



The Right Way to Do Wrong: A Unique Selection of Writings by History's Greatest Escape Artist

Harry Houdini , Teller (Introduction)

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One of the most intriguing and recognized figures of the twentieth century conducts a masterclass in subversion

Originally published in 1906, *The Right Way to Do Wrong* was a masterclass in subversion conducted by the world's greatest illusionist. It collected Houdini's findings, from interviews with criminals and police officers, on the most surefire ways to commit crime and get away with it.

This volume presents the best of those writings alongside little-known articles by Houdini on his own brand of deception: magic. Revealing the secrets of his signature tricks, including handcuff and rope escapes, and debunking the methods of his rivals, he proves himself to be just as clever and nimble a writer as he was a magician—and surprisingly free with trade secrets! All of which makes this unique selection of works both the ultimate anti-etiquette guide and proof that things are not always as they seem.

In an exclusive introduction to this volume, Teller—magician, comedian, and silent sidekick of Penn Jillette—speaks up about the greatest magician of modern times.

The Right Way to Do Wrong: A Unique Selection of Writings by History's Greatest Escape Artist Details

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From Reader Review The Right Way to Do Wrong: A Unique Selection of Writings by History's Greatest Escape Artist for online ebook

Alicia Fox says

Fun read.

I can't wait to travel back in time to a hundred years ago and embark on a crime spree. This book is full of ye olde scams. Fun!

Edward says

Introduction

- Helpful Hints for Young Magicians Under Eighty
- Addressing an Audience
- The French Letter Cuff
- Light on the Subject of Jailbreaking as Done by My Imitators
- The Cologne Libel Suit
- Rope Ties
- Sword-Swallowing
- Stone-Eaters
- Defiers of Poisonous Reptiles
- Cryptography
- The Right Way to Do Wrong

Lauren Davis says

Written by Harry Houdini in 1906. A collection of his writings about 'mystification', sword-swallowers, poison-ingesters, escape artists and so on... There's an intriguing essay about criminals of the time: bunco men, 'begging-letter' swindlers, pickpockets, second-story men, bank and train robbers, grifters and forgers. Some of it is clearly dated, but it's fun to see how many of these cons are still practiced today and merely updated -- especially the 'betting-letter' swindles.

Houdini comes off as a tough, smart scrapper -- jealous of his turf, ready to take on all comers and the essays in which he relates challenges to his reputation are the most personally revealing.

My uncle, a magician who went by the name "Len Vintus", founded the International Brotherhood of Magicians with Houdini in 1922, so perhaps this book held more interest for me than it would for others, but I do think it would interest anyone curious about the period or the craft. The introduction by Teller (of Penn & Teller) is excellent.

Published by Melville House as part of their Neversink Library series, which I highly recommend.

Natalia says

If you're a fan of Harry Houdini, I highly recommend reading this book of his writings! It'll be worth your while. They're absolutely fascinating. :)

Sandra says

This book was originally published in 1906, and Houdini describes scams and robberies that mostly could not take place today. It is an interesting piece of history.

Lucas Miller says

Neversink library books are worth buying solely for their design. All Melville House titles, but this series in particular, are wonderfully made physical objects. Neversink titles are forgotten, rediscovered, long out of print titles. Each title is the type of book a minor character in a long novel or psychological thriller would be obsessed with. I purchased ten of the most popular Neversink titles, rather impulsively, as a Christmas gift for myself several years ago. To my shame, I have read very few of them. This title alone, always held immense promise. Just the phrase, "The Right Way to Do Wrong."

It is a very interesting collection. I know who Harry Houdini is of course, but hearing his voice across the various, newspapers, journals, and books he contributed to, he did not sound very familiar. He was very much a product of his times, and takes his profession quite seriously. The selections are all interesting, but the language can get a bit stuffy, victorian and in the end the content is geared towards someone who is serious about magic. I thought at several points throughout the book (including when I was skimming chapters here and there) that Teller's introduction could have been longer, and could have extended into notes or explanatory essays on the different selections.

Three stars seems low, I enjoyed this book, but didn't give it a very close reading. I think it's a more interesting idea, a more compelling historical artifact than it is a good read. It does leave me with more questions about Houdini and magic in general, the whole world of dime theaters, freak shows, circuses, and magicians that were such a part of late 19th century, early 20th century culture throughout American and Europe. This would be a good book to pair with a history or biography concerned with Houdini and his world.

Gabby says

Definitely interesting if you're a fan of Houdini! It's very short, much shorter than I originally expected, and not particularly relevant anymore, except as a glimpse into how things used to be. There are a few humorous bits, that aren't intended, mostly because of the outdatedness of it all (tip: beware of women who believe it or not can be criminals too).

Ed says

Unusual. Interesting primarily in part because it was Harry Houdini's own words....

Bodhi47 says

Fun Read

Quick and entertaining read about old scams and how thieves conduct their business. Written by Houdini and in certain cases with the help of ghostwriters. I enjoyed it.

Tosh says

The legendary and totally iconic Harry Houdini wrote this book a little bit after the turn of the century - where till his death, he was a major entertainer/star. I knew about his obsession with the after-life and the fake people that go along with that world, his silent movie serials, and his remarkable legendary escapes from various locks and locations. What i didn't know is that he wrote a book about the nature of the con-artist, pickpocket artist, robber, scam artists, and so on.

"The Right Way To Do Wrong" is a small book, but a fascinating document on the underworld as seen through the eyes of Houdini. "The Sword-Swallowing and the Stone-Eaters chapters are a marvel to read, because one, Houdini is very impressed with the skills of these people, and two, as a reader I am really drawn into Houdini's interest in these side-show adventures. Houdini is very much a class act in a world that is sometimes not that classy. Very impressive book and a must to add to libraries devoted to the criminal and their devilish ways.

Colleen says

Book 19 of my #2018readingchallenge is Harry Houdini's "The Right Way to Do Wrong" and it is BOOOOORRRRRING. IT'S SO BORING.

This very short book was a lesson in patience as Houdini took fairly exciting subjects - illusions, petty crimes, magic, and weird human tricks - and made them SO BORING I COULD BARELY FINISH THIS BOOK. SO. BORING. ABSOLUTELY BORING.

BORING.

The end.

Chaunceton Bird says

This is an entertaining collection of insight and short stories about the art of illusion. There are several essays written by Mr. Houdini on some of the popular acts of deception during his time; such as sword swallowing, rock swallowing, cryptography, and, to a small extent, escape artistry. Following the articles is his short book, *The Right Way to do Wrong*. In the book is a collection of stories, organized by type of property criminal (thief, pickpocket, burglar, etc.).

Mr. Houdini was one of the world's greatest escape artists, but his writing reflects the character of a man that wants to be sure the reader is aware of his fame and talent. I would recommend this to anybody interested in the life of one of history's greats, and any aspiring illusionist, but probably not to the indifferent reader.

Etienne Melton says

If you have ever been interested in the great Houdini or even have the slightest interest in the magic acts of the time period and or performance magic as a whole; you'll devour this. *The Right Way to Do Wrong* provides an insider perspective to the art of stage magic as well as a personal understanding of the man himself through his writing. While insight can be gleaned through reading this, the real gift of these compiled articles is the spark of intrigue that has led me to purchase various sets of handcuffs, keys and shims to satisfy the nagging urge to try my hand at the "Handcuff King's" craft. (I can now open cuffs using only a paperclip both behind my back and using my teeth. Not because this book taught me to do that but it did give me the spark to learn!)

Reading this takes you back to a time where entertainment rested entirely on the skill of the performer. Practice, preparation, innovation and reputation were the determining factors for success and the ability to push your mind and body to the limit could make you a king.

Peter Landau says

The stuff on knots and locks and other magic craft is interesting, as is the surprisingly not-so-dated guide to criminality, but for me the best were the detailed asides, such as the English executioner who hardened himself for the job by killing rats with his teeth.

Martine Bailey says

This was a rather slight but interesting account by the great Houdini of the many tricks and scams of master criminals. It appears he interviewed police chiefs as he travelled the world and collected such stories, which as ever have the theme - if it seems too good to be true, it undoubtedly is...
