

# Benjamin Franklins “Black-Spot” Tool

The "black spot" method of Benjamin Franklin is an original strategy for character and self-improvement. Franklin, who was renowned for his methodical approach to personal development, tracked and improved his daily behavior using a straightforward but powerful technique.

## Here's How It Worked:

### Creating the Chart:

Franklin would create a chart for each virtue or habit he wanted to cultivate. He focused on thirteen virtues like temperance, silence, order, and more. He would make a table with a column listing each of these virtues.

### Daily Self-Examination:

Every day, Franklin would review his behavior and actions in the context of these virtues. If he had an instance where he failed to adhere to one of his virtues, he marked that day with a black spot or a mark in the corresponding column.

### Monitoring Progress:

Over time, he aimed to reduce the number of black spots in each virtue's column, ultimately striving for a clean chart with no marks. The idea was to become more virtuous and disciplined over time.

### Focus on One Virtue:

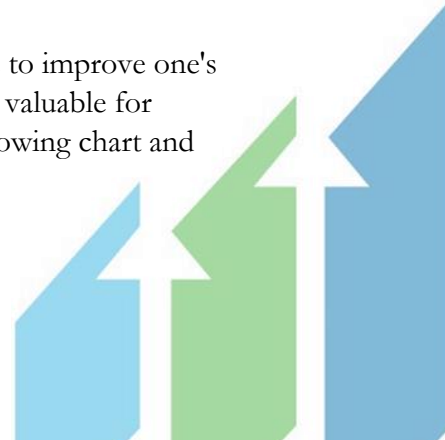
Franklin didn't try to work on all his virtues at once. Instead, he would concentrate on one virtue for an entire week. He believed that focusing on a single virtue would make it easier to develop that particular habit.

### Cycle Through the Virtues:

After a week of focusing on one virtue, he would switch to the following virtue after a week of concentrating on the previous one. He would cycle through each of his selected virtues over the course of thirteen weeks.

The "black spot" or mark represented a lapse in his commitment to a particular virtue for that day. The visual representation of his progress helped Franklin identify areas where he needed to improve and stay accountable for his actions.

Franklin's approach is a great example of using self-awareness and self-discipline to improve one's character gradually. It's a simple but effective method that many people still find valuable for personal development and habit-building today. Try it for yourself using the following chart and virtues.



## Ben Franklin's 13 Virtues

1. **TEMPERANCE.** "Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation."
2. **SILENCE.** "Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation."
3. **ORDER.** "Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time."
4. **RESOLUTION.** "Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."
5. **FRUGALITY.** "Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e., waste nothing."
6. **INDUSTRY.** "Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."
7. **SINCERITY.** "Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly."
8. **JUSTICE.** "Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty."
9. **MODERATION.** "Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve."
10. **CLEANLINESS.** "Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation."
11. **TRANQUILITY.** "Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."
12. **CHASTITY.** "Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."
13. **HUMILITY.** "Imitate Jesus and Socrates."

## Supplemental Virtues & Traits To Consider

1. **ACCEPTANCE.** Of yourself and others.
2. **PATIENCE.** Without becoming irate or upset, accept or tolerate delay, difficulty, or suffering.
3. **MINDFULNESS.** Focus on the here and now while consciously acknowledging and accepting one's emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations.
4. **COMPASSION.** Concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.
5. **HOPE.** A feeling of positivity brought on by the conviction that you have the strength to accomplish your goals and a strategy for doing so.
6. **SELF-EFFICACY.** Confidence in yourself and your abilities to accomplish tasks.
7. **RESILIENCE.** The ability to recover or recover from difficulty, conflict, failure, or even good events, progress, and increased responsibility
8. **OPTIMISM.** The justifications given for why specific events happen, whether favorable or unfavorable



# FRANKLINS BLACKSPOT PRACTICE

| Virtue      | M. | T. | W. | T. | F. | Sat. | Sun. |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| TEMPERANCE  |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| SILENCE     |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| ORDER       |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| RESOLUTION  |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| FRUGALITY   |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| INDUSTRY    |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| SINCERITY   |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| JUSTICE     |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| MODERATION  |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| CLEANLINESS |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| TRANQUILITY |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| CHASTITY    |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |
| HUMILITY    |    |    |    |    |    |      |      |

