

THE ARC SETUP CHECKLIST

20 checks that separate an arc you finish from one that quietly dissolves in November.

An arc challenge has no built-in failure condition. Nobody quits their arc – they wake up in late November holding a set of rules that no longer asks anything of them, with no moment they can point to where it ended. This checklist is the missing enforcement: five sections, twenty checks, worked through **before day one** rather than on day 34. Tick each one when it is actually done, then sign the contract on page 5.

01 DESIGN, BEFORE DAY ONE

- ☐ **Start date and end date written down.**

An arc with a fuzzy start never quite begins, and one with a fuzzy end never quite finishes. Write both dates in full. The end date is what turns a vague intention into something with a finish line you can see from day one.
- ☐ **Three to five rules. Not six.**

Every rule you add multiplies the ways a day can go wrong. Ten-rule lists look serious on day one and collapse by week two. Three to five is the range that survives 92 days.
- ☐ **Every rule scoreable yes/no in ten seconds.**

"Did I train today" is scoreable at 11pm when you are tired. "Did I eat well today" is a debate, and it is a debate you will win. If a rule needs interpreting, rewrite it until it does not.
- ☐ **One rule that has nothing to do with fitness.**

An arc that is only training is a training block. Pick one rule from another part of your life – reading, money, sleep, a skill – so the arc changes more than your legs.

02 THE FLOOR, THE BAD-DAY VERSION

- ☐ **A minimum version written for every rule.**

The floor is the version of the rule you can still do on your worst day: one page instead of ten, five minutes instead of an hour, shoes on and out the door instead of a full session.
- ☐ **Floor written in week one, not week six.**

In week one you are designing. In week six you are negotiating. These are different people, and only one of them should be writing the rules.
- ☐ **A floor day counts as a full day.**

If the floor feels like a demotion you will not use it, and the floor is what carries you through the dead zone. On the tracker a floor day is the same box, the same size, the same weight.
- ☐ **Travel and holiday days pre-marked as floor days.**

You already know which days are trips, family events and holidays. Mark them as floor days now, so they are part of the plan instead of a surprise that breaks it.



03 FAILURE CONDITION, THE PART EVERYONE SKIPS

- ☐ **One written line: what counts as breaking it.**
The arc format has no built-in failure condition. Nobody quits their arc – they wake up in late November holding rules that no longer ask anything of them. Write one line that says what breaking it actually means.
- ☐ **A rate target, not a streak target.**
Pick a number you can miss days against and still hit, and write it down before you have a reason to move it. A rate survives a bad week. A streak does not.
- ☐ **Missed day marked missed. No restart.**
Habit research indicates a single missed day does not meaningfully derail the process. Treating it as a reset is how people quit in November. Mark the box empty and carry on.
- ☐ **Rules locked: one revision allowed, day 45, in writing.**
Unlimited revision is why arcs get amended into nothing. Give yourself one window, on day 45, written down. Until then, the rules are the rules.

04 WITNESSES

- ☐ **One person who will notice if you stop.**
You do not need a full accountability partner. You need one person who will notice if you go quiet and ask about it. External visibility is one of the few interventions here that holds up.
- ☐ **Proof format decided before day one.**
Pick one format – a photo, a screenshot, a log entry – and do not change it mid-arc. Changing the format is usually the first step towards dropping it.
- ☐ **Proof captured same day, never rebuilt later.**
Reconstructed proof is a story about a day, not a record of one. If the day ends without proof, the box stays empty.
- ☐ **Proof stored where the whole run is visible.**
Keep it all in one place where you can see the full run. Seeing 40 days at once does something that seeing today does not.



05 THE DEAD ZONE, DAYS 31 TO 60

☐ **Week 5 review already in the calendar.**

The dead zone arrives on schedule: the start-line energy is gone and the finish is still far away. Put a review in the calendar for week 5 so you meet it with a decision instead of a mood.

☐ **Pre-decided: lower the bar, never add to it.**

The instinct around day 35 is to add intensity so the arc feels serious again. Do not. If anything changes, the bar goes down to the floor, not up.

☐ **Written answer to "I missed two in a row, now what."**

Write the answer while you are clear-headed. Two misses in a row is the moment most arcs end, so decide now exactly what day three looks like.

☐ **End date in the calendar as a real event.**

An arc with a vague ending does not end - it fades. Put day 92 in the calendar like any other event, and plan what you will do with the finished tracker.

YOUR SCORE _____ / 20

Sixteen checks or fewer means you have a plan for the first three weeks. **All twenty** means you have a plan for the whole arc. If you are short, the gaps are almost always in section 03 and section 05 - the failure condition and the dead zone. Those are the two that decide November.

NEXT: PUT IT ON PAPER

The checklist gets you to day one. What gets you to day 92 is a sheet with a box for every rule on every day, and a rate you are scoring against instead of a streak you are protecting. That is the arc tracker - free, dated and undated, at harder.pro/blog/arc-tracker.html.



ARC vs 75 HARD vs HABIT TRACKING

Three formats, three different ways to fail.

	Arc challenge	75 Hard	Habit tracker
Length	~90 days, fixed end	75 days, fixed	Indefinite
Rules	You write them	Prescribed, non-negotiable	You write them
Missed day	Continues, no reset	Restart at day 1	Streak breaks
Failure condition	None	Severe	None
Finish line	Yes	Yes	No
It dies by	Fading	Restarting	Never ending

The arc is the best-designed of the three: a fixed finish line, rules you choose, and no reset when you miss. It is also the only one with nothing holding it up. 75 Hard dies by restarting - one slip and you are back at day 1. Habit trackers die by never ending - there is no finish line to protect. The arc dies by fading, quietly, somewhere in November. **The twenty checks are what hold it up.**



MY ARC CONTRACT

Fill it in while you are clear-headed. Sign it. Put it where you will see it on day 34.

START DATE _____ END DATE (DAY 92) _____

RULES AND FLOORS

1 RULE _____

FLOOR _____

2 RULE _____

FLOOR _____

3 RULE _____

FLOOR _____

4 RULE _____

FLOOR _____

5 RULE _____

FLOOR _____

THE PARTS EVERYONE SKIPS

BREAKING IT MEANS _____

RATE TARGET _____ / 92 DAY-45 REVISION (ONE, IN WRITING) _____

WITNESS _____ PROOF FORMAT _____

IF I MISS TWO IN A ROW, DAY THREE LOOKS LIKE _____

WEEK 5 REVIEW DATE _____ PRE-MARKED FLOOR DAYS _____

I will mark each day the day it happens. A floor day counts as a full day. A missed day costs one box and nothing else. Day 92 does not move.

SIGNED _____ DATE _____

