — update it weekly.
- Record MFE and MAE for each trade to learn whether your exits and stops fit how your trades actually behave.
- Evaluate changes only over batches of 20+ trades, and change one rule at a time so you know what caused the difference.

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LESSON 12 OF 12

Treat Discipline as a Trainable Skill

The most damaging myth in trading is that discipline is a personality trait — you either have it or you don't. Every serious treatment of trading psychology teaches the opposite: discipline is a trainable skill, built exactly the way physical fitness is built — through small, repeated, deliberately chosen actions. Following your checklist on a boring Tuesday is a repetition. Passing on a B-grade setup is a repetition. Stopping at your daily loss limit is a repetition. Each one makes the next easier.

The mechanism that makes training work is separating process from outcome. A disciplined trade that loses money is a success; an impulsive trade that makes money is a failure — because over hundreds of trades, the process is what repeats, not the lucky outcome. Traders who score themselves daily on process ('did I follow my rules?') rather than P&L build discipline measurably faster, and suffer far less emotional whiplash.

Trust in your own system is the final layer. Even good strategies produce losing streaks — reason enough for many traders to abandon them precisely when statistical variance is about to normalise. If you have tested a system over a meaningful sample and defined its expected drawdowns in advance, then a losing streak within those bounds is not evidence of failure; it is the system working as measured. Discipline, at its core, is acting on that knowledge when your emotions are screaming otherwise.

Action steps

- Score every trading day A–F on process only ('did I follow my rules?') — never on profit.
- Define in advance what losing streak your system can normally produce, so variance doesn't trick you into abandoning it.
- Treat every small act of rule-following as a repetition in training — consistency on boring days is what builds the skill.

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KEEP LEARNING

Sources & Further Reading

The habits in this course reflect themes taught consistently across the most respected free market-education resources. For deeper study — all for education, none of it financial advice — these are excellent starting points:

Investor.gov (U.S. SEC)
Official U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission investor education — basics, risk, and fraud protection.
https://www.investor.gov/

FINRA Investor Education
Regulator-run education on brokerage accounts, order types, and investor protection.
https://www.finra.org/investors

Investopedia
The most comprehensive free reference for trading terms, order types, and trading psychology.
https://www.investopedia.com/

Babypips School of Pipsology
A famously beginner-friendly structured course on markets, sessions, and risk management.
https://www.babypips.com/learn

CME Group Education
Exchange-run courses on futures, hedging, and how global markets operate.
https://www.cmegroup.com/education.html

NYSE: How the Market Works
Education from the New York Stock Exchange on listings, auctions, and market structure.
https://www.nyse.com/education

BEFORE YOU GO

Keep the Habits Alive

Habits fade without reinforcement. Put a quarterly reminder in your calendar to re-read these twelve lessons and grade yourself honestly on each one. The traders who benefit most from material like this are not the ones who read it once — they are the ones who turn it into a checklist and return to it.

For live market session times, overlaps, holidays, and more free trading education, visit globalmarkets24hours.com — the site this course comes from. It's free and always will be.