



Swamped by Too Much Info? Here's How to Beat the "Noise Bottleneck"

信息太多，如何克服“噪音瓶颈”

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At the start of the 19th century, roughly half of the British population couldn't read. This meant that the news and information you got mostly came through **chatter** and **hearsay**. In the 20th century, when the vast majority of the developed world could read, people were still getting their news from one or a few sources. You'd buy a certain newspaper or settle down to watch a particular news channel you liked. Fast forward to today, and things have changed **drastically**. Newspapers are increasingly unpopular and unsuccessful, with many local or smaller papers closing. **Likewise**, **cable** news channels are all finding it hard to keep their **ratings** — losing around a third of their viewers between 2020 and 2021.

19 世纪初，大约一半的英国人不识字。这意味着你得到的新闻和信息大多来自闲聊和道听途说。20 世纪，绝大多数发达国家的民众都识字了，人们仍然从一个或几个来源获取新闻。人们会买一份特定的报纸，或者静下心来观看喜欢的某个新闻频道。快进到今天，事情发生了翻天覆地的变化。报纸逐渐被冷落，许多地方性的报纸或小报关闭。同样，有线新闻频道也很难保持收视率——在 2020 年至 2021 年期间失去了约三分之一的观众。

What we have, instead, is an always-in-your-pocket, 24/7 news cycle. When you open a news app, you'll notice a brief moment when the "old news" is still there. In a flash, your timeline is refreshed, and the ancient history of a few hours ago is **swept** away for the next "breaking news". Every second, we are presented with new information. Every day, we have "five **essential** articles to read." It's **relentless**, but you better **keep**

chatter ['tʃætər] *n./v.* 喋喋不休，唠叨 | Jane's constant chatter was beginning to annoy him. 简无休止的唠叨开始使他心烦。

hearsay ['hɪrseɪ] *n.* 道听途说，传闻 | We can't make a decision based on hearsay. 我们不能根据传言做决定。

drastically ['dræstɪkli] *adv.* 急剧地，彻底地 | Output has been drastically reduced. 产量已急剧下降。

likewise ['laɪkwəɪz] *adv.* 同样地，类似地 | 'Have a good weekend.' 'Likewise.' “周末愉快。”“你也一样。”

cable ['keɪbl] *n.* 有线电视；电线，电缆 | We can receive up to 500 cable channels. 我们可以接收多达 500 个有线电视频道。

rating ['reɪtɪŋ] *n.* 收视率，收听率；等级，级别 | The show has gone up in the ratings. 这个节目的收视率上升了。

sweep [swi:p] *v.* 打扫；卷走，冲走；迅速传播 | Rumours of his resignation swept through the company. 他辞职的传言在全公司

up.

相反，我们如今拥有的是一个随时随地、全天候的新闻周期。当你打开新闻应用程序，你会发现“旧新闻”只停留片刻。一眨眼，你的时间线就刷新了，几个小时前的旧闻就会被下一个“突发新闻”所覆盖。每一秒钟，我们都会收到新的信息。每天，我们都有“五篇必读文章”。新闻从不间断，你最好跟上。

In his book, *Antifragile*, Nassim Nicholas Taleb introduced the world to the phrase, “noise bottleneck.” A noise bottleneck is where we are **overwhelmed** with so much information (or noise), that our **cognitive** abilities can't keep up. Our brains have limited resources, spread across numerous functions. So, while our brain can read five articles a day, and while our attention can watch four hours of TED talks, our long-term learning processes can't. We simply don't retain the information we read, or we **zone out** five minutes into a video.

在《反脆弱》一书中，纳西姆·尼古拉斯·塔勒布提出了“噪音瓶颈”这个词。噪音瓶颈是指我们被太多的信息(或噪音)淹没，以至于我们的认知能力无法跟上。我们的大脑资源有限，分散在许多功能上。所以，虽然我们每天可以阅读五篇文章，看四个小时的 TED 演讲，但不能把它们全部转化成长期记忆。我们记不住读过的信息，或者看视频的时候走神了五分钟。

The matter is made worse by our modern addiction to “**multitasking**” which is, **more often than not**, simply a **euphemism** for divided attention. We **flit** between tabs, we watch TV holding our phones, and we listen to a podcast, at double speed, while shopping. The problem is that the idea of the super-productive multitasker is a myth. The human brain might have structural limitation **inherent** in the cognitive architecture which causes the slowing down that occurs when two tasks are performed at the same time.

现代人痴迷于“一心多用”使情况变得更糟，而“一心多用”往往只

传播开了。

essential [ɪ'senʃl] *adj.* 必不可少的，极其重要的；基本的，根本的 | Experience is essential for this job. 对于这份工作，经验是非常重要的。

relentless [rɪ'lentləs] *adj.* 苛刻的，无情的，坚决的；不停的，不懈的 | a relentless enemy 残酷的敌人

keep up 跟上，持续了解 | Employees need to keep up with the latest technical developments. 员工需要跟上最新的技术发展。

overwhelm [ˌoʊvərˈwelɪn] *v.* 充溢，难以禁受；压垮，使应接不暇；压倒，击败 | We were overwhelmed by requests for information. 各方的问讯使我们应接不暇。

cognitive [ˈkɑːɡnətɪv] *adj.* 认知的，感知的

zone out 入睡，失去知觉，走神 | What? Oh, sorry – I was just zoning out there for a minute. 什么？哦，对不起——我刚才走神了一会儿。

multitasking [ˌmʌltiˈtæskɪŋ] *n.* 多重任务处理，能同时处理多项事情的

more often than not 通常，往往，一贯 | More often than not the train is late. 这趟火车常常晚点。

euphemism [ˈjuːfəˌmɪzəm] *n.* 委婉语，委婉说法 | ‘Pass away’ is a euphemism for ‘die’. “去世”是“死”的委婉语。

是注意力分散的委婉说法。我们在不同的网页间切换，一边玩手机一边看电视，一边购物一边用两倍速听播客。问题是，超级高效地同时处理多项任务是一个神话。人类大脑的认知结构可能存在固有的结构性限制，导致同时处理两项任务时速度变慢。

In short, your brain is not as good as you think it is. You are a human being who can only take in so much a day.

简而言之，你的大脑并没有你想象的那么好。作为人类，你一天只能吸收这么多信息。

Understanding the noise bottleneck allows us to fix it. So, here are three tips to get you going:

理解噪音瓶颈有助于我们解决它。这里有三个小技巧：

Curate your content — set up a new account on social media and follow only accounts or people you think are really valuable. Be **brutal** and pick only the content which enriches you. It's healthier to have a few **wholesome** meals that **fill** you **up**, than **gorging** on fast food throughout the day.

管理内容——在社交媒体上新建一个账户，只关注你认为真正有价值的账号或人。无情一点，只看那些能充实生活的内容。吃一些有益健康的食物来填饱肚子，比整天吃快餐更健康。

Single-task — you don't need to **ditch** the phone but do ditch the **distractions**. Give yourself a time limit or restriction if it helps. Say, "I will only use this app for 20 minutes" or "I will only read this magazine after dinner." Multitasking is for show; single-tasking is for pros.

一心一意——你不用丢掉手机，但一定要杜绝让你分心的事情。可以给自己设定一个时间限制。比如，“这个应用我只用 20 分钟”或者“晚饭后我只会看这本杂志”。一心多用只是做做样子，一心一意才是行家。

Accept your limits — you'll never read all the news. You'll never read all the "must-read" articles. Accept you can only choose two or three and **embrace** that fact. Don't **beat yourself up** that you're being unproductive or you're missing out. You're

flit [flɪt] v. 轻快地从一处到另一处，掠过；搬家，迁居 | Butterflies flitted from flower to flower. 蝴蝶在花丛中飞来飞去。

inherent [ɪnˈhɪərənt] adj. 固有的，内在的 | Every business has its own inherent risks. 每笔生意本身都有风险。

curate [kjʊˈreɪt] v. 管理（博物馆或画廊等收藏品）

brutal [ˈbruːtl] adj. 残暴的，兽性的；直截了当的，冷酷的 | He replied with brutal honesty. 他回答得太过直接。

wholesome [ˈhəʊlsəm] adj. 有益健康的；在道德上有益的 | well-balanced wholesome meals 营养均衡的健康餐

fill sb. up 吃饱

gorge [ɡɔːrdʒ] v. 贪婪地吃，狼吞虎咽 n. 峡谷 | We gorged ourselves on fresh sardines and salads. 我们大吃新鲜的沙丁鱼和色拉。

ditch [dɪtʃ] v. 摆脱，抛弃；逃学，逃课 n. 沟渠 | I decided to ditch the sofa bed. 我决定把沙发床扔了。

distraction [dɪˈstrækʃn] n. 分散注意力的事，使人分心的事；娱乐，消遣 | I find it hard to work at home because there are too many distractions. 我发觉在家里工作很难，因为使人分心的事太多。

embrace [ɪmˈbreɪs] v. 欣然接受，

getting more out of those few than that “super-productive” person on social media who says they read five books a week.

接受局限——你读不完所有的新闻。你不可能读完所有的“必读”文章。你只能挑两三个读，接受这个事实。不要怪自己效率低下或者错过了什么。你通过这些文章获得的收获，比那些在社交媒体上说自己每周读五本书的“超级高效”的人要多得多。

After all, it's better to have a little remembered, than a lot forgotten.

毕竟，记住一点总比忘记很多要好。

乐意采纳；拥抱；包含 | He embraces the new information age. 他迎接新的信息时代的到来。

beat yourself up 太过自责 | If you do your best and you lose, you can't beat yourself up about it. 你要是尽了最大努力后还是失败，就不用太责怪自己了。

➤ 脉络梳理

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➤ 长难句拆解

