

Tim Ferriss recommends three writing books; Elon Musk backs Paul Graham's case that banning agents creates openings for startups

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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Ferriss names the books he gives aspiring writers, Musk amplifies Paul Graham's argument about agent bans, and Elad Gil and Chamath Palihapitiya point to new AI results and data.

Top pick: Tim Ferriss's books for writers

In a newly posted YouTube video, *How To Experiment Your Way To Success*, Ferriss was asked for his tips for writers and answered with a short reading list:

- ***Bird by Bird*** (Anne Lamott). He calls it “a must-read” and says it “will help you manage the psychological and emotional challenges of being a writer.” He adds that it has “very good tactical stuff, especially for fiction.” [1]
- ***On Writing Well*** (William Zinsser). He calls it “a good book.” [1]
- ***On Writing*** by Stephen King. If Zinsser's book feels too dry, Ferriss says King's is “phenomenal” and “a splendid book,” and that he wants to reread it soon. [1]

The transcript doesn't name Lamott or Zinsser; those author credits are added here. In the same answer, Ferriss notes that many prolific writers work between roughly 10 p.m. and 8 a.m., when there are fewer distractions. [1] Watch

Elon Musk: Paul Graham’s thread on Amazon banning agents

Musk quoted Graham’s post with a single word, “Seriously.” [2] Graham argues that “Amazon banning agents is the first opportunity I’ve seen since Amazon was founded for a startup to create an Amazon competitor.” His reasoning is that people will want agents to shop for them and won’t want to use “some Amazon-supplied agent.” [3] In a follow-up post he makes the general version of the point: any business that bans agents shows that people want to use them, “and that in turn means there’s demand for a competitor that allows them.” [4] The thread connects to the agent-protocol debate from recent briefs. Post

Elad Gil: OpenAI’s new math results

Gil quoted OpenAI’s announcement and wrote “What a time we are living in.” [5] OpenAI says it is releasing “a broad range of new mathematical results produced by an internal frontier model.” It also says it consulted the Institute for Advanced Study’s independent Advisory Group on Mathematics and AI on how to release them. [6] The results are at github.com/openai/math. [6] The last brief carried Sam Altman’s framing of the same work. Gil, who doesn’t work at OpenAI, is a new recommender.

Gil separately shared a YouTube video, captioned only “current state of private markets.” He gave no other comment. [7]

Chamath Palihapitiya: two quick signals

- **Amjad Masad on AI decompilation.** Chamath quoted Masad’s post with “This.” [8] Masad wrote that AI-powered reverse engineering and decompilation is “absolutely insane” and that “pretty soon all software will be de facto open-source.” [9] Post
- **Social Capital’s DeepSeek chart.** Chamath’s reaction was “Wow.” [10] The post claims that in the last week of September, DeepSeek models processed more tokens on OpenRouter than OpenAI, Google, Anthropic and xAI models combined. [11] Social Capital is Chamath’s own firm. Post

Shorter mentions

- ***Be More Pirate*, recommended by Camille François (founding president of Roost) on a Reid Hoffman-channel interview.** [12] She found the book while preparing for Roost’s first team retreat and calls it “great.” What she valued is how it reads the history of piracy for institutional lessons and as “a moment in time that brought a lot of advances in equality and democracy.” [12] Asked what makes her optimistic about the future, she named *Star Trek*, specifically *Deep Space Nine*. Her

reason: it inspires optimism about “our ability to collectively govern it at interplanetary scale.” [12] Watch

- **Steven Mark Ryan’s video “SpaceX Just Pulled Off 5D Chess Move,” via Elon Musk**, who called it “Interesting analysis.” [13, 14] Musk runs the company the video is about. Post
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Sources

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