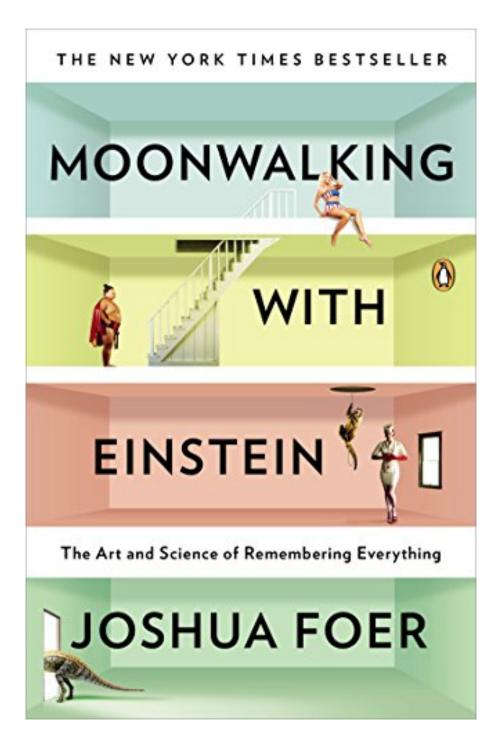


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Amazon.com Review

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Review

In this marvelous book, Joshua Foer invents a new genre of non-fiction. This is a work of science journalism wrapped around an adventure story, a bildungsroman fused to a vivid investigation of human memory. If you want to understand how we remember, and how we can all learn to remember better, then read this book

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The blockbuster phenomenon that charts an amazing journey of the mind while revolutionizing our concept of memory

An instant bestseller that is poised to become a classic, Moonwalking with Einstein recounts Joshua Foer's yearlong quest to improve his memory under the tutelage of top "mental athletes." He draws on cutting-edge research, a surprising cultural history of remembering, and venerable tricks of the mentalist's trade to transform our understanding of human memory. From the United States Memory Championship to deep within the author's own mind, this is an electrifying work of journalism that reminds us that, in every way that matters, we are the sum of our memories.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

- Sales Rank: #9000 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-03-03
- Released on: 2011-03-03
- Format: Kindle eBook

Amazon.com Review

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In this marvelous book, Joshua Foer invents a new genre of non-fiction. This is a work of science journalism wrapped around an adventure story, a bildungsroman fused to a vivid investigation of human memory. If you want to understand how we remember, and how we can all learn to remember better, then read this book

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717 of 751 people found the following review helpful.Amazingly Interesting and HelpfulBy David SheppardThis is one of those rare books that is not only a joy to read, but also immensely helpful. It can help all of us

This is one of those rare books that is not only a joy to read, but also immensely helpful. It can help all of us with something that is at once troublesome and worrisome: our memory. It does this with ease, not teaching us some grueling rote memory technique, but one that is easy, natural and intuitive. Yet Moonwalking with Einstein turns out to not be exclusively a how-to book on memory. So what is it?

Well, yes, it is about memory and how to improve it, but it is at once a history of techniques, a description of what memory is and what can go wrong with it, and also a running narrative of how the author, a journalist himself with no special memory skills, becomes one of the most proficient memory athletes in America.

I'd learned a mnemonic device to aid memorization decades ago while in college, and found it to be helpful, but for some reason I'd abandoned the technique once I graduated. But Moonwalking with Einstein expands the mnemonic technique I learned back then by use of something of which I'd never heard: the "Memory Palace." The Memory Palace exploits our inherent skill for remembering images and spatial locations, harnesses these two abilities we all posses in abundance, and relates them to the memorization of numbers, lists and assortments of other difficult to remember items. The amazing thing is that the Memory Palace not only makes memorization easy, it also makes it fun.

What makes the book so interesting is that it is narrative non-fiction and reads like a novel. The author locks his conflict with his own memory early on, gives a sense of rising tension as he accumulates the forces to overcome its limitations, and resolves this internal conflict at the end when he participates in the US Memory Championship. I didn't read it as urgently as I did today's number one bestseller, Laura Hillenbrand's Unbroken, but still, I couldn't put it down.

In Chapter Five, I scanned the "to-do" list of fifteen items on pages 92/3 that the author had to memorize in his initial attempt, and developed the technique for myself as I read about the author memorizing it. As my Memory Palace, I used an old home of a high school friend with which I was still familiar, constructing useful details as I went. When I had finished reading about the author memorizing the list (took me about five minutes), I had memorized it myself, and I found that the items were not only immediately memorable, but that the list of items and their sequence was still with me days later, and so imbedded in my memory that I'm sure I'll ever forget it. All this, I accomplished effortlessly. This is a truly remarkable feat for me because I'm almost seventy years old and have chronic fatigue syndrome, which adversely affects all aspects of my memory.

It has also given me hope that I might finally learn ancient Greek. I tried to learn it several years ago, but found building a vocabulary so difficult that I abandoned the project. Rote memory was just too much trouble. I am interested in all things Greek, and as it turns out, the Memory Palace technique was invented in the fifth century BC by Simonides following his narrow escape from the collapse of a building. This in itself

is a story you'll be interested in reading about. The author says that since the time of this ancient Greek, "the art of memory has been about creating architectural spaces in the imagination." Having been to Greece twice, I have all the makings of a superb Greek Memory Palace. While traveling around Greece and the western coast of Turkey for ten weeks, I visited many cities and islands: Athens, Thebes, Delphi, Ithaca, Mykonos, Delos, Santorini, etc. I can't count all the archaeological sites I visited. What I'm creating isn't just any old Memory Palace but actually a Memory Country. Within each location, I can identify as many locations for storing words and meanings as I need. But not only that, I can also use characters from Greek mythology to create actions and images to reinforce the material, as the author suggests. All this constitutes my Greek Memory Palace: the location where I will store ancient Greek words and meanings as I learn the language, in accordance with the instructions learned in Moonwalking with Einstein. None of it was difficult. I picked it up as I read the book.

The author describes how in the past people viewed their minds as something to perfect by loading it with all sorts of intellectual material. "People used to labor to furnish their minds. They invested in the acquisition of memories the same way we invest in the acquisition of things." [page 134] Some even believed that "the art of memory was a secret key to unlocking the occult structure of the universe." [page 151] This has given me an entirely new view of how to perceive my own mind and nourish it in the future.

The author also discusses how we came to lose touch with our ability to remember with the invention of the printed word. The history of that estrangement and how inventions like Wikipedia and the Internet foster that estrangement is a very interesting story. The author makes the reader aware of what is happening to us and provides a way to project ourselves into the future without suffering so much of technology's debilitating effects.

Perhaps the reason this book is so successful is that the reader never loses sight of the practical use of the information the author is providing because the author is discovering it himself and actively making use of it in his quest to make it into the US Memory Championship.

This is an important book. Everyone can benefit from reading it. David Sheppard

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

only on page 100, but have been trying the techniques on my own. Almost literally unbelievable.

By . . . AsISeeEm

So this is not a self-help book but a story of how the author was introduced to memory champs and their techniques and how he came to use them to get to the world memory championships.

I always thought I had a bad memory, especially for names - when I met people, I wouldn't remember them a week later, without some context. A few years ago I took a test on line for prospagnosia - the inability to remember faces - and I crushed it. So I had to revise my self-image regarding my memory; it's good for faces.

This book explains that our memories are much better at remembering images (and why).

So just a few pages in, I decided to try out the first technique of making names into images. Here's what I did.

Mr. Foer talks about the "curve of forgetfulness" invented by Hermann Ebbinghaus. I figured there's no way I'd normally recall this germanic name. So I thought about it for a while and came up with this image: A

smirking woman, indicating the rastafarian man next to her with a jerk of her thumb. That's "Her mon," apologies to the Jamaican accent. Then I put them in chairs on the deck of a white clapboard house, which itself is half falling into a river as the tide ebbs. Hermann Ebbinghaus. A day later it took me maybe 7 seconds to recall this guy's name! I was seriously flabbergasted. And overjoyed. I decided to try it again.

My second attempt was with another name in the book. Wilder Penfield popularized the idea that everything we see and hear and sense, remain in our brains somewhere, and we just need to recall the details (this apparently is no longer the consensus). I thought about it and came up with pens with spiky hair, planted in a field like wheat blowing in the breeze, except they have their hands over their heads and they are shaking them wildly in dance. Days later I can recall this guy's odd name. The only complication here, to be honest, is that sometimes I reverse his first and last names... But WOW.

I also put a third name into memory and why. George Miller discovered that we can keep 7, plus or minus 2, pieces of info in our short term memory at a time. To remember his name, I pictured "King George" in full regalia (I actually have no idea what he really looked like but it doesn't matter), tied to where the mule or horse would make flour by walking around and around the mill. I have him sweating in the sun as he toils. There's an american flag in there as a reminder that he is King George. Then I put a mustache on him.

Why the 'stache? Because early in the book we're introduced to 'S' Dr. Luria's famous synesthesia/memory study. S always saw the number 7 as a man with a mustache. George Miller discovered "plus or minus 7." A day later I was trying to remember the third person I committed to memory and correctly came up with George Miller. But I didn't know who he was, when I suddenly recalled the mustache. Why, I wondered, had I given him a mustache? When the answer hit me I almost fell down. I exaggerate but I was thrilled.

This was all before page 30.

By the time he explained what a memory palace was and walked us through the first example (a shopping list), I had little problem memorizing the entire thing. Whoa. Garlic pickles, cottage cream, smoked salmon preferably with peat smoke, 6 bottles of white wine, 3 pairs of socks, 3 hoola hoops with maybe a spare, a snorkel, dry ice, email sophia, paul newman movie, skin-colored cat suit, elk sausages, director's chair and bullhorn, ropes and climbing harness, barometer. I might have left something out, I created that memory palace about an hour ago.

Simply amazing.

Foer mentions that these techniques were considered part of one's education for hundreds if not thousands of years, yet today we teach people to eat right and exercise without giving any lessons on how to properly use our memories. Let's get on that.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Should have read in high school. Still a great read for anyone at any age.

By Sathya Ramanathan

Can I improve my memory? I am no longer someone who is going to school or college. I have crossed over into the mid-life. Is there a way to not forget day-to-day tasks or important things to say during a conversion? Is it even possible or am I essentially stuck with what I have got at this point. I started reading this book to find answers to these questions.

In MoonWalking with Einstein, Joshua Foer takes us through the world of Mental Athletes and memory competitions. He humanizes the mental athletes and says, they are nothing more special than you and I. From

his experience competing in US memory championship, he explains that anyone can master these memory techniques through smart training and hard work.

I was always of the opinion that memorization is bad and rote-memorization is really bad. He makes convincing arguments that memorization (filing your memories in the correct place in the brain) along with your experiences in a field will help you remember the right thing at the right time. Among other techniques, he introduces Memory Palace - an ancient technique to improve ones memory.

I recently read MindSet by Carol Dweck. In Moonwalking with Einstein, Joshua Foer complements the growth mindset thought by proving that one can accomplish anything with sheer effort, hard work and smart training. I pretty much used kindle audio narration to hear the book, which was excellent. Overall I highly recommend this book.

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