

IDEAS 42

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 42ND INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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Beating Bad Habit

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We all have habits - good and bad - but in order for us to move forward and become the successful people we were destined to be, we need to forego of our negative habits and change them. What is that one bad habit that always, if not, most of the time, pulls you down? I'll tell you mine, and it's that one thing that I'm not proud of, both as a college instructor and as an online English tutor - I procrastinate a lot. And by this, I mean, from eating breakfast, coming up with test questions for the exam tomorrow afternoon and reading materials in advance for my online English tutees tomorrow night.

When I was still a student, I didn't see this habit of mine as overly destructive - adrenaline rush, I used to say - my mind is at its best when I'm cramming. I still got good grades even if I just finished the 7-page paper a night before the deadline. But now that I see this bad habit in the students in the college where I teach English, literature and Humanities, and how much procrastination takes its toll on their grades, I say, "stop with the procrastinating and do things you're supposed to do as soon as you're told!"

One fine school day, I told one of my classes to make a dream collage as their assignment. I was so excited to see my students turn in their works the following meeting and what did I get, many of them asking to have the deadline extended the following week. As a reward for those who didn't procrastinate and did their assignments - I gave them a 30 out of 30 rating. As for those who had this and that as an alibi - 20 as the highest score they can get, regardless of the effort they put into making their work beautiful.

As I look back to my life as a student, had I not procrastinated and finished my 7-page research paper a week before the deadline, I would have had enough time to review and edit it. I could have gotten myself, not just a good grade but an excellent one. Alas! With the help of my procrastinating students, I have finally learned that those who don't procrastinate are the ones who are rewarded.

Having acknowledged the fact that I am a procrastinator and I don't like to continue being one, I need to have a positive habit that could replace it. This is the only way that I can beat it and that goes out to any other bad habits you can think of - replace it with a good habit. From this day on, I will seriously use my planner, write to-do-lists, check the entries as soon as possible and stick to my schedule. I am going to do this because once I beat my bad habit of procrastination, I will become more organized and in the end, more successful.

As Aristotle, a wise philosopher puts it, "we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit." This goes out as a challenge to all of us, let us feed the good habits and starve the bad ones, so as to become the best that we could be. Let us repeatedly do the positive things that can make us a more sensible member of society and stop doing the negative habits that we do not want to conquer our being. Bad habits will always find their way of bringing us to that dark abyss of nothingness; we better start beating them now.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the top bad habits that you want to let go of?
2. How do you think can you successfully erase these negative habits?
3. What is that one good habit that you want others to copy from you? Why?
4. Children tend to emulate habits from their parents - how can parents teach their kids to develop good habits, especially, good study habits?
5. Is it okay to tell a person that he/she has a habit that annoys you? Why or why not?



POWERHOUSE OF HABIT CHANGE

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People have different attitudes and behavior and all of us have that tendency to create or acquire a habit; however our “ human will” serves as the powerhouse of habit change. If our will just have that total commitment to change, t...hen it will happen. Doing everything to change a habit or break it would not be too difficult at all. All we need to do is to address the habit formed and try to find ways on how to deal with it. However, if we just merely attempt to break an old or bad habit, then we are just playing half-heartedly on it and worst that would happen is that there is only very limited success to eradicate it. It will be very different if you are motivated by that intent decision that the time has come to stop dithering and to take action. Apply that task of having that will to do the task and then achieve your goal.

Then you will ask yourself the question, “Can habits change?” The answer is yes, they do change, and at times they seem to be difficult. Once you form a habit, it will have a significant effect on us. Notably, it would have an indicative effect on our behavior too. Surprisingly enough, it will require a significant effort to change a habit. It doesn’t come overnight. We should also be aware that we would not fall into a bad habit because it can be soothing and seductively familiar. It can actually stunt our development and even harm us, like smoking, excessive drinking, and overeating. By nature, they are hard to break and because they are difficult, it can lead to negative emotions and self-criticism.

By contrast, good habits can increase our self-esteem, nurture positivity and encourage personal achievement and progress. These things need to be formed through mindfulness, self-control and conscious choice. In order for us to do this, let us decide on our set of priorities and what is the highest priority that we have. What is it that we do really want and value? Consequently, you will have the courage and discipline to be able to say “no” to other things. So, you can now easily pin down what your goals are and what is it you really want to achieve.

When you know how to acknowledge your feelings, rather than suppressing your emotions, then you can decide and know how it is best to be dealt with, in order for us to create that change of habit that we need. If you commit to change, then your human will is at work. That desire to replace a habit or an attitude together with the firm commitment of the will, which serves as a powerhouse of habit change, to do so, will substantially increase the likelihood of success.

Questions for discussion:

1. Have you ever tried to change a habit? How did you do it?
2. Do you agree that our human will serves as a powerhouse to habit change? Why or why not?
3. Do you find it difficult to gather your strength and have the will to change a bad habit? Why or why not?
4. Have you addressed that habit of yours which you have been clinging on for a long time? Explain your answer.
5. Have you set your priorities in life so you can have the guts to do your will to create a change of habit in your life? Elaborate on your answer.



HABIT - AN EMOTIONAL CRUTCH

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Many of us resort to habits as an emotional crutch so as to satisfy an irresistible desire, cravings and temptations that we experience. It can be termed too as an emotional apathy or a pain that you feel. We should remove these emotional crutches and stand in our own emotional strength and maturity. We all have these and most of the time we use them as an excuse, reasons, justifications, and ways to check out and discover what is going on inside of us. Actually, habit or addiction can be driven by a need to belong, an emotional crutch, a method of escape, an endorphin rush.

It's a hard habit to break when it is an emotional crutch. We have to honestly accept it and then break it. It will really take some considerable effort for you to break it. As the term itself denotes, emotional crutch is a substance, object of individual providing temporary comfort and support in times of turmoil and duress. Many of us have the habit of using food as emotional crutch. When they are sad or depressed resort to food and before they notice it, they have already gained a lot of weight. Others during unpleasant times and when they feel so stressed or agitated use alcohol as their outlet, thus they have the tendency to over-drink making it a habit.

Many people also use smoking as an emotional crutch during unpleasant times. Due to the build-up of this habit, these people become emotionally dependent and start to smoke when they are sad, scared or unhappy. Some people have their imagination to completely escape from the limitations of reality. So what they do is they read a book, watch a movie, and even write a novel. A lot of people though when they feel anxious, upset, tired or overworked use shopping as an emotional crutch.

When we talk of breaking your habit, that is, your emotional crutch, it is not about abandoning support but rather finding healthy and conscious support. You will need more support than ever when you are breaking your emotional crutches. So there's no need to be afraid to reach out and talk to someone close to you. Stop leaning on your crutches and have a transformed life. All you need to do is have that commitment to do so. In doing this, you have to recognize that those crutches you stand on limit your speed and mobility. Most of all admit that you are using an emotional crutch for you to check out.

There is no doubt that breaking your emotional crutches is a very challenging process. We have to honestly accept our emotional crutches and break them. Pretty soon you'll find out that the more emotional crutches you break, the more likely that you will be able to move forward authentically. Thus, that would only mean that you have addressed the issues beneath the discomfort that you experience. The bottom line is for you to change your habits, because whether you like it or not they are the emotional crutches in your life.

Questions for discussion:

1. Have you ever tried addressing that habit which created an emotional crutch in you? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think that having a habit brings discomfort to your life? Why or why not.
3. What habits have you acquired during the unpleasant times in your life? Name them.
4. Have you experienced a lot of habit forming attitudes most especially when you are scared? Explain your answer.
5. Do you stand firm in removing those habits that you have formed in your life? How will you do it?



GOOD HABITS VERSUS BAD HABITS

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A habit is something which a person does repeatedly, usually or regularly. A habit is something we do over and over again. Habits can be good or bad. Habits make people who they are. They also challenge a person's self-will in controlling his or her own behavior. All of us have habits. Some habits may be the same with others and some are not. A person may possess good habits, bad habits or the combination of both. However, a person is responsible on how to handle them in his whole life. He can keep the good habits and change the bad ones. To cease doing the bad habits is not an easy thing. A person's body system doesn't have a "delete" button to press anytime he wants to quit or erase the bad habits he has. It requires essential courage and enough strength to put an end. It needs willpower.

It is more significant to propagate and cultivate good habits. A man who has nice habits is often emulated and followed. Everyone shows respect him because of his good habits. He becomes a role model to other people. Because what he is doing is practically important. It gives clarity of his personality. It is the brilliant light of his own character that shines among other people. It's worthy to mimic good habits because we acquire a desirable value in life. Being punctual in school is an example of a good habit. Teachers are always glad when their students are coming on time. A latecomer may imitate him or her. He would challenge himself to do the same. Good habits help a person to succeed in life. They guarantee a huge success. But he has to work it out. Success does not come naturally. A person needs to exert much effort to achieve it.

On the contrary, some people have bad habits. Bad habits are negative behavior patterns. These affect in their daily lives. Overspending is a common example of a bad habit. It is spending money more than one a person can buy. It is likewise a common problem especially when he or she has credit cards. It's because of the availability of credit. A person may overspend to impress their associates, for example, by picking up the bill for a meal at a restaurant. He must control his expenses to avoid this problem and be worry-free. There are a lot of bad habits around. If you can't control them and you indulge, you'll find yourself glued with them and you can't easily quit doing so. However, there are multiple techniques on how to remove these bad habits. A person must give priorities to do significant procedures on how to avoid or eliminate them. According to Donald Latumahina, bad habits are among the worst enemies of living life to the fullest. So, the first step to breaking the bad habits is to identify them. Only after identifying them can you decide to do something about them.

Whether we like it or not, good habits must prevail than bad habits in ourselves. We should keep and vitalize the good ones rather the bad practices. We should not leave an empty space for bad habits to occupy. Let us utilize our willpower to be always aware of practicing good habits. Our self-control will lead us to overshadow the bad habits around. It is our strength to continue enjoying life worth living. It is our driving force and major determination to live life to the fullest.

Questions for discussion:

1. What springs to mind when you hear the word "habits"?
2. When do we say it's a good habit? When do we say it's a bad habit? Cite
3. examples.
4. What are your good and bad habits? How did you change your bad habits?
5. Why do we need to strengthen good habits and eradicate the bad ones?
6. Which is one of your habits that you are most proud of? Why?



OLD HABITS DIE HARD

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I am a helpless creature of habit. If there is somebody out there who can sufficiently prove that he is not so, then he deserves an award of some kind. Humans are helpless creatures who easily succumb to well-formed and deeply-entrenched habits that refuse to die readily. We virtually spend every waking and slumbering hour under the humongous influences of the habits we internalize, or externalize for that matter.

Fortunately, some habits are great to have.

I admire those who spend their first wakeful moments steeped in early morning prayer. Those people genuinely want to start their day right, so what better way to do so than to immerse oneself deep in communication with the Almighty? Such transcendental habits certainly amount to greater assurances of daily grace. While I spend my first wakeful seconds shuffling to the kitchen, I can only manage a thank you for having woken up to another fresh day. So my day begins.

Unfortunately, there are habits that can be classified as downright crazy.

My children have often remarked that I am obsessive-compulsive. This type of behavior makes those afflicted with it as having a sometimes extreme “mental and interpersonal control at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obsessive%E2%80%93compulsive_personality_disorder) Being thus, I have the habit of checking more than once if I’d turned off the cooking gas tank, made the bed, shut off the lights in the room, and many such repetitive actions. I also get mad when other people in the house fail to put back something they take to its proper place. It pisses me off when anybody in the household sits down on the sofa and doesn’t fix the cover as I had, or when somebody leaves a spot on the floor that will require another buffing. Guests are exempt, but household members have no excuse whatsoever.

It had been even worse before my sickness last January. I am proud to say that the degree of my obsessive-compulsive behavior has lessened somehow since then. I recognize now when my frail constitution tells me to take it easier. Oh, I still do the habit of checking more than once on things I have already done prior, but my children do not have to be too worried about not keeping things messy? I just tell them to fix up whatever they had messed up. It’s kind of like teaching them how difficult house work can be if done repeatedly and at invariable times of the day.

Most old habits die hard. Let us strive to have habits like prayerfulness and keen listening as part of our daily living and interactions. Shove the undesirable ones that translate to personality disorders out the door, where they belong.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What good habits do you believe you possess? Why do you classify them as good ones?
2. What bad habits do you believe you have? Why do you consider them bad?
3. Why is it difficult to let go of any habit?
4. How are habits formed? Can we actually learn habits from other people?
5. What good habits do you wish you had? Why do you want to have such habits?



KEEP WHAT'S GOOD IN, KICK GARBAGE OUT

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Being a normally functioning human being, I too have habits both bad and good. Let me correct my first statement, though. I may not be a perfectly functioning human being as far as my health faculties are concerned, but spiritually I still possess the same inadequacies and completeness that all people have. I decide on things with my heart and mind working together, sometimes apart. I perform the varied functions of my job as a mother and a professional with whatever it is I have. I think, therefore I am. Thus, I also have both good and bad habits.

Of the good ones, I am happy to say that I do manage a short prayer or two, at varying parts of the day. I can not manage to say one at the beginning of each day, because I am often taken up with the concerns of starting the whole day early, but I make sure I converse with the Almighty at certain moments when everything has quieted down.

I also brush my teeth at least twice a day, using fluoride and calcium toothpaste, as recommended by dentists. I never go to sleep without washing my face, and have been at my own daughters' necks to do the same. I do my housework at specific times, except when otherwise constrained. I begin my online work a little after lunch and continue till early evening. I also try to go to sleep at specific times, because losing only a half hour from my normal sleeping hours will surely render me living zombie-like the next day.

I don't smoke, and since my father died last year, have abhorred smoking.

I also have the habit of procrastinating on things I have to do, such as completing things before the deadline. To fix this perennial problem, I just keep a planner of some sort so I do not end up with a bunch of deadlines to contend with. I also have my own form of Tourette syndrome, which has me shouting expletives at no one in particular, probably myself and my own stupidity, whenever I drop something, bump into something, or get into a sudden, exasperating or unexpected incident. I also have the unexplainable habit of opening the refrigerator door to check what I have already seen before, even knowing what I would see inside beforehand.

Yes, like any human being, I have habits, both good and bad. Hopefully, my good habits remain, as people believe that old habits die hard. Now what to do about my bad ones.....

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of your good habits? What about your bad ones?
2. How are habits formed?
3. Why is it always difficult to let go of any habit?
4. What sort of habits that others have will easily turn you off? Why?
5. Did you have habits when you were a child that you have eradicated in adulthood? How did you let those habits go?



FORMING EFFECTIVE STUDY HABITS

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The importance of forming good study habits can never be questioned. Good study habits encourage students to genuinely love the task of studying, so much so that studying ceases to be a tedious chore all at once. When students develop great habits in studying, they are assured of reaping the fruits of such during examinations and recitations.

Cramming never helped anybody in remarkable degrees. It could prove to be an immediate remedy, but crammers often find that what they force their brains to absorb in one sitting gets easily forgotten the next day. Thus, the purpose of learning things thoroughly is utterly defeated, especially when what has been crammed proves to be useless when examinations come. How many times have we crammed on rosters of facts, only to find out that the examinations are in situational format rather than in enumeration form? Of what good is all the cramming we did barely hours before?

Suggestions which can help students in forming good study habits abound.

The student should always set a positive mood for studying. It won't do to have to sit through the entire study process scowling at the pages before you and wishing you were somewhere else but. One of my high school teachers told us to smile when we opened our books and notebooks, try to visualize the good things that could come if we used the study period effectively. Good grades are a great incentive, but one should not study only to get those. Grades are just quantifications of what we learn, but how much we learn lies in the degree of practice and application we are eventually able to do.

Always schedule a time that you consider to be the most productive for studying. If you need time for a power nap after coming home from school, then by all means take that. It would be futile to try to study when you feel all drowsy. But set your alarm clock to a time when you can optimally study. Some people prefer to do their studying early in the morning, so they make sure they get enough sleep at night to be able to wake up fresh when dawn comes.

Find a space that has few or no distractions of whatever type?away from the TV set, from siblings playing in the background, and most especially, from the bed. One of my college teachers said, "The bed is the root of all evil." She definitely hadn't meant this to be a sexually-suggestive remark because we were talking about effective study habits. The Soft Bed + the Electric Fan or Air Conditioner + the Quiet of the Night = Restful Sleep. Kiss your grades goodbye, kiddo!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you believe you have good study habits? Why or why not?
2. How helpful are good study habits to fulfilling school requirements and passing exams?
3. If you had to change a specific study habit you had, what would it be? Why would you change it?
4. How would you train your own children to develop effective study habits?
5. Is there any particular person you admire for their study habits? What makes this person admirable?



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