

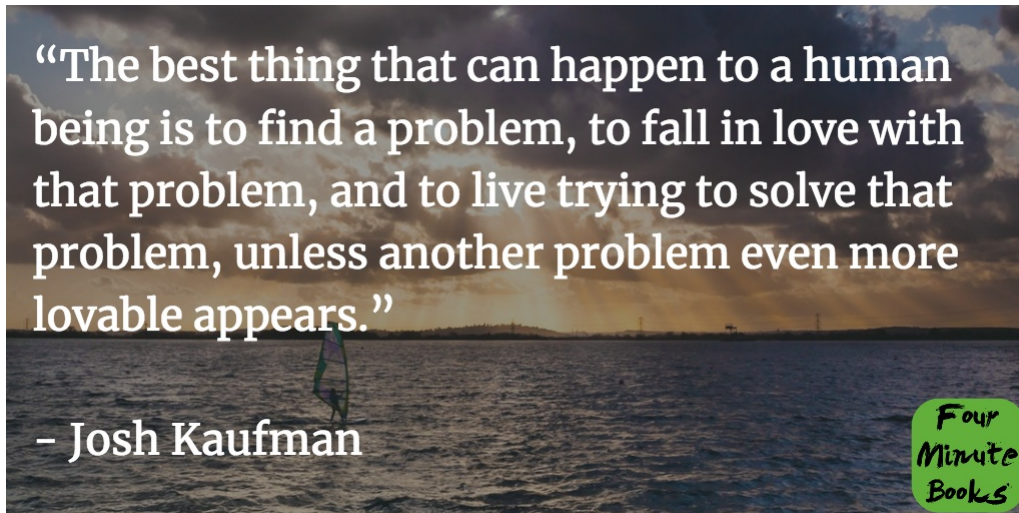
The First 20 Hours Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/the-first-20-hours-summary/

1-Sentence-Summary: *The First 20 Hours* lays out a methodical approach you can use to pick up new skills quickly without worrying about how long it takes to become an expert.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Here's a small selection of the things I hope to learn in my lifetime: producing electronic dance music, rapping, freerunning, kung fu, chess, streaming video games, freestyle dancing, and speaking Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Italian, and French at least somewhat fluently. Yeah, right. I don't have time to learn all those. Neither do you. We all have to make sacrifices.

Like Josh Kaufman, when he quit his job as a brand manager for Procter & Gamble in order to focus on writing and researching. After *The Personal MBA* turned into his full-time career, he noticed he also wanted to learn lots of things, like windsurfing, Go, or playing the ukulele. In order to reconcile his larger commitment with his curiosity, he developed a process that would allow him to quickly learn the basics of new skills. This way, he could decide what to double down on later on, without missing out on taking a swing at the things that matter to him.

He called this process *The First 20 Hours*, and that's what this book is about. It contains ten principles of rapid skill acquisition, ten principles of efficient learning, and examples of how Josh used both in his life. Here are the 3 that seemed most important to me:

1. Always make the next skill you're going to learn the one you're most excited about.
2. Think about emotional and real-life obstacles beforehand.
3. Initially, focus on quantity over quality.

You don't need to retire young to be able to try everything you want and the ship has not yet sailed. All you need is 20 hours and a plan on how to spend them. Here's that plan.

Lesson 1: Choosing your next skill to learn is easy: it must be the one you're most excited about.

One of my favorite Warren Buffett anecdotes is about what James Clear calls his 2-list strategy. When his pilot Mike Flint asked him how he could figure out his career priorities, Buffett told him to list his 25 biggest goals and then mark the top 5. After he'd completed the exercise, he expected Buffett to recommend he focus on the top 5 and spread the remaining 20 in between. But he didn't. Buffett told him to avoid the bottom 20 *at all cost*, for they'd only get in the way of his biggest dreams.

Whether what you want to learn is something you hope will change your career or just a passionate hobby, the same logic applies. Don't focus on what's "kind of interesting" and don't try to learn multiple new things at the same time. All-in. **Whatever you learn next should be the thing you're most excited about right now.**

This doesn't *guarantee* you'll stay motivated, but it sure maximizes the chances. The first few hours of learning are always the most brutal, because you're instantly confronted with the fact that, as a beginner, you suck. So the more fun you can have with it, the better.

Lesson 2: Identify both emotional and practical barriers in advance.

I like Josh's sixth principle, because it addresses an issue few people talk about when wanting to learn new things: irrational obstacles. When planning practice sessions, it's easy to imagine and anticipate practical problems, like a distracting phone, a long drive to the gym, etc. But **the biggest preventer of progress are the sessions you don't start at all** because you're afraid of failing, looking bad in front of others, and so on.

When Josh started windsurfing, he was worried about drowning and hypothermia, so he always brought someone along to watch him and bought a really good wetsuit. But he was also fretting about not having been in the water forever. Besides making a list of potential distractions and taking measures to prevent those, think about your fears, doubts, and other beliefs that might hold you back.

Why do you have them? When did you develop them? Do you really think they're true? Doubt your own doubts, so you can start learning with the enthusiasm of a child.

Lesson 3: In your first 20 hours, learn as much as you can, as fast as you can.

When I began to practice writing, I wrote whenever inspiration struck. I had a few initial ideas, but then, my imagination quickly "dried up." Except that's not how it works. As long as you sit down and *start thinking*, you'll always come up with something. It was only six months later that I set a goal of writing 250 words every day, but once I did that, I immediately picked up steam.

That's why I can't stress Josh's tenth principle enough: **When you first learn a new skill, practice as *much* as you can, as *fast* as you can.** It doesn't matter how many bad posts

you write, how often you fall into the water, or how many swings it takes until you make it onto the green. What matters is that you don't let disappointment get the better of you.

If you can make it through the first 20 hours, whether that's in 60-minute or 20-minute sessions, the worst is likely going to be behind you, and future failures won't affect you as much. Once you make that transition, you can start looking for quality in your efforts. It's bound to show up sooner rather than later.

My personal take-aways

This is a book for the semi-scientific self-experimenters out there. It's less methodical than Tim Ferriss's 4-Hour approach, but more structured than just a motivational kick in the pants. Ten simple steps, which you can follow with a few hours of work to get The First 20 Hours under your belt.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why setting a target performance level is important
- How to make sure you don't ask too much of yourself at first
- Where to find the time for your new endeavor
- What kinds of feedback mechanisms you can employ

Who would I recommend The First 20 Hours summary to?

The 34 year old consultant, who never got his sailing license, although he now has the money to finally pay for it, the 63 year old, who thinks her chance to become good at gardening has long gone, and anyone who struggles with structuring how they tackle new projects.