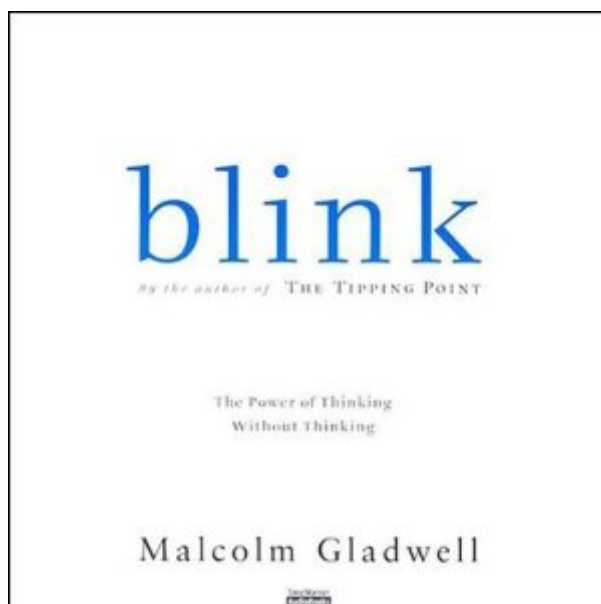


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# Blink: The Power Of Thinking Without Thinking



## Synopsis

In his landmark bestseller *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink*, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant-in the blink of an eye-that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work-in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? In *Blink* we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of "blink": the election of Warren Harding; "New Coke"; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of "thin-slicing"-filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Well, as a huge fan of Gladwell's last book, *The Tipping Point*, I was excited last week to finally get my hands on his new effort: *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. This time around Gladwell's basic thesis is that often snap judgements (what he calls "thin slicing") can be more

accurate than well researched, careful analysis. Gladwell uses many examples (most are interesting) to demonstrate this behavior such as determining when art is faked, sizing up car buyers, picking presidential candidates and determining the characteristics of a person by observing their living space. This has always been Gladwell's talent: taking just-under-the-radar topics and bringing them into the public's view through great journalism and storytelling. Gladwell is also careful to examine the flipside of this phenomenon: the times when "thin slicing" misleads us or gives us the wrong results. For instance, he presents examples where the mind works based on biases that don't necessarily enter the realm of conscious thought, but are nevertheless there (age, race, height, and so on). It's a great topic and Gladwell sets it up with some wonderful examples, but then the book begins to have problems. First, the book is a little too anecdotal. Anyone who has ever had a 200-level psych class knows that what looks like cause and effect may be accounted for by an independent variable that wasn't considered (e.g., concluding cancer rates are higher in some area of the country because of pollution, when in fact the area has higher smoking rates as well). Given this, I found that too often conclusions are made on basic handwaving, or that important aspects of studies are not mentioned.

I am a great admirer of Malcolm Gladwell's writing, having read him for years in "The New Yorker" and loving "The Tipping Point," his earlier book. But "Blink" is no "Tipping Point." The idea here is that people often have intuitive first impressions that are more valid and valuable than carefully considered, well-thought-out, researched conclusions. Except when they aren't, because first impressions of individuals, for example, can be clouded by (and Gladwell even discusses this) such matters as attractiveness, gender, race -- and even height (what Gladwell calls the "Warren Harding" error). And how are we to know when our quick-as-a-blink reaction is valid and when it isn't? Well, that's the problem with the book. Ever experienced love-at-first-sight and then realized the person wasn't really everything you thought s/he was...? This entire book flies in the face of an excellent article Gladwell wrote in 2000 called "The New-Boy Network" [...] about how worthless the typical job interview is (because it relies too much on gut impressions) and how "structured interviews" are the only worthwhile ones (an excerpt from the article: "This interviewing technique is known as "structured interviewing," and in studies by industrial psychologists it has been shown to be the only kind of interviewing that has any success at all in predicting performance in the workplace. In the structured interviews, the format is fairly rigid. Each applicant is treated in precisely the same manner. The questions are scripted. The interviewers are carefully trained, and each applicant is rated on a series of predetermined scales.") Even examples he uses in this book

are not very on-target, such as the Red/Blue military exercise he spends a considerable amount of time discussing.

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