



Book Review – “Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World”

by Jon Sevenker

If you're a golf or sports fan, you've probably seen [the video of a 2-year old Tiger Woods](#) showing off his skills on a late-night TV show. And when you think of a violin prodigy or young chess champion, you probably assume they've spent 8 hours a day for years practicing their craft. And you'd probably be right. For decades, the message has been clear: you (or your kids) must start early and specialize to be highly successful in a field or sport. But as David Epstein points out in *Range*, that line of thinking only applies in certain cases. And given today's rapidly changing world, there's a strong argument for focusing on breadth rather than depth. Fans of [Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*](#), of which I'm one, will be interested to read *Range*.

Here are a few snippets from Epstein's book:

- *Eventual elites typically devote less time early on to deliberate practice in the activity in which they will eventually become experts. Instead, they undergo what researchers call a “sampling period.” They play a variety of sports, usually in an unstructured or lightly structured environment; they gain a range of physical proficiencies from which they can draw; they learn about their own abilities and proclivities; and only later do they focus in and ramp up technical practice in one area.*
- *...highly credentialed experts can become so narrow-minded that they actually get worse with experience, even while becoming more confident—a dangerous combination.*
- *“If you're working on well-defined and well-understood problems, specialists work very, very well,” he told me. “As ambiguity and uncertainty increases, which is the norm with systems problems, breadth becomes increasingly important.”*

There's a reason this book earns 4.7 stars out of 5 on Amazon. Check it out! (Hat tip to my friends Phil and Jill for recommending this book to me.)

Clicking on the links above may result in you leaving the Pittenger & Anderson, Inc. website. The opinions and ideas expressed on these external websites are those of third-party vendors and Pittenger & Anderson, Inc. has not approved or endorsed any of this third-party content. For the full Terms & Conditions of using the Pittenger & Anderson, Inc. website, [click on this link](#).

To view this article and others like it online, visit the P&A blog at <https://pittand.com/blog/>.