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**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 10:16 AM  
**To:** Hab Barton  
**Subject:** Shortcuts



## Shortcuts

Watching the Olympics last month, you couldn't help but be impressed. These are the fastest, most skilled, most athletic, most mentally tough people on the planet. They swim faster than I run. They fly through the air in an almost cartoonish fashion.

However, a nagging thought lingered as I watched. The Olympian backstories always include something about starting the sport 22 weeks in utero, training 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and so on.

That's all well and good. Sure, I guess it makes sense that you have to train hard to make the Olympics. *But really, there must be a shortcut that is not being shared with the general public.* Really, couldn't I pole vault like Mondo Duplantis if I had the secret pole vaulting equipment they just don't tell us about? Couldn't I beat the world's top marathoner with the right shoes and a few weeks training?

You can't sit there and expect me to believe that a key to becoming an Olympian is years of difficult training. Just tell me the real way to do it.

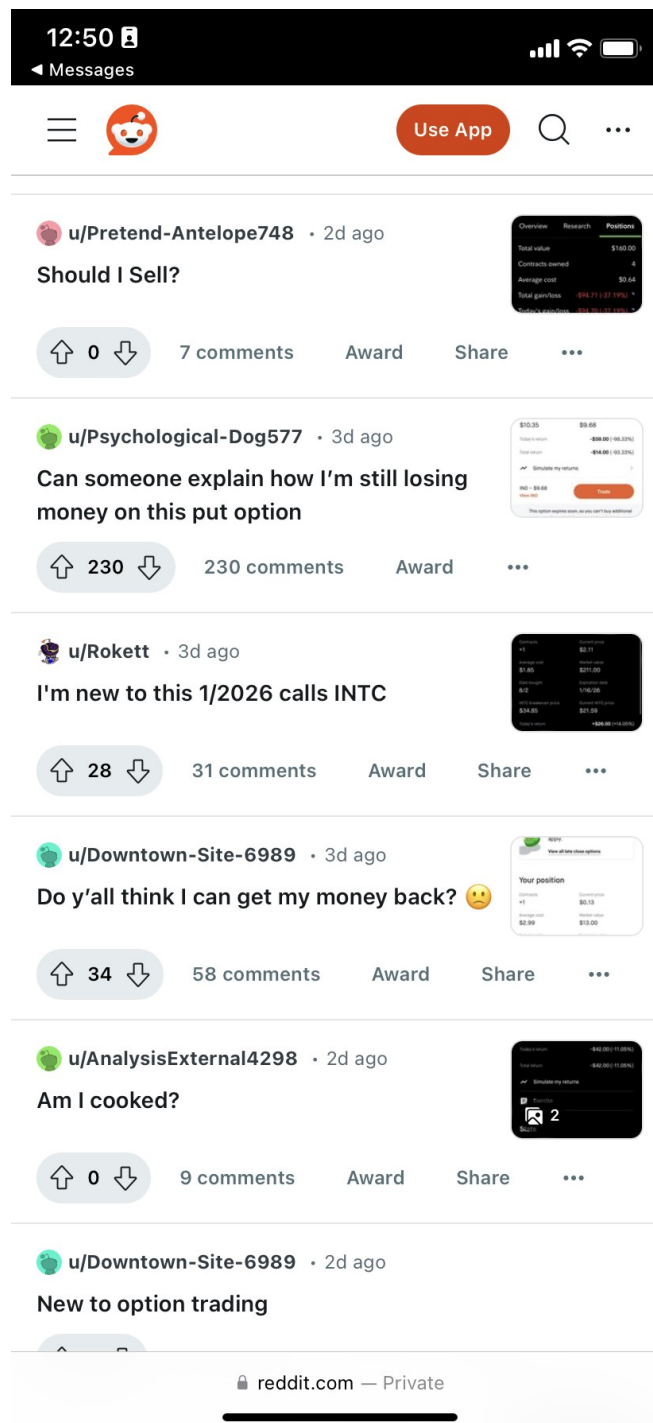
Same thing with the mental fortitude. Yeah, it's impressive to perform at a high level while billions are watching. But there must be a quick hack to sharpen your mind.

Sound ridiculous? It's meant to be ridiculous and sarcastic. No one has ever thought there is a shortcut to being an Olympian.

How about a shortcut to successful investing and to massive investment returns? Ahhhh, here we go.

I don't peruse the internet much, especially the financial side of things, because I don't have much tolerance for BS. A few weeks ago though, when the market took a steep drop, someone sent me a link about options trading. They were curious if options trading was a way to protect against quick and unforeseen downturns. Could it also be a really quick path to some massive profits?

The options trading site had a sleek logo and a super impressive name: OptionsMillionaire! Oh my. In reality it was a message board where strangers on the internet discuss options trading. As you can see from the screenshot below, it's mainly a bunch of scared people getting their rear-ends handed to them.



It's easy to understand how someone could end up here. Financially literacy is not widely taught. It's hard to know who to trust. For every person offering decent advice, there are about 100 people offering a get rich quick scheme. I'm not calling options trading a scheme. Some really smart people think options have some use. Yet most people approach them as just another way to try and avoid the real costs of successful investing.

It's very seductive to look for an easy and quick route, something that doesn't require much discipline. There will always be stories of someone getting rich overnight or of having immediate success while everyone else has to toil. But these are the exceptions that prove the rule, assuming we even know the full story.



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## The True Nonexistent Holy Grail

I think even more than the get rich quick schemes, we can be lured by the Returns with no Risk schemes. Bernie Madoff didn't build a Ponzi scheme by lying about massive returns. He conned people with fraudulent modest returns BUT never supposedly having losses. Reasonable returns with no losses are what really drew people in.

In 2020 as we were coming out of the covid crash, someone asked me about REITs (it's a type of real estate investment. We use them sparingly). He had been told by someone that REITs offered the *returns of the stock market without the risk*. On the paper he'd brought with him to discuss REITs, it literally showed all the past drops in value this particular REIT had suffered. Some were severe, as they can be with any investment.

As I pointed this out, it was as if he could not see the information right in front of him. Someone had told him there was a risk-free way to earn sizeable returns. That story was what he now wanted so badly to believe, no amount of evidence was going to sway him otherwise, not even the very piece of paper he held in his hand.

I don't know what happened to that person. That was the last conversation we ever had. My hope is that he stopped looking for mythical solutions and became more accepting of the inevitable ups and downs.

There are about as many shortcuts to being an Olympian as there are to successful investing. That is to say there aren't any. There are always tweaks and improvements to be made. And investing is but a single part of real financial planning. So in some sense you could always be working on something.

But there are no shortcuts. I could go on and on about the evidence supporting everything I say. That would be entertaining but only for me. I'll just stop here for now.

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### Video of the Month: the Perfect Song



I searched myself for words adequate enough to describe the greatness of the song "September" by Earth Wind & Fire. Nothing came. I searched again and still nothing was good enough.

Let's just say this song is perfect. There are a million reasons why it's perfect, but really the song just speaks for itself.

So please enjoy EWF and their timeless classic: [Earth, Wind & Fire - September \(Official HD Video\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

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### Election Alert

Stacy and I are watching the Ken Burns documentary on the Roosevelts (we also just finished watching The Bachelorette; I am not trying to impress you with our fancy viewing habits). It reminded me we have an election coming up. Here is a video discussing that there's been no significant difference in market performance historically no matter who wins. Elections are important to the market; so are a thousand other items. [Staying the Course During a Presidential Election Year \(buckinghamstrategicpartners.com\)](#)



### Ring the bell

School has begun. As you might be able to tell from the posterboards each child is holding, we were much more prepared for Alice's first day than for Annie's. We planned for months for Alice's inaugural school day. For Annie, we pretty much forgot she was going to Asbury until a fellow parent texted us the night before. What do you expect though, she's the second child.

