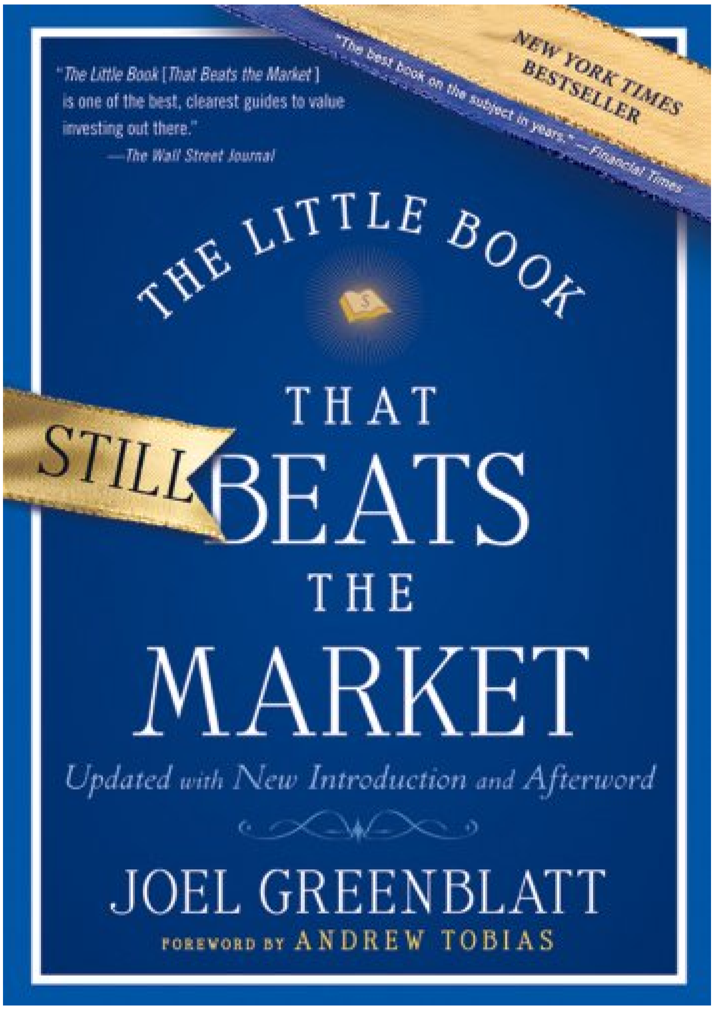
The Little Book That Still Beats The Market (Little Books. Big Profits)



Synopsis

In 2005, Joel Greenblatt published a book that is already considered one of the classics of finance literature. In The Little Book that Beats the Marketâ ”a New York Times bestseller with 300,000 copies in printâ ”Greenblatt explained how investors can outperform the popular market averages by simply and systematically applying a formula that seeks out good businesses when they are available at bargain prices. Now, with a new Introduction and Afterword for 2010, The Little Book that Still Beats the Market updates and expands upon the research findings from the original book. Included are data and analysis covering the recent financial crisis and model performance through the end of 2009. In a straightforward and accessible style, the book explores the basic principles of successful stock market investing and then reveals the authorâ ™s time-tested formula that makes buying above average companies at below average prices automatic. Though the formula has been extensively tested and is a breakthrough in the academic and professional world, Greenblatt explains it using 6th grade math, plain language and humor. He shows how to use his method to beat both the market and professional managers by a wide margin. Youâ ™ll also learn why success eludes almost all individual and professional investors, and why the formula will continue to work even after everyone â œknowsâ • it. While the formula may be simple, understanding why the formula works is the true key to success for investors. The book will take readers on a step-by-step journey so that they can learn the principles of value investing in a way that will provide them with a long term strategy that they can understand and stick with through both good and bad periods for the stock market. As the Wall Street Journal stated about the original edition, â œMr. Greenblattâ |says his goal was to provide advice that, while sophisticated, could be understood and followed by his five children, ages 6 to 15. They are in luck. His â ˆLittle Bookâ ™ is one of the best, clearest guides to value investing out there.â •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a portfolio manager at a large New York based hedge fund I have read more investment books than I care to admit. With that being said, The Little Book That Beat the Market is the first book I have felt compelled to review on (of course, I am not really going out on a limb recommending a book that legendary investor Michael Price describes as "One of the most important investment books of the last 50 years.")Professor Greenblatt’s first book, You Can Be a Stock Market Genius, is widely regarded as the seminal text on special situations investing and the strategies contained in the book are employed by multiple hedge funds and investment professional. While I recommend Stock Market Genius to anyone who has the time and desire to analyze stocks in detail (at least 3 hours a week) I highly recommend The Little Book That Beat the Market to ALL investors of ALL ages and to ANYONE who wants to understand how businesses create value.The beauty of the Little Book is a follows:1) It is simple2) It works3) Most investment professionals cannot follow the Little Book’s strategy and that makes this strategy one of the only instances where small investors have a HUGE advantage over professionals.4) The people who have recommended this book are some of the most successful investors in the history of Wall Street (myself excluded, maybe someday!)1) It is SimpleWhile some of the reviews on have argued that the Little Book is too simply, I completely disagree. The reason this book is great is that it takes a very complicated subject matter (investment success) and makes it simple and easy to understand.

Joel Greenblatt’s Little Book That Beats the Market (John Wiley, just released; $19.95), offers what the author says is a "magic formula" for success in the stock market. Such a phrase may arouse your skepticism, as it did mine, but let’s look into the claim. Joel Greenblatt founded and is a managing partner of Gotham Capital, a hedge fund that, according to reports, achieved a 50% annualized return [before payment of an incentive allocation] during the ten years (1985-1995) that it was open to outside investors. This kind of record certainly merits attention. Greenblatt, it's safe to say, has gotten rich. Greenblatt's formula is based on only two measures: earnings yield and return on capital. These numbers are not hard to obtain. Greenblatt defines earnings yield as EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) divided by enterprise value. Enterprise value equals a company's stock market capitalization plus debt plus preferred shares minus cash and cash equivalents on the balance sheet. Return on capital he defines as EBIT divided by the sum of net fixed assets (total assets minus depreciation to date) plus net working capital (current assets minus current liabilities). One weakness of Greenblatt's presentation is the use of earnings as a measure. I prefer to look at a company's free cash flow (after subtraction of capital expenditures) rather than EBIT. Earnings are susceptible to a greater degree of manipulation than cash flow. Second, the book does little to elucidate the qualitative measures that go into Greenblatt's investment process. Which businesses have a sustainable advantage? How do you identify growth? On the other hand, Greenblatt lays out a testable hypothesis--a real merit.

I won't repeat what other reviewers have said. This book is a quick read, with a breezy tone, and in some simple ways helps to explain value investing, but...A few problems that the author dismisses without any discussion.1. Backtesting. Most backtested stock market systems don't work in the forward direction for very long. A good example is the Motley Fool's Foolish Four model, based on the Dow Dividend model. Backtested it looked great! But when a large number of people started to follow the model, it's performance approached mediocre. This makes sense. Wall Street is nothing but efficient. Any strategy that works will quickly be copied by tens of thousands of players, and this can quickly ruin a system. That's why hedge funds that use "black box" models don't publish the models.And since Greenblatt tells the reader that the system only works over a three year period, it would be at least three years before one could tell the system wasn't working.I would predict that the system will produce diminishing returns over the next ten years, proportionate to how many copies of the book that the author sells. Ironic that the richer that Greenblatt gets, the poorer his followers will get.2. Trading costs: Greenblatt completely ignores trading costs and taxes in his analysis. If you follow his advice and buy 30 stocks, you would pay $779 in round-trip commissions at E-trade (or $600 if you had more than $50,000). That's about 1.5% a year in trading costs on $50,000 invested, or about 3% a year on $25,000. Or almost 8% on $10,000! That's a big expense drag, especially if the system doesn't outperform by as much as it claims to.And taxes.

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