

The law of success

by Napoleon Hill · Language: EN

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Overview

The Law of Success by Napoleon Hill is a foundational self-help work that distills the principles of personal achievement into a systematic philosophy of success. Originally published in 1928 as an eight-volume course, the book is based on Hill's extensive interviews with over 500 successful individuals, including Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and Thomas Edison. Carnegie challenged Hill to codify the common traits of these achievers, and the result is a comprehensive guide that blends practical advice with motivational philosophy. The book argues that success is not a matter of luck or circumstance but of applying a set of universal laws, such as definiteness of purpose, self-confidence, initiative, and persistence.

The book is structured as a series of lessons, each focusing on a specific principle or 'law' of success. Hill presents these laws as interconnected steps that build upon one another, forming a complete system for personal and professional development. He emphasizes the importance of a positive mental attitude, the power of the subconscious mind, and the need for a well-defined goal. The narrative arc moves from the individual's internal mindset to external actions, culminating in the idea that success is achieved through the harmonious application of all the laws. The book matters because it laid the groundwork for the modern self-improvement industry and continues to influence countless readers with its timeless insights into human potential and achievement.

Key Takeaways

- Define your major purpose in life and write it down, then commit to it with a burning desire.
- Develop self-confidence by mastering your thoughts and focusing on your strengths rather than your weaknesses.
- Take initiative and act promptly on opportunities, as success rarely comes to those who wait.
- Cultivate a positive mental attitude, as your thoughts shape your reality and attract success.
- Build a 'mastermind alliance' of like-minded individuals to pool knowledge, experience, and effort.
- Practice persistence and never give up, even in the face of temporary defeat or failure.
- Learn to make decisions quickly and firmly, and change them slowly, to avoid the habit of indecision.

- Use the power of autosuggestion to program your subconscious mind with positive affirmations and goals.

Chapter Summaries

The Master Mind

This opening lesson introduces the concept of the 'Master Mind'—a coordination of knowledge and effort between two or more people who work toward a definite purpose in a spirit of harmony. Hill argues that no individual achieves lasting success without the cooperation of others. He provides examples of successful partnerships and explains how the collective intelligence of a group can exceed the sum of its parts. The lesson emphasizes the importance of choosing allies who share your vision and are willing to contribute their unique talents.

A Definite Chief Aim

Hill stresses that a clear, specific goal is the starting point of all achievement. He instructs readers to write out their major purpose, along with a plan for its attainment, and to read it aloud twice daily—once upon waking and once before sleeping. This practice, he claims, impresses the goal upon the subconscious mind, which then works to bring it into reality. The lesson includes examples of individuals who succeeded by defining their aims precisely, and it warns against drifting through life without a clear direction.

Self-Confidence

This lesson addresses the enemy of success: fear and self-doubt. Hill explains that self-confidence is not inherited but developed through the conscious control of thought. He provides a formula for building confidence, which involves affirming one's abilities and focusing on past successes. He also identifies the six basic fears—poverty, criticism, ill health, loss of love, old age, and death—and shows how they can be overcome. The lesson includes practical exercises, such as writing out a self-confidence formula and repeating it daily.

The Habit of Saving

Hill argues that financial independence is a cornerstone of success and that the habit of saving money is essential. He advises readers to set aside a fixed portion of their income, no matter how small, as a means of developing self-discipline and creating a reserve for opportunities. The lesson warns against the dangers of debt and extravagance, and it emphasizes that saving is not about deprivation but about building a foundation for future ventures. Hill also discusses the psychological benefits of financial security.

Initiative and Leadership

This lesson distinguishes between followers and leaders, asserting that success requires the ability to take initiative and act without being told. Hill outlines the qualities of effective

leadership, including decisiveness, planning, and the willingness to assume responsibility. He encourages readers to cultivate the habit of going the extra mile and to seek out opportunities to lead. The lesson includes examples of leaders who rose from humble beginnings by seizing initiative and inspiring others to follow.

Imagination

Hill explores the power of imagination as the workshop where all plans are created. He distinguishes between synthetic imagination, which combines existing ideas, and creative imagination, which taps into the subconscious and universal intelligence. He provides exercises for developing imagination, such as visualizing goals and brainstorming solutions. The lesson argues that imagination is the most important faculty for success because it allows individuals to see possibilities beyond their current circumstances and to devise innovative strategies.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is presented as the fuel that drives action and inspires others. Hill explains that genuine enthusiasm comes from a deep belief in one's purpose and is contagious, spreading to colleagues, customers, and partners. He advises readers to cultivate enthusiasm by focusing on the benefits of their work and by associating with positive, energetic people. The lesson includes techniques for maintaining enthusiasm, such as speaking with conviction and using physical gestures to reinforce emotional states.

Self-Control

This lesson emphasizes the importance of mastering one's emotions, especially in the face of adversity. Hill argues that self-control is essential for making sound decisions and for maintaining the respect of others. He identifies the 'seven deadly emotions'—desire, fear, hate, love, sex, and others—and explains how they can either serve or sabotage success. The lesson provides strategies for channeling emotions constructively, such as pausing before reacting and focusing on long-term goals rather than immediate impulses.

The Habit of Doing More Than Paid For

Hill advocates for the principle of going above and beyond in one's work, regardless of compensation. He argues that this habit not only builds a reputation for reliability but also attracts opportunities and promotions. The lesson explains that those who give more than they are paid for eventually receive more in return, whether through raises, new clients, or personal satisfaction. Hill provides examples of individuals who advanced by adopting this mindset and warns against the trap of doing only what is required.

Pleasing Personality

This lesson focuses on the importance of cultivating a personality that attracts others. Hill lists qualities such as a positive attitude, good posture, a pleasant tone of voice, and genuine interest in others. He argues that a pleasing personality opens doors and facilitates cooperation, which is

essential for success. The lesson includes practical tips for improving one's appearance, communication skills, and social presence, and it emphasizes that personality can be developed through conscious effort.

Accurate Thinking

Hill distinguishes between accurate thinking, which is based on facts and evidence, and inaccurate thinking, which is influenced by emotion and prejudice. He advises readers to gather all relevant facts before making decisions and to separate truth from opinion. The lesson warns against the dangers of hasty conclusions and encourages the use of logic and reason. Hill also discusses the importance of critical thinking in a world filled with misinformation and suggests that accurate thinking is a skill that can be honed through practice.

Concentration

The final lesson in the original course emphasizes the power of focused attention. Hill explains that concentration involves directing all mental energy toward a single goal, shutting out distractions. He provides exercises for improving concentration, such as focusing on a single object for a set period and practicing mindfulness. The lesson argues that concentration is the key to mastering any skill and to achieving the level of success that comes from deep, sustained effort. Hill also ties concentration to the other laws, showing how it amplifies their effects.

Themes

- Definiteness of purpose
- Self-confidence and belief
- Mastermind alliance
- Persistence and resilience
- Positive mental attitude
- Personal initiative

Notable Quotes

- "The starting point of all achievement is desire." — From the lesson on Definite Chief Aim, where Hill emphasizes that a burning desire is the first step toward success.
- "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve." — A recurring theme in the book, often cited in the context of self-confidence and the power of the subconscious mind.
- "Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle." — From the lesson on Persistence, where Hill argues that adversity is necessary for personal development.

- "The way of success is the way of continuous pursuit of knowledge." — From the lesson on Accurate Thinking, emphasizing the importance of learning and self-improvement.
- "Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness." — From the lesson on Initiative and Leadership, where Hill discusses the sacrifices required for success.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is The law of success about?

The Law of Success is a self-help classic by Napoleon Hill that outlines a systematic philosophy of personal achievement. Based on interviews with over 500 successful people, it presents a series of 'laws' or principles, such as definiteness of purpose, self-confidence, and persistence, that readers can apply to achieve their goals. The book is structured as a course with lessons, each focusing on a specific principle.

Is The law of success worth reading?

Yes, especially for readers interested in the origins of modern self-help. The book offers timeless principles that remain relevant, such as the importance of clear goals, positive thinking, and building a supportive network. However, its language and examples are dated, and some readers may find it repetitive. It is best appreciated as a foundational text that influenced later works like Think and Grow Rich.

How does The law of success end?

Spoiler: The book does not have a traditional narrative ending; it concludes with the final lesson on Concentration. Hill summarizes the entire philosophy, emphasizing that success comes from the harmonious application of all the laws. He encourages the reader to begin immediately, starting with a definite chief aim, and to persist until success is achieved. The ending is motivational, urging action.

Who should read The law of success?

This book is ideal for individuals seeking a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to personal and professional success. It appeals to entrepreneurs, students of self-improvement, and anyone interested in the psychology of achievement. Readers who enjoy classic motivational literature and are willing to engage with early 20th-century examples will find it valuable. It is less suited for those looking for quick, modern advice.

How long does it take to read The law of success?

The reading time depends on the edition. The original 1928 course is over 1,000 pages, while later abridged versions are shorter. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, a full edition might take around 10-12 hours. A typical reader could finish it in a week or two if reading

a few hours daily. The book's lesson-based structure allows for easy breaks.