

blink

By the author of THE TIPPING POINT



The Power of Thinking
Without Thinking

Malcolm Gladwell

Blink : The Power of Thinking Without Thinking

Details:

- [Malcolm Gladwell](#)

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By the author of THE TIPPING POINT

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The Power of Thinking
Without Thinking

Malcolm Gladwell

***Blink* is about the first two seconds of looking--the decisive glance that knows in an instant. Gladwell, the best-selling author of *The Tipping Point*, campaigns for snap judgments and mind reading with a gift for translating research into splendid storytelling. Building his case with scenes from a marriage, heart attack triage, speed dating, choking on the golf course, selling cars, and military maneuvers, he persuades readers to think small and focus on the meaning of "thin slices" of behavior. The key is to rely on our "adaptive unconscious"--a 24/7 mental valet--that provides us with instant and sophisticated information to warn of danger, read a stranger, or react to a new idea. Gladwell includes caveats about leaping to conclusions: marketers can manipulate our first impressions, high arousal moments make us "mind blind," focusing on the wrong cue leaves us vulnerable to "the Warren Harding Effect" (i.e., voting for a handsome but hapless president). In a provocative chapter that exposes the "dark side of blink," he illuminates the failure of rapid cognition in the tragic stakeout and murder of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx. He underlines studies about autism, facial reading and cardio uptick to urge training that enhances high-stakes decision-making. In this brilliant, cage-rattling book, one can only wish for a thicker slice of Gladwell's ideas about what Blink Camp might look like. --Barbara Mackoff**



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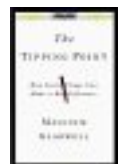
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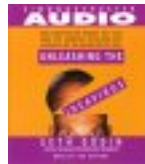
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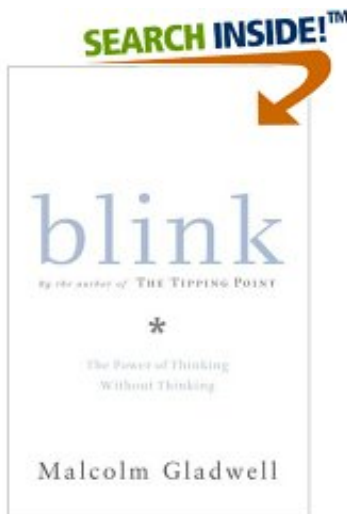
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Blink is about the first two seconds of looking--the decisive glance that knows in an instant. Gladwell, the best-selling author of [The Tipping Point](#), campaigns for snap judgments and mind reading with a gift for translating research into splendid storytelling. Building his case with scenes from a marriage, heart attack triage, speed dating, choking on the golf course, selling cars, and military maneuvers, he persuades readers to think small and focus on the meaning of "thin slices" of behavior. The key is to rely on our "adaptive unconscious"--a 24/7 mental valet--that provides us with instant and sophisticated information to warn of danger, read a stranger, or react to a new idea.

Gladwell includes caveats about leaping to conclusions: marketers can manipulate our first impressions, high arousal moments make us "mind blind," focusing on the wrong cue leaves us vulnerable to "the Warren Harding Effect" (i.e., voting for a handsome but hapless president). In a provocative chapter that exposes the "dark side of blink," he illuminates the failure of rapid cognition in the tragic stakeout and murder of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx. He underlines studies about autism, facial reading and cardio uptick to urge training that enhances high-stakes decision-making. In this brilliant, cage-rattling book, one can only wish for a thicker slice of Gladwell's ideas about what Blink Camp might look like. --*Barbara Mackoff*

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Best-selling author Gladwell (*The Tipping Point*) has a dazzling ability to find commonality in disparate fields of study. As he displays again in this entertaining and illuminating look at how we make snap judgments—about people's intentions, the authenticity of a work of art, even military strategy—he can parse for general readers the intricacies of fascinating but little-known fields like professional food tasting (why does Coke taste different from Pepsi?). Gladwell's conclusion, after studying how people make instant decisions in a wide range of fields from psychology to police work, is that we can make better instant judgments by training our mind and senses to focus on the most relevant facts—and that less input (as long as it's the right input) is better than more. Perhaps the most stunning example he gives of this counterintuitive truth is the most expensive war game ever conducted by the Pentagon, in which a wily marine officer, playing "a rogue military commander" in the Persian Gulf and unencumbered by hierarchy, bureaucracy and too much technology, humiliated American forces whose chiefs were bogged down in matrixes, systems for decision making and information overload. But if one sets aside Gladwell's dazzle, some questions and apparent inconsistencies emerge. If doctors are given an algorithm, or formula, in which only four facts are needed to determine if a patient is having a heart attack, is that really educating the doctor's decision-making ability—or is it taking the decision out of the doctor's hands altogether and handing it over to the algorithm? Still, each case study is satisfying, and Gladwell imparts his own evident pleasure in delving into a wide range of fields and seeking an underlying truth.

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REAL NAME™

It's hard to tell what this book is about. It could be airy nothing. Or it could be - and this is more likely, about an attempt to make money by feeding the public tautologies and truisms. Yes, our snap judgments are sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Yes, our considered judgments are sometimes right and sometimes wrong. And, yes, the more experience we have, the more likely both our snap and considered judgment will be right. So what? The dark side of me thinks (and this is a considered, not a snap judgment) that the idea behind this book is to flatter the reader into thinking they are pretty smart because, after all, they already knew most of the main points. It's like a Disney ride through Tomorrow land - there's something there, but not that much. Instead of reading "Blink", go take a nap. You'll be better off. By the by, Malcolm needs a new advisor about the brain and how it works: The fusiform gyrus is not a piece of brain software (page 219), the midbrain doesn't hijack the forebrain much less reach up to hijack it (page 225), and it is doubtful that rapid heart beats shut down the motor systems or any other brain component (pages 220-225).

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Reviewer: [Tucker Hughes "Economics Graduate Student/Avid Reader"](#) (Fairfax, VA United States) - [See all my reviews](#)

REAL NAME™

The basic idea of the book is to explore the instinctive decision-making process, and to ask why some people are better at making snap judgments than others are. In doing so he wanders widely, from basic game theory to neuroscience and some cognitive science. His case studies include such diverse topics as art fraud, music talent scouting, and police decision making under pressure.

Gladwell begins by explaining his concept of thin slices, which is the idea that the information we process and the decisions that we make can be broken down into sequential slices, and that often the most important information and the best decisions come from that first slice. He cites a number of examples of people who have learned how to isolate and then minimize the smallest slice upon which they can base a decision and expect it to be correct with a sufficiently high degree of certainty. These people are experts in their fields, and are able to make extremely accurate decisions with far less information than we might expect. Gladwell then goes on to show why he believes it is that most people distrust their first opinions, that people tend to look at a slice which is too thick. By doing so he believes that people often are misled or confused by extraneous information. He believes that when people look at a slice of information which is too thick with extra details, then they find themselves basing their decisions on facts and opinion which have no bearing on the facts of the situation. He tries, and succeeds, in showing just how easy it is to influence the subconscious with extra information. He finishes the book with several more lengthy examples of both good and bad snap decisions, and a brief conclusion.

This is a very interesting book, well written, and it is a very quick read. Although almost completely devoid of explicit theory, the examples and stories are all interesting, and generally quite relevant to the topic. I found the implicit theory of knowledge that Gladwell uses to be particularly interesting. He stresses heavily the importance of personal knowledge, knowledge that cannot be passed like an algebraic formula, but which must instead be gained through much effort and study. What he is trying to do in this book is not to teach you how to judge an unknown musician, or how to tell a fake kouros from a real one, but rather to make you realize that with practice you can gain the ability to make accurate and rapid judgments on very little information if you take the time to gain that personal knowledge. As someone who believes in the crucial role of personal knowledge in accurate decision making, I find his goal to be admirable.

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This book is almost entirely devoted to describing instances of snap judgements that either assisted or led people astray in their decision making. Gladwell's conclusion, after studying how people make instant decisions in a wide range of fields from psychology to police work, is that we can make better instant judgments by training our mind and senses to focus on the most relevant facts - and that less input (as long as it's the right input) is better than more. Fascinating.

I also purchased the Amazon recommended title, "The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book." It is a fascinating look at how emotions influence our thinking and includes an online EQ test.

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Gladwell begins with a story about a supposed Greek statue that some experts, using scientific testing, could not detect as a fraud, while others were immediately suspicious. (So, some people look at the forest for immediate clues, before examining the trees in detail.)

Another example involved a single tennis expert with an uncanny knack of foretelling when someone was about to double-fault. (The bad news is that he could not relate how this was done. Thus, what this proves is beyond me.)

Still another revolved around an officer playing a "rogue MidEast commander" vs. the regular Army. Anyone who has been in government knows that it moves at glacial speed, and can easily be outdone by much smaller groups with a modicum of intelligence and speed (eg. Lockheed's "Skunk Works," and Burt Rutan's "space ship."). So the rogue officer's success is hardly surprising.

To say that quick decisions - based on a few KEY VARIABLES - is better than studied analyses that include a multitude of minor issues is hardly surprising either.

Finally, readers need to keep in mind that there will always be statistical aberrations - eg. someone who correctly predicts the flip of a coin 50 times in a row. However, that does not prove that they have any special talent, and they are just as likely to be wrong as right on the next toss.

Similarly, finding snap judgements superior to supposedly sophisticated statistical models does not necessarily support a conclusion supporting snap judgements - many statistical models are poorly specified and have embarrassingly large errors.

Not worth reading.

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Gladwell begins with a story about a supposed Greek statue that some experts, using scientific testing, could not detect as a fraud, while others were immediately suspicious. (So, some people look at the forest for immediate clues, before examining the trees in detail - certainly a sensible, but non-revolutionary approach.)

Another example involved a single tennis expert with an uncanny knack of foretelling when someone was about to double-fault. (The bad news is that he could not relate how this was done. Thus, what this proves is beyond me.)

Still another revolved around an officer playing a "rogue MidEast commander" vs. the regular Army. Anyone who has been in government knows that it moves at glacial speed, and can easily be outdone by much smaller groups with a modicum of intelligence and speed (eg. Lockheed's "Skunk Works," and Burt Rutan's "space ship."). So the rogue officer's success is hardly surprising.

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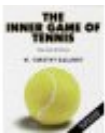


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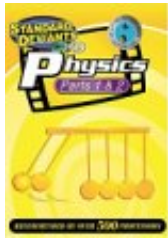
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