



Image via [Unsplash](#)

What Does It Take to Be a Leader?

By Paul Denikin

Harlem, Georgia got its start as a city shortly after the Civil War. Since then, Harlem has given rise to many accomplished people — not the least of whom is renowned comedian Oliver Norvell Hardy. These local leaders are recognized in exhibits at the [Harlem Museum and Welcome Center](#) where you can learn more about the history of Harlem and the people who lived here.

Not all of us will find our names in museums, of course, but that doesn't mean our contributions don't add up to something positive. So, ask yourself this question: "What does it take to make an impact on your community like these local leaders?" More than a vision or sharp wit. As President Barack Obama [said](#), "Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everyone would do it. But it's not. It takes patience, it takes commitment, and it comes with plenty of failure along the way..."

How to cultivate leadership skills

How can you live up to your big dreams? It starts with developing the skills you need to persevere.

- These [four activities](#) will help you reflect on your values, strengths, and obstacles in order to develop a more resilient mindset.
- Improve your problem-solving skills by using a [strategic framework](#) for approaching problems. A structured approach makes problems feel less overwhelming.
- Struggling to find solutions? You may need a more creative mindset. Learn the [habits](#) that cultivate creative thinking.
- Success isn't achieved alone. Build your people skills by joining Toastmasters, a nonprofit organization that teaches leadership and [communication skills](#).

The best books for developing leaders

Nothing beats reading when you need inspiration. Whether you need practical tips or a fresh perspective, these books will help you unleash the leader within.

- Habits are a major factor in your success. This [reading list](#) will help you build better habits and improve your self-efficacy.
- Nourish your creativity and [learn from innovative thinkers](#) when you read books like *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World* and *Outliers*.
- Leaders also need to know how to approach difficult topics and conversations. [Read up](#) on what it takes to be an inclusive, emotionally intelligent leader.

How to raise the next generation of leaders

The best leaders don't just do great things — they inspire others to achieve too.

- Do you want to influence the younger generation? A [master's degree or endorsement](#) in education opens the door to a fulfilling teaching career.
- You don't need a degree to uplift your community. Support important causes, get involved in local policymaking, and [motivate the next generation](#) through mentorship and community outreach.
- Getting involved in organizations that [serve youth](#) is another great way to raise future leaders. Examples include the YMCA, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, and Scouts.

Leaders come in many forms. Whether you want to make a difference in your local community or leave your mark on the world, let these learning opportunities guide the way. With leadership habits and a growth mindset, there's nothing you can't achieve!