

小猴子学七十二变：把本领拆成每天练一点的方法

山脚下住着一只小猴子，名叫团团。团团最爱听《西游记》，听到孙悟空变成小虫钻进铁扇公主的肚子里，它就拍着巴掌喊：「我也要学七十二变！」第二天一早，团团背着干粮，上山去找老山羊拜师——老山羊是山里最有名的师傅，谁想学本领都找它。团团一开口就说：「师傅，我要学七十二变，今天先学变大，明天学变小，后天学飞！」老山羊捋了捋胡子，问：「你打算练几天？」团团拍拍胸脯：「练到学会为止！」

老山羊没教它变大，也没教它变小，只教了第一招：变成一块石头。规则很简单，站在大青石旁边，一动不动，心里数一百下，数完还不被松鼠当成真石头来坐，就算没学会。团团第一天数到三十就痒得抓耳朵，松鼠没来；第二天数到五十，尾巴自己扫起了灰；第三天它干脆不数了，跑去追蝴蝶。晚上它坐在洞口想：七十二变有七十二招，一天学一招也要学两个月，我连一块石头都变不成，还学什么变？它决定不学了，把干粮袋子往老山羊门口一放，转身就走。

走到半山腰，它看见老山羊正教小野猪练拱土。小野猪拱一下，土只翻起一点点，它拱了整整一个下午，翻出的土堆成了一个小丘。老山羊看见团团，就说了一句：「它今天也没学会拱地，它只是比昨天多拱了一点。」团团愣在原地。它回去把干粮袋子拿了回来，问老山羊：「那我到底该怎么学？」

老山羊给它定了一个办法，就三条。第一条：每天只练一招，这一招学不会，第二天还练它，不许换。第二条：每天只练一个时辰，太阳偏西就收工，不许加练，也不许逃课。第三条：在洞口墙上刻正字，练一天刻一笔，谁也不许擦。团团觉得这办法太慢了，但它还是照做了。第一天刻一笔，练的还是变石头；第五天，松鼠第一次把它当成了真石头，一屁股坐上来，它憋不住笑出了声，松鼠吓得蹦起三尺高。老山羊说：「笑出来就算没学会，明天继续。」

团团在墙上刻了三十多笔，才学会第一招变石头。接着学变树，变树要连根站稳，它练了二十来天。再学变水缸，学变小石头，一招比一招难，墙上的正字一列一列地长。半年过去，团团学会了七招。它离七十二变还差得远，可它已经不再说「我要一天学会」这种话了。有一天，小兔子问它：「你为什么什么都能变一点？」团团指了指洞墙上密密麻麻的正字，说：「不是我厉害，是我每天只练一点，练的日子多。」

后来团团成了山里最耐心的小猴子，谁学本领半途而废，它就领谁去看那面墙。它说：孙悟空的七十二变也是一招一招练出来的，本领要练，坚持才行。墙上的正字不会骗猴子。

The Little Monkey Learns the 72 Transformations: A Method of Practicing a Little Every Day

At the foot of the mountain lived a little monkey named Tuantuan. Tuantuan loved listening to Journey to the West. When the story got to Sun Wukong turning into a bug and slipping into Princess Iron Fan's belly, he clapped and shouted: 'I want to learn the seventy-two transformations too!' Early the next morning, Tuantuan packed dried

food and climbed the mountain to apprentice under Old Goat – the most famous teacher in the hills, whom everyone went to for skills. Tuantuan's first words were: 'Master, I want to learn the seventy-two transformations. Today teach me to grow big, tomorrow to shrink small, the day after to fly!' Old Goat stroked his beard and asked: 'How many days do you plan to practice?' Tuantuan thumped his chest: 'Until I've learned it!'

Old Goat taught him neither growing big nor shrinking small. He taught only the first trick: turning into a stone. The rule was simple – stand beside the big blue boulder without moving, count to one hundred in your head, and if a squirrel still doesn't come and sit on you as if you were a real stone, you haven't learned it. On day one Tuantuan got an itch and scratched his ears at thirty; no squirrel came. On day two he reached fifty when his tail swept up dust by itself. On day three he stopped counting altogether and went chasing butterflies. That night, sitting at the cave mouth, he thought: seventy-two transformations means seventy-two tricks; one trick a day still takes two months, and I can't even become a stone – what am I learning? He decided to quit, left his food bag at Old Goat's door, and turned to go.

Halfway down the slope, he saw Old Goat teaching a little wild boar to root the soil. One push turned up barely any dirt, but the boar rooted the whole afternoon until the turned soil piled into a small mound. Old Goat spotted Tuantuan and said just one thing: 'He didn't master rooting today either. He just rooted a little more than yesterday.' Tuantuan froze on the spot. He went back, fetched his food bag, and asked Old Goat: 'So how exactly should I learn?'

Old Goat set him a method with three rules. Rule one: practice only one trick a day; if you haven't learned it, keep practicing it tomorrow – no switching. Rule two: practice only one shichen a day – quit when the sun tilts west; no extra practice, and no skipping. Rule three: carve tally marks on the wall at the cave mouth, one stroke per practiced day, and nobody may erase them. Tuantuan thought this was far too slow, but he did it anyway. Day one: one stroke, still practicing the stone. On day five, a squirrel mistook him for a real stone and plopped down on him; he couldn't hold back a laugh, and the squirrel jumped three feet high. Old Goat said: 'Laughing means you haven't learned it. Continue tomorrow.'

Tuantuan carved more than thirty strokes before he mastered the first trick, the stone. Next came the tree – becoming a tree means standing rooted, and he practiced twenty-some days. Then the water jar, then the little pebble. Each trick was harder than the last, and the tally marks grew column after column on the wall. Half a year passed, and Tuantuan had learned seven tricks. He was still far from seventy-two, but he never again said things like 'I'll learn it in a day.' One day a little rabbit asked him: 'How come you can turn into a little bit of everything?' Tuantuan pointed at the dense tally marks on the cave wall and said: 'It's not that I'm amazing. It's

that I practice only a little each day, and the days add up.'

Later Tuantuan became the most patient little monkey in the hills. Whenever someone gave up halfway on a skill, he took them to see that wall. He said: Sun Wukong's seventy-two transformations were trained one trick at a time too. Skills must be practiced, and persistence is what works. The tally marks on the wall don't lie to monkeys.

小猴子和它的三个「明天再说」

皮皮是小猴子，看完《西游记》戏台表演后，它逢猴就说要学七十二变。可它嘴里的七十二变，第一天在树上，第二天还在树上，因为练习的事它都推给了明天。它一共说过三次「明天再说」，每一次都连着一次「差一点」。

第一次「明天再说」发生在爬树课。猫头鹰师傅教「快爬」：从这棵树换到那棵树，不许落地。皮皮今天爬了三遍，第三遍差一点就接上了，它心想：今天有点累，明天再说，明天肯定能成。第二天它到了树下，发现昨天差一点的那个动作，手该抓哪根枝又忘了，只好从头再来。它这才明白：差一点的时候收手，明天要从「差很多」开始。练本领像烧水，烧到八十度熄火，第二天从冷水重新烧。

第二次「明天再说」发生在搬木头课。师傅让它把一根小木头从东坡搬到西坡，练力气和走直线。皮皮搬了一半，木头压在草坡上，它想：反正明天还要练，先放这儿吧。结果夜里下雨，木头滚进了沟里。第二天它得先捞木头，再搬木头，捞木头比搬木头还累。它明白了：今天的事放一半，明天先赔一半。

第三次「明天再说」发生在认路课。师傅让它闭眼从溪边走回洞口，数清楚过几块石头。皮皮走到一半睁开眼偷看，心想明天再认真闭眼走。结果第二天它数到第七块石头就乱了，因为昨天它根本没记住前六块长什么样。它明白了：偷的懒，明天要双倍补。

三次「差一点」之后，皮皮在戏台底下又看《西游记》。它这次注意到一个细节：孙悟空学艺时，师兄们都在玩，它在灶边劈柴烧火，劈了七年。皮皮问戏班老师傅：「孙悟空没说过明天再说吗？」老师傅说：「台上一场戏，台下七年柴。你只看见七十二变，没看见灶边的七年。」皮皮当晚回去，把三样没练完的事各做了一遍，每样只做五分钟。它发现五分钟比它想的短，做完还想做。第二天它主动提前到树下，第三天也是。它给自己定了个新规矩，不叫「每天练一个时辰」，叫「先做五分钟」——因为「明天再说」的反面不是「明天开始」，是「今天先做五分钟」。

后来皮皮没学会七十二变，它学会了爬树最快、搬木头走直线、闭眼认路。狐狸问它：「你不是要学七十二变吗？」皮皮说：「七十二变是别人的本领，我的本领是我自己一天一天攒的。」它现在劝别的猴子只用一句话：「你昨天说的『明天再说』，今天变成『差一点』了吗？」

The Little Monkey and Its Three 'I'll Do It Tomorrow's

Pipi was a little monkey. After watching the stage play of Journey to the West, he told every monkey he met that he would learn the seventy-two transformations. But his seventy-two transformations stayed in the tree on day one and still in the tree on day two, because he kept putting practice off until tomorrow. He said 'I'll do it tomorrow' three times in total, and each one was followed by a 'so close, yet not quite.'

The first 'tomorrow' happened in tree-climbing class. Master Owl taught 'fast climb': leap from this tree to that one without touching the ground. Pipi climbed three rounds that day; on the third he almost made the catch. He thought: a bit tired today, I'll do it tomorrow - tomorrow I'll surely make it. Next day he arrived at the tree and found he'd forgotten which branch his hand should grab in that almost-move, so he had to start over. That's when he understood: quit at 'almost,' and tomorrow starts at 'far from it.' Training a skill is like boiling water - kill the flame at eighty degrees, and the next day you start from cold water again.

The second 'tomorrow' happened in log-carrying class. The master told him to carry a small log from the east slope to the west slope, training strength and straight-line walking. Pipi carried half, propped the log on the grassy slope, and thought: I'll practice again tomorrow anyway, leave it here. It rained at night, and the log rolled into the ditch. The next day he had to fish the log out first, then carry it - fishing was harder than carrying. He understood: leave today's work half-done, and tomorrow you pay half back first.

The third 'tomorrow' happened in pathfinding class. The master had him walk from the stream back to the cave mouth with eyes shut, counting how many stones he crossed. Halfway, Pipi opened one eye to peek, thinking he'd walk seriously with eyes shut tomorrow. Next day he lost count at the seventh stone, because yesterday he had never actually memorized what the first six looked like. He understood: laziness stolen today must be repaid double tomorrow.

After three 'so close' moments, Pipi watched Journey to the West again beneath the stage. This time he noticed a detail: when Sun Wukong was apprenticed, while his senior brothers played, he split firewood and tended the stove by the kitchen - seven years of it. Pipi asked the old troupe master: 'Did Sun Wukong ever say I'll do it tomorrow?' The old master said: 'One show on stage, seven years of firewood offstage. You only see the seventy-two transformations; you never saw the seven years by the stove.' That night Pipi went back and finished all three unfinished drills, five minutes each. He found five minutes shorter than he'd feared, and he wanted more when they were done. The next day he arrived at the tree early on his own, and the day after that too. He set himself a new rule, not 'practice one shichen a day' but 'do

five minutes first' - because the opposite of 'I'll do it tomorrow' is not 'I'll start tomorrow,' it is 'do five minutes today first.'

Later Pipi never learned the seventy-two transformations. He learned to climb trees fastest, carry logs in a straight line, and find his way with eyes shut. A fox asked him: 'Weren't you going to learn the seventy-two transformations?' Pipi said: 'Seventy-two transformations are someone else's skill. My skills are ones I saved up day by day myself.' Now he persuades other monkeys with just one sentence: 'That "I'll do it tomorrow" you said yesterday - has it become "so close, yet not quite" today?'

老山羊师傅的收徒三问：半途而废的猴子都答不上来

山里谁都知道，老山羊收徒弟极严。不是考爬树，也不是考力气，它只问三个问题。想拜师的猴子站在它面前，三问答不上来，干粮袋子就背回去。它教过的猴子不少，半途而废的，全都栽在同一批误区上。老山羊自己数过，一共五个。

第一个误区：想学的不是「一招」，是「七十二变」。第一问「你想学哪一招」，十只猴子有八只答「七十二变」。老山羊的原话是：「七十二变是七十二招加在一起的名字，不是招的名字。你说不出要学哪一招，就等于没说学什么。」答不上来的猴子，练了三天就开始换招，今天变石头，明天变树，后天觉得变水缸更神气，每招都停在第一天的水平。老山羊管这叫「猴子掰苞谷」。

第二个误区：把「学会」当成一个突然的时刻。第二问「你打算练多少天」，猴子们最爱答「练到学会为止」。老山羊说：「这句话听着有志气，其实最危险。它等于说：哪天我『感觉到』自己会了，才算会。感觉靠不住。我的规矩是数日子：一招练满三十天，练没练会，墙上三十笔正字说了算。」半途而废的猴子都在等那个「突然会了」的感觉，等不到就走。

第三个误区：练不会的那天，什么也不做。第三问最关键：「练不会那天你做什么？」所有答错的猴子都沉默了。它们默认练不会就休息、就换招、就改天。老山羊的规矩是：练不会的那天照练，刻正字，只是第二天接着练同一招。它说：「半途而废不是从『不学了』那天开始的，是从『今天练不会，那就今天不练了』那天开始的。」

第四个误区：跟别人比进度。有只猴子学了十招，看见同门学了十二招，当天就下山了。老山羊知道后只说了一句：「它跟同门比了两天，自己少练了两年。」后来老山羊定了一条新规矩：不许问同门学到第几招，只许看自己墙上的正字。比进度偷走的不是时间，是明天还想练的那点念头。

第五个误区：只在有劲的时候练。有只猴子状态好时一天练三个时辰，状态差时一笔不刻。老山羊让它把三个时辰拆成每天一个时辰，拆完它反而多练了两个月。老山羊说：「本领不是从最猛的一天长出来的，是从最平常的一天长出来的。」太阳偏西就收工那条规矩，就是为了不让

猴子把明天累垮。

三问答不上来不要紧，老山羊允许猴子下山想清楚再来。但它有一条硬规矩：第二次来拜师，三问必须一字不差答上来——学哪一招、练多少天、练不会那天做什么。答上来的猴子，它一律收。多年下来，答上来的猴子没有一个半途而废。它们后来常回山上看那面墙，墙上刻的不只是正字，是一天一天不肯断的日子。本领要练，坚持才行——这句话不是道理，是墙。

Old Goat Master's Three Admission Questions: Every Monkey Who Gave Up Halfway Failed Them

Everyone in the hills knows Old Goat is extremely strict about taking apprentices. He doesn't test tree-climbing or strength. He asks only three questions. A monkey who comes to apprentice stands before him, and if it can't answer the three questions, it carries its food bag back down. He has taught many monkeys, and every one that gave up halfway stumbled on the same batch of mistakes. Old Goat counted them himself: five in all.

Mistake one: what they want to learn is not 'one trick' but 'the seventy-two transformations.' To the first question - 'which trick do you want to learn?' - eight of ten monkeys answer 'the seventy-two transformations.' Old Goat's exact words: 'Seventy-two transformations is the name of seventy-two tricks added together, not the name of a trick. If you can't name which trick you want, you haven't said you want to learn anything.' Monkeys who couldn't answer started switching tricks after three days - a stone today, a tree tomorrow, and the day after they decide the water jar looks grander, leaving every trick stuck at day-one level. Old Goat calls this 'the monkey snapping corn.'

Mistake two: treating 'mastered it' as a sudden moment. To the second question - 'how many days will you practice?' - monkeys love answering 'until I've mastered it.' Old Goat says: 'That sounds ambitious, and it's the most dangerous sentence of all. It means: I'll count as learned only on the day I feel I've got it. Feelings are unreliable. My rule is to count days: practice one trick for a full thirty days, mastered or not, and the thirty tally strokes on the wall decide.' Every monkey that quit halfway was waiting for that sudden 'now I've got it' feeling, and left when it never came.

Mistake three: doing nothing on the day you fail. The third question is the key one: 'What do you do on the day you fail?' Every monkey that answered wrong went silent. They assume that on a failed day they rest, switch tricks, or try another day. Old Goat's rule: on a failed day, practice anyway, carve the tally stroke, and keep practicing the same trick the next day. He says: 'Giving up halfway doesn't

begin on the day you say I quit. It begins on the day you say I failed today, so I won't practice today.'

Mistake four: comparing progress with others. One monkey had learned ten tricks, saw a fellow apprentice at twelve, and went down the mountain that same day. When Old Goat heard, he said only: 'It spent two days comparing with its classmate and lost two years of its own practice.' Old Goat then set a new rule: no asking classmates which trick they're on; look only at your own tally marks. Comparing progress doesn't steal time - it steals the little wish to practice again tomorrow.

Mistake five: practicing only when in the mood. One monkey practiced three shichen on good days and carved nothing on bad days. Old Goat had it split the three shichen into one shichen every day, and after the split it practiced two months longer. Old Goat said: 'A skill doesn't grow from your most heroic day. It grows from your most ordinary day.' The quit-when-the-sun-tilts-west rule exists precisely so monkeys don't exhaust tomorrow.

Failing the three questions is not fatal - Old Goat lets monkeys go down the mountain, think it through, and come back. But he has one hard rule: on the second visit, the three answers must be word-perfect - which trick, how many days, and what you do on the day you fail. Any monkey that answers, he takes. Over the years, not one monkey that answered gave up halfway. They often return to see that wall. The wall holds more than tally marks - it holds day after day that refused to break. Skills must be practiced, and persistence is what works. That sentence isn't a moral. It's the wall.