

Two brown eggs are decorated with simple black faces, including closed eyes and small mouths. They are adorned with green leaves and white flowers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus red and white.

Unusual Habits

Introduction

This resource is intended as a directory of habits that might be used to create unique characters. The resource is split into sections for bedroom routine, clothes, food, commuting, work, communication, decision-making and health. The suggestions in each category are free to be used by any writer. However, to conjure truly original characters, it might be a better idea to use these suggestions as a starting point and to think beyond them, considering (for example) what else (other than a parrot) might become an alarm clock, or what other unusual ways a character might go about eating their food.

A close-up, slightly blurred image of a brown teddy bear's face, focusing on its eyes and nose. The bear is looking directly at the camera.

BEDROOM ROUTINES

Bedroom Routines

Wake-up routine

Has trained their pet parrot to act as an alarm clock

Has created a 'Wallace and Gromit' type contraption to get them out of bed in the morning

Lists the fifty states of America (or other trivia list) each morning before getting out of bed

Presses snooze seven times before getting out of bed

Their alarm clock emits a noxious smell in order to encourage them out of bed

Will only get out of bed when the time (in minutes) is a multiple of three

Bedtime routine

Checks under the bed before turning off the light

Has a tick list on a clipboard that they complete every night before bed (front door locked, cooker off, lights off etc.)

Takes an unusual object (cactus plant, violin, hole punch) to bed with them

Turns their bed through a specific angle each evening to match the position of the earth in relation to the sun

Writes down the dream they want to dream that night on a piece of paper which they then swallow

Sleep routine

Can't sleep if any cupboards or drawers are open

Counts snakes or other dangerous animal (rather than sheep) to send themselves to sleep

Imagines a taekwondo fighter kicking away all their thoughts so that their mind is blank ready for sleep

Sleeps in a hanging basket like astronauts in space

Sleeps underneath their bed rather than on the mattress

Sleeps with a childhood teddy or doll



Clothes

All clothing items are labelled for a specific day of the week

Always has one sleeve rolled up and one rolled down

Carries a change of clothes with them at all times

Colour-matches what they wear to make laundry easier

Constantly wears apron / overalls even to formal events

Constantly wears formal clothes even when doing household tasks or lying on the beach

Does a lottery-style draw to see what clothing items they will wear each day

Doesn't wear underwear

Dresses as a different fictional character for each day of the week

Dresses themselves with household items (bin bags, cardboard boxes etc.)

Ensures that what they wear on the top half of their body is the opposite colour to what they wear on the bottom half

Has a fear of buttons / zips / spots / stripes

Has a pocket watch

Has a superhero costume which they wear under their 'regular' clothes

Walks everywhere barefoot

Wears a monocle

Wears mismatched socks

Wears shirts back-to-front or inside out

Wears socks on their hands

Wears their watch on their ankle

Wears two pairs of underpants

Wears underwear back-to-front or inside out

Won't wear clothing brands with an N in their name



Food

Counts out grains of rice in order to measure it precisely

Creates a menu schedule for each month and prints it out

Deconstructs chocolate chip cookies so that the dough and chocolate chips can be eaten separately

Eats food from least favourite item to most favourite item

Eats food in colour order

Eats food in size order

Eats food to the ticking of a metronome (one mouthful on every fourth tick)

Has ketchup with every food (even cake / bowls of ice cream / chocolate bars)

Insists on eating the entirety of a food item (whole pizza / loaf of bread / cake; the core / seeds of an apple)

Makes a picture with food items before eating

Microwaves foods like crisps / biscuits before eating

Number of food items needs to be part of the Fibonacci sequence

Only eats food in sandwiches

Photographs meals before eating

Precisely measures out all food using weighing scales

Says sorry to food items for any pain they might experience from being eaten

Sniffs all food before eating

Subsists entirely on baked beans and oat cakes

Times themselves eating each meal and records this in their diary

Washes gummy sweets before eating

Won't eat food that begins with a particular letter



Commuting

Applauds the driver of their train / bus before disembarking

Carries a UV light to check cleanliness of public transport

Does a curtsy before boarding a train / bus

Does a pub quiz for fellow commuters

Enters their car from the passenger side and clambers across to the driver's seat

Enters their car through the window

Gets lifts from a friend but travels on the roof of the car

Gets off the bus / train at every stop before re-embarking

Has a list of authentication questions they ask to 'supposedly' pregnant / disabled people before giving up their seat on the bus / train

Keeps a log book of journeys travelled which specifies time taken, route, average speed etc.

Loudly repeats everything the train / bus announcer says both on the platform and when on board

Plays train seat bingo where they pick ten seat numbers at the start of the week and they try to sit on all of them (one per journey, going and return) before the end of the week

Performs impromptu karaoke on public transport

Refuses to stow bags in overhead racks

Starts polemical conversations on public transport

Travels to work on a unicycle

Travels to work on a space hopper

Walks backwards

Walks on their hands

Won't tread on paving cracks

Writes an assessment of their driving skills at the end of each journey



Work

Business cards designed by their four-year-old niece

Carries out business meetings at the zoo / cemetery / pet shop / swimming pool etc.

Comes into work on their days off and works harder than they usually do

Decorates desk with creepy dolls / Disney princess figurines etc.

Divides their weeks into blocks of work (which they carry out all in one go—thirty-five hours straight) then blocks of leisure, sleep, food etc.

Does Zumba at sporadic intervals during the day

Has a shrine for other peoples' business cards

Has an alarm on their phone to mark each quarter hour (like a church clock)

Has set up their office in a lift / bus stop / storage container etc.

Hums while working

Leaves passive-aggressive Post-it notes around office

Overshares details of their personal life with colleagues

Performs presentations as an opera or rock musical

Plays drinking bingo during work meetings

Prepares all drinks / snacks at the start of the day so they never have to leave their desk

Refuses to start work until precisely nine o'clock and clocks off at precisely five o'clock

Replaces their computer keyboard with a typewriter and / or replicates a typewriter sound every time they make a carriage return

Sporadically checks temperature / noise levels / other environmental factors of working conditions and informs their manager when these are outside normal parameters

Takes power naps at their desk

Takes off shoes in office and stinks the place out

Times colleagues' toilet breaks

Treats work as an opportunity to Cosplay

Wears noise-cancelling headphones and VR goggles so that all outside distractions are eradicated

When a manager asks them why their work hasn't been done, they use childish excuses like 'the dog ate it'

Writes emails in code (to make things more fun for their colleagues)



Communication

Carries a thesaurus around with them and 'converts' as many words as possible into more 'unusual' words

Communicates through charades

Communicates through drawing pictures

Communicates with morse code

Communicates with their neighbour using semaphore

Has made up a language to communicate with a friend / loved one

Inserts Latin phrases into emails and other correspondence in an attempt to seem smart

Introduces themselves in the style of 'Bond, James Bond'

Only uses sentences of seven words

Only uses words from the first half of the dictionary

Pretends they can't hear if someone talks to them from another room

Says 'over' to indicate they have finished speaking (in normal conversation)

Shouts down the telephone

Sings rather than talking

Speaks in rhyming couplets

Speaks in rapid bursts of one hundred words then pauses for five seconds before the next rapid burst of words

Waits for five rings before picking up the phone

Writes in emojis

Writes letters in invisible ink

Yodels rather than talking



DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making

Asks AI

Coin toss

Creates an online poll and asks their friends to choose on their behalf

Dice

Evaluates what their worst enemy would do and decides to do the opposite

Flips open the bible to a random page and uses the first line that catches their eye as the answer

Holds an imaginary conversation with themselves

Imagines different alternative futures depending on the decision that they make

Magic 8-ball

Puts their dilemma to an inappropriate audience (a primary school teacher asking their pupils about their love life, for example; or a surgeon asking their patients before they go under the knife)

Roulette wheel

Tarot cards

Writes a scientific paper to decide on even the most basic or non-scientific decisions (like where to go on holiday)



HEALTH

Health

Checks their temperature and pulse rate every hour

Goes to the doctor with minor ailments like scraped knees or minor bruises

Has a 'decontamination' shower in their house

Has a 'rage room' in their house for stress relief

Holds breath for fifteen seconds if someone sneezes

Obsessed with step count, doing precisely thirty thousand steps per day

Only washes hands with bottled spring water imported from the Himalayas

Performs their own health and dental check-ups using their son / daughter as their assistant to record their findings

Swears by a specific food item to cure all ills

Think doctors are vampires

Uses medieval 'remedies' like putting a frog in their mouth to cure toothache



Other

Exaggerates the time something takes

Exaggerates the size of objects when talking about memories

Has an imaginary girlfriend / boyfriend / boss / colleague / teacher / child / pet

Measures time with songs

Only ever wears one earbud when listening to music

Shouts 'dog' every time they see a dog

Starts dancing every time they hear a specific song

Volume of TV / radio has to be an even number



ENDNOTE

Bio:

This resource has been created by Matt Kendrick. Matt is a writer, editor and teacher based in the East Midlands, UK. His short fiction has been widely published both online and in print. He has been placed or listed in various writing competitions including Bath, Flash 500, the Oxford Flash Fiction Prize, Reflex and Leicester Writes. His work has been included on the Biffy 50 list for 2019-20, in Best Microfiction 2021, Best Small Fictions 2022 and the Wigleaf Top 50 list for 2022. He has also been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.

Other Resources:

For links to other free resources, please visit my website: <https://www.mattkendrick.co.uk/resources>

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Information about my [courses](#) and [editorial services](#) can also be found on my website.



Support me on Ko-fi

As a workshop facilitator, I am committed to opening up writing opportunities to people from all backgrounds based on ability to write rather than ability to pay. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to finance pay-what-you-can and free spots exclusively from my own pocket. So, if you've downloaded this resource and are in a position to support narrowing the access gap to creative writing opportunities, I would be very grateful if you would consider buying me a virtual coffee*.

**Any money donated to my [Ko-fi page](#) will be used to fund free and reduced-price places for my Write Beyond The Lightbulb courses, as well as to provide free editing and mentoring opportunities for low-income writers, and to support other opportunities that seek to level the playing field.*