

# You Are Not A Gadget Summary

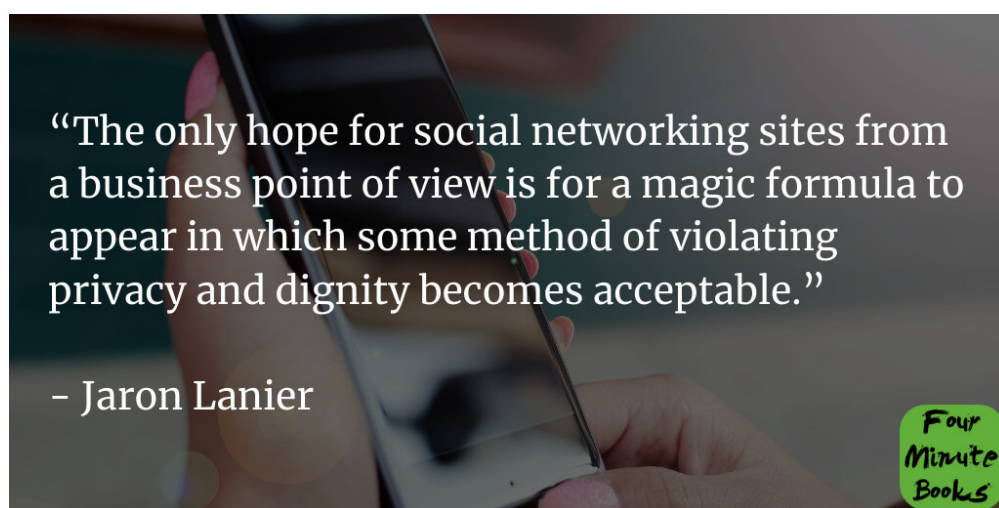
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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *You Are Not A Gadget will help you get a better grasp on how much the internet undervalues your individuality by explaining the history of the digital world, the worrying path that it has put us on, and how we might make changes as a society to fix these problems.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Would you say that technology makes society better or worse? It might seem obvious that life is easier because of the interconnectedness and efficiencies it allows for. It's easier to reach out to people, work, entertain ourselves, and so much more.

But is there a darker side to these advancements that we're overlooking?

What happens off-screen to people after they've taken a beating on a Twitter thread? How much worse is bullying now that it's taken on this new cyber component? And what effect does Instagram's fakeness have on people's mental health?

These seem like the obvious problems with the internet. But most people don't realize there are also issues with data mining, devaluing people, and not giving artists real credit for their work, or an opportunity to make a living from it, just to name a few.

Jaron Lanier is here to explore these concepts with his book *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*. You'll start to understand why the internet might not be so great as it is right now, but also discover what we can do to get it to its full potential.

Here are the 3 greatest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. Technology is changing the value of individuals and putting people into boxes.
2. The internet facilitates dangerous mob behavior because of the anonymity it provides.
3. If we change the way the online world works we might be able to re-focus on the worth of human beings as opposed to the hive mind it promotes.

Let's take a deep dive into the workings of the internet and how it's affecting your life in ways you can't imagine!

## **Lesson 1: Because of the advancement of technology, we are putting people into boxes and undermining the value of individuals.**

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Between the internet, digital media, and our devices, there are countless pieces of information floating around. Some people even think we'll eventually compile all of it together into one big unit of wisdom!

If this happens, we might see computers becoming smarter than people. It's already happening now in some cases. Just take the computer that beat Garry Kasparov, a chess champion, at his own game, for instance.

There are people who believe that events like this prove that computers are already smarter than humans. **The problem is, this kind of deification of technology makes us overlook its limitations.** And even worse, it limits people's individuality.

Take a typical Facebook profile for example. All you can put there are a few things about what you like, where you went to school, and your relationship. The truth is, people are a lot more complex and unique than this, but Facebook overlooks all that.

Consider also the fact that computers require our input to tell them what to do. If we take that component away they're just scraps of metal.

We should stop putting technology on a pedestal and re-focus on what's most important. Instead, it's time to look back to our own brains to reinforce our individuality and creativity.

## **Lesson 2: Anonymity on the internet can be dangerous unless you provide some limitations for it.**

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It's no secret that the internet is full of arguments. Just go to any YouTube comments section or Reddit thread and it's obvious. Some people start these fights on purpose, and the mob mentality doesn't help when things get heated.

The unfortunate truth about this online world is that we've baked this type of behavior into it by allowing people to remain anonymous on many sites. That means anyone can get on the internet and say whatever they want without taking any responsibility.

Some even make accounts to deliberately voice their heated opinions. And whether it's a single troll or a group of people attacking one person, the consequences can be awful.

**Korean actress Choi Jin-Sil even committed suicide after the harassment she experienced online got so severe.**

Wherever you go online it seems that you're never far from somebody that uses anonymity to be rude. Can we fix this problem? Some sites may have resolved it by incentivizing people to keep a good reputation but still stay anonymous.

eBay, for instance, has rating systems that motivate people to be on their best behavior, without making it so they have to reveal their true identity. Reddit also implemented points systems that encourage people to remain civil.

### **Lesson 3: We must explore options to improve the way the internet works to renew our appreciation of individuals.**

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Do you remember life before the internet? While that time may seem long gone, it's not that far behind us, and the web is relatively new. That means we can mold it to be whatever we want, including a way to promote intelligence and individuality.

One approach to shape the net toward these goals is to help make sure that people's intellectual property gets protected.

We might do this by making only one copy of everyone's work, protecting it, and then putting it behind a paywall. Those that make content would get fairly paid and recognized for their work.

Another unique idea is called the songle. It's a USB stick that you can plug into your computer and listen to music but only while it's inserted into your computer.

The idea the author presents that I like the best is something that Medium.com is already doing well. This blogging platform uses membership fees to compensate writers for their work based on how much people interact with it.

The author suggests something similar. **He says we could place a small tax on the internet based on how much data you use at different sites then distribute that money to those that created the content on them.**

Whatever we do with the internet, our future is bright if we use it right!

### **You Are Not A Gadget Review**

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I'm really on the fence about *You Are Not A Gadget*. On the one hand, it's good to pay attention to the negative side of the internet and the connectedness it brings. But on the other hand, the book felt a little too pessimistic for my tastes. I did like the ideas it brought up about paying creators better for their work, but I'm not sure any of the solutions the author presented would work.

### **Who would I recommend the *You Are Not A Gadget* summary to?**

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The 64-year-old who wants to get a better understanding of how technology is changing the world, the 37-year-old blogger that would like a better way to get paid for her work, and anyone that wants to know how the internet is affecting artists' work.