

Building Your Trigger for Grading Flow

Peak performance isn't about willpower — it's about building a personalized routine that triggers your flow state on command, then condensing it until it's automatic.

TEACHING DECISION

How do I batch-process grading efficiently instead of losing hours to task-switching and attention residue?

CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

- ✗ Grade whenever you find free time
- ✗ Keep phone nearby "in case of emergency"
- ✗ Push through with willpower and caffeine
- ✗ Switch between grading, email, and texts
- ✗ Demand perfect silence to concentrate
- ✗ Re-read papers after losing your place

BUILDING YOUR TRIGGER

- ✓ Designate a specific grading location
- ✓ Phone physically in another room
- ✓ Use a repeatable sensory routine to enter flow
- ✓ Batch in 45-minute focused blocks
- ✓ Build a Soft Zone that absorbs distractions
- ✓ Anchor with a trigger to prevent the Downward Spiral

MONDAY MORNING ACTION: BUILD YOUR 5-STEP GRADING TRIGGER

1. **Same location** — one dedicated grading spot every session
2. **Same drink** — a specific sensory anchor (coffee, tea, sparkling water)
3. **Same playlist** — instrumental only, no lyrics, same tracks each time
4. **Phone in another room** — not on silent, not flipped over — gone
5. **Timer set for 45 minutes** — one batch, then a real break

Practice daily for two weeks. The routine itself will begin triggering your flow state automatically.



The Art of Learning by Josh Waitzkin

Concepts: Building Your Trigger · The Soft Zone · The Downward Spiral · Making Sandals

My Grading Trigger Builder

Fill in each step to design your personalized pre-grading routine. Practice it daily for two weeks.

1

LOCATION

My dedicated grading spot: _____

Tip: Choose somewhere you don't do other work. Your brain will learn to associate this place with deep focus.

2

DRINK

My grading drink: _____

Tip: The taste and smell act as a sensory anchor. Use the exact same drink every session — consistency is the cue.

3

SOUNDTRACK

My grading playlist: _____

Tip: Instrumental only, no lyrics. The same songs every time become a Pavlovian signal to your nervous system.

4

PHONE RULE

Where my phone goes: _____

Tip: "Another room" is the gold standard. If it's within arm's reach, you will reach for it. Remove the option entirely.

5

TIMER

My batch length: _____ minutes (recommended: 45)

Tip: When the timer goes off, take a real break — stand up, stretch, walk. Then restart the trigger for batch two.

Remember: You're not building willpower. You're building sandals.

After two weeks of daily practice, the routine itself will trigger your flow state — just like Dennis condensed 45 minutes into a few breaths.

"Growth comes at the point of resistance." — Josh Waitzkin

