

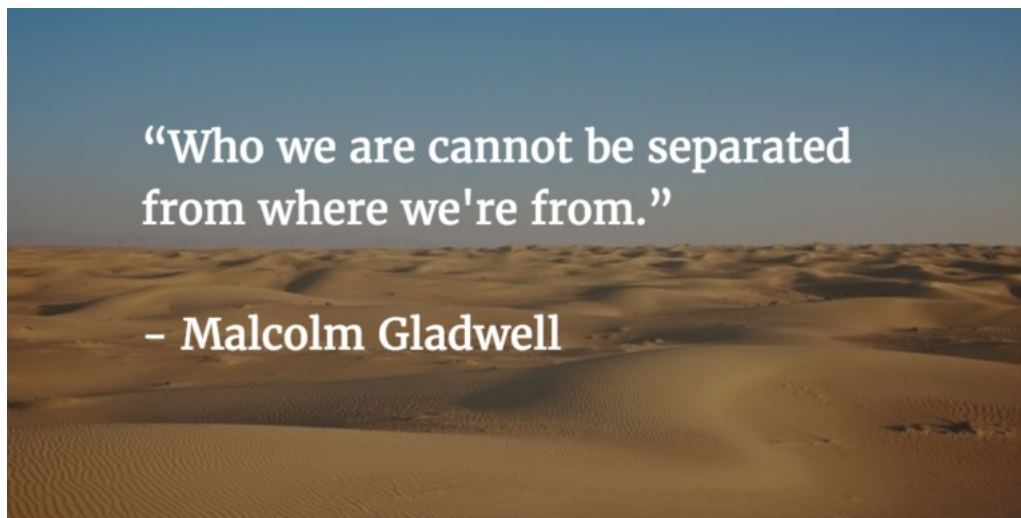
Outliers Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/outliers-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Outliers explains why “the self-made man” is a myth and what truly lies behind the success of the best people in their field, which is often a series of lucky events, rare opportunities and other external factors, which are out of our control.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Wow. This is one of those times where reading the summary on Blinkist first really pays off.

The only thing I knew about Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*, was that this is the book that the 10,000 hour rule came from. The rule says to become world-class at anything, you have to put in 10,000 hours of practice, which equals to about 5 years of uninterrupted 40-hour workweeks worth of practice. In reality, it's often closer to 10 years.

Therefore, I expected the book to be about deliberate practice and how success is in your own hands, if you work hard enough. Boy, was I wrong. The book argues the exact opposite.

Here are 3 great lessons from it:

1. After you cross a certain skill threshold, your abilities won't help you.
2. The month you're born in matters.
3. Asians are good at math, because where you come from matters.

Lesson 1: After you cross a certain skill threshold, your abilities won't help you.

To debunk the myth of the “self-made man”, which might be the most popular myth of our time, Gladwell first looked at how much your skills really influence where you end up in life.

Of course practice matters, and so do genetic predispositions in sports, but their influence is limited. As it turns out, **once you cross a certain threshold with your skills and abilities, any extra won't do you much good.**

For example, since the 1980s, the average height of an NBA basketball player has been 6' 7". Even if you grow to be 7' tall, those additional inches won't give you a huge advantage over other players.

Gladwell also looked at law school students and their performance. Some law schools lower their admission requirements for racial minorities, and even though these students tend to perform worse than their non-minority peers both before and in law school, **this gap completely disappears once they graduate.**

They make the same valuable contributions, get paid just as much and receive as many honors as their peers. Why?

Because once you've reached a certain level of legal expertise, other factors start to take over and influence your career, like social skills, how good your network is, and even catching a lucky break.

Lesson 2: Being born in the wrong month can put you at a disadvantage.

Remember when you saw an 8th grader in high school date a 10th grader? You were probably shocked! "He's 2 years older than her, that's insane!" – I still remember the comments, it was a huge deal in our school.

However, when you're 40 and take your wife to dinner with the neighbors, nobody would be surprised to hear she's 38, 42, or even several more years older or younger than you.

That's because **relative age matters, especially when you're young.** How old you are compared to your peers can give you a huge advantage or disadvantage, for example in sports.

Gladwell found out that most professional Canadian hockey players, who end up in the NHL, are born in the first half of the year. In fact, twice as many have birthdays in the first quarter as in the last.

That's because the annual cutoff date for youth teams is January 1st, meaning kids born in December have to compete with their friends who are almost a year older than they are. **When you're 8 years old, you stand no chance against a 9 year old** in terms of strength and speed – the difference is huge when a year makes up 12.5% of your entire life.

Think through your own life, this happens all the time. I remember being born early in 1991 always sucked in school, because 1990 was often the cutoff year for sports teams, due to the way the German school year is set.

Lesson 3: Asians are good at math, because where you come from matters.

If you think age is bad, **try imagining being born somewhere entirely different**. Warren Buffett always says he's been lucky to have been born into the United States at the time he was, because a few thousand years ago, with his kinds of genes, he'd have been some animal's lunch.

For example, Gladwell says there's a reason for the stereotype that "Asians are good at math." Several factors actually *are* in favor of Asians becoming relatively good at it.

First, Asian languages are set up so that children learn to add numbers simultaneously with learning to count. Second, hundreds of years of building a traditional culture around farming rice has instilled a great sense of discipline into Asian culture.

Unlike farming wheat or corn, farming rice is hard. It needs a lot more precision, control, coordination and patience. Rice farmers could also reap the full rewards of their work, whereas European farmers were often robbed of a big part of their harvest by greedy landlords and nobility, leaving them far less motivated to do their best.

Just like rice farming, math is hard. You have to stick with problems and let the gears in your brain crunch until you work it out. Europeans often give up a lot faster on hard math questions than their Asian peers, because neither math nor discipline are a part of their cultural legacy.

So yes, **where you're born matters**.

Outliers Review

I loved *The Tipping Point*, and I expect *Outliers* to be just as awesome. I'm really glad I read the summary first, because now I'm actually more interested in it than before – it feels refreshing to hear some counter-arguments to the self-made man for a change!

This is getting long, so I don't want to keep you from learning more, check out this summary and brilliant book!

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why Jeb Bush calling himself a "self-made man" is ridiculous
- Where the odds are manipulated for your chances to actually put in 10,000 hours of practice

- What practical intelligence is and why children from poorer families are often not lucky enough to be taught in it
- The “odd coincidence” of 3 software billionaires being born within a single year
- Why Korean Air wasn’t at fault for its terrible safety record and how they solved that problem
- What we can do to even out the playing field when we see it’s actually tilted in few peoples’ favor

Who would I recommend the Outliers summary to?

The 21 year old with a weakness for motivational talks, who’s sure if he just keeps working hard every day, he’ll eventually get his dream, the 38 year old Mum, who’s worried her child might get bullied in school for being younger, and anyone who thinks Asians are good at math is a stupid cliché.