



# HOW TO STOP BITING YOUR NAILS

A bite sized guide

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# Getting rid of your nail biting habit

## This is a tough habit to break

**Onychophagia**, habitual nail biting is a VERY common condition, some estimations claim that up to 45% of the population suffered from it at some point.

While a large portion are able to stop this habit, if like me, you're part of the ones that weren't able to stop. Don't worry this guide will show you how to kick this habit.

This is such a tough habit to break that quite a few people give up. For years I tried to stop biting my nails, I promised myself that tomorrow I'll stop, I willed myself to stop, I got angry at myself "What's wrong with you?! Why can't you just stop?", I used all sorts of disgusting ointments and lotions applied to my fingers, made sure I have something to keep my restless fingers busy.

**Nothing worked!**

For many years nail biting caused me frustration, shame, and being angry at myself.

One day I decided to try something else, the *Process* below, and it worked! Slowly, but steadily I beat this habit. Once I stopped I felt proud, it's something that I can tell myself when self-doubt raises its ugly head. Besides stopping to bite my nails, it helped me accept myself more.

The purpose of this guide is to give you a system to fallback on so you can kick this habit.

Let's go!

# Mindset

## **Trust the process**

This takes time and persistence. There's no one time magic that will solve this for you.

Stick with the process, and you'll see progress.

## **Have a system you can fall back onto**

This isn't a direct line, you won't go from nail biting addict to kicking the habit in a week.

This will take at least 10-15 weeks, but you'll feel so much better with yourself during and after this!

## **Relapse is inevitable**

You will fall, it's REALLY f#%king hard to break this habit!!!

Be kind to yourself don't hate or get angry with yourself if you fall!

This is part of the process, you didn't learn to ride a bike without falling.

## **Slow is smooth and smooth is fast**

It's better to move slow and be certain with your progress than move quickly and suffer bad relapses.

*"fix me up yesterday"* approach will end badly. There's no deadline or date in which "you'll be fixed".

Take your time, don't rush it, that's the fastest way.

# The process

**The mind is infinite in wisdom.**

**The brain is a stupid little dog that is easily trained.**

**Jerry Seinfeld**

We're not trying to stop nail biting in one swoop, we're taking small steady steps.

We're going to break the habit one finger at a time.

Remind yourself that you're only trying to stop biting the nail of your left pinky.

## **Remind yourself why you want to stop**

Make a list of problems/issues caused by your nail biting habit.

Embarrassed to show your hands? Pain in your fingers? Want to set an example for your kids? Don't hold back, pour it all onto the page!

## **Take it all in**

Spread your fingers on a surface. Look carefully at your nails and skin around them. Take it in, one finger at a time.

Now take a photo of each of your hands so that you can clearly see the bitten nails and skin around them. (you can add a note with the date).

If you have an accountability partner you can send them the photos as well.

## **The way the world sees you when you're biting**

Look at yourself biting in front of a mirror, or take a video, realize this is how the world sees you when you're biting.

Imagine you're seen like this at an important business meetings, a job interview, a first date with a someone you really like!

## **Path of least resistance**

We'll start from the nail you bite **the least!**

We're going to slowly work our way up from the fingers you bite the least, which should be the easier to stop, up to your "favorite" fingers to bite on.

Commit to not biting this nail for the next week. I started with my left hand pinky. You can keep biting on all other nails, but remind yourself that you're not biting the finger on your stop list.

**Physical barrier** - Some people find it helpful to cover the finger they're focusing on with a band-aid, so in case it does reach your mouth you can't bite it, and you'll have a reminder that you shouldn't.

## **Celebration ceremony - DON'T SKIP THIS STEP!**

At the end of each day look at the nail you stopped biting and be proud of yourself! Even if you bitten it during the day, the fact you're trying is good enough, progress will come over time, stick to the process.

Your celebration ceremony should be something short and sweet that makes you smile. A small dance or move, or a sentence you tell yourself to celebrate this moment.

Mine was a raise the roof motion, with a "woot woot" sound. Silly, but it made me smile, and that makes it's easier to keep going :-)

I know it sounds stupid, and you'll feel dumb doing it, but getting yourself to celebrate tiny wins, is SUPER-important!

## Gear up

Establishing a habit of grooming your nails using tools instead of your teeth will help you keep your fingers away from your mouth.

Filers are great for smoothing out the splinters and rough edges that triggers us bitters oh so easily.

Buy clippers and a filer, tend to your nails once or twice a week.

Don't use this as an excuse not to start! *"I just need to buy clippers and I'll start..."* NO! Start, you can buy the clippers and filer later.

If you're the type of person that will lose the clippers/filer buy three or more of each up front.

## Bonus

- Carry a clipper and filer in your bag.
- Buy 2-3 packs of band-aids.

## Moving to the next finger

Once **you're certain** you're not biting a nail anymore (after a week/month/etc.), it's *Established*, move on to the next nail, and add it also to your stop list (this list includes all the nails you already stopped biting).

Choose the next nail you bite the least.

Keep going until all your nails are *Established* and are on your stop list.

- For fingers that you never bite on you can do 2 at a time, but I suggest going 1 by 1, and not more than 2 fingers at a time.
- I think it's better to go finger by finger with a shorter establishing time (3-5 days), rather than doing two fingers at the same time.
- The hard core fingers might take months to *Establish*, we're undoing a lifelong habit here, so don't give up! Stick with the process, you'll get it.

Keep celebrating the nails you *Established*. Remember the progress you already made.

If this process seems slow, compare it to a lifetime of nail biting, the frustration it brings, don't rush this.



# Few more things that can help

## Keep your curious fingers busy

For me wearing a ring worked great. I could twist and play with it, and my hands could stay away of my mouth, also it wasn't something I could forget, since I was wearing it. Replacing nail biting with playing with my ring.

- Bracelets also work for me, but do whatever works for you, have something to keep your restless fingers busy.
- Manicure - I heard a few times that having your nails look nice, preferably with nail polish helped . Though on some cases people moved to abuse the skin around the nail.

## Accountability partner

This isn't a must, but can be helpful.

Choose someone who'll support and lift you, not someone that will bring you down, what you need is support, you're hard enough on yourself!

## Handling relapses

This isn't a direct train, you'll fall, relapse and get discouraged, you will chew nails that you thought *Established*, there's no way avoiding this, but as long as you'll keep trying and stick to the system you'll make it!

Go back to the last finger/s you think *Established*, and start the process again from them. Two steps forward, one step backwards is part of the process, no way around it.

Certainty is more important than speed in this process, don't move too fast. Go back if needed and reestablish fingers. Think of it as laying the foundations of your castle, you want them to be sound, rather than have them up quickly, but flimsy.

This will also help you kick the habit quicker since once you get to the real tough, core nails you bite, you want to have solid foundations.

Remind yourself that this is a journey, and that you're doing the best you can. Keep trying. **This is the most important thing!** Doesn't matter how many times you fall, but how many times you get up. Each failure brings you a step closer to kicking this habit.

## **Non-bitters don't get it**

Try not to get mad at your friend or family member offering advice how to stop biting. They think you can just stop whenever you want, they don't realize that if you were able, you'd stop, but you're unable stop. You tried, but nothing worked.

## **Addressing stress and anxiety**

Nail biting is a mechanism for handling stress and anxiety. While managing these two things in your life is behind the scope of this guide they are a few things that can help.

### **Identify triggers**

Try to notice (and log) when you bite your nails specific time, setting, situation or person, etc. See if you can locate the root cause for this.

## **Breathing exercises**

For me meditation and Wim Hof style breathing drills help quite a bit to calm my mind and reduce stress levels.

Give it a try, it's one of those things that help with all other aspects of life.

## **Good luck!**

If this didn't work for you, don't blame yourself! This system isn't perfect, keep trying and find what works for you.

But please reach out, I'd be happy to know what didn't work, what other things you tried, what worked, and try to help.

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