

4

HOW TO READ AND REMEMBER THIS (AND ANY) BOOK

Your time is one of your greatest assets. It's the one thing you can't get back.

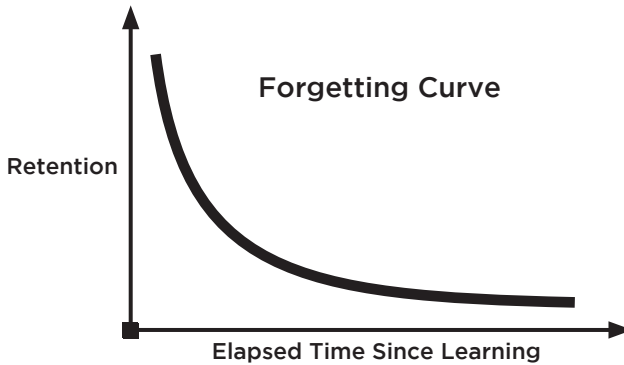
As your brain coach, I want you to get the greatest results and return on your attention, so here are some recommendations on how to get the most out of this book. You can apply this advice toward practically anything you want to learn and read.

Let's start with a question: Have you ever read something only to forget it the next day?

You are not alone. Psychologists refer to this as the "forgetting curve." It is the mathematical formula that describes the rate at which information is forgotten after it is initially learned. Research suggests humans forget approximately 50 percent of what they learn within an hour, and an average of 70 percent within 24 hours.¹

Below are a handful of recommendations that will help you stay ahead of the curve. Later, I will share advanced strategies to

accelerate your learning and retention in the sections on study, speed-reading, and memory improvement.



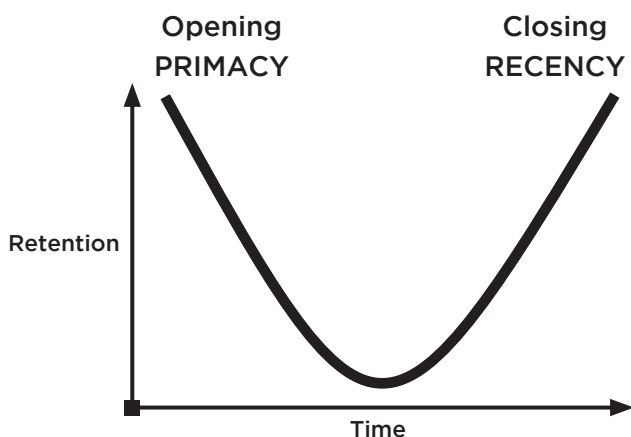
Research suggests that our natural ability to concentrate wanes between 10 to 40 minutes. If we spend any longer on a given task, we get diminishing returns on our investment of time because our attention starts to wander. For that reason, I suggest you use the Pomodoro technique, a productivity method developed by Francesco Cirillo based on the idea that the optimal time for a task is 25 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break.² Each 25-minute chunk is called a “Pomodoro.” As you read this book, I suggest that you read for one Pomodoro and then take a 5-minute brain break before continuing.

When it comes to learning, the Pomodoro technique works for reasons related to memory, specifically the effect of primacy and recency.

The effect of primacy is that you’re more likely to remember what you learn in the beginning of a learning session, a class, a presentation, or even a social interaction. If you go to a party, you might meet 30 strangers. You’re most likely to remember the first few people that you meet (unless you’ve been trained to remember names with my method, which I’ll teach you later in this book).

The effect of recency is that you’re also likely to remember the last thing you learned (more recent). At the same party, this means that you’ll remember the names of the last few people you met.

We've all procrastinated before a test and then, the night before the exam, sat down to "cram" as much as possible without any breaks. Primacy and recency are just two of the (many) reasons cram sessions don't work. But by taking breaks, you create more beginnings and endings, and you retain far more of what you're learning.



If you sit down to read a book over the course of two hours without taking any breaks, you might remember the first 20 minutes of what you read, then maybe you'll experience a dip around the 30-minute mark, and then you're likely to remember the end of what you read. This means the lull in between, with no breaks for assimilation or thinking through what you just read, results in a dead space for learning. So, take this book one Pomodoro at a time so you get the most out of what you read. If you still choose to cram, you'll learn helpful methods in the book to retain the "in-between" information.

Did you know that the very act of reading this book will make you smarter? I realize that's a big claim, but I'm completely convinced that it's true. On one level, it's going to teach you to be smarter through the tools and tactics I share here. But on another level, when you actively read it, you'll form pictures in your mind, and you'll make connections between what you know and what you're learning. You will think about how this applies to your

current life, and you will imagine how you can use the knowledge you're taking in. It promotes neuroplasticity. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Every now and then a man's mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation, and never shrinks back to its former dimensions."³ When you read any book, you have the opportunity to stretch the range of your mind, and it will never be the same.



KWIK START

Set a timer for 25 minutes right now and concentrate on what you're reading in this book for that amount of time. When your alarm goes off, bookmark this book and close it. Then write down what you learned within that 25-minute period.

USE THE FASTER METHOD

To get the most out of this book, here is a simple method for learning anything quickly. I call it the FASTER Method, and I want you to use this as you read, starting now.

The acronym FASTER stands for: Forget, Act, State, Teach, Enter, Review. Here's the breakdown:

F is for Forget

The key to laser focus is to remove or forget that which distracts you. There are three things you want to forget (at least temporarily). The first is what you already know. When learning something new, we tend to assume we understand more than we do about that subject. What we think we know about the topic can stand in the way of our ability to absorb new information. One of the reasons children learn rapidly is because they are empty vessels; they know they don't know. Some people who claim to have twenty years of experience have one year of experience that they've repeated twenty times. To learn beyond your present sense of restraints, I want you to temporarily suspend what you already know or think you know about the topic and approach it with what Zen philosophy calls "a beginner's mind." Remember that your mind is like a parachute—it only works when it's open.

The second thing is to forget what's not urgent or important. Contrary to popular belief, your brain doesn't multitask (more on this later). If you're not fully present, it will be difficult for you to learn when your focus is split.



KWIK START

As you are reading this book, when your mind inevitably wanders into something else—and that something else is important but not urgent—don't try to not think of it. What you resist persists. Instead, keep a notebook close by to capture that thought or idea by writing it down. You can thus release it temporarily, to be addressed after the task at hand is complete.

And finally, forget about your limitations. These are the pre-conceived notions you believe about yourself, such as that your memory isn't good or that you're a slow learner. Suspend (at least temporarily) what you believe is possible. I know this may sound difficult but keep an open mind to what you can do. After all, since you are reading this book, some part of you deep down must believe there's more to life than what you've already demonstrated. Do your best to keep your self-talk positive. Remember this: If you fight for your limitations, you get to keep them. Your capabilities aren't fixed, and it's possible to learn anything.

A is for Act

Traditional education has trained many people that learning is a passive experience. You sit quietly in class, you don't talk to your neighbor, and you consume the information. But learning is *not* a spectator sport. The human brain does not learn as much by consumption as it does by creation. Knowing that, I want you to ask yourself how you can become more active in your learning. Take notes. Do all the Kwik Start exercises. Download the Kwik Brain app to test and train your limitless abilities. Go to the resource page at www.LimitlessBook.com/resources for additional free tools. I recommend you highlight key ideas, but don't become

one of those highlight junkies who make every page glow in the dark. If you make everything important, then nothing becomes important. The more active you are, the better, faster, and more you will learn.



KWIK START

What is *one* thing you will do to make reading this book a more active experience? Write it down here: _____

S is for State

All learning is state-dependent. Your state is a current snapshot of your emotions. It is highly influenced by your thoughts (psychology) and the physical condition of your body (physiology). Your feelings or lack thereof about a subject in a specific situation affect the learning process and ultimately the results. In fact, when you tie a feeling to information, the information becomes more memorable. To prove this, I'm guessing there's a song, fragrance, or food that can take you back to your childhood. Information times emotion helps create long-term memories. The opposite is also true. What was the predominant emotional state you felt back in school? When I ask audiences this question, most people in the room shout out "boredom!" In all likelihood, you can relate to this.

If your emotional energy at school was low, it's no wonder you forgot the periodic table. But, when you take control of your state of mind and body, you can shift your experience of learning from boredom to excitement, curiosity, and even fun. To achieve this, you might try shifting the way your body moves in a learning environment or piquing different moods before you sit down to learn. Change your posture or the depth of your breathing. Sit or stand the way you would if you were totally energized and excited for what was coming. Get excited about how you will benefit from what you are about to learn and what you will do with your new knowledge. Remember, all learning is state-dependent. Consciously choose states of joy, fascination, and curiosity.

**KWIK START**

How motivated, energized, and focused are you at this moment? Rate your current state on a scale of 1 to 10. What is *one* thing you will do right now to increase that number?

T is for Teach

If you want to cut your learning curve dramatically, learn with the intention of teaching the information to someone else. Think about it: If you know you have to give a presentation on what you learn, you will approach how you learn the topic with the intention of mastering it well enough to explain it to someone else. You will pay closer attention. Your notes might be more detailed. And you might even ask better questions. When you teach something, you get to learn it twice: once on your own, and then again through educating another person.

Learning isn't always solo; it can be social. You may enjoy this book more if you invite someone else to learn with you. Buy a copy for a friend, or, even better, start a Limitless Book Club that meets weekly so you can discuss the ideas and concepts in this book. You'll enjoy learning more when you're making memories with a friend or group of friends. Working with someone else will not only help you stay accountable, but it will give you someone to practice this method with.

**KWIK START**

Find a learning buddy to read this book with and hold each other accountable. Name that person (or persons) here: _____

E is for Enter

What is the simplest and most powerful personal performance tool? Your calendar. We enter important things on our schedule: work meetings, parent-teacher gatherings, dentist appointments, taking Fluffy to the vet, and so on. Do you know what a lot of

people don't schedule? Their personal growth and development. If it's not on your calendar, there's a good chance it's not getting done. It's too easy for the day to slip by with you "forgetting" to work out your body and brain.

**KWIK START**

Take out your calendar and enter your Limitless readings for the next seven days. Label these LIMITLESS ME, GENIUS TIME, BRAIN TRAINING, CONVERSATIONS WITH JIM, or anything else provocative enough to guarantee that you'll keep this date on your calendar.

R is for Review

One of the best ways to reduce the effects of the forgetting curve is to actively recall what you learned with spaced repetition. You are better able to retain information by reviewing in multiple spread-out sessions. Going over the material at intervals increases our brain's ability to remember it. To leverage this principle, before you begin your reading session take a moment, if only a few minutes, to actively retrieve what you learned the session before. Your brain will give greater value to the reviewed material and prime your mind for what's to come.

**KWIK START**

Before each reading, take a few minutes to talk about or write what you remember from the previous reading.

CHOOSE WISELY

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre noted that, "Life is C between B and D," meaning that the life we live is the choices we make between the "B" of birth and the "D" of death. The profound simplicity of that statement is particularly relevant to the journey we're engaged with here. Being limitless is a choice, and that choice is entirely yours, regardless of your circumstances. You can choose to give up this power, but why would you when you

“This is your last chance.
After this, there is no
turning back. You take the
blue pill—the story ends, you
wake up in your bed and
believe whatever you want to
believe. You take the red pill—
you stay in Wonderland,
and I show you how deep the
rabbit hole goes. Remember:
all I’m offering is the truth.
Nothing more.”



—MORPHEUS

know that you can truly live a life without barriers? But choosing is an active thing, and the time to make this choice is right now.

So, I want you to resolve and commit. Most people are sincerely interested in doing something that they know they *should* do. But they don't do it, because they consider it a preference not a promise. There's tremendous power in making a real resolution. I want you to write down your commitment to complete this book. When we write something down, we're more likely to do what we promise.

Opposite, I've included a commitment page for you to fill out. If you want extra points, take a photo of your signed promise, then post it on social media. This public resolution will help you stay accountable. Tag me @JimKwik #LimitlessBook so we can cheer you on!

THE QUESTIONS ARE THE ANSWER

Have you ever read a page in a book, arrived at the end, and could not recall what you just read? You may even reread it, only to forget it again. I don't want you to experience this while you are reading this book, so why do you think it happens? The answer is, you're not asking the right questions. Questions, in fact, are the answer.

Every second, your senses gather up to 11 million bits of information from the world around you. Obviously, if you tried to interpret and decipher all of them at once, you'd be immediately overwhelmed. That's why the brain is primarily a deletion device; it's designed to keep information out. The conscious mind typically processes only 50 bits per second.

What makes it through the filter is determined by the part of the brain called the reticular activating system, or RAS for short. The RAS is responsible for a number of functions, including sleep and behavior modification. It also acts as the gatekeeper of information through a process called habituation, which allows the brain to ignore meaningless and repetitive stimuli and remain sensitive to other inputs.

One of the ways to guide the RAS are the questions we ask ourselves. These tell that part of our brain what is important to us.

Let's take my younger sister's birthday as an example. Years ago, my sister kept sending me postcards, pictures, and e-mails of

I, _____, commit to reading this book in 10- to 25-minute increments until it is finished.

I commit to focusing by forgetting my prior understanding, distractions, and limiting beliefs of what is possible.

I commit to being active in the process. I will do all the Kwik Start exercises, take notes, highlight, and practice asking myself relevant questions as I read.

I commit to manage my state of being as I read, checking in regularly with my energy levels and being proactive in adjusting my motivation as needed.

I commit to teaching what I learn to others, so we may all benefit.

I commit to entering my reading time in my calendar, because if it's in my schedule I will do it.

I commit to review what I have already learned so I can remember it better before moving on to something new.

And finally, I commit that even if I "mess up" with any of the above, I won't beat myself up. I'll get back at it and do my best.

Yes! I am ready to be LIMITLESS!

Signed,

_____ Date: _____

“The one real object
of education is to
leave a person in
the condition of
continually asking
questions.”



—BISHOP MANDELL CREIGHTON

pug dogs. You know, the ones with the mushy faces and the bulgy eyes. They're very docile; you can dress them up as ballerinas and they won't care. Of course, I wondered why she was sending me photos of pugs—and then I remembered her birthday was coming up, and it became evident she was leaving clues because she wanted one.

Later that day, I was checking out at the health food store, and I looked over at the other checkout line. To my surprise, I saw a woman carrying her pug over her shoulder. *Wow, I haven't seen one of one of those in a long time—what are the chances of that?* I thought. The next day I went running in my neighborhood, and there was someone walking six pugs.

The question is, where did the pugs come from? Did they just magically appear? Of course not. They were always there. But in the flood of stimuli, I had never paid attention to them before. Once pugs broke through my awareness, I started seeing them all over the place. Have you had an experience like this? Maybe it was a specific kind of car or outfit that “magically” began appearing everywhere.

In an interview with media personality Jeannie Mai, we compared this effect to how your favorite social media platform starts showing you more posts based on past expressed interest. The site you're on knows this because of what you clicked, liked, or watched before. Your RAS is like that site's algorithm. It shows you more of what you express interest in, and it hides the things you don't engage in.

So often the answers we want are there, but we're not asking the right questions to shine a spotlight on them. Instead, we're asking useless questions or worse, questions that are disempowering. Why am I not smart enough? Why am I not good enough? Why can't I lose weight? Why can't I find the person I'm meant to be with? We ask such negative questions, and then those questions give us evidence—or pugs—as answers. The human mind is always generalizing in order to make sense of the world. Here, there, and everywhere, we can find evidence to confirm our beliefs.

Thinking is a process of reasoning through something, during which we ask and answer questions. You may be asking, is that true? See, you had to ask a question. While we have tens of thousands of thoughts a day, we have one, maybe two dominant questions we ask more than others. As you can imagine, these questions direct our focus, which directs how we feel, and how we consequently spend our lives. As a thought experiment, imagine someone whose most frequent question is, "How do I get people to like me?" You don't know their age, career, or what they look like. But you know more than you probably realize. What do you imagine their personality is like? You don't need to know much to guess that they're a people pleaser, they're indirect in expressing their needs, and they're not authentic about how they feel or think in any given moment. Someone who is constantly asking themselves how to get people to like them can never truly be their true self because they will always be molding themselves to the preferences of the people around them, even if they're not aware of it. You know all this information, and you only know one question they ask themselves. What do you think is your dominant question?

YOUR DOMINANT QUESTION

When I felt my brain was broken, I loved to escape into the world of superheroes, comic books, Dungeons and Dragons. The world of fantasy helped me forget my pain. I decided that the superpower that would be best for me was invisibility, and my dominant question became, "How do I stay invisible?" Instead of being seen, I was always watching everyone else, wondering what everyone's life was like. I wondered why this person was so popular, and that person was so happy, or what made another person so smart. I was suffering all the time, so as I watched people and learned from the world around me, my dominant question changed to, "How do I make this better?" I wanted to solve this riddle: "How does my mind work so I can work my mind?" The more and more I asked these new questions, the more answers I got. This book is the result of two decades of asking empowering questions.

“He who
asks questions
cannot avoid
the answers.”



—CAMEROON PROVERB

I first met Will Smith at Quincy Jones's 80th birthday party. After hearing about my traumatic brain injury, he invited me to be his guest at the premiere of the film *Concussion*, a movie about the concerns of football-related head trauma. (I'll talk about brain protection in an upcoming chapter.) Eventually, Will booked me to come to Toronto to spend time with him for a week on set. He was shooting a superhero film, so you can imagine that I was in my glory.

What was interesting to me was the cast and crew were working each night, from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M., outside in the dead of winter. Not all Hollywood is glitz and glam; there's a lot of hurrying up just to wait on set. During a break, Will and I discovered a few of his dominant questions, one of which is "How do I make this moment even more magical?" While we were waiting for Will's next scene to shoot, his family and friends were huddled in tents watching the other actors work. At 3 A.M., while I'm sure everyone was cold and tired, we got to see his dominant question in action. He was bringing everyone hot cocoa, cracking jokes to make us smile, and actively playing host when he could have been resting. He was indeed making the moment even more magical. The result of this question directed his focus and his behavior, and completely changed the experience for everyone.



KWIK START

What is one dominant question you ask yourself? Write it down here: _____

PREPARE YOUR MIND

Questions direct your focus, so they play into everything in life—even reading comprehension. Because people typically don't ask enough questions when they read, they compromise their focus, understanding, and retention. If you prep your mind with the right kinds of questions before you read, you'll see answers (pug dogs) everywhere. For that reason, I place specific key questions throughout the book.

To start you off, here are the three dominant questions to ask on our journey together. They will help you to take action on what you learn and turn the knowledge into power.

- How can I use this?
- Why must I use this?
- When will I use this?



KWIK START

These are your three magic questions: How can I use this? Why must I use this? When will I use this? They will help you integrate the knowledge from this book into your head, heart, and hands. Ingrain them. Write these questions down where you can see them—on your desk or in your phone.

Instead of passively reading, consider these questions as you take in the knowledge in this book. Remember, questions are the answer. At the beginning of every chapter for the rest of the book, you will find a series of questions that are designed to prime your focus as you read. Study the questions before you read each chapter, and you'll be better prepared to understand and remember what you learn.

Along with the questions, do the “Kwik Start” exercises seeded in strategic places throughout the book. They are specific activities designed to train you to take immediate action in your learning and life. Most of these can be done in one or two minutes. Remember the power of neuroplasticity: Every time you answer a question and do a new activity, you rewire your brain. I also conclude each chapter with exercises to do before you move on to the next section, to really set these lessons into practice.

“Everybody is a genius.
But if you judge
a fish by its ability
to climb a tree,
it will live its whole life
believing that
it is stupid.”



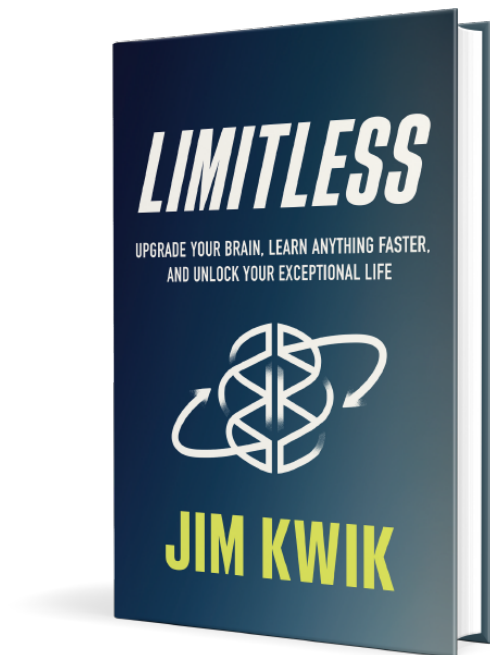
—ALBERT EINSTEIN

ARE YOU READY TO DISCOVER YOUR SUPERPOWERS?

Belief that you are limited might be holding you back from your biggest dreams. In *Limitless*, I share tools that will help you cast off your perceived limitations.

You're going to learn how to upgrade your brain and memory. What's more, you'll learn how to increase your focus, optimize your work time, and form healthy habits.

Limitless helps you learn anything faster, and once you've done that, there is nothing holding you back from your dreams. You'll unlock your exceptional life and uplevel your career, studies, business, and relationships.



[Order the Book Now](#)