Elon Musk’s Favorite Books

We were compiling a list of Elon Musk’s favorite books because Amazon is likely to have good deals on books in the coming days (last year they had $5 off $15 of books) so we wanted to add Elon to our book recommendation list (see menu bar and here for example). Love or hate Tesla […]

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But first!

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additional cost to you.

Specifically, “Elon describes how his existential crisis was ended with The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, a philosophical comedy science fiction series created by Douglas Adams. He also gives insight into first principle thinking with his process of asking what question is most important. Originally a radio comedy broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in 1978, it was adapted to other formats, including stage shows, novels, comic books, a 1981 TV series, a 1984 computer game, and 2005 feature film. A prominent series in British popular culture, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy has become an international multi-media phenomenon; the novels are the most widely distributed, having been translated into more than 30 languages by 2005.”

While building out Elon Musk’s favorite books we noticed CNBC compiled an awesome list from various interviews, although we know a lot of these beforehand below are eight they listed we also did some quick research and came up with 17/18 books recommended by Elon Musk. As far as we know, this article the most comprehensive list to date of Elon Musk’s favorite books – for sources we tried to find original source and credited anyone who helped us find them, are at the bottom of the article.

Additionally, almost all the books here are available in Kindle (amazon is having a huge sale this week only on Kindle devices), and also on Audible (where you can get a 30 day free trial)

See the full Elon Musk’s favorite books list below.

1. “Structures: Or Why Things Don’t Fall Down” by J.E. Gordon
2. “Benjamin Franklin: An American Life” by Walter Isaacson

3. “Einstein: His Life and Universe” by Walter Isaacson
4. “Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies” by Nick Bostrom
5. “Merchants of Doubt” by Erik M. Conway and Naomi Oreskes
6. “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding
7. “Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future” by Peter Thiel
8. The “Foundation” trilogy by Isaac Asimov
9. The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams
10. Nikola Tesla Biographies: Musk didn’t specify which one but there’s The Tesla Autobiography as well as Tesla: Inventor of the Electrical Age by W. Bernard Carlson
11. Ignition!: An Informal History of Liquid Rocket Propellants by John D. Clark
12. Howard Hughes: His Life and Madness by Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele
13. The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin
14. Catherine the Great Portrait of a Woman by Robert K. Massie
15. by Max Tegmark
16. Twelve Against the Gods: The Story of Adventure” by William Bolitho – this book is now hard to find and more expensive since the Musk recommendation but Amazon has some copies
17. ‘The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress’ by Robert Heinlein
18. “Liftoff: Elon Musk and the Desperate Early Days That Launched SpaceX” by Eric Berger

Also see “Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future” by Ashley Vance on Elon Musk

Sources: Amazon Review, Foundation 20, KCRW, Forbes ,CNBC, MarketFolly, Inc, Elon’s Twitter and here and here, BI via Bloomberg, the New Yorker, The Guardian, CNN interview, MIT, BusinessInsider, note several books were mentioned more than once by Musk – in those cases we just used the first direct

source we could find.

Are we missing any? Please let us know in the comments.

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