



MVS: Learn or Perish

Title

Learn or Perish

Description

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" - Mahatma Gandhi.

The first point I would like to stress it is the utmost importance of assimilating the concept of **lifelong learning**.

You must live with the idea of **learning until your last day**. It is **not a one-time process** confined to a limited time frame. **World changes at quick pace**. The circumstances of your life may undergo **unexpected**, unforeseen changes that are difficult to manage, and we are forced to **respond based on the knowledge and skills we have accumulated** during our life.

In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to **acquire new knowledge** and **adapt** quickly to new situations, technologies, people and job roles is crucial. The concept of "learning to learn" involves understanding and practice a **process to acquire new skills and knowledge more efficiently**. This meta-cognitive skill is essential.

Just think about massive layoffs, changes in the job market and other unexpected situations where we need to learn quickly, sometimes under pressure and to resolve difficult tasks out of our comfort realm.

It is astonishing how some people continue doing the same thing for years, **believing** they either **don't need to improve** or are simply not interested in enhancing their expertise and skills in other areas.

Those competences in other areas could be used eventually as **backup** for other careers, to create insightful **connections** between distinct subjects or just to **help others** and **contribute positively** to the world.

Furthermore, enhanced learning skills improve your ability to **tackle complex problems** by **quickly assimilating and applying** new information. The more problems you can handle the more your **self-esteem** and **self-confidence** grow. Consequently, the more other **people can rely on you**.

Don't let your brain atrophy by lulling yourself into the flatness of brain waves. People usually feel so comfortable that at the slightest need to learn something new, they feel bad, **uncomfortable**, see it as an inhuman effort, they feel their brains are exploding, etc. If you are not a genius (yes, *life is unfair*) learning is like training it can be fun but **usually is not**. Guess what? As everything else that really improve yourself **it requires effort**.

As a human being you have to **practice learning in every field**. You need to understand that **you can learn much more than you think**.

Howard Gardner identified 7 forms of intelligence. You will probably feel more competent in one or more areas than in others. I said *probably* because it might not be true at all. Don't buy into the dream of "*find your talent*"; it leads to a **passive**, hopeful, disillusioned **mindset**.

With this mindset, you'll cling to the hope that you're special, **just waiting** for your talent to reveal itself. **Bad news** for you, Mrs./Mr. Couch Potato.

You might not have any talent. In that case, the only talent left is **relentless, consistent, hard and smart work.** In order to do that, learning how to learn fast and efficiently is of paramount importance.

Howard Gardner list of intelligence types:

- **Linguistic Intelligence (word smart):** Mastery of words and language, with a talent for expressing ideas clearly and creatively.
- **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence (number/reasoning smart):** Skill in problem-solving and logical reasoning, excelling in analyzing patterns and abstract thinking.
- **Spatial Intelligence (picture smart):** Ability to visualize and manipulate images, with a strong sense of direction and design.
- **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (body smart):** Control of body movements and physical coordination, often excelling in sports, dance, or hands-on activities.
- **Musical Intelligence (music smart):** Sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, and music patterns, with the ability to create, recognize, and appreciate musical compositions.
- **Interpersonal Intelligence (people smart):** Understanding and relating effectively to others, with strong communication and empathy skills.
- **Intrapersonal Intelligence (self-smart):** Deep self-awareness and introspection, with the capacity for self-reflection and personal growth.
- **Naturalist Intelligence (nature smart):** Connection and understanding of nature and living things, with an ability to observe and classify elements in the environment.

I would like to add the following types of intelligence:

- **Risk intelligence:** The ability to take the right level of risk (most people tend to take *zero* or stupid risks).
- **Financial intelligence:** The ability to manage personal finances, make investments, and develop an instinct for emerging sectors and opportunities.

- **Information intelligence:** The ability to leverage collective knowledge, discern reliable sources, and easily grasp key points.

Be careful **not to fall victim to categorizations** and labels—I believe they can be limiting. This list aims to **broaden your perspective** on the types of knowledge. For example, it's a common misconception that intelligence is measured solely by IQ, which often equates intelligence with logical-mathematical ability. The message here is that we are much more than that, and **it's essential to explore other spheres of knowledge.**

Aspire to be like Leonardo da Vinci, while also embodying Socrates, Pythagoras, and Polydamas of Scotussa.

This concept is beautifully described by this quote:

“A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.” - Robert A. Heinlein

Obviously, it's hard to go deep within each intelligence. Likely, your level of competence will resemble a **T shape**, meaning that you will have deeper expertise in one or few fields while being average on the others.

Anyway, bear in mind that, as in other areas of life, you need to **convince yourself** that you are **blind to this belief** and other **limiting beliefs**. Do you really think that believing you're limited to one area of knowledge can help you approach learning more effectively than believing you can succeed in more areas?

Just a reminder: during your learning experiences, you'll likely encounter both of these effects:

- **Dunning-Kruger effect:** A cognitive bias where people with limited knowledge **overestimate** their competence. The less you know, the more confident you might feel. Essentially, if you've read

one book and watched 10 videos, **you know shit**. Accumulate 10,000 hours of **quality practice**, and then we'll talk.

- **Impostor syndrome**: The feeling of doubting your own abilities and fearing being exposed as a fraud, **even when you're competent**. You may feel like you don't deserve your achievements, despite evidence to the contrary. In this second case, it's important to **recognize it**—not to avoid striving for improvement or rest on your laurels, but to **prevent yourself from being undermined or deceived in certain environments** (*don't be naive*). Moreover, this “syndrome” affects those who are not deluded, who **understand the vastness of human knowledge** in any field and who are eager to learn.

As Hippocrates said regarding medicine: "*Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*". It means "Art is long, life is short." It reflects the idea that while the pursuit of **mastery** or knowledge (art) **takes time** and is enduring, **human life is limited and fleeting**. It emphasizes the importance of dedicating oneself to learning or creating, despite the brevity of life.

Tasks

The goal is to learn something in several areas while trying to go deeper as possible and exit from your warm and comfortable routinely microcosm of expertise.

0. Taking Notes

First of all, you'll need to take notes. Paper and pen, along with one digital tool, are more than enough. Don't fall victim to those rants about 100 tools that will make you waste days just analyzing their features, **giving you the illusion of being productive** when in reality, you're doing nothing (*analysis paralysis*). The important thing is to choose one and keep using it. That's it. Cherrytree? Fine. Notion? Fine. Obsidian? Fine. Google Docs? Fine. **Stick to it.**

1. Allocate Dedicated Time to Study

Plan in advance your study sessions and attend them. Committing to regular study times fosters discipline and helps you balance other

responsibilities effectively. A planned schedule minimizes last-minute cramming and reduces anxiety by breaking tasks into manageable chunks.

1. Understanding the Core Concept

Try to choose a subject for each type of intelligence.

First try to build a **foundational base** on the subject by yourself **without using facilitating technologies** (e.g. your beloved chatgpt) or **shortcuts**.

Just go through the process of **searching** through books, web pages, people and your past knowledge.

During this phase you need to improve your capacity to **distinguish good and bad information sources** and the goal is to **grasp the core concept behind**.

2. Different Layers of Depth

At the end of the process, **reiterate** the task and **use every means** you have access to in order to improve the learning experience (p.e. chatGPT and others ai models, videos, books, audiobooks, matter experts, etc.) and go **deeper**.

For every word you don't know, research it, summarize it, add it to your notes and reread them to ensure that integrating this new knowledge helps you understand better. **Don't fool yourself into thinking you've understood if it's not the truth**. Don't skip any steps and **proactively ask yourself a lot of questions**.

3. Learning Strategies

Bear in mind that **human body likes efficiency**, brain work costs calories. We evolved in circumstances where scarcity prevailed, and conserving calories is a mechanism dictated by biological and evolutionary laws. It's always easier to lay down on the couch like an adult potato. In short, if you feel **it will be hard** to go against your natural tendency to be a couch potato, do not worry, is normal.

Some **strategies** that can be helpful at the time of learning. Try to **stack them one by one** to your studying time:

- **Create a Study Schedule:** Implement spaced repetition by designing a **study schedule** that revisits topics at increasing intervals.
- Each time **retrieve** what you learnt during the passed study sessions.
- **Active Learning: Engage actively** with the material. This can involve discussions, teaching others, or applying concepts in practical scenarios.
- **Spaced Repetition: Spread** out your learning over time. This technique helps reinforce memory and retention.
- **Interleaving Practice: Mix different topics** or forms of practice to enhance learning. This approach helps you to better distinguish between concepts and apply them flexibly.
- **Self-Testing:** Regularly **test yourself** on the material. This not only assesses your knowledge but also strengthens memory. After a study session, write a short reflection on what techniques you used and how effective they were.
- **Teach Someone Else:** Reinforce your understanding by **explaining** the concepts to someone else or even to yourself aloud.
- **Practice Retrieval:** Use flashcards or practice tests to regularly **quiz yourself** on key information.
- **Mix It Up:** Incorporate interleaving by **mixing different subjects** or types of problems in your study sessions.
- **Reflect on Your Learning:** Spend time **reflecting** on what methods worked best for you and why.
- **Say Out Loud** what you want to remember

By implementing these strategies and tasks, you can significantly enhance your ability to learn new things efficiently and effectively. Remember, learning to learn is a **lifelong journey** that can open up limitless opportunities for **personal** and **professional growth**.

Duration

Bare minimum: at least 10 study sessions of 1 hour for each subject. For example, if one were to choose a concept for each of the 11 types of intelligence, there would be a total of 110 hours of study.

I can already picture your face and hear the thoughts running through your head: *'It's too much,' 'No one's paying me for this,' 'Where will I find the time?' 'It's too hard,' 'What's the point?'* Stop. These are excuses. Life isn't designed to be comfortable. **You have a choice—do it, or don't.** But remember, growth happens outside of comfort and comfort kills dreams. How many of you have actually completed all the tasks from previous newsletters? Probably none. Maybe 1%. The truth? Most won't. But those who do will see results. So, what will it be? Your choice.

Expected Results

- You growth a **lifelong learner attitude**
- You have **willingness** to increase competences in **different realms** of human knowledge.
- You developed a **basic strategy** when it comes to acquiring new skills.
- **You are not scared** to learn in new fields
- **You learnt** something new

For any feedback, criticism, suggestions, chat:
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