

A Short History of Nearly Everything

by Bill Bryson

A printable to-do list of the most effective habits from this book. Check one off each day you do it.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

01 Pick one thing and trace it back

Choose any object in your room. Research its full chain of creation - the materials, the people, the history. Feel the awe.

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02 Write your cosmic address

Write your full address - street, city, continent, Earth, Solar System, Milky Way, Local Group. Read it aloud. Feel what it means to actually have a location in the universe.

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03 Read one paper's history

Find a major scientific discovery and read the story of how it actually happened - false starts, rivals, personalities, luck.

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04 Find the age of one object near you

Pick any common material - glass, iron, salt - and research when those atoms were forged in a star. You are holding stellar remnants that are billions of years old.

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05 Sit in the dark for 10 minutes

Without any devices. Let your brain experience genuine boredom. Notice what arises. Most people can't last five minutes.

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06 Explain deep time without numbers

Try to convey what 4 billion years feels like to a child using only analogies and comparisons. Can you make someone genuinely feel the scale, not just hear it?

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07 Learn the size of a proton

Look up: a proton is one femtometer. The nucleus of an atom is one femtometer across. Atoms are 100,000x larger. Let that sit.

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08 Read one scientific correction

Find a moment in history when confident scientific consensus was overturned. Notice how it happened - how long the resistance lasted and what finally changed minds.