

# Digital Minimalism Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Digital Minimalism* shows where to draw the line for our engagement with technology, and how taking a digital Sabbath is the key to living a more focused life in an increasingly noisy world.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



I'm convinced that, had I not made that decision, I would not have written this book summary you now read. Surely someone would write it, just not me. I feel that I have a long way to go to realize the place of digital freedom that Cal Newport, author of *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World* talks about in this book. But with the roadmap that he's succinctly laid out for us, the goal seems more attainable than ever before.

*Digital Minimalism* ascribes to the basic principles Marie Kondo has so passionately promoted, that less is more and better living comes from less. Does this website, app, or social media platform support what you value? It's about maximizing purpose while reducing the cost of time and energy.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons about having a better relationship with technology:

1. Digital minimalism centers on 3 principles – clutter is costly, optimization is vital, and intentionality is satisfying.
2. Plan downtime events which are a source of inward joy and deep contemplation.

3. Quick fixes and “life hacks” might prompt a healthy new habit, but they don’t promote sustainable change.

Can we make changes that are sustainable to help liberate us from the strangling shackles of email, social networks, smartphones, and screens? Let’s dive in and find out!

## Lesson 1: Follow the principles of New Economics, the Law of Diminishing Returns, and Amish wisdom.

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Henry David Thoreau promoted the first principle in his book, Walden. It’s based on New Economics, which includes examining life costs when you are calculating the actual worth of something. An example of this would be if you’re considering purchasing a car to drive into town rather than walking.

The price you’d pay for the car isn’t the only cost involved. You need to consider factors such as the effort and stress it would take to earn this money. There’s also keeping the car secure and maintained. When weighing all the factors, maybe the healthy practice of walking the few miles into town is a better choice in the end. We should apply this same thoughtfulness to the digital media we let into our life.

The second component is called the Law of Diminishing Returns. **This principle illustrates that you can’t just continue adding stuff and expect continued improvement.** One example is my manager at work. When there’s a big project, her solution is to round up a small army of people to get it done. I always say no and instead ask for a team of two or three good workers. I know that too many people helping is only going to be a mess. We would start bumping into each other, and the whole process would take longer.

We can look to the Amish for another principle to help us have healthier relationships with technology. These people don’t reject it outright. Instead, they test and question new ideas and products first. If the item passes their test, they will gladly use it. If not, it will be banned. We should apply the same value-based approach to digital technology.

## Lesson 2: One aim of digital minimalism is to make room for more high-quality time, while working to limit low-quality activities.

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Aristotle pointed out that to live the good life, one must have the downtime needed for deep contemplation, for no other reason than to enjoy the thinking process itself. Actions that provide a source of inward joy are vital to a satisfying life.

Newport refers to these as high-quality leisure, while calling distractions such as social media and absent-minded bingeing low-quality recreation. **We should strive to make as much space for the best projects by making concerted efforts to reduce the less impactful ones.**

Hobbies requiring strenuous effort might sound tiring, but you'll often come away feeling satisfied and energized. Physically engaging with three-dimensional objects is also beneficial. YouTube tutorials, though still on a screen, can help you learn how to build a backyard pond, play an instrument, or complete a woodworking project.

I consider writing a high-quality endeavor that brings me joy. I invested in an 18-hour video tutorial called *Write Like a Pro*, to help me reach my writing goals. For this, I needed to make incremental investments of time on my laptop. But this screen time has proven to be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling investments I've ever made. If it weren't for making decisions like giving up Facebook, I wouldn't have the time to put into this rewarding course.

### Lesson 3: There are a variety of practices that are proven to have the kind of meaningful value that is missing from most digital-based habits.

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As with any habit that you are working to improve, the best plan isn't going cold turkey to eliminate the bad behavior. This can easily backfire and result in a relapse of old behavior patterns.

The problem with many quick fixes is that they don't set you up for sustainable change over the long term. Digital minimalism has a variety of recommended practices that prove to have the kind of meaningful and rewarding value that is absent from many digital-based activities.

Solitude is one recommendation that I value. I'm old enough to remember what life was like before the smartphone. But anybody who was born after 1995 grew up with these devices and now spends hours every day on them. **With this smartphone addiction comes a shocking correlation of depression, eating disorders, loneliness, and anxiety.**

Another term for what this group, dubbed iGen, is suffering from is "solitude deprivation." Spending time alone is crucial for helping us process emotions. Reflecting on relationships and giving the brain some calm and clarity are also essential to general mental health and well-being.

The good news is that solitude is easy to find, if you want it. We can find it even in a crowded cafe or a train. It's about being alone with and mindful of our thoughts.

## Digital Minimalism Review

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You could easily devour *Digital Minimalism* in a couple of sittings. I found the book very revealing – it was like looking in a mirror at times. Yes, I pick up my smartphone constantly, I’m always checking for new text messages and emails. It’s a bit like junk food, we know it’s unhealthy, but it’s become a habit. This book has a lot of good ways to break free.

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## Who would I recommend the Digital Minimalism summary to?

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The 24-year-old grad student who’s hopelessly addicted to *Fortnite*, the 55-year-old multimedia specialist who spends multiple hours trolling for “likes” on Facebook, and anyone interested in socializing with real-life people.