



April 2019

Book Review When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing

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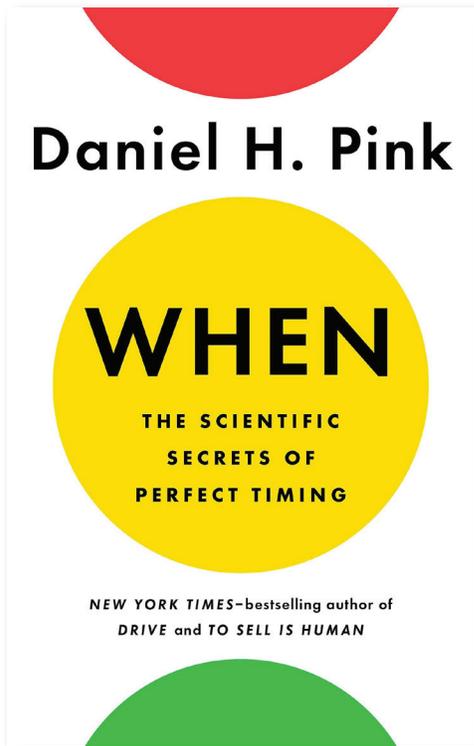
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Recommended Citation

Porter, Nick (2019) "Book Review When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing," *Marriott Student Review*. Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview/vol3/iss1/18>

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When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing

By Daniel H. Pink

Book Review by Nick Porter

"I used to believe that timing was everything. Now I believe that everything is timing," says *New York Times* bestselling author Daniel Pink. In his newest book, Pink makes the claim that timing is not an art, but a science.

Drawing on emotionally-charged stories and backed up by thousands of pages of scholarly research, Pink grips the reader with compelling claims that certain times of the day are best for certain activities. The book opens with the tragic tale of the British passenger ship *Lusitania*, the largest in the world at the time, whose sinking by a German U-boat escalated World War I. This story sets the stage for the book by suggesting that the tragedy may have resulted from the time of day that the captain made some key decisions.

Science shows that each day contains three parts: a peak, a trough, and a recovery. These three parts of our day help explain morning productivity, afternoon slumps, and the second wind most people experience in the evening. The timing of these phases is not the same for everyone, but both the night owls and the early-morning larks experience the same pattern of peak, trough, and recovery.

So, if everyone experiences these dangerous troughs, what can be done? Pink addresses this question with two suggestions. First, there is power in taking a break. Breaks have a unique ability to decrease the effect of the trough by resetting our attention and by spurring creativity. The most effective breaks happen outside with others, completely disconnected from work. When the ideal break isn't possible, there are many other ways to take a break, including eating lunch, which Pink says is the most important meal of the day.

The second way to overcome the trough is to schedule certain types of activities during the low point of the day. For most people, analytical work is best completed in the morning during the peak. The trough lends itself better to creative work, meetings, and answering emails. Don't waste the precious peak! And speak up if the boss tries to have creative brainstorming meetings during the morning.

After reading this book, I have changed the timing of my activities, and I've found myself being more productive and energized because of it. In a running do-it-yourself section throughout the book called the "Time Hacker's Handbook," Pink gives practical ways to unlock the secrets of perfect timing. I have no doubt that I will find myself reading and rereading his findings throughout the years. If you're ready to apply the science of timing to your life, this book is the starting point. But, at the very least, "never schedule a doctor's appointment in the afternoon." 📌