15 Steps to Cultivate Lifelong Learning

Learning is a great activity. It expands your viewpoint. It gives you new knowledge you can use to improve your life. Even if you discount the worldly benefits, the act of learning can be a source of enjoyment.

But in a busy world, it can often be hard to find time to learn anything that isn’t essential. The only things learned are those that need to be. Everything beyond that is considered frivolous. Even those who do appreciate the practice of lifelong learning, can find it difficult to make the effort.

Here are some tips for installing the habit of lifelong learning:

1) Always Have a Book
It doesn’t matter if it takes you a year or a week to read a book. Always strive to have a book that you are reading through, and better, they will probably share some of their knowledge with you.

4) Guided Thinking
Albert Einstein once said, “Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking.” Simply studying the wisdom of others isn’t enough, you have to think through ideas yourself. Spend time journaling, meditating or contemplating over ideas you have learned.

5) Put it Into Practice
Skill based learning is useless if it isn’t applied. Reading a book on C++ isn’t the same thing as writing a program. Studying painting isn’t the same as picking up a brush. If your knowledge can be applied, put it into practice.

6) Teach Others
You learn what you teach. If you have an outlet of communicating ideas to others, you are more likely to solidify that learning. Start a blog, mentor someone or even discuss ideas with a friend.

7) Clean Your Input
Some forms of learning are easy to digest, but often lack substance. I make a point of regularly cleaning out my feed reader for blogs I subscribe to. Great blogs can be a powerful source of new ideas. But every few months I realize I’m collecting posts from blogs that I am simply skimming. Every few months, purify your input to save time and focus on what counts.

8) Learn in Groups
Lifelong learning doesn’t mean condemning yourself to a stack of dusty textbooks. Join organizations that teach skills. Workshops and group learning events can make educating yourself a fun, social experience.

9) Unlearn Assumptions
You can’t add water to a full cup. I always try to maintain a distance away from any idea. Too many convictions simply mean too few paths for new ideas. Actively seek out information that contradicts your worldview.

10) Find Jobs that Encourage Learning
Pick a career that encourages continual learning. If you are in a job that doesn’t have much intellectual freedom, consider switching to one that does. Don’t spend forty hours of your week in a job that doesn’t challenge you.

“I don’t think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.” Abraham Lincoln