

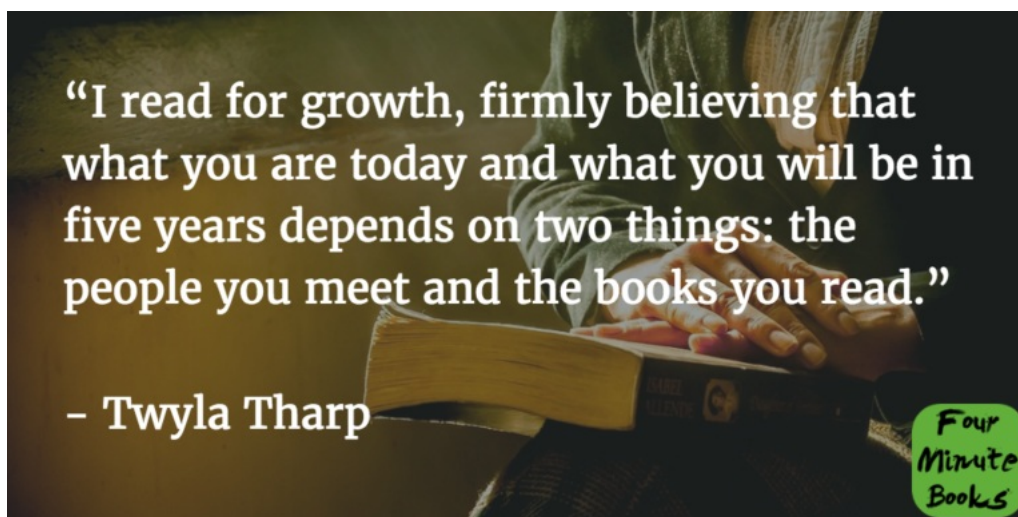
The Creative Habit Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Creative Habit is a dancer's blueprint to making creativity a habit, which she's successfully done for over 50 years in the entertainment industry.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Twyla Tharp is one of the world's most renowned dancers and dance choreographers. At 75 years old, she's not only choreographed, danced in and produced an enormous amount of plays and performances – for over 50 years she's run her own business too!

Needless to say, to stay creative for such a long time takes a lot of discipline and creativity itself, just so you can sustain the habit of coming up with new things.

The Creative Habit is her 2006 book in which she shares how she dealt with this tough challenge throughout her career. Here are my 3 favorite lessons:

1. Design a starting ritual for your creative process.
2. Use a project box to prepare your work and ground yourself.
3. Always end right in the middle of work for an easy entry the next day.

Want to build a creative habit that'll last you a lifetime? Let's get to work!

Lesson 1: Have a daily starting ritual to get your creative process going.

You can't be creative on command. No one can. Not even the world's most genius writers, musicians and painters. So how do they keep churning out hit after hit? Simple: they show up to work, every day. And then they accept that creativity itself ebbs and flows.

But whether they work or not is not up for debate. Inspiration or not, they put in time. Motivation or not, they create. Until doing the work has become a habit that feels as natural as breathing.

One thing you can do that'll tremendously help in building such a habit is to design a starting ritual for yourself. Stravinsky played the same fugue by Bach every morning. I make a cup of coffee before I sit down to start writing. Twyla herself gets up at dawn, grabs a coffee and then hails a cab to the gym.

It doesn't matter what your starting ritual looks like. As long as it signals you "it's time to go!" it does the job. Pick something, set it up and start your creative habit today.

Lesson 2: Use a project box to organize, prepare and recalibrate yourself at work.

Every time you start a new, creative project, you can take a simple cardboard box, write the name of the project on it, and then put all of your resources and materials into the box. Whatever you need to complete the project goes in there.

Why is this helpful? A couple of reasons:

1. It represents a commitment to the project. As long as the box isn't empty, you still have work to do.
2. It shows you how far you've come. Even if the project stalls, you can always open the box, look inside and see what you've done already.
3. It keeps everything you need neatly organized in one place.

Of course the box doesn't do the work for you. It's just a means of preparation and a token of your creative process. But it's still helpful.

It doesn't even have to be a box. You can use drawers, a folder, or even organize your stuff on your computer. **As long as it creates order and commitment, it'll work.**

Lesson 3: Make it easy to pick up work again by leaving right in the middle of something.

This trick comes from one of the most famous authors of all time: Ernest Hemingway. Combined with your starting ritual, it'll really help get your hands, feet, or whatever you use to create your work, moving.

If you **leave your work right in the middle of something, where you exactly know what you want to do next**, picking up again will be really easy.

For example, Hemingway would always finish his writing sessions in the middle of a sentence. That way, when he returned the next day, he could be sure to know what to start with: wrapping up what he wrote the night before.

This could mean stopping a choreo at step 5 out of 8, leaving the refrain of a new song unfinished, or only mapping out your biking route 75%, before you put the pen down. Of course, you don't have to risk anything: simply write down the next few steps of the direction you wanted to take the project in on a note and leave it at your workspace.

This way, when you begin again one day later, you'll remember what you wanted to do and have no problems to restart your creative habit.

The Creative Habit Review

I'm not a dancer. I don't know much about ballet. But that doesn't mean I can't learn from someone who's spent their entire life doing it. Whatever the occasion may be, if you have a chance to learn from someone who's been in an industry for over 50 years, you should take it. Doing great work for so long comes with many life lessons that extend way beyond what's important in any given field. When mentors talk, listen. No matter what you want to be mentored in. Thumbs up for *The Creative Habit*.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why all artists must be self-aware
- What the question how you'd change your name will teach you about yourself
- Another good habit for creatives to have
- Why you need a good memory
- What "scratching" is and how it'll help you come up with new ideas
- Why true creativity only happens after you let go of your original plan
- How Charles Goodyear invented tires by accident
- What the spine of your work is and how it helps you steer the course
- How to dig yourself out of a rut
- The difference between private and public failures and why both are important

Who would I recommend The Creative Habit summary to?

The 13 year old ballet dancer, who's not sure if she should go for the big leagues or give up when school gets serious, the 47 year old father, who secretly kicks himself for being on the softball team, but not making time for his novel ideas, and anyone who feels blocked every time they sit down to do something creative.