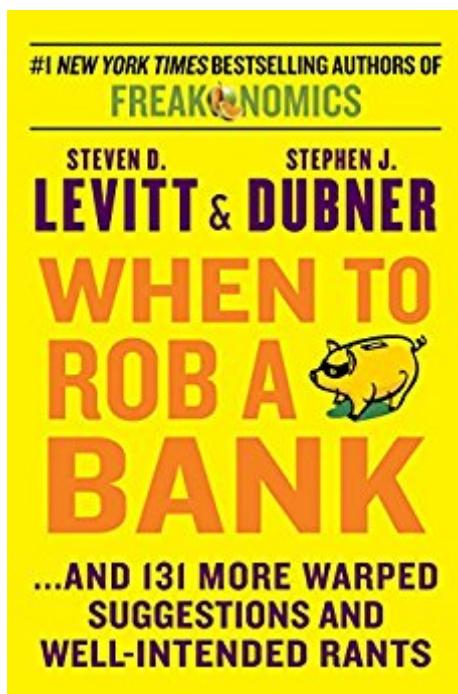


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# When To Rob A Bank: ...And 131 More Warped Suggestions And Well-Intended Rants



## Synopsis

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of the landmark book *Freakonomics* comes this curated collection from the most readable economics blog in the universe. It's the perfect solution for the millions of readers who love all things *Freakonomics*. Surprising and erudite, eloquent and witty, *When to Rob a Bank* demonstrates the brilliance that has made the *Freakonomics* guys an international sensation, with more than 7 million books sold in 40 languages, and 150 million downloads of their *Freakonomics Radio* podcast. When *Freakonomics* was first published, the authors started a blog—and they've kept it up. The writing is more casual, more personal, even more outlandish than in their books. In *When to Rob a Bank*, they ask a host of typically off-center questions: Why don't flight attendants get tipped? If you were a terrorist, how would you attack? And why does KFC always run out of fried chicken? Over the past decade, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner have published more than 8,000 blog posts on *Freakonomics.com*. Many of them, they freely admit, were rubbish. But now they've gone through and picked the best of the best. You'll discover what people lie about, and why; the best way to cut gun deaths; why it might be time for a sex tax; and, yes, when to rob a bank. (Short answer: never; the ROI is terrible.) You'll also learn a great deal about Levitt and Dubner's own quirks and passions, from gambling and golf to backgammon and the abolition of the penny.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book isn't so much a book, let alone a sequel to *Freakonomics*, as it is a celebration of 10 years of the *Freakonomics* branded state-of-mind. Little to nothing here is presented as thoroughly researched forays into unrelated anecdotes but rather it is more of a ticket into the minds of Levitt and Dubner who show they think about various topics in somewhat different ways (such as "Why Don't Flight Attendants Get Tipped?"). The book does expand beyond this idea of understanding the psychology of economists as well, offering "fun sized" pieces of *Freakonomics*, such as the story/stories about Jane Siberry. Additionally, there are just genuinely fun parts that celebrate the decade long run of this "new" way of thinking, as evident through the author's contests. If you are expecting to thoroughly understand when to rob a bank or the cost of fearing strangers, then you should look elsewhere. This book is more of a piece of memorabilia that marks the 10th anniversary of the *Freakonomics* brand (the original book was published in 2005). The same way that die hard Harry Potter fans might purchaseÂ Â J.K. Rowling: A Bibliography 1997-2013, and fans of the Andy Griffith Show might purchaseÂ Â Mayberry Memories: The Andy Griffith Show Photo Album, fans of *Freakonomics* should buy this book to have a look behind the scenes of the mindset of the authors. Plus there are little bonuses along the way. Now, most of this book, if not all of this book is from their blog. Which means most of this book, if not all of this book is available online. For free. So why did I buy it? For the same reason that people bought Malcolm Gladwell'sÂ Â What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures: simply just to have a nice, updated collection of the author's/authors' anthology in the form of a tangible item. As for charging people for free material, perhaps the authors say it best: "Having grown up on the middle of nowhere himself, Dubner had always thought it strange that so many people would pay good money for a bottle of water. And yet they do, to the tune of roughly \$100 billion a year. Suddenly a book of blog posts didn't seem so dumb. So in the tradition of Poland Springs, Evian, and other hydro-geniuses, we've decided to bottle something that was freely available and charge you money for it." Levitt and Dubner are just responding to incentives. If it seems a little odd then that this is only a 3 star review given what I have been previously trying to argue, that is because there are still some aspects that take away from the experience. Poor editing is one. For example, on page 38, the first sentence in the section "The Next Time Your Daughter Brings Home A New Boyfriend, Be Sure To Ask His Middle Name," Levitt writes: I got an interesting

a package..." (the authors write their blog posts separately they explain early in the book. So yes, it is Levitt as the SDL indicates below the entry's title.) This piece about middle names also serves as another example for how the book falls short. Some of these "taste" of Freakonomics, the pieces that seem like they are the springboard into something truly fascinating, do not go anywhere. Although, it truly seems like they should. The source of this middle name material came from a reader who had sent the authors pieces of articles that showed crimes were being committed by people whose middle names were Wayne. But there is nothing more than that. An anecdote like this begs an explanation, yet there is none to be found. It would be like if the (in)famous abortion piece was shortened to a couple of pages that essentially stated: "After decades of escalation, the rate of crime is dropping!" Pieces like this should have been excluded as to been further elaborated on in a true sequel (if that true sequel should ever happen). Finally, why this book is getting 3 stars (from me anyway) is because of the authors' habit of providing theoretical solutions or conclusions in the forms of one or two sentences. It is one thing to show where the sources of their "What if..." or "How come..." questions originate from. It is further interesting to illustrate the seeds of these ideas that have presumably bloomed into full fledged Freakonomic pieces (as was partially the purpose of the Beatles Anthology CDs). But after only a few pages of introducing an idea, sometimes even far less, the authors will from time to time end by saying something along the lines of "My guess is that..." or "It would be better if..." These solutions and explanations and conclusions are not rooted in anything except for speculation. Which is something that anyone can do. Readers should not expect an answer for every problem in this book because this book is not about that. It is 131 examples of how to think differently (which does a better job by doing it indirectly than the direct approach of *Think Like a Freak: The Authors of Freakonomics Offer to Retrain Your Brain*). And there are some gems in the 131 examples. But the abbreviated conclusions negate these introductions to new ideas because they are not founded in data. Nor years of research. It is just the authors attempting to wrap up these little bits of stories by inserting their opinions. Which seems odd for the world of *Homo economicus*. Not to say that the authors shouldn't insert their opinions. But even when they blatantly say that it is a guess, it still undermines the fact that their actual conclusions of former pieces are based on data. And their success is based on their unique interpretation of the data. All in all, it is a nice, quick read. It introduces some interesting thoughts but it does not take the time to explore them. Because that is not what this book is about. It is about the fact that for 10 years, the world has been shown how to think differently. That the world is not black and white. Nor are there just many shades of grey. But often, you may find hues of fuchsia. It is an anniversary of the creation of something interesting and addictive. It is a celebration that people from all walks of

life have come together to join in on becoming Freaky. Through all its faults, and the faults are there, When To Rob A Bank is a nice afterward to the first decade, a little memento from Misters Levitt and Dubner.

For a collection of blog posts, this isn't bad. It is the fourth book in the Freakonomics series. I can't compare this to the others because I haven't read them. I imagine this one is a bit more freeform. They loosely tie their selections together under some pretty broad categories. These guys are clearly intelligent. Despite some quirky subjects, they do take themselves fairly seriously. It happened that I was reading this while taking an economics course, so it was fairly relevant for me. I think this made the book more enjoyable than I would have found it otherwise. If I had to do it over again, I would want to read Freakonomics first, then maybe come to this book.

These guys are great. I listen to their podcast, read their blog, and I've read all their books. Buying this was a no-brainer. However, I'm not as impressed with this book as I have been in the past. I'm not a fan of recycled material (though they do expand on certain pieces). If you don't know, this book is basically post from their blog (hand picked). The posts are of course great posts and if you haven't read them then you'll likely very much enjoy this book. If you're like me and you read their blog, listen to their podcast, then this book may not blow you away. I still really like these two guys and want to support what they do so I bought the book. :)

I'm a fan of the Freakonomics series. I bought this while on travel one day. It made for a light read sitting in the airport terminal (and probably any other light reading venues...bathroom....beach). The content is not as 'prolific' as the previous two versions - meaning you will have less insights into economic relationships and probably won't be able to impress others with as many interesting factoids. So, this one is not as great as the first two - but I give it 4 stars because it is still a entertaining read. The authors state outright that the book is a summary of their online blog entries over the years. I'm a fan of the series, but didn't keep up with their online commentary - so all this was new to me. I regularly pay for bottled water - so I'm used to paying for free things. :) I'd say, if you are a fan of the Freakonomics books (like the writing and the linking of incentives).

If you're already a fan of Freakonomics, this book is for you! It's a collection of the best blog posts from their blog over the last 10 years. It's very much in the style of all of the Freakonomics books, includes a few posts from guest writers, and all in all is yet another fascinating, thought provoking,

and head spinning take on a wide variety of subjects. The book is even a bit broader than their previous books as they hit a wider range of topics. If you haven't read any of the Freakonomics books, this is a suitable introduction but I would highly recommend starting with their first book, *Freakonomics*, as the best introduction to this economist/journalist duo that have engender a cult following among many. If you like that book, then I highly recommend their other previous books *Superfreakonomics* and *Think Like a Freak*, in that order. If you read *Freakonomics* and didn't like it, then definitely don't bother with the others (although *Think Like A Freak* has some more practical applications than the other books).

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