

# Moonwalking With Einstein Summary

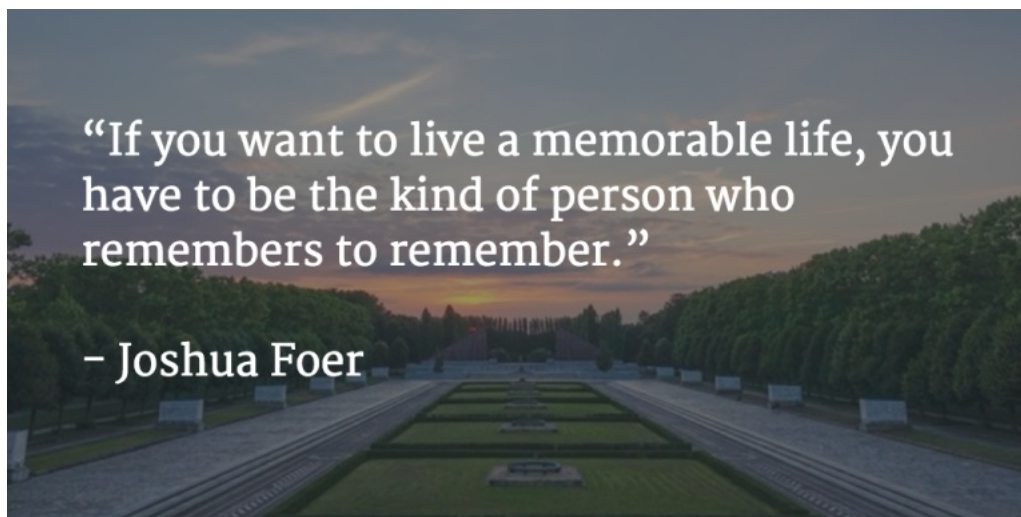
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 [fourminutebooks.com/moonwalking-with-einstein-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/moonwalking-with-einstein-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Moonwalking With Einstein* not only educates you about the history of memory, and how its standing has declined over centuries, but also gives you actionable techniques to extend and improve your own.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



It's safe to say that Joshua Foer has lots of memory credentials – he won the 2006 USA Memory Championship and set a new record for memorizing a deck of 52 cards: 1 minute and 40 seconds.

When he's not memorizing stuff, he works as a freelance writer, writing for The New York Times or The Washington Post, for example. He also has a TED talk.

Here's what I learned from the book summary:

1. The importance of memory has diminished from century to century.
2. Our now horrible memory isn't fixed.
3. 2 great techniques to instantly improve your memory are chunking and the memory palace.

Let's go!

**Lesson 1:** Memory has become less and less important throughout history.

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We didn't always have the attention span of a goldfish, but today it sure seems that way.

Imagine our memory had been so bad, once we finally became old enough to pass on knowledge from generation to generation.

We wouldn't be here today, had the elders not remembered a few important things.

No wonder: Anything that was written before 200 BC had no punctuation, **all texts were basically just word strings**. If you didn't already know what you were reading, reading was useless.

Once we could **store information externally**, physically store it anywhere in our house and access it at any time, the need to remember things significantly declined.

This tendency has continued ever since, and taken a major turn for the worse with the invention of smartphones and globally available internet.

## Lesson 2: However, our bad memory isn't fixed.

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However, just because our memory sucks now doesn't mean we can't improve it. You might know that **the average number of list items we can store in our short-term memory is 7**.

Test subject S.F. expanded his ability to memorize digits from 7 to 79 through over 230 hours of repeating number sequences to himself, a technique also called the phonological loop.

Similarly, it was found that chess players have a so-called chess memory. Because they are **an expert in their field**, they perceive the board differently and focus on the most important parts of it, based on their experience.

It's called **chess memory** because it is limited to chess and won't help them do better on general memory tests.

The lesson? **Through repetition, practice and becoming an expert in certain fields you can increase your capacity to remember things**.

## Lesson 3: Chunking and the memory palace are 2 great techniques to instantly improve your memory.

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Remembering more is one thing, and you're bound to hit an eventual ceiling there, but **recalling better and faster** is where it really gets interesting.

Can you remember 1117200112241999 just by looking at it once?

Neither can I, but I can remember 2 dates in a row: 11/17/2001 and 12/24/1999.

Fascinating, right? By creating 2 chunks of differently formatted information, memorizing a string of seemingly random numbers becomes easy.

If you now put these dates into **context**, it'll be even easier, for example 11/17/2001 was my friend's 11th birthday and the second date was Christmas 1999.

**The memory palace** is a technique where you **walk along a route you know really well, and put memories in certain locations along the way.**

For example, you could go through your childhood home and place the items from your shopping list on the kitchen table. Then, when you're in the grocery store, all you have to do is to mentally enter the kitchen and see what's there.

Once you see tomatoes, onions and potatoes on the table, you know what to shop for. You can even have multiple routes for different kinds of memories.

## Moonwalking With Einstein Review

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How We Learn was more about the "how" of memory formation and how you can use the way your brain works to your advantage.

Moonwalking With Einstein is all about the "what", as it gives you specific techniques to actively improve your memory.

Chunking (as with the date example) was a big "aha" moment for me. That and the memory palace stood out, so I included them here.

I love how Foer gives a little historic background, knowing why I should improve my memory (and why it's so bad in the first place), was a great angle to get me to want to get better at it, otherwise I would've just used the "we have smartphones now" argument.

That said, this summary is packed with a lot more techniques, interesting studies and examples from history. It was really hard to pick 3 things. I also never would've bought the book "blindly", but now it's on my list.

In this case I do recommend you read the summary first.

## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- Another great chunking example where you end up with just 1 chunk
- What elaborative encoding is and how it helps you recall your shopping list
- The distinction between memories we make consciously and unconsciously
- How school's could drastically improve student results by teaching them memorization techniques
- Why rote memorization isn't a cure-all and, if practiced too often, makes your memory worse
- The baker/Baker paradox and how you can better remember names
- How memory artists use images and emotions to remember long texts
- Which kinds of images and emotions to use for best retention
- More about the memory palace

## Who would I recommend the Moonwalking With Einstein summary to?

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The 6-year old elementary school girl, who just learned how to read, to give her a great head start in school and life, the 17 year old older brother, who refuses to learn for history class, because “Wikipedia knows everything”, and anyone who struggles to remember their shopping list.

[Learn more about the author](#)

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