

Cribsheet Summary

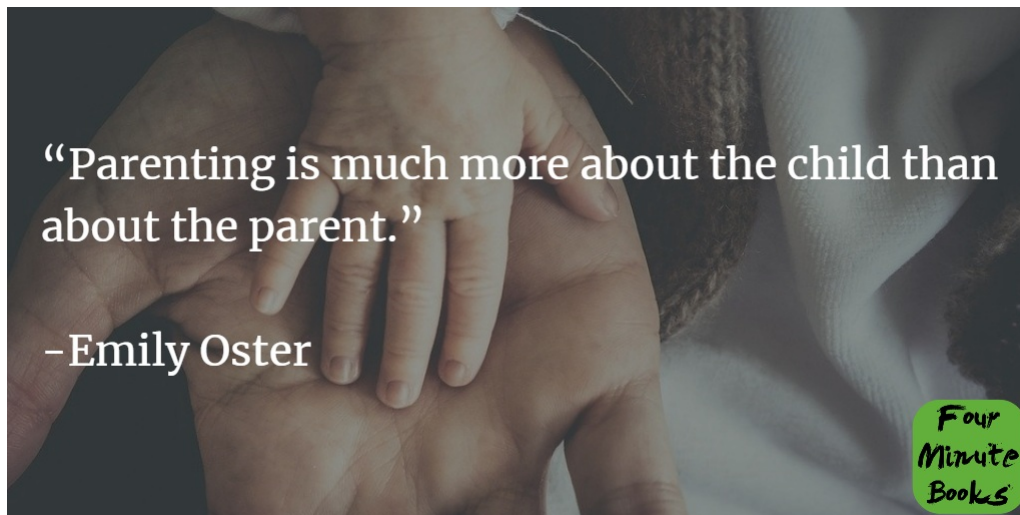


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Cribsheet* is a smart guide on how to make the best parenting choices for you and your child, by using an economic perspective and evidence-based advice based on scientific data.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Among all of the responsibilities we take on in life, becoming a parent is one of the most daunting. There are so many choices when it comes to parenting. Should I breastfeed? How about cosleeping? Should I stay home or get childcare? And this is only the beginning. Parenting involves years and years of tough choices. Wouldn't it be great to have some sort of guide to help you make these decisions?

There are tons of parenting books out there. Many complicated, some oversimplified, and some may not even be applicable to you. Why? Because not everyone's parenting situation is the same. So how can a book tell you exactly what will be right for you? How about instead of giving general advice, we teach *you* how to make smart, informed decisions?

Cribsheet: A Data-driven Guide to Better, More Relaxed Parenting is exactly that. Written by economist Emily Oster as a follow-up to her best-selling pregnancy book *Expecting Better*, she delves into the early years and gives her unique perspective on parenting. She dives into the current research on parenting and uses economic principles to teach you how to make a decision-making framework of your own. She'll help you be prepared for the big decisions— so you can relax and enjoy parenting.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons from the book:

1. Parenting decisions are personal to you.
2. Economic reasoning can help in building a framework for your decision-making.
3. Scientific studies can help guide your choices, but choose what studies you base decisions on wisely.

Are you ready to start making the best decisions for your family? Let's learn!

Lesson 1: The choices you should make as a parent are personal.

Right from the moment your bundle of joy arrives you'll have a lot of choices to make. And people are going to give you a lot of different, and often conflicting advice, whether you ask for it or not. But the problem is that there is no one right answer for everyone. This is where economics comes in.

Economists have to solve a lot of difficult problems. Economics won't give the same solution for every problem because it takes individual factors into account. Like an economist, you can use a cost-benefit analysis when making decisions.

An example of this would be if you were a working mom deciding between putting your child into a daycare or hiring a nanny. To weigh a decision like this, an economist would look at the benefits and the costs of the choices, which are called "inputs."

A nanny will typically be more expensive, making daycare to likely the better financial choice. But this will be different based on your financial circumstances. If you don't have tons of disposable income, the price difference will matter, whereas if you're rich, this difference will be trivial.

There are non-monetary inputs too, such as giving up the personalized care of a nanny. Or maybe the social aspect of daycare is important to you—this would be the cost of hiring a nanny. **So depending on what your inputs are, you can and should arrive at different decisions than other people.**

Lesson 2: Using economic reasoning, you can build a framework that will help you make parenting choices.

Economic reasoning involves looking at trade-offs. These trade-offs depend on two principles called *opportunity cost* and *marginal value*. If you are trying to decide to stay at home with your child or go back to work, you need to decide whether or not to pay for childcare. If your salary is low and/or the cost of childcare is high in your area, you could lose money. Or maybe the difference in your salary minus childcare isn't very much.

If you love your job or prefer independence, it could make sense to go back to work anyway. But if you don't need that extra money and want the time with your child, the opportunity cost of losing that time with your child is higher than the *marginal value* of the money you will receive for going back to work.

Another strategy to use is using a risk assessment. This can be helpful for non-monetary choices. Many people don't consider co-sleeping because studies suggest it is linked to a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS.

The risk of SIDS from co-sleeping is 0.14 for every 1,000 births. But in comparison, the risk from infant death by a car accident is 0.20 for every 1,000 births. A benefit of cosleeping is more sleep for mothers who breastfeed. **It comes down to your situation and preferences, but when you accurately know the risks and can assess whether it's worth it, you can make the best choice.**

Lesson 3: You can use scientific studies to guide your decisions, but look for the right ones.

Studies can be helpful in making decisions. But when searching out scientific data, be cautious of confounding variables-those extra variables unaccounted for that can affect the results.

You've probably heard that studies have found that breastfed kids have higher IQs than formula-fed ones. At first, it sounds like the breastmilk is what's making them smarter. But studies also show that women who breastfed tend to be more educated and come from a higher socioeconomic background.

These factors are probably confounding variables that are causing the higher IQ. When researchers controlled for these variables by finding women from the same background, the IQ difference is much smaller and less significant.

So what data is good then? The author recommends large-scale randomized controlled trials. They're best because of the large sample size and randomization.

The randomly assigned groups will have similar characteristics overall because they were placed into experiment and control at random, helping control confounding variables. In addition, studies that have a causal mechanism can give you even more confidence in causality. This is something that can scientifically explain the correlation.

You can also use observational studies if they are well conducted. **The larger the study, the more confidence you can have in it.** The best studies are those that compare siblings because you can be sure of the same background and control confounding variables.

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Cribsheet Review

Cribsheet is an invaluable tool for anyone who has kids or wants kids. It prepares parents with the perfect framework that can help them make decisions that will be personalized to them and their circumstances. Her unique perspective is refreshingly objective, and her writing comes off as reassuring instead of condescending. By the time you're done reading it, you will feel more confident to make the right decisions for your family.

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Who would I recommend the Cribsheet summary to?

The 29-year-old parents expecting their first child, the 33-year-old new mother contemplating whether or not she should go back to work, anyone who has kids or wants kids.