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best-selling author of  
*The 4-Hour Workweek*  
*The 4-Hour Body*

# TOOLS OF TITANS

THE TACTICS, ROUTINES, AND HABITS  
OF BILLIONAIRES, ICONS,  
AND WORLD-CLASS PERFORMERS

# TIM FERRISS

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AND WORLD-CLASS PERFORMERS**

# **TIM FERRISS**

**FOREWORD BY ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER**

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**Houghton Mifflin Harcourt**

**BOSTON NEW YORK**

**2016**

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[www.hmhco.com](http://www.hmhco.com)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN 978-1-328-68378-6

ISBN 978-1-328-68405-9 (ebook)

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Cover design by Brian Moore

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v1.1116

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## Dedication

First, gratitude to you all, my “companions on the path,” as James Fadiman would say.

Second, a portion of author royalties will be donated to these worthwhile causes:

- After-School All-Stars ([AFTERSCHOOLALLSTARS.ORG](http://AFTERSCHOOLALLSTARS.ORG)), which provides comprehensive after-school programs for keeping children safe and helping them to succeed in both school and life.
- DonorsChoose.org, which makes it easy for anyone to help a high-need classroom, moving us closer to a nation where all students have the tools they need for a great education.
- Scientific research at institutions such as the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where entheogens are being studied for applications to treatment-resistant depression, end-of-life anxiety (in terminal cancer patients), and other debilitating conditions.

Third, for all the seekers, may you find much more than you’re looking for. Perhaps this book will help.

## Foreword

I am not a self-made man.

Every time I give a speech at a business conference, or speak to college students, or do a Reddit AMA, someone says it.

“Governor/Governator/Arnold/Arnie/Schwarzie/Schnitzel (depending on where I am), as a self-made man, what’s your blueprint for success?”

They’re always shocked when I thank them for the compliment but say, “I am not a self-made man. I got a lot of help.”

It is true that I grew up in Austria without plumbing. It is true that I moved to America alone with just a gym bag. And it is true that I worked as a bricklayer and invested in real estate to become a millionaire before I ever swung the sword in Conan the Barbarian.

But it is not true that I am self-made. Like everyone, to get to where I am, I stood on the shoulders of giants.

My life was built on a foundation of parents, coaches, and teachers; of kind souls who lent couches or gym back rooms where I could sleep; of mentors who shared wisdom and advice; of idols who motivated me from the pages of magazines (and, as my life grew, from personal interaction).

I had a big vision, and I had fire in my belly. But I would never have gotten anywhere without my mother helping me with my homework (and smacking me when I wasn't ready to study), without my father telling me to "be useful," without teachers who explained how to sell, or without coaches who taught me the fundamentals of weight lifting.

If I had never seen a magazine with Reg Park on the cover and read about his transition from Mr. Universe to playing Hercules on the big screen, I might still be yodeling in the Austrian Alps. I knew I wanted to leave Austria, and I knew that America was exactly where I belonged, but Reg put fuel on the fire and gave me my blueprint.

Joe Weider brought me to America and took me under his wing, promoting my bodybuilding career and teaching me about business. Lucille Ball took a huge chance and called me to guest star in a special that was my first big break in Hollywood. And in 2003, without the help of 4,206,284 Californians, I would never have been elected Governor of the great state of California.

So how can I ever claim to be self-made? To accept that mantle discounts every person and every piece of advice that got me here. And it gives the wrong impression—that you can do it alone.

I couldn't. And odds are, you can't either.

We all need fuel. Without the assistance, advice, and inspiration of others, the gears of our mind grind to a halt, and we're stuck with nowhere to go.

I have been blessed to find mentors and idols at every step of my life, and I've been lucky to meet many of them. From Joe Weider to Nelson Mandela, from Mikhail Gorbachev to Muhammad Ali, from Andy Warhol to George H.W. Bush, I have never been shy about seeking wisdom from others to pour fuel on my fire.

You have probably listened to Tim's podcasts. (I particularly recommend the one with the charming bodybuilder with the Austrian accent.) He has used his platform to bring you the wisdom of a diverse cast of characters in business, entertainment, and sports. I bet you've learned something from them—and oftentimes, I bet you picked up something you didn't expect.

Whether it's a morning routine, or a philosophy or training tip, or just motivation to get through your day, there isn't a person on this planet who doesn't benefit from a little outside help.

I've always treated the world as my classroom, soaking up lessons and stories to fuel my path forward. I hope you do the same.

The worst thing you can ever do is think that you know enough.

Never stop learning. Ever.

That's why you bought this book. You know that wherever you are in life, there will be moments when you need outside motivation and insight. There will be

times when you don't have the answer, or the drive, and you're forced to look beyond yourself.

You can admit that you can't do it alone. I certainly can't. No one can.

Now, turn the page and learn something.

—Arnold Schwarzenegger

## On the Shoulders of Giants

I am not the expert. I'm the experimenter, the scribe, and the guide.

If you find anything amazing in this book, it's thanks to the brilliant minds who acted as teachers, resources, critics, contributors, proofreaders, and references. If you find anything ridiculous in this book, it's because I didn't heed their advice or made a mistake.

Though indebted to hundreds of people, I wish to thank here the many guests who have appeared on my podcast and who grace the pages of this book, listed in alphabetical order:

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## **Read This First— How to Use This Book**

“Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can’t see from the center. Big, undreamed-of things—the people on the edge see them first.”

—Kurt Vonnegut

“Routine, in an intelligent man, is a sign of ambition.”

—W.H. Auden

I’m a compulsive note-taker.

To wit, I have recorded nearly every workout since age 18 or so. Roughly 8 feet of shelf space in my home is occupied by spine upon spine of notebook upon notebook. That, mind you, is one subject. It extends to dozens. Some people would call this OCD, and many would consider it a manic wild goose chase. I view it simply: It is the collection of my life’s recipes.

My goal is to learn things once and use them forever.

For instance, let’s say I stumble upon a picture of myself from June 5, 2007, and I think, “I really wish I looked like that again.” No problem. I’ll crack open a dusty volume from 2007, review the 8 weeks of training and food logs preceding June 5, repeat them, and—voilà—end up looking nearly the same as my younger self (minus the hair). It’s not always that easy, but it often is.



This book, like my others, is a compendium of recipes for high performance that I gathered for my own use. There's one big difference, though—I never planned on publishing this one.

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As I write this, I'm sitting in a café in Paris overlooking the Luxembourg Garden, just off of Rue Saint-Jacques. Rue Saint-Jacques is likely the oldest road in Paris, and it has a rich literary history. Victor Hugo lived a few blocks from where I'm sitting. Gertrude Stein drank coffee and F. Scott Fitzgerald socialized within a stone's throw. Hemingway wandered up and down the sidewalks, his books percolating in his mind, wine no doubt percolating in his blood.

I came to France to take a break from everything. No social media, no email, no social commitments, no set plans . . . except one project. The month had been set aside to review all of the lessons I'd learned from nearly 200 world-class performers I'd interviewed on *The Tim Ferriss Show*, which recently passed 100,000,000 downloads. The guests included chess prodigies, movie stars, four-star generals, pro athletes, and hedge fund managers. It was a motley crew.

More than a handful of them had since become collaborators in business and creative projects, spanning from investments to indie film. As a result, I'd absorbed a lot of their wisdom outside of our recordings, whether over workouts, wine-infused jam sessions, text message exchanges, dinners, or late-night phone calls. In every case, I'd gotten to know them well beyond the superficial headlines in the media.

My life had already improved in every area as a result of the lessons I could remember. But that was the tip of the iceberg. The majority of the gems were still lodged in thousands of pages of transcripts and hand-scribbled notes. More than anything, I longed for the chance to distill everything into a playbook.

So, I'd set aside an entire month for review (and, if I'm being honest, pain au chocolat), to put together the ultimate CliffsNotes for myself. It would be the notebook to end all notebooks. Something that could help me in minutes but be read for a lifetime.

That was the lofty goal, at least, and I wasn't sure what the result would be.

Within weeks of starting, the experience exceeded all expectations. No matter the situation I found myself in, something in this book was able to help. Now, when I'm feeling stuck, trapped, desperate, angry, conflicted, or simply unclear, the first thing I do is flip through these pages with a strong cup of coffee in hand. So far, the needed medicine has popped out within 20 minutes of revisiting these friends, who will now become your friends. Need a reassuring pat on the back? There's someone for that. An unapologetic slap in the face? Plenty of people

for that, too. Someone to explain why your fears are unfounded . . . or why your excuses are bullshit? Done.

There are a lot of powerful quotes, but this book is much more than a compilation of quotes. It is a toolkit for changing your life.

There are many books full of interviews. This is different, because I don't view myself as an interviewer. I view myself as an experimenter. If I can't test something or replicate results in the messy reality of everyday life, I'm not interested. Everything in these pages has been vetted, explored, and applied to my own life in some fashion. I've used dozens of these tactics and philosophies in high-stakes negotiations, high-risk environments, or large business dealings. The lessons have made me millions of dollars and saved me years of wasted effort and frustration. They work when you need them most.

Some applications are obvious at first glance, while others are subtle and will provoke a "Holy shit, now I get it!" realization weeks later, while you're daydreaming in the shower or about to fall asleep.

Many of the one-liners teach volumes. Some summarize excellence in an entire field in one sentence. As Josh Waitzkin (page 577), chess prodigy and the inspiration behind *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, might put it, these bite-sized learnings are a way to "learn the macro from the micro." The process of piecing them together was revelatory. If I thought I saw "the Matrix" before, I was mistaken, or I was only seeing 10% of it. Still, even that 10%—"islands" of notes on individual mentors—had already changed my life and helped me 10x my results. But after revisiting more than a hundred minds as part of the same fabric, things got very interesting very quickly. For the movie nerds among you, it was like the end of *The Sixth Sense* or *The Usual Suspects*: "The red door knob! The fucking Kobayashi coffee cup! How did I not notice that?! It was right in front of me the whole time!"

To help you see the same, I've done my best to weave patterns together throughout the book, noting where guests have complementary habits, beliefs, and recommendations.

The completed jigsaw puzzle is much greater than the sum of its parts.

What Makes These People Different?

"Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers."

—Pierre-Marc-Gaston

These world-class performers don't have superpowers.

The rules they've crafted for themselves allow the bending of reality to such an extent that it may seem that way, but they've learned how to do this, and so can you. These "rules" are often uncommon habits and bigger questions.

In a surprising number of cases, the power is in the absurd. The more absurd, the more "impossible" the question, the more profound the answers. Take, for

instance, a question that serial billionaire Peter Thiel likes to ask himself and others:

“If you have a 10-year plan of how to get [somewhere], you should ask: Why can’t you do this in 6 months?”

For purposes of illustration here, I might reword that to:

“What might you do to accomplish your 10-year goals in the next 6 months, if you had a gun against your head?”

Now, let’s pause. Do I expect you to take 10 seconds to ponder this and then magically accomplish 10 years’ worth of dreams in the next few months? No, I don’t. But I do expect that the question will productively break your mind, like a butterfly shattering a chrysalis to emerge with new capabilities. The “normal” systems you have in place, the social rules you’ve forced upon yourself, the standard frameworks—they don’t work when answering a question like this. You are forced to shed artificial constraints, like shedding a skin, to realize that you had the ability to renegotiate your reality all along. It just takes practice.

My suggestion is that you spend real time with the questions you find most ridiculous in this book. Thirty minutes of stream-of-consciousness journaling (page 224) could change your life.

On top of that, while the world is a gold mine, you need to go digging in other people’s heads to unearth riches. Questions are your pickaxes and competitive advantage. This book will give you an arsenal to choose from.

#### Performance-Enhancing Details

When organizing all of the material for myself, I didn’t want an onerous 37-step program.

I wanted low-hanging fruit with immediate returns. Think of the bite-sized rules within these pages as PEDs—performance-enhancing details. They can be added to any training regimen (read here: different careers, personal preferences, unique responsibilities, etc.) to pour gasoline on the fire of progress.

Fortunately, 10x results don’t always require 10x effort. Big changes can come in small packages. To dramatically change your life, you don’t need to run a 100-mile race, get a PhD, or completely reinvent yourself. It’s the small things, done consistently, that are the big things (e.g., “red teaming” once per quarter, Tara Brach’s guided meditations, strategic fasting or exogenous ketones, etc.).

“Tool” is defined broadly in this book. It includes routines, books, common self-talk, supplements, favorite questions, and much more.

#### What Do they Have in Common?

In this book, you’ll naturally look for common habits and recommendations, and you should. Here are a few patterns, some odder than others:

- More than 80% of the interviewees have some form of daily mindfulness or meditation practice
- A surprising number of males (not females) over 45 never eat breakfast, or eat only the scantiest of fare (e.g., Laird Hamilton, page 92; Malcolm Gladwell, page 572; General Stanley McChrystal, page 435)
- Many use the ChiliPad device for cooling at bedtime
- Rave reviews of the books *Sapiens*, *Poor Charlie's Almanack*, *Influence*, and *Man's Search for Meaning*, among others
- The habit of listening to single songs on repeat for focus (page 507)
- Nearly everyone has done some form of “spec” work (completing projects on their own time and dime, then submitting them to prospective buyers)
- The belief that “failure is not durable” (see Robert Rodriguez, page 628) or variants thereof
- Almost every guest has been able to take obvious “weaknesses” and turn them into huge competitive advantages (see Arnold Schwarzenegger, page 176)

Of course, I will help you connect these dots, but that's less than half of the value of this book. Some of the most encouraging workarounds are found in the outliers. I want you to look for the black sheep who fit your unique idiosyncrasies. Keep an eye out for the non-traditional paths, like Shay Carl's journey from manual laborer to YouTube star to co-founder of a startup sold for nearly \$1 billion (page 441). The variation is the consistency. As a software engineer might say, “That's not a bug. It's a feature!”

Borrow liberally, combine uniquely, and create your own bespoke blueprint.

This Book Is a Buffet—Here's How to Get the Most Out of It

Rule #1: Skip Liberally.

I want you to skip anything that doesn't grab you. This book should be fun to read, and it's a buffet to choose from. Don't suffer through anything. If you hate shrimp, don't eat the goddamn shrimp. Treat it as a choose-your-own-adventure guide, as that's how I've written it. My goal is for each reader to like 50%, love 25%, and never forget 10%. Here's why: For the millions who've heard the podcast, and the dozens who proofread this book, the 50/25/10 highlights are completely different for every person. It's blown my mind.

I've even had multiple guests in this book—people who are the best at what they do—proofread the same profile, answering my question of “Which 10% would you absolutely keep, and which 10% would you absolutely cut?” Oftentimes, the 10% “must keep” of one person was the exact “must cut” of someone else! This is not one-size-fits-all. I expect you to discard plenty. Read what you enjoy.

Rule #2: Skip, BUT do so intelligently.