

The Art Of Learning Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/the-art-of-learning-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *The Art Of Learning* explains the science of becoming a top performer, based on Josh Waitzkin's personal rise to the top of the chess and Tai Chi world, by showing you the right mindset, proper ways to practice and how to build the habits of a professional.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I first learned about Josh Waitzkin from Tim Ferriss, who not only had him on his podcast a couple times, but also tried to learn Brazilian Jiu Jitsu under his guidance in an episode of his TV show The Tim Ferriss Experiment.

Josh is incredibly passionate about learning itself, more so than about any particular skill field or industry. That also explains how he could just quit chess at the age of 23, in spite of being one of the most promising players of all time and jump straight into martial arts.

In 2008, he wrote *The Art Of Learning* to share what he's learned about what it takes to become a top performer – regardless of whether you're particularly talented, or not.

Here are 3 lessons about the secrets of top performance:

1. If you want to win, you have to lose first.
2. Don't turn distractions into excuses – use them to get better.
3. Improve your recovery rate with HIIT.

Committed to kicking the world's ass in something? Let's look at the lessons from lead performers!

Lesson 1: Losing comes before winning (not just in the dictionary).

When Josh was 10 years old, he started to play in adult chess tournaments. For the first time, he started actually losing a bunch of matches. Of course, Josh was frustrated. But it was only through this frustration that he found a major flaw in his chess skills: he couldn't concentrate long enough to compete in serious tournaments.

Adult chess matches are twice as long as the one in children's leagues, so Josh started working on his endurance.

The only way to get better is to compete with people, who are better than you. But competing against better people *always* means losing.

This makes losing a necessary precursor of winning. However, especially when it comes to children, we're very focused on a mindset of non-competition today. The answer is somewhere in the middle. Losing too much is bad, but so is not losing at all.

When you or your kid lose in something that's important to you, do this:

1. Remember that it's okay to be disappointed.
2. Be proud of yourself for showing up in the first place.
3. Identify where to improve in the short term.

Always use failure to set new short-term goals, which fuel a long-term goal, and you'll never get discouraged from any particular loss.

Lesson 2: Stay in the soft zone to accept distractions and perform in spite of them.

Sometimes it gets really loud in the café I usually work in these days. Business meetings, students venting about their latest exam, loud coffeemakers. On some days it feels very distracting and I get annoyed, because it feels like the world won't let me focus.

Josh would call this being in **the hard zone**. Our anger takes over and we can't perform at the level we're used to. But in reality, great performers can also deliver when conditions aren't ideal. For example, soccer players have to be able to execute a free kick or penalty, even when thousands of people are raging in the stands around them.

If you embrace distractions instead, and learn to perform while they're present, you get better at being in **the soft zone**. In this state, you can ignore or even use disruptions to build mental resilience and make your brain stronger.

For example, Josh once lost an important chess match, because he had a catchy song stuck in his head. Learning from the loss, he started practicing at home with music playing, eventually aligning his thoughts with the rhythm. This worked so well, that he started singing songs in his head before tournaments *on purpose*, so he could trigger this new flow state.

Lesson 3: High-intensity interval training will cut your recovery rate down fast.

If you're a runner, or do cardio on a regular basis, you might have heard of HIIT before. It stands for high-intensity interval training – short bursts of very tough exercise, followed by a brief period of recovery time.

For example, if you're running laps on a track, you could run one lap at your regular pace, then sprint as fast as you can for 10 seconds when you reach the start/finish line, and finish the rest of the lap at your normal pace again. The more you repeat this process, **the quicker your heart rate returns to its base level and the longer it takes for it to reach really high levels.**

Whether you're big on sports or not, integrating some form of HIIT into your schedule will be well worth your time: Researchers at the Human Performance Institute have found that **this skill translates from physical to mental** and will help you reduce stress and recharge after exhausting your mental capacities.

The Art Of Learning Review

A very cool glimpse into the world of high-performers. Screw talent, it's all about practicing and practicing right. Whether you're trying to become a writer, better manager or want to dominate in a sport, *The Art Of Learning* can give you a few valuable principles to make your practice more deliberate. Go Josh!

[Read full summary on Blinkist >>](#)

[Free Preview >>](#)

[Learn more about the author >>](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- The one skill you need to have at hand every time you lose
- What an entity approach to learning is and why it sucks
- How you know that your practice is taking effect
- Why baby steps are the best steps
- The reason why all top performers have a routine

Who would I recommend The Art Of Learning summary to?

The 13 year old, who's passionate about basketball, but recently wanted to quit, because his team lost a game, the 49 year old librarian, who's often frustrated when people make noises at work, and anyone who's not doing any endurance training at the moment.

