

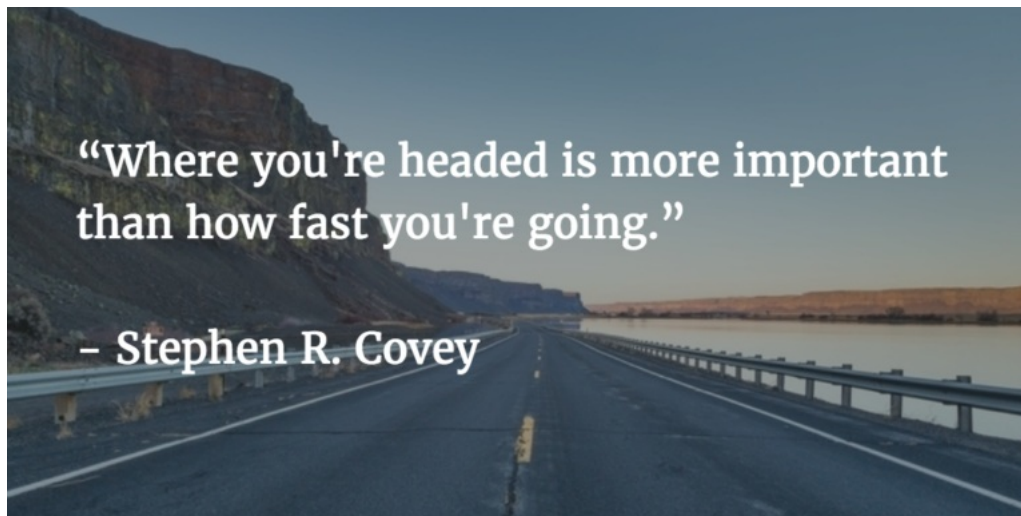
First Things First Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/first-things-first-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *First Things First shows you how to stop looking at the clock and start looking at the compass, by figuring out what's important, prioritizing those things in your life, developing a vision for the future, building the right relationships and becoming a strong leader wherever you go.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Another book from the “old but gold” category. Published in 1994, *First Things First* went against the even then popular “get more done in less time” approach and took a look at how you can work on what matters without burning yourself out.

Most of us live our lives by the clock. Appointments, to-do’s, urgent events and deadlines have us rushing from one thing to the next, while never getting to what actually matters, nor even stopping to think about what that is for us. This book will help you exchange the clock for a compass, that holds your values and principles, so you can be sure you’re facing true north at all times – because direction matters a lot more than how fast you’re going.

Here are 3 lessons to help you put first things first:

1. Forget what’s urgent and focus only on what’s important.
2. Imagine your 80th birthday to make decision-making a piece of cake.
3. Accept that success comes from interdependence and cooperation, not independence and competition.

Ready for some ruthless prioritizing? Let’s figure out your first things!

Lesson 1: Ditch the status symbol of urgency and attend to things by importance.

The battle of urgent vs. important is a recurring theme in Dr. Stephen R. Covey's work (remember the Eisenhower matrix from The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People?) and is the foundation of the principles in this book.

Our lives would be pretty easy if everything that was important to us was also urgent, but **most of the time these things are vastly different**. Dinner with your family, exercising and finding meaningful work are all important, but they're not as urgent as the client who's expecting to hear from you or the deadline at work.

There are two reasons we often choose what's urgent over what's important:

1. Urgency is a status symbol, especially in the Western world. If you're not busy, you must be lazy, that's the assumption.
2. Checking items off a long to-do list gives you a rush of adrenaline and dopamine, and therefore satisfies your biological needs.

In the long run, this leads to regret, but is actually something that's preventable. When you've committed to a night of board games with your kids, don't let your boss's sudden dinner invitation get you off schedule. **Say no to urgent things whenever you can**. You can't always skip work dinners, but you sure can prevent the distrust and disappointment in your family by sticking to the commitments you've made more often than not.

Lesson 2: Imagine your 80th birthday to make decision-making a piece of cake.

Have you ever met someone who found it really easy to make decisions and envied them? Chances are they had **a strong vision for the future**. Knowing where you want to be in 5 or 10 years makes aligning today's decisions with the future a much easier task than when you're just drifting around. Sometimes you might have to take a slight curve, but you'll always know how to get back on track.

For example, when Gandhi first started leading people, he was shy and a really bad and constantly nervous public speaker. But his vision of a society in which all people are equal made it easy to decide and practice speaking every chance he got, in spite of his fear, and become the person he needed to be to make his vision a reality.

Here's a great question to ask yourself and instantly make deciding a lot easier: **What would my ideal 80th birthday look like?**

Do you see a lot of friends and family at a charity dinner? Your business partners and staff? Or just the one person you love the most on a remote beach in Asia?

The goals you want to see yourself have accomplished when you look back when you're 80 are the goals you need to start on working *right now*.

Lesson 3: Switch from an independence and competition mindset to an attitude of interdependence and cooperation.

The lifestyle of urgency and rushing around is mostly a result of seeing ourselves as independent and in constant competition with everyone else. The only way to overcome it is to realize that **we all depend on one another and can only succeed if we cooperate**.

For example, even at Apple, there is no one person who can build an entire Macbook by themselves – or even a mouse. Not even Steve Jobs could. Only by coming together and cooperating as a team the people who build the processors can help those who build the case, and eventually combine everything into a great product.

Whether you're trying to build a business, improve your love life, learn more, leave a legacy or even just survive, you need other people to help you out along the way. Ditching the competition mindset will allow you to look for win-win solutions, instead of pushing people out of the way, resulting in both short-term and long-term benefits on your way to keeping your first things at the top of your priority list.

First Things First Review

Back when I first read this summary on Blinkist I remember thinking it was one of the best ones I've read so far, and that's still true. All time management tactics are only as good as the goals you want to achieve with them, so this really addresses the root of the problem, instead of just scratching the surface.

The summary gets you quite far, but after you've read *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* I suggest you get *First Things First* next, especially if you like Dr. Covey's work.

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- The difference between your life's clock and compass
- Which four basic human needs make up a quality life
- Three things you should identify for every goal to make sure it doesn't become a broken New Year's resolution
- Why you need as many perspectives as a photographer needs lenses

- How to be a strong personal leader
- Why compartmentalizing your life doesn't work
- What a jar full of rocks can teach you about inner peace

Who would I recommend the First Things First summary to?

The 43 year old sales manager, who thinks his job is really competitive, but could actually achieve better results when cooperating, the 70 year old, who still has 10 years left to create her perfect 80th birthday, and anyone who often wakes up feeling behind on their schedule already.