Insights from *Finish What You Start* by Peter Hollins

Finishing what you start requires four follow-through muscles: focusing, taking action, resisting distraction, and persisting.

When you start a new project, you're full of ideas and experience a surge of inspiration which helps you focus, take action, resist distraction, and persist. But when inspiration fades, your follow-through muscles weaken without the performance-enhancing effects of inspiration. The ego doesn't want to admit weakness or risk failure so it puts up a "perfectionism" roadblock by raising the finishing requirements. With the finishing requirements seemingly out of reach, you lose interest and fail to finish what you started.

The first step to finishing what you start is to knock over the "perfectionism" roadblock by adopting a finishing = learning mindset.



Adopt a Finishing = Learning Mindset

Peter Holland says, **"You only learn certain things if you see them through to the end. If you don't follow through, then you don't learn all that you have to do and you don't learn anything about yourself except that you are lazy or afraid or a failure."**

When you finish a project, you get the opportunity to evaluate your work, adjust, and develop a better method. A finished product that fails to meet your expectations is infinitely more valuable than a product you don't finish. You can complete a terrible website people laugh at, but that terrible website is an excellent stepping stone to your next website.

Once you adopt a finishing = learning mindset, you can keep "perfectionism" at bay and start strengthening your follow-through muscles.



Create a Finishing Manifesto

The follow-through muscles that help you focus, take action, resist distraction, and persist take time to develop and atrophy quickly when you stop following through on your plan. The key to strengthening your follow-through muscles is to execute your plan consistently. A great way to execute consistently is to create a "finishing manifesto."

A manifesto is a simple set of rules you follow without exception. Your manifesto can contain one rule or ten rules. I like to keep my manifesto to two rules.

Manifesto Rule #1: When it's time to work, I state an "I want. I will. I won't."

Each week I schedule a one-hour "Course creation" time block in my calendar. When I receive a calendar notification from my "Course creation" time block, I quietly tell myself:

- "**I want** to experience the satisfaction of finishing my course on accelerated learning."
- "**I will** brainstorm ideas and outline the next module for two minutes."
- "**I won't** check my email for the next hour."

Schedule time blocks in your calendar to work on your "must finish" project every week until that project is complete. When the next time block arrives, state what you want, what you will do first, and what you won't do.

Your "**I want"** is the end state you ultimately want to reach. When you state "I want…" you connect your immediate actions to a meaningful goal in the future.

Your **"I will"** is a small action you're willing to take right now. The smaller, the better. Don't underestimate the power of small steps to get started and build momentum. Inertia is procrastination's most potent weapon, but super small starting actions disarm that weapon.

Your **"I won't"** is what you will avoid doing to ensure you stay on task. When you state your "I won't…" you identify your most common form of procrastination. Maybe you like to check your phone for messages, browse the latest news headlines, or waste ten minutes finding the perfect song you'll work to.

Studies show that setting an implementation intention, like an "I want. I will. I won't.", can triple the rate you follow through.

Manifesto Rule #2: When I'm about to procrastinate, I will conduct a 10-10-10.

Your future self wants to finish long-term goals but needs your present self to act on its behalf. The problem is your present self only cares about obtaining immediate pleasure and avoiding immediate pain. When it comes time to work on your long-term goals, your present self isn't motivated to act because the reward is distant, and there is no immediate pain associated to procrastinating. But if you can get your present self to travel into the future and experience the pain of not following through, you can kickstart your present self into action.

The next time you're scheduled to start working on a project but don't feel like doing it, allow yourself to feel lazy, and then imagine how you'll feel after procrastinating for **10 minutes**. Now imagine procrastinating for **10 hours**. Then imagine procrastinating for **10 days**.

When I imagine procrastinating for 10 days, the guilt I experience is strong and painful because I don't want to be known as a person who doesn't follow through on his intentions. As my present self experiences the future pain of not following through, I remind myself, "*this pain can all go away if I take action right now…*"

The **finishing = learning mindset** coupled with a **finishing manifesto** will make you an unstoppable finisher who gets to enjoy the pride and satisfaction that comes from finishing what you start.