



The Switch

A practice for stuck moments

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What Is The Switch

I discovered this by accident.

I was stuck — not for the first time — staring at a blank page, waiting for something to come. Nothing came. I had been here before. The pattern was always the same: the longer I waited, the heavier the not-moving became. At some point, the weight of not starting outweighed the fear of starting badly.

But this time, I noticed something. What got me unstuck wasn't a breakthrough. It wasn't motivation. It wasn't a plan. It was a tiny action so small it barely counted as action at all. I set a timer for five minutes and wrote garbage. The garbage didn't matter. What mattered was that after those five minutes, I was no longer a person who hadn't started.

I call it *the switch*.

The switch is the smallest possible action you can take to move from **being stuck** to **being in motion**. It's not a solution. It's not a system. It's a signal — a tiny green light that tells yourself: *the door is still open. You can still walk through.*

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The key insight is this: the state of being stuck isn't broken by solving the problem. It's broken by moving one millimeter. Once you've moved, you're a different person — a person in motion. And a person in motion has an entirely different set of possibilities than a person who hasn't started.

Finding Your Smallest Action

Your switch won't look like mine. The point isn't to copy my switch — it's to find your own. The switch has to be so small that you can't fail at it. If it feels like it requires effort, it's too big.

Four questions to find your switch

1. Think of a time you were stuck.

What was the smallest thing that could have moved you? Not the perfect thing — the smallest.

2. What's the one action so small you can't fail at it?

If it's possible to fail, it's too big. A true switch is something you can do in under 30 seconds with no preparation.

3. What does your body do when you're about to avoid something?

Some people reach for their phone. Some people freeze. Some people stand up and sit back down. The switch works best when it intercepts that physical pattern.

4. What's the least impressive version of the thing you want to do?

Want to write? The least impressive version is one word. Want to exercise? The least impressive version is putting on your shoes. Want to have a hard conversation? The least impressive version is opening the chat window.

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Once you find your switch, test it. Try it on something small. If it works, keep it. If it doesn't, try a different action. The switch is not a commitment — it's an experiment.

Three Switches I've Used

These are real. I've used each of them more times than I can count. None of them look impressive. That's the point.

1. The five-minute timer

When I don't want to write, I set a timer for five minutes. I write anything — even "I don't know what to write" repeated fifty times. When the timer goes off, I can stop. Usually I don't. But the permission to stop is what lets me start.

2. The shoe rule

When I don't want to go outside — for a walk, for an errand, for anything — I just put on my shoes. That's the entire action. If I want to sit back down after tying them, I can. But most of the time, once my shoes are on, I'm already halfway out the door. The action is too small to resist, and once it's done, the momentum carries me forward.

3. The first word

When I'm staring at a blank page — an email, a slice, a message I've been avoiding — I write one word. Not a sentence. Just one word. It doesn't have to be the right word. It doesn't even have to be a word I'll keep. But once there's one word on the page, the page is no longer blank. And a page with one word is easier to add to than a page with none.

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None of these switches solved the underlying problem. They didn't make the writing better or the walk longer or the email more eloquent. All they did was turn me from someone who was *about* to act into someone who *had* acted.

The Rules

The switch works best when you follow these four rules. They're not commandments — they're observations from what I've found works.

1. It must be almost stupidly small

If your switch feels like it requires effort, it's too big. A true switch should take no more than 30 seconds and require zero preparation. If you have to gather anything, plan anything, or prepare anything, it's not a switch — it's a project.

2. No judgment after doing it

After you flip the switch, you're allowed to stop. The point isn't to produce results — it's to break the state of being stuck. If you write one word and close the document, that's a successful switch. The judgment comes later, if at all. Right now, you're just moving.

3. No minimum, no maximum

The switch doesn't require you to do more than the minimum. But it also doesn't limit you — if you flip the switch and want to keep going, keep going. The only rule is that you're allowed to stop after the switch. Everything beyond that is a bonus.

4. Tomorrow is fresh

Each day, the switch resets. You don't carry forward unfinished business from yesterday. Tomorrow, if you're stuck again, you flip the switch again. No guilt. No "but yesterday I did more." Every day is a clean start.

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These rules exist to protect the switch from becoming another thing you fail at. The switch is not a habit tracker. It's not a streak. It's a one-time action that you take when you need it. Nothing more.

When The Switch Doesn't Work

The switch is not a cure-all. I need to be honest about when it doesn't work — because if you try it in those moments and it fails, you might think the switch itself is broken. It's not. It's just not designed for everything.

When the stuck is actually burnout

If you're exhausted — physically, mentally, emotionally — the switch won't help. Burnout isn't a state of being stuck that needs motion. It's a state of being depleted that needs rest. In that case, the right action isn't "do something small." It's "do nothing." The switch can wait.

When the stuck is actually grief

Grief doesn't respond to switches. Grief needs time, space, and the freedom to not move. If what you're feeling is loss — of a person, a relationship, a version of yourself — don't try to switch out of it. Let it be there. The switch is for practical stuckness, not for emotional pain.

When the stuck is actually a signal

Sometimes the resistance is telling you something. Sometimes the blank page is saying "this isn't the right thing to write." Sometimes the hesitation before sending a message is saying "don't send this." The switch is useful, but it's not smarter than your gut. If something keeps resisting every switch you throw at it — listen to it.

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The switch is a tool. Like any tool, it has its limits. Use it when it works. Put it down when it doesn't. The switch will still be there tomorrow.

The Only Thing That Matters

I've been stuck more times than I've been unstuck. That's not a confession — it's just the truth. The switch doesn't change that ratio. What it changes is the time I spend in the stuck state before I remember I can move.

That's the only thing that matters: the gap between being stuck and remembering you can choose to move. The switch shortens that gap. Not by much. Just enough.

And sometimes, just enough is all you need.

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This practice is not a promise. It's not a system. It's just something I tried, and it worked for me. If it works for you, keep it. If it doesn't, leave it. That's how all switches should work — you flip it, see what happens, and decide for yourself.

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