

Autobiography of Ben Franklin

Benjamin Franklin

What does Franklin gain—and risk—by treating virtue as something that can be tracked in a table?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	The virtue book turns morality into data
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Plan for Attaining Moral Perfection
START	I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues.
END	a clean book, after a thirteen weeks' daily examination.
PASSAGE ID	sec-bf-03

THE MOVE

Turn an abstract goal into a measurable system

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Franklin turns virtue into a system of categories, marks, and daily records. Measurement gives him feedback and visible progress, but it also risks reducing complex moral life to whether boxes remain clean.

MARK

Underline the parts of Franklin’s system that make behavior measurable—virtues, rows, columns, marks, repeated review. Circle the evidence that the system helps him notice patterns. Star the point where measurement may simplify something morally complex.

NOTICE

- What does the table let Franklin see that memory alone might hide?
- Which kinds of moral improvement fit easily into a checklist?
- What might a tracking system fail to capture about motives, context, or competing duties?

THINK

Answer provisionally: What does Franklin gain—and risk—by treating virtue as something that can be tracked in a table? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: What does Franklin gain—and risk—by treating virtue as something that can be tracked in a table? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	The table gives Franklin visibility, routine, and measurable feedback, but it risks reducing moral life to marks in boxes. Measurement helps him notice patterns while oversimplifying motive, context, and competing virtues.
EVIDENCE	Use the columns, virtues, black marks, weekly review, or clean-page goal, then identify one moral complexity the system cannot easily record.
WATCH FOR	Do not choose either 'the system works' or 'the system is silly.' The question asks what measurement gains and what it may lose.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

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What does Franklin gain—and risk—by treating virtue as something that can be tracked in a table?

START ANCHOR	I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues.
END ANCHOR	a clean book, after a thirteen weeks' daily examination.

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK - Underline the parts of Franklin’s system that make behavior measurable—virtues, rows, columns, marks, repeated review. Circle the evidence that the system helps him notice patterns. Star the point where measurement may simplify something morally complex.
2. NOTICE - What does the table let Franklin see that memory alone might hide? Which kinds of moral improvement fit easily into a checklist? What might a tracking system fail to capture about motives, context, or competing duties?
3. THINK - Answer provisionally: What does Franklin gain—and risk—by treating virtue as something that can be tracked in a table?
4. WRITE - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.