

The Checklist Manifesto Summary



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1-Sentence-Summary: *[The Checklist Manifesto](#) explains how checklists save lives and teaches how to implement them correctly.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:

A graphic featuring a quote overlaid on a background image of a hand holding a pen and checking off items on a checklist. The quote is in white serif font.

“Under conditions of complexity, not only are checklists a help, they are required for success.”

– Atul Gawande



One day in San Francisco, California, a medical team began operation on a man for what they believed was a shallow stab wound. Unfortunately, however, due to errors the surgeons only noticed the larger, foot-long wound after beginning surgery. The man was at a Halloween costume party and was impaled by a bayonet. The entire staff present forgot to double-check what kind of injury the man had.

Contrast this experience to one of author and surgeon Atul Gawande during a surgery. Because of the Safe Surgery Saves Lives program, which Gawande helped establish himself, his team used a checklist before beginning. As part of that process, they checked expected blood loss during the surgery. When the team discovered they had no extra blood, they quickly fixed this easily forgettable requirement. During the surgery, Gawande accidentally made an incision in the wrong place. The extra blood procured because of the checklist saved the patients life.

Checklists save lives, especially in highly complex fields. With the enormity of what we know and can do, no individual or [team](#) can possibly remember everything. Implementing a checklist ensures that professionals don't forget the easily missed, yet critical items. [The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right](#) will teach you the why and how of using checklists.

Here are the 3 greatest lessons this book teaches about checklists:

1. Using a checklist will help you avoid common mistakes with serious consequences.
2. Make your checklists short, clear, and only showing the essentials.
3. There are various applications for checklists in whatever occupation you have.

Get ready to learn how to use checklists to check stress off your list! Let's get started!

Lesson 1: You will avoid serious mistakes by implementing a checklist.

If you were receiving treatment for a heart attack in the 1950s, you may have only had to take meds and be on bed rest. But today there are multiple ways of treating a heart attack and we can even prevent them, too. While we are saving lives, this [advancement](#) comes with a cost. The added complexity makes it more difficult for professionals of any kind to make the right decisions consistently

I began my career as a Civil Engineer. In this field, there are numerous code requirements to remember. For the work I do, as many as six different codes, with hundreds of pages *each* may apply on just one job. I found that with so much to remember, it was difficult to catch each thing that I needed to do on each job. This problem isn't one that only Civil Engineers have. **Multiple fields of work have a hard time remembering, [organizing](#), and applying the correct know-how in the correct way.**

The solution to all of these problems is to use a checklist. Though simple, checklists are powerful tools to list all the steps necessary to complete a procedure. They contain the most commonly skipped requirements for accomplishing a complex task. In this way, checklists act as a safety net to make sure we don't miss what seems obvious.

Lesson 2: Focus on the essentials and be short and clear when creating checklists.

I love writing spreadsheets. Financial-planning, [goal-setting](#), [habit-tracking](#), and numerous other kinds of in-depth spreadsheets litter my Google Drive right now. If it were up to me to write a checklist for everything I do, I would likely make it too complex. But the power of checklists comes in their being concise, [focused only on what's essential](#).

When creating a checklist, your goal is not to write an in-depth guide. Rather, focus on the vital few things that you or your team must complete to do the procedure correctly. Think of the items that you may have commonly missed in the past and be sure to include them. You only need five to nine items on a checklist for it to be effective. **Most people easily become distracted after about a minute of reading a list, so keeping it short will help you stay focused.**

Also make sure that the application of your checklist is clear to those who will be using it. There are two kinds of checklists:

- “READ-DO” checklists are the kind where you read the step first *then* complete it.
- “DO-CONFIRM” checklists are used by finishing each step then confirming it's done.

Knowing which type you're using is vital to the successful application of checklists.

Lesson 3: Whether you are a chef or a stock market investor, checklists will help you become more effective.

It's easy to see the usefulness of checklists in the medical field, or even engineering. But don't discount their power to help your team, or even you as an individual, become more effective. No matter what type of intense environment you work in, using a checklist will help you be better at what you do.

Chef Jody Adams, for example, uses checklists at the Rialto Restaurant in Boston to help her know what to do and when. Using checklists for recipes and special customer requests allow Adams to consistently serve exquisite meals to customers. Her efforts have led to many awards and placements on “best-restaurant” lists.

Using a similar process of writing down patterns to help people make decisions also benefits stock market investors. One anonymous [investor](#) who goes by the name of “Cook” uses a checklist to help his team determine if they will invest in a stock. Because of the added efficiency this system brings, Cook has a leg up on the competition. He and his team couldn’t evaluate potential investments so quickly if it weren’t for a checklist.

Now that you’ve seen how checklists benefit people in other fields of work, how might using one benefit you? Whether it’s on an individual or team level, using these principles will help you become more efficient!

The Checklist Manifesto Review

The Checklist Manifesto is fascinating! Who knew that implementing such a [small thing](#) can have such a significant impact? I can see these principles helping everyone, individuals and teams alike, and I’m excited to try using them myself!

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Who would I recommend The Checklist Manifesto summary to?

The 48-year-old doctor who still forgets all of the steps of important procedures, the 31-year-old engineer who would like to feel more thorough on their jobs, and anyone who wants to develop a more simple and effective way to do things correctly.