

Field *Guide*
TO YOUR
**LEARNING
JOURNEY**



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Introduction

Let's keep this simple.

This field guide presents a new way to think about learning during your high school years.

It starts with a very basic premise.

"The purpose of learning is to help you live a good life."

This premise sets us up for everything in this book.

It's not about getting into college. It's not about finding a job. It's not about graduating at the top of your class. Learning is about helping you to live a good life.

This field guide is designed to open up your thinking about school and learning and to introduce a different approach.

It can be used by homeschoolers, unschoolers, and teenagers at liberated learning centers, Sudbury schools, democratic schools, and open schools. Those students have a little more control over how they approach learning but the field guide can also be helpful to any student or parent looking for a new way to re-imagine school.

The field guide will walk you through a process for designing your own pathway through high school.

In some ways you can think of the field guide itself as a kind of school.

Even though it doesn't include a curriculum or classes, the field guide actually does some of the things you would expect a traditional school to do.

- The field guide offers an overall purpose for you to work towards
- The field guide offers you a structure that you can use to guide your journey towards that purpose
- The field guide offers you a way to think about and record your progress and accomplishments
- The field guide offers you a way to communicate what you have done to the outside world

A traditional school decides for you the purpose of your learning, it provides the structure that you are required to follow, it has a pre-built system to record your progress and determine which accomplishments are valuable, and it communicates using grades, rankings, and awards.

Using the field guide, you will see that the methods used by traditional schools aren't the only way or even the best way to approach these problems.

The field guide won't tell you what to learn or when and with whom to learn it. It won't limit how you learn something or where you learn it. It doesn't assume to know why something is important to you.

Those decisions are up to you.

The field guide doesn't tell you when to wake up or when you can use the bathroom, either.

The field guide starts from the premise of helping you to live a good life and builds up from there. It doesn't pretend to know what is the best way for you to live a good life or the best way for you to go about learning.

You are worthy of making those decisions yourself. The field guide is designed to help you make those decisions and give you a framework to think about learning.

It assumes you have your own interests and your own goals. It assumes that you can figure out what brings meaning and purpose to your life and that you are interested in finding a way to bring your unique gifts and strengths to the world, no matter what you discover or determine those gifts and strengths to be.

Even though there isn't a school building or cafeteria or classes or teachers or a curriculum, this field guide is a school in the sense that it is a framework to help you learn.

In particular, it is a framework that starts with this idea ...

"The purpose of learning is to help you live a good life."

This framework is a new way to think about school. It is an approach that puts you at the center.

Here is how this field guide is organized

Section 1 asks, "What is the point of school?" "What is a good life?" and "What is a Learning Journey?"

If the purpose of learning is to help you live a good life then we need to explore what it means to "live a good life" and how you can approach your learning as a journey in order to accomplish this goal.

Section 2 explains four key strategies for you to use on your Learning Journey.

Those strategies are...

1. Make Decisions
2. Explore Widely
3. Dive Deeply
4. Reflect on it

Using these four strategies, you can plan and navigate your Learning Journey and start living a good life, today.

Section 3 examines the importance of "telling your story" as part of your Learning Journey. Journeys make for good stories and it is a very powerful tool to imagine your Learning Journey as a developing story for you to tell yourself and the world.

Section 4 is full of examples, templates, prompts, and exercises. This section is meant to help flesh out and bring to life some of the ideas from the first three sections.

A couple of final points before we get started.

Nothing in this book is sacred. It is meant to open up your thinking about ways to complete your high school years. Use what works for you.

There are no checklists of things you are required to do.

It doesn't dictate any of the details about your day to day activities.

There is no test at the end.

Everyone's Learning Journey is unique. That is by design.

Being in charge of your Learning Journey is hard work. In a lot of ways it is harder than going to traditional school. After all, it is much easier to just follow a checklist and do what you are told.

Going on a Learning Journey isn't for everyone.

It might sound great to be able to make your own decisions and be the one in charge but along with that freedom comes responsibility.

It is up to you to make it work. It is up to you to do the work of reflecting and reviewing where you have been and deciding what to do next. It is up to you to make all of the decisions and deal with all of the consequences.

Along the way you will most likely make mistakes, take the wrong path, change your mind, get frustrated, question yourself.

That is part of the journey, too.

There is no punishment for making a mistake or taking a wrong path. Those are opportunities to learn about yourself and find your place in the world.

If you are ready to take on this challenge, to take ownership of your learning, to craft a unique path that makes sense for you, to start living a good life. Keep reading.



What is the Point of School?

You are forgiven if you have come to believe that school is only about obeying a bunch of rules, following directions, getting good grades, and graduating. It would be easy to come to that conclusion.

Traditional schools provide you a predetermined path to graduation. They have rules and requirements for how you should behave, when your day starts and stops, and what you can wear.

They have already figured out what you should learn and how you should learn it. Traditional schools are organized for you to learn along side students your own age and taught by professional teachers inside buildings that are more or less isolated from the surrounding community. Most importantly, they have decided why it is important for you to be in school and learn the things they put in front of you, even if they don't exactly share that reason with you.



It doesn't have to be that way.

There are other ways to approach learning.

You are a teenager. You are at a very unique and special point in your life. A period of exploring and figuring out the world and your place in it.

Shouldn't school be about that? Exploring. Figuring it out. Finding your place.

This field guide is designed to help you do just that.

- Explore the world
- Find your place in it

The field guide is all about helping you to live a good life but living a good life doesn't mean following a path that is already selected for you. After all, if you follow someone else's path, you will only end up at their goal not yours.



The job of school *could be* to help you live a good life. If schools made that the point, they would have to be organized very differently.

For one, it is up to *you* to decide what a good life means, not the school. They would need to give you the power to make decisions about your learning. They would need to give you the freedom to follow paths that makes sense to you. They would need to be ok with the idea that you can decide for yourself what brings meaning and purpose to your life.

That's not the way schools are currently organized.

But that is what a Learning Journey is all about. It is about you exploring the world and figuring out where you fit in.

You don't live a good life by following someone else's directions on a map. You live a good life by getting out there and seeing what the world has to offer and what you have to offer the world. That is going to look very different than traditional schools.



This is your chance to see what the world has to offer. After all, you don't even know what you don't know. There is a lot out there and you have a lot to learn.

And that's ok. In fact, it is perfectly normal. There is nothing wrong with not knowing everything. It is more important that you are open to the world of possibilities than it is to prove that you memorized a bunch of random bits of knowledge.

The goal is to live a good life and to do that you will first need to know what the world has to offer.

Along the way you might find that some things will speak to you more than others.

Some things will feel more natural and more meaningful to you.

Not everyone will agree with you.

That is perfectly normal. People are interested in different things.



Different people have different interests. That isn't all that surprising but you wouldn't necessarily think it is true if you look at the way a traditional school is organized.

If you are going to explore the world and figure out where you fit in, you will need to acknowledge that not everyone is interested in the same things. The point isn't to adapt your interests to match everyone else, the point is to explore and find the things that have meaning for you.

The same thing is true for how good you are at something. Not everyone is good at the same things. Different people have different strengths. That is also perfectly normal and not at all surprising even if traditional school doesn't always take that into consideration.

Again, the point isn't to demonstrate that you are good at the same things as everyone else, the point is to find your strengths and figure out ways to bring your strengths to the world.



A big part of going on a Learning Journey is to find ways to connect your interests and strengths with the world around you. To find a place and a way for you to fit in.

People of all ages are still figuring out their strengths and discovering new things about the world. The truth of the matter is that your whole life is a Learning Journey of exploring the world and finding your place in it.

Living a good life is an active process of being open to new things and connecting your strengths, skills, knowledge with the world around you.

The purpose of this field guide is to help you live a good life right now and in the future. The secret to accomplishing that is going on a Learning Journey to explore the world and find your place in it.

Summary

What is the point of school?

The point of school is to help you live a good life. Even if traditional schools aren't designed for this task, this field guide can operate like a school providing you with a framework to use as you go on a Learning Journey to start living a good life.

WHAT DOES "A GOOD LIFE" MEAN?

FOR ME, IT WOULD MEAN HAVING THE TIME AND THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS THAT I LOVE, LIKE HIKING, AND LISTENING TO MUSIC, AND WORKING WITH ANIMALS.

IT IS PROBABLY A LOT DIFFERENT FOR YOU.



What is a Good Life?

"What is a good life?" isn't an easy question to answer because the definition of "a good life" is going to be different for everybody. Ask around, you will get all kinds of different answers.

Some people think that a good life is the same thing as having a good job. They believe that school is all about preparing you for a career because a good, well paying job will lead you to a good life.

It isn't as simple as that. After all, there are people who have good paying jobs and are still unhappy with their lives. Other people have jobs that seem, on the surface, to be unimpressive but they genuinely find their lives to be very satisfying and meaningful.

It is pretty clear that living a good life isn't just about finding the right job. That could be a part of it but it isn't the whole story.

We need a better way of thinking about living a good life. Instead of focusing on jobs and careers we are going to focus on four qualities that typically go along with a good life. You might have "a good job" but if you are lacking in these qualities you probably don't have "a good life."

You will probably find that a career or a job are only a small part of a good life. We fill our lives with hobbies and interests and activities and community and creativity that bring us great joy and fulfillment. Sometimes our career is related to that and sometimes it isn't.

Instead of focusing on a career, we are going to focus on four qualities that are associated with living a good life. These are: autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection.

Focusing on these four qualities is a way of including your whole life in your learning. You should be seeking a rich and meaningful life. That means you need to think about much more than your career. A good life might include relationships, hobbies, interests, service, creativity, art, entertainment, fandoms, travel, recreation, games and a lot more.

A rich and meaningful life includes acknowledging the full range of your interests and strengths not just the ones that are career-oriented.

The four qualities that we are going to focus on allow us to leave the details of your good life up to you. Instead it is a recognition that these qualities are typically present in a good life no matter what the details are.



Quality 1 is Autonomy.

Autonomy is a feeling of being in control of your life, of understanding yourself and what you need to do to find meaning and fulfillment, of being able to make decisions and be responsible for your own life.

Quality 2 is Competence.

Competence is being capable of accomplishing your goals, being able to develop and maintain the necessary skills and habits to be successful, and to maintain the ability to continue to learn, grow, and develop.

Quality 3 is Confidence.

Confidence is being comfortable with yourself, knowing your values and your strengths and how to use your skills and habits to reach your goals, knowing that you are capable of setting and reaching your goals and facing challenges.

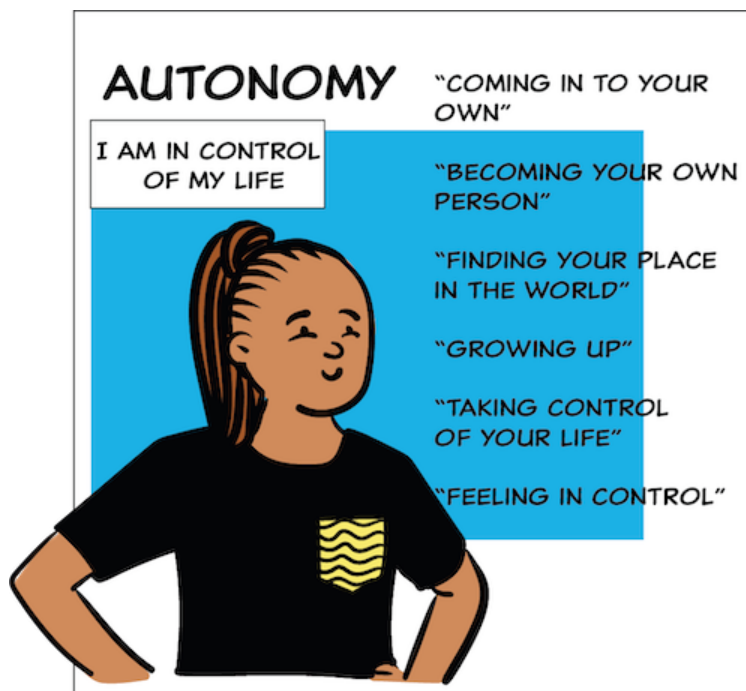
Quality 4 is Connection.

Connection is being able to relate to and connect with the world around you, building and maintaining a healthy life that has meaning and purpose, feeling that you are a contributing part of a community.

If you feel in control of your life (Autonomy). If you have the knowledge and skills to do the things you want to do (Competence). If you know what you are capable of doing (Confidence). If you have a place where you fit in (Connection). You are probably living a good life.

Here's the good news — you can develop these four qualities by going on a Learning Journey. In fact, a Learning Journey is a fantastic way to develop Autonomy, Competence, Confidence, and Connection and begin living a good life.

Before we start talking about what a Learning Journey is, let's talk about these four qualities in more detail.



What is Autonomy?

A person with Autonomy feels that they have agency or control in their life. They are capable of making decisions, working towards their own goals, and finding their own place in the world. They have thoughts about their goals and how to achieve them. They have an understanding of their strengths and what might be required to overcome challenges. They have a sense of their deeper values and can react to surprises and roadblocks without losing the feeling of being in control of their life.

This period in your life, from your early teens to your early twenties is the period where developing Autonomy is the most natural. You are discovering the world and discovering how you fit into the world. You are moving away from a period of your life where you were primarily integrated into your immediate family and moving towards establishing your own life.

People who do not feel in control of their life can end up feeling alienated, unmotivated, and unsatisfied with their life. Many people end up in this position and blame their bad luck, outside forces, or other people. They can feel like their life is inauthentic and doesn't fully belong to them.

Feeling autonomous doesn't mean that all of your problems are solved. It means that you have the skills, habits, and mindsets to tackle problems and work towards your goals. It means you have a greater sense of who you are and what strengths you have and how those strengths might be used to craft a meaningful life.

Autonomy gives you the tools and the strength to tackle the problems yourself or to seek out the help of others when necessary.

Developing Autonomy is not a matter of getting a passing grade in Autonomy 101. It doesn't work like that. It can't be distilled into a lecture and measured on a test.

You will work towards Autonomy by making decisions, taking chances, owning responsibilities, reflecting on mistakes and growing, understanding your values, strengths, and interests. Your Learning Journey can help you understand how you learn best, how to put yourself in the best position to be successful. It can help you discover what brings you joy and satisfaction. You develop Autonomy by taking initiative and being an advocate for yourself. Those are the things that will help you work towards Autonomy.

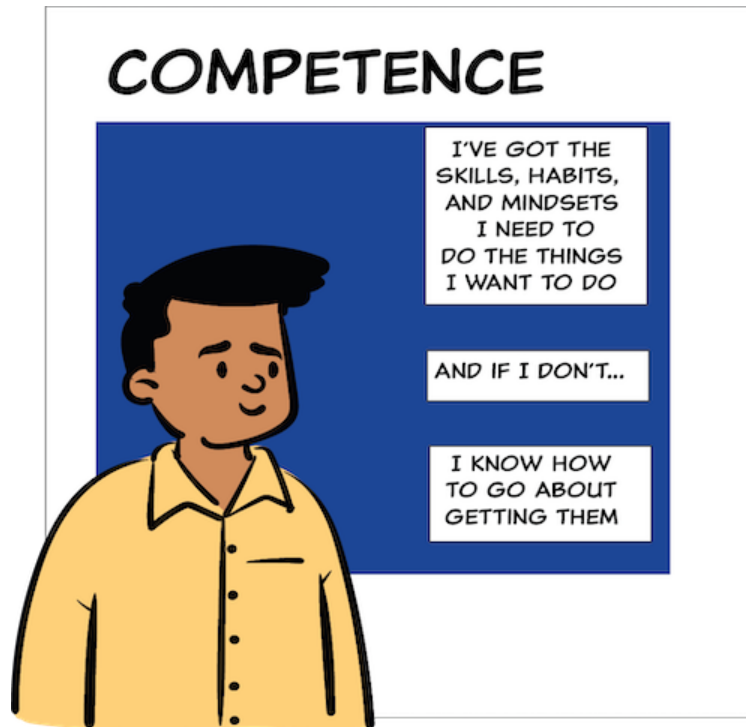
On your Learning Journey you can explore widely and push yourself to try new things and take some chances. Maybe you try out for a play or send a poem off for publication. Maybe you make a phone call to try and get an internship. Maybe you sign up for an in person class that scares you a little bit.

Autonomy can be developed with a habit of reflecting on your journey, taking a moment to look back on things you have done and analyze what worked and what didn't. Asking yourself why did I decide to read that book and did it end up living up to my expectations? Why did I decide to take on that project alone and would it have made more sense to work with a team or seek out help when I ran into a hurdle?

Reflection isn't a grade. It is a conversation with yourself. It isn't about finding blame but about an honest analysis of what happened and what you can take away from it. Reflecting on your Learning Journey will help you develop Autonomy.

Autonomy can also be developed by diving headfirst into your interests and strengths. By pushing yourself to develop your strengths, skills, and knowledge in areas that have meaning and purpose, you will become more Autonomous. Taking on a big project, digging into a fascinating subject, developing expertise, working on skills and habits, are all ways that can help develop Autonomy.

Autonomy is developed by the very act of being in charge of your own Learning Journey. The very act of deciding what to learn, who to learn it with, how to learn it, where to learn it, when it makes sense to learn it, and why it is important to you, is a path to Autonomy. Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. You are worthy of the freedom. You are capable of managing the responsibility.



What is Competence?

There are skills, habits, and knowledge that will be necessary for you to reach your goals. They require time and practice and patience to develop. Some things might require a mentor, guide, or teacher. Some skills, habits, and knowledge need to be built up sequentially, one step at a time. Some skills, habits, and knowledge will be gathered over time without a required order.

The particular set of skills, habits, and knowledge that you work on during your Learning Journey is as individual as you are. It is a reflection of your interests, your strengths, and your goals. It will be a mirror of what is important to you.

There are some basic skills that are probably going to be useful no matter your life path; reading and writing, thinking critically, thinking creatively, recognizing patterns, working as part of a team, being empathetic, asking for help, being persistent.

There are also skills that are more specific to you. Things that you enjoy or areas where you excel.

Your Learning Journey will include basic skills and specific skills. They are all in service of helping you live the kind of life that brings you meaning and purpose.

Developing competence might mean understanding different mindsets. There are various mindsets for approaching problems that are beneficial for anyone to understand and there are mindsets that will help you achieve your life goals.

A mindset is a collection of perspectives, habits of thinking, skills, and underlying knowledge that allows you to approach a problem from a particular point of view.

Quantitative Thinking can be seen in mathematicians, statisticians, businessmen, coaches, trainers, and meteorologists. They use logic, computation, modeling, data, and measurement to help them identify problems, find solutions, make predictions, locate patterns. Quantitative thinking is not just found in these professions. Having a basic level of competence with quantitative thinking is helpful to anyone.

Empirical Thinking is used by scientists, investigative journalists, doctors, and lawyers. It involves gathering evidence, asking questions, examining findings and developing theories to explain the evidence, and testing hypotheses in a scientific manner.

Societal Thinking like a sociologist, historian, economist, or a politician looks at underlying systems and their impact on society and individuals. You have to understand and consider diverse perspectives including economic, cultural, political, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, age, and ability. You have to be aware of differences in people, places, environment, and time. It is a complex interaction of human behavior, cultural systems, and group dynamics.

Creative Thinking or approaching the world like an artist, inventor, or entrepreneur is often a looping process of observation, questioning, idea creation, communication, and experimentation. The creative mindset is willing to challenge orthodoxies, rethink the commonplace, remix what has come before, and see the invisible.

A Nurturing Mindset is used by caregivers, teachers, parents, nurses, and therapists. Nurturers use empathy, compassion, listening, generosity, and advocacy to help their community. A nurturing mindset is capable of seeing problems from another person's point of view, of seeking solutions that help people in their daily lives, of recognizing the humanity and worthiness of others.

A Competitive Mindset is used by athletes, gamers, adventurers, and businesspeople. A competitive mindset uses healthy competition with others and with themselves to drive their performance.

A Performer Mindset is used by entertainers, speakers, writers, chefs, comedians, actors, teachers, and politicians. A performer uses observation, improvisation, listening, communication, storytelling, humor, suspense, surprise, and drama to reach an audience.

A Critical Mindset is used by judges, critics, referees, game designers, lawyers, and managers. A critical mindset uses knowledge, experience, judgment, and wisdom to provide feedback, advice, opinions about someone or something. A critical mindset can be useful when developing or applying laws, rules, and regulations.

All of those different mindsets require specific skills, habits, and knowledge. Having some basic Competence in all of these mindsets will help you. It is a part of exploring what the world has to offer. You should attempt to gain some experience, exposure, and basic competence in these different ways of seeing the world and approaching problems.

You might find one of these mindsets speaks more to you than the others. You might also think that you see the benefit of more than one. Perhaps you want to develop a deeper competence in the areas that have meaning to you.

When you dive in deeper you will develop very specific skills, habits, and knowledge. The particular sets of skills, habits, and knowledge that you decide to develop should be based on what you are drawn to, interested in, and driven to do.

Competence is not defined by reaching a certain score on a predetermined set of skills, habits, or knowledge. There is no test that says you need to score above a 90% on Creative Thinking in order to

move on. It will be individual to you and your strengths, interests, and goals. Your competence should be in relation to your goals and plans.



What is Confidence?

Confidence comes from understanding yourself and your potential place in the world. Confidence is not arrogance or boastfulness, it is a genuine belief in your ability to navigate the world. A person with a sense of confidence knows where they have strengths and skills but they also know where they still need to improve. Confidence doesn't only come from being "good" at something, it comes from knowing yourself and knowing your capabilities.

Many people who have a strong sense of confidence might come across as humble. There is a level of humility in seeing the world with some clarity. The beginner only knows what they know. The expert also knows all the things that they don't know. Confidence can mean seeing the world and yourself with clarity.

Some people attempt to project confidence with bragging and self-congratulation. Typically that kind of false confidence is covering up something. When we talk about working towards confidence we are not talking about being false or bragging. We are talking about a genuine confidence that comes from inside you, a confidence that is earned and authentic.

A Confident person can be playful and have fun as part of learning. A confident person can face open-ended problems. A confident person can assess themselves fairly and avoid unhealthy comparisons like envy and jealousy. A confident person can pursue meaning and purpose in their life. A confident person is not afraid to seek out help or assistance, not afraid to admit they don't know or admit they made a mistake. A confident person is open to new experiences, new ideas, and new information.

Like the other goals we have discussed, confidence doesn't come neatly packaged in a class. It is something you gain over time. It comes, in part from gaining competence. It comes, in part, from gaining autonomy, an understanding of yourself, your strengths, and your goals. It comes from reflecting on your

progress and seeing what you have accomplished so far. Confidence comes from setting goals and reaching them. It comes from making mistakes and recovering from them. It comes from working with others and understanding that you belong.

CONNECTION



What is Connection?

Connection is caring for both yourself and the communities that you belong to. Connection is considering the needs of others but also considering your own needs. It can mean developing healthy habits like exercise, sleep, and nutrition (some of the easiest and least expensive routes to life satisfaction.) It is also finding a way to contribute to your communities. It is taking your strengths and skills and offering them to the world.

It can mean giving time to help the less fortunate but it might also take the form of living your best life, creating things that bring joy or meaning to yourself and to others, helping people reach their goals, incorporating kindness into your day, being grateful, and practicing forgiveness.

Connection could mean organizing your Learning Journey to give yourself time to sleep and exercise. It might mean setting aside time to take a walk in nature to refresh. It could mean volunteering, raising money, or tutoring a classmate.

Connection could look like taking a trip to the Grand Canyon to experience awe. It could also look like spontaneously offering to help someone take their groceries to their car. It might be developing a habit of mindful meditation or a habit of people watching at a local coffee shop.

In adventure stories the hero often returns home after an adventure having faced challenges and survived. The hero's return includes bringing back a type of gift to their community. They return wiser, braver, nobler. The lessons the hero learned on their adventure serve to integrate themselves back into their life at home and as a member of their community. The reward is both their own and their community's.

You are a hero going on an adventure, a Learning Journey. The end of the journey is a return home with Autonomy, Competence, and Confidence and applying those qualities to connect with your community, finding the places where your strengths, passions, and interests can find a home. In today's world, connecting with your community isn't just about the place where you live, it could be a group of peers, a place online, an industry, an art movement, a social group, a fandom.

Summary

What is a Good Life?

What it means to live a good life is different for everybody. It is up to you to decide what the specifics of living a good life might mean for you but we can look at four qualities that are often associated with a good life: autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection.

Those four qualities are not the types of things that can be directly taught to you in a class or measured by taking a test. They go beyond the skills you need to go to college or get a job. These qualities point to a full and meaningful life.

One good way to work on those qualities is to go on a Learning Journey.



What is a Learning Journey?

A journey is a way of exploring the world. It is different than following a predetermined path or finding the shortest route to a destination. A journey is open to unexpected discoveries and adventures. A journey is heading out into the unknown.

A journey is not about reaching a destination; it is about the experience.

A Learning Journey is a metaphor to help you understand that learning isn't about memorizing facts and regurgitating them on a test. A Learning Journey is a process of seeing what is out in the world and discovering your strengths. Going on a Learning Journey is the method you will use to explore the world and find your place in it.

One type of journey is to have no plans and no strategies. To just head out into the unknown and see what happens.

Sometimes that works out fine. If that describes you, go ahead and close this field guide and head out into the wilderness.

Go for it.

If you are still reading this, you probably realize that it might help to have a little bit of a strategy. Maybe pack a few things, first.

The rest of this book is about the tools and strategies to help you navigate the wilderness. It is your Field Guide to your Learning Journey.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

Remember the overall purpose is to live a good life.

Also remember that a good life can look very different for different people but there are four qualities that we will focus on. These four qualities, autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection give us hint at a way to start living a good life.

The way we are going to work on your autonomy, develop your competence, build your confidence, and make your connections is to go on a Learning Journey.

In this way, a Learning Journey is what you do for "school" but it is a little bit different than what most people think of as school.

For one, there isn't a place where you go for all of your learning. Instead, it recognizes that you can learn in all kinds of different settings. You can learn on your own or with a friend. You can learn online or in a classroom. You can create your own projects and follow your own research or you can work with a teacher. You can learn at home or on a campus.

Instead of placing all of the resources in a single school building, a Learning Journey says, there isn't a building at all. The resources are all over the world. On your Learning Journey you can pull together learning opportunities from anywhere and craft a path that makes sense for you.

On one hand, what a great opportunity. You can learn anything, anywhere.

On the other hand, wait a minute ... the whole world is pretty big, there are a lot of options to pick from, how do you know what to pick?

Here is where the tools and strategies come in.



Four Key Strategies for Your Learning Journey

To help you on your Learning Journey, there are four key strategies you should concentrate on.

1. Make Decisions
2. Explore Widely
3. Dive Deeply
4. Reflect on It

In section two we will get into greater detail about each of these four strategies but for now, let's make sure you understand the big picture.

The first strategy is *Make Decisions*.

Making decisions is about understanding and accepting that you are in charge of your Learning Journey. It is all about making choices for yourself, listening to your curiosity, following your interests, setting your own goals, telling your own story.

On your Learning Journey you are free to pick where you learn. Perhaps you want to take a class at a traditional school but you also want to learn by working in your community. You are free to pick the places where you learn.

You are also free to pick what you learn. Maybe you want to learn about chemistry but you also love old movies and you love to draw. You get to decide what has meaning in your life.

You are in charge. That is a big responsibility. It might seem scary or even intimidating to be in charge of your Learning Journey.

Don't worry. You are worthy of it. You are a human being with agency. You deserve to make decisions about your own life.

Yes, you might take some missteps. You are going to change your mind along the way. That is a part of the process. Mistakes are opportunities to learn. Journeys have wrong turns.

Don't worry. You don't have to do it by yourself. You aren't being sent into the wilderness alone, without a compass. You should surround yourself with people who will help you navigate your Learning Journey; family, friends, peers, guides, teachers, advisors, mentors, experts, partners. Learning is a team sport. You are in charge but you should have a team supporting you.

That brings us to key strategy number two, *Explore Widely*.

It's a big world with a lot to see and experience. This is your chance to see what is out there. You live in a time and place where an unbelievable amount of information is available to you online, in books, movies, audio. For thousands of years people who came before you left behind stories, ideas, discoveries, inventions, and advice.

Part of exploring widely is sampling some of what came before you. Dip your toes into the stream of human experiences. See what other people have figured out. Listen to their stories. Join in the conversation that goes back thousands of years.

On the other hand, part of exploring widely is also having your own experiences; make things, create, meet people, be out in nature, work, volunteer, and engage with the outside world.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

Try out different ways to learn; take classes, get a job, travel, do projects, find a mentor, join clubs, play games, read.

Learn about new things; explore new ideas, find out about the past, think about the future, work on new skills and talents, develop new habits.

Learn by yourself, learn with new people, learn from new people. Teach and mentor people.

Some of the ideas you come across or the experiences you have will speak to you more than others. Some parts of your Learning Journey will tap into your particular strengths and interests. Some ideas will draw you deeper. There will be skills that you want to develop because they will help you reach your goals. There will be habits that you find helpful and you decide to actively pursue them.

This is what is meant by key strategy number three, *Dive Deeply*.

Diving deeply during your Learning Journey is when you are applying your individual strengths and skills towards your goals. You are seeing places where you might fit in. You are discovering what brings meaning and purpose to your life. You might have interests and decide to follow them deeply. You might work on the skills and habits that will help you reach your goals.

When you dive deeply you are having the experiences that will prepare you for your next steps. You will work on the habits and mindsets that help you live a good life.

The final key strategy, *Reflect on It*, is taking the time to think about what is happening. All too often we go through life on autopilot. To make your Learning Journey truly an effective process of living a good life it will be important to reflect on your decisions; consider whether you are Exploring Widely, plan your Deep Dives, capture how much progress you have made, and imagine what to do next.

Reflecting is a way of taking stock of your Learning Journey. It will help you recognize when you need to make adjustments or seek out help. Reflecting will allow you to listen closely to your heart and find the places that fill your life with meaning. It will also help you understand yourself, help you identify your strengths, and help you integrate everything that is happening into a story about your adventures.

Ok, so you are going on a Learning Journey to help you live a good life.



How does a Learning Journey work?

Let's talk details. How does a Learning Journey work?

There isn't a map. There isn't an itinerary. There is no predetermined path to follow.

A Learning Journey is very open ended. At the beginning you might not know everything you are going to see and do but that is kind of the point of a journey.

Instead of having a path to follow, you are going to make all of the decisions about what to learn and how best to learn as you go. To help make those decisions you will use the four key strategies.

1. Make Decisions
2. Explore Widely
3. Dive Deeply
4. Reflect on it

That's it. A Learning Journey isn't about learning specific content or passing standardized tests or passing a set of required classes. It is about following these strategies.

Going on a Learning Journey is a process. It is a process for living a good life. And following these strategies will help you make progress towards the qualities that are associated with a good life; Autonomy, Competence, Confidence, and Connection.

This is quite a bit different from the way we typically think about school.

It is all about the process. Think about the phrase, “get an education.” It implies that learning is something that you can acquire, maybe like you could acquire a car. When you acquire a car you go to a car dealership, pick out a car, pay for it, and drive it off the lot.

In some ways, we think of traditional school in a similar way. You go to a building, you do the things they tell you to do, they give you a diploma, and you walk away with “an education.”

Going on a Learning Journey is something different. It is about the process, the experience, the journey.

The goal isn't to walk away with a piece of paper that says you graduated. The goal is to live a good life. You are going to use the Learning Journey to accomplish that goal.

Understanding the four strategies will help you navigate your Learning Journey.

Don't worry. You are still completely in charge. These strategies don't limit what you learn, determine who you learn with, dictate how you learn, and most importantly don't tell you why something is important.

Those are all decisions for you to make.

In fact, decision making is the heart of strategy number one.

Summary

What is a Learning Journey?

A Learning Journey is an approach to schooling where you are in charge of making decisions about who you learn with, what kind of things are important to learn, when is the best time and best pace to learn something, where is the best place for you to learn, why something might be important for you, and how is the best way for you to learn.



Key Strategy One: Make Decisions

You are in charge of your Learning Journey. That is important. You need to be the one making decisions; decisions about what is important, what is interesting, and what is meaningful; decisions about what to do next, and decisions about why something is important.

This doesn't mean that you will always be learning alone. Your Learning Journey will have classmates, partners, teammates, friends, mentors, teachers, guides, tutors, supervisors, and bosses. The important thing is that it is you who will decide who you want to learn with and who you want to learn from.

On a Learning Journey it is you deciding what to learn and how to learn it. That doesn't mean you have to totally reinvent the wheel. You can take classes at a school, if that is what you want to do. You are also free to design unique projects that explore topics that are particularly interesting to you or find an internship that gives you hands-on experience. The most important thing is that it is a decision that you are making.

Keep in mind, not everything worth learning is taught in a classroom; not everything worth learning happens in school.

The world is full of opportunities to learn. You happen to be alive at a time in history where information and opportunity are abundant.

There are computer programs that simulate flying a plane, building a civilization, or going on a quest. There are videos that will teach you to fix a car, explain World War I, or witness how Mountain Gorillas raise their families. There are free classes on chemistry, personal finance, or the science of happiness.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

There are databases, wikis, and FAQ's that allow you immediate access to information that a generation ago was hidden away.

You might live in a community with parks, museums, libraries, aquariums, and zoos. Even if you don't, you can travel the world virtually or plan a trip utilizing apps, reviews, videos, and guides. You can reach out and talk with experts on another continent and find peers in other countries.

There is a world beyond your computer screen, too. You can volunteer, job shadow, and intern. Maybe you want to start your own business or perform in a play. Perhaps painting is your thing or playing tennis? Nature hikes, kayaking, fishing, horseback riding?

Do you believe strongly in a cause and want to be involved in political activism? Do you want to join an organization or even start one.

Do you like to work with younger people or maybe spend time with seniors? How about working with animals or growing vegetables in a garden?

Some people are deep into fandoms and enjoy making costumes, fan art, and fan fiction. Some people just want some quiet time to read or listen to music.

It is possible to do a whole lot of valuable learning without ever setting foot in a classroom.

But there is nothing wrong with learning in a classroom, if you want to.

The whole point is that *you* will be making the decisions.

You can learn through internships, in person classes, mentorships, self-directed research, interviews, traveling, creating, volunteering, clubs, sports, community groups, shadowing, entrepreneurship, gaming, performing, making art, making music, creative writing, drawing, inventing, experimenting, exploring, problem solving, activism, mindfulness, watching shows, listening to podcasts, building things, planting a garden, or hanging out with friends.

Everyone of those things and many, many more are opportunities for you to learn something. They are called Learning Opportunities.

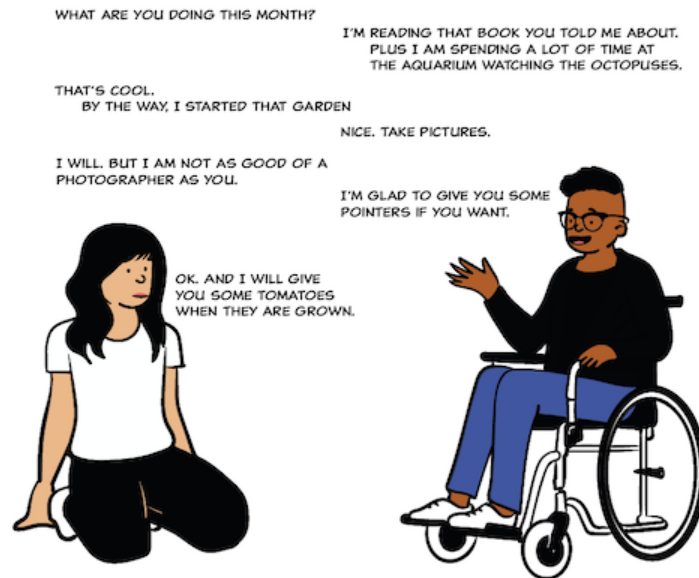
It doesn't matter if a Learning Opportunity happens at a school with a teacher. It doesn't matter if you receive a grade.

A Learning Opportunity is anytime you put yourself in a position to learn something.

A Learning Opportunity could be short, like maybe a day you spend at an aquarium. A Learning Opportunity could be longer, like a year on a self-directed, deep-dive research project.

A Learning Opportunity could be formal, like driving lessons. A Learning Opportunity could be informal, like reading a book in your favorite book series.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS



The world is full of Learning Opportunities. You have access to so much information, experiences, and connections that you could build a school out of it.

In fact, that is what your Learning Journey is; it is a school built out of all kinds of different Learning Opportunities.

The way a Learning Journey works is that you decide which Learning Opportunities you would like to pursue. Some of them will be focused on Exploring Widely, some of them will be Diving Deeply, and some will be a little bit of both.

The active process of you deciding which Learning Opportunities to pursue; you deciding how you will learn; you deciding who to learn with; and you reflecting on what happened and deciding what to do next is all a part of the first key strategy

It is all about making decisions.

You are in charge, partly because you are worthy of being in charge of your own life and partly because feeling in charge of your life (Autonomy) is an important part of living a good life.

Where Do I Find Learning Opportunities?

If a Learning Opportunity is "anytime you intentionally put yourself in a position to learn something." And if a Learning Opportunity could look like a class, an internship, reading a book, creating music, testing out a hypothesis, interviewing an expert, watching a documentary ... if it can be any of those kind of things. Well ... how do you find them? Where do you look to find all of these interesting Learning Opportunities?

You can find Learning Opportunities that are already somewhat structured and ready to go.

Or you can create your own, unique Learning Opportunities from scratch.

There is an abundance of Learning Opportunities out there already. We obviously can't identify and review every one of them. Even if we could, we can't determine which ones make sense for you.

In Section 4 of this field guide we have included some ideas, examples, and strategies for finding existing Learning Opportunities and for creating your own unique ways to learn.

Let's Talk About Motivation

On your Learning Journey you will be making a lot of decisions. Let's talk about the motivations for making all of these choices. How do you make decisions anyways?

First of all, not all motivation is the same. Some motivation comes from inside of you. Sometimes you are driven to do something because you enjoy doing it. Sometimes you do something because it is important to you. Sometimes you are curious. Sometimes you are interested. Sometimes you want to try something new.

These reasons all come from inside of you. This is called intrinsic motivation. We do all kinds of things because doing them is its own reward. Games, sports, music, reading, hiking, talking to friends, watching a show, making art, knitting, cooking, exercise, poetry, fashion. Our lives are full of things that we do because doing them makes our lives better. They are fun, interesting, meaningful, important.

There is another type of motivation that comes from the outside. It is usually described in terms of rewards and punishments. This is called extrinsic motivation. You do these type of activities not because they bring meaning or value to your life but because there is some kind of external reward or punishment driving it.

"If I don't clean my room, my mom is going to kill me." That's an example of an activity that is driven by a fear of a punishment. That is an extrinsic motivation.

"I'm gonna clean my room and it is going to make my mom so happy." Same activity but this time it is driven by a reward, a happy mom. That is also an extrinsic motivation.

In both cases you are motivated to clean your room by an external force, the reaction of your mom.

In comparison, "I'm going to clean my room because I like having a clean room." Is an example of an intrinsic motivator. You are motivated by your desire for a clean room.

You might also say, "I actually enjoy cleaning my room." This is also intrinsic but the motivation isn't driven by the end result of a clean room, the motivation is the activity itself.

Extrinsic rewards often include tangible rewards such as money, trophies, ice cream, and prizes. They can also be less tangible rewards such as praise, fame, or grades.

The basic idea is that you are working to gain the reward whether it is tangible or intangible.

Extrinsic punishments work the same way. You are typically motivated to avoid a punishment which might be tangible such as a fine or penalty or punishment or might be something less tangible like disappointment, anger, or embarrassment.

In a school setting extrinsic motivators include grades, credits, requirements, parent and teacher praise or disappointment, gold stars, demerits, student of the month, valedictorian, class rank, and even admission to college. All of these act as extrinsic motivators.

Intrinsic motivators like curiosity, interest, passion, and meaning can help you learn and even be successful at school. Being interested in what you are learning goes a long way to helping you achieve external rewards like higher grades but whether you were internally motivated to succeed or whether you were merely driven by the reward isn't directly factored into your results. From the school's perspective, a 100% on a test is the only thing that matters.

When many people think about motivation they think of it as an external force, as in, "how do I motivate someone to do what I want?" or even "how do I motivate myself?" This framing treats motivation as some magical force that can be applied when needed. This is how we end up with, "If you clean your room, we can go get ice cream after."

When we think of motivation as an external force, we end up creating rewards and punishments.

Let's explore a different approach to motivation. It is something that will help you make decisions about your Learning Journey.

A better way to think about motivation is as an internal force that is already inside of you. It is a matter of recognizing it and putting yourself in situations where your activities and your motivations are in alignment.

"How do I motivate myself to learn?" is the wrong question.

"What already motivates me? And how do I keep my Learning Journey in alignment with my motivations?" is a better framing. It recognizes that the motivations are already there inside of you.

You have motivations already. There are things that interest you, excite you, inspire you, entertain you, or bring meaning to your life. Your job is to understand your motivations and find ways so that those things are part of your Learning Journey.

We are reversing the framing. Instead of finding motivation to learn, you are finding learning that matches your motivation.

The first job is to listen to your motivations

We all have intrinsic motivations that we should be listening to. Learn to recognize and listen to some of your basic intrinsic motivators. Here is a list of some common words that tap into intrinsic motivations:

- Curiosity and questioning
- Exploration and discovery
- Enjoyment and fun
- Adventure and excitement
- Interest and intrigue
- Passion and drive
- Purpose and meaning
- Creativity and imagination
- Expression and communication

These words point to the kind of things that we do because they bring value to our lives. These are very human motivations. They don't require external rewards or punishments because they are their own internal reward.

One approach to making decisions about your Learning Journey would be to let yourself be guided by these types of motivators.

Here are some strategies you can use to connect with your intrinsic motivators.

Listen to Your Curiosity

Curiosity can be as simple as wanting to know the answer to a question, "What was the hottest day ever recorded?" Some questions have straightforward answers. You can look up the hottest day on record and get an answer. There is something satisfying about having a question and finding the answer.

Sometimes curiosity is more complicated than looking up an answer. Scientists can be driven by curiosity and spend years trying to find an answer. Albert Einstein was curious about what a light beam would look like if you could travel next to it. Einstein couldn't look up that answer. He had to figure it out.

We are naturally curious. It doesn't require developing special skills to be curious. Although, you might benefit from developing a habit of listening to your curiosity. At some point as we move from kindergarten to high school we pay less attention to our curiosity. Maybe school knocks it out of us or maybe it is just part of getting older. No matter the reason, your Learning Journey can benefit from being more open to your curiosity.

Think in Questions not in Answers

One strategy of tapping into your natural curiosity is to think in questions rather than in answers. It is easy to be convinced by school that the world is full of answers and your job is to just learn the answers.

The truth is that the world is a lot more interesting if you think in terms of questions. It is also a way of developing a habit of listening to your curiosity. Even if people are presenting what appear to be confident facts you can still ask yourself questions like, "how do they know that is true?" or "how did they find that out?"

How do they measure the temperature of the Sun?

How do they know how much bacteria is in my yogurt?

Why does the US still use miles and inches?

How do they know if fish sleep?

Those questions might have answers, too? But the answers are less important than the process of thinking in questions.

Be Open to the New

Being open to new things is a good strategy to tap into your intrinsic motivators. In a way, it is a bit like being curious only instead of listening to your curiosity, you are intentionally pushing yourself to be curious.

Being open to new things means giving things a decent try and not judging too quickly. Some things are acquired tastes, some things require a little work to fully appreciate them. Maybe the first time you listened to an opera it didn't really connect with you. Maybe you tried reading Walt Whitman but it didn't make sense. That is going to happen. We aren't saying that you have to keep reading Walt Whitman until it makes sense, we are saying don't entirely give up. Maybe come back to it a little later. Maybe put it in the pile of something you might try again one day.

Have Fun

Just because you are having fun doesn't mean you aren't learning anything. Go ahead and seek out ways to have fun.

It is your Learning Journey after all, if you want to have fun during your Learning Journey, that is your decision to make.

Besides, play is a natural way to learn. And not just for humans. Watch puppies and squirrels and bears, they play, too. It is likely that all animals use play as a way of learning about the world around them. Play is a good way to learn.

Seek out Adventure

Humans seem to also have a natural sense of adventure. Adventure is a little bit like curiosity and a little bit like play. Maybe splash in a touch of the unknown and maybe even a little bit of fear or trepidation and you have adventure.

Adventure pushes us out of our comfort zone. Adventure asks us to do something without knowing how it will turn out. Adventure promises surprises.

Adventure might mean going on a trip but it could also mean asking someone for an interview. Adventure could mean being outside in nature but it could also mean playing a game or even reading a book.

Adventure is that sense of not quite knowing how things will turn out.

That's Interesting

Listen to yourself, every now and then when you find out something new or do something unexpected you might make a barely audible "hmm" sound. You can interpret that as meaning, "that's interesting."

We like discovering interesting new things. There is a whole sub Reddit dedicated to "Today I Learned". Of course, what is interesting to someone else might not be as interesting to you and vice versa.

Listen to those moments when you quietly say "that's interesting" in one manner or another. That is a sign to yourself. It doesn't have to lead anywhere. It doesn't have to be turned into an "educational activity" or lead to a career or college major. It can just be "interesting". That is enough.

Follow Your Passion

Some things go beyond being “interesting” and become true passions for us. If you have passions, you probably know it. It isn’t something you should have to think very hard about. It is important to you and maybe no other explanation is needed.

Once again, the things you are passionate about don’t need to become your career, you don’t need to go to college to study them (although there is nothing wrong with those options). Your passions can just be your passions. You can work them into your lives in whatever way you want.

Some people love birdwatching, RC cars, flying drones, knitting, recording music, traveling, scuba diving, history, fixing up old houses, wood working. The list is endless.

Some people don’t want to make their passions part of their career because they are afraid of losing their passion for it if it becomes the way they make money. Some people want to spend all of their time involved with their passion and therefore seek out ways to make it their career as well as their passion.

There is no right or wrong answer. Honestly, your passions might change as you get older, as you discover new things, as you meet new people. The only worthwhile advice is to not be afraid to follow your passions. You can make them a part of your Learning Journey because it is intrinsically rewarding to keep your passions in your life.

Don’t worry yet about turning your passions into a career. That is a decision for a later day. Right now, recognize when you truly love something and make it a part of your Learning Journey. That will help you down the road when you take on the question of your career.

Seek Out Meaning and Purpose

Maybe there is only a subtle difference between “passion” and “meaning and purpose”. They can certainly overlap. Meaning and purpose is connecting with and contributing to a community in some manner. Sometimes that can be charity and helping out those in need. It can also mean using your gifts to contribute to a community. That could be done through the arts like music, painting, literature. That could be done through public service. That could be done by writing code or creating a product.

Meaning and purpose are yours to define. What brings meaning to one person’s life might not bring meaning to yours. While passions are somewhat internally focused, meaning and purpose are somewhat externally focused. They are about offering the gifts of your signature strengths to the world in some way or another.

Maybe there are ways that they combine and your interests and passions coincide with what brings your life meaning and purpose. You love medicine and you want to be a doctor. You love the outdoors and you want to become a park ranger. You love making videos and you love travel and you have a YouTube channel about your adventures.

Just as importantly, meaning and purpose can come in smaller packages. Maybe you volunteer once a week at a shelter. Maybe you contribute to an online discussion about your favorite genre of music. Maybe you sit on a public bench and sketch the people you see downtown.

Get Creative

You can think of creativity as a means to an end. It can be a method to produce an end product. You can use creativity to create art, to make music, to write poetry. You can use creativity to solve problems and find solutions. In that regard you can think of creativity as a tool to accomplish something. There is nothing wrong with that framing.

You can also think of creativity as an end in itself. You can derive joy and meaning and a sense of purpose from the very process of being creative. In that regard, creativity isn't a tool—it is a process that has its own reward.

You can see small examples of this all the time. If you ever squirted the mustard on your sandwich into a smiley face for no other reason than it was fun, if you made up a random rhyme, whistled while you worked, wore funny socks, you've experienced the small joys of creativity.

Sometimes you might do little things to make someone else laugh. Maybe you speak in a funny voice, point out something ridiculous, make up a silly pun. It is hard to find the practical value in those actions. You are just sharing your creativity with another person.

Humans enjoy creativity. You can always use creativity on your Learning Journey to accomplish practical things. In those cases your motivation is driven by the end product and you are using creativity as a tool. You can also get creative for its own sake. You can use the act of creativity as your source of inspiration.

Express Yourself

One form of creativity is related to expressing yourself. There are probably some deep psychological explanations behind the desire to express yourself but let's just imagine that, on occasion, you need to say to the world, "here I am."

Like creativity, the desire to express yourself can be an end itself. It doesn't have to lead to some practical result to have meaning in your life. You can solve problems or create products or contribute to your community or follow your curiosity without giving much consideration to expressing yourself. You can also do those same things and find opportunities to put your unique stamp on what you are doing.

You might make choices in your Learning Journey that serve no greater purpose than just expressing yourself, saying to the world, "here I am." You can be motivated to express your opinions, your point of view, your personality, your values, your experiences, your feelings.

The desire to express yourself can be the primary motivation behind a Learning Opportunity or it can be a part of a combination of motivations.

Be Comfortable Not Knowing

Intrinsic motivation is great. It is possible you could complete your entire Learning Journey by keeping your learning aligned with your intrinsic motivators.

But there are some dangers you should keep in mind. It is easy to fool ourselves to think that we are just following our heart when what we are really doing is avoiding what is hard.

Let me explain.

First off, learning is inherently vulnerable. And humans don't like to be vulnerable.

You make a choice to learn something when you don't know something or when you aren't good enough at something. In order to learn to speak a new language you have to be able to admit that you don't know that language. In order to learn to get better at tennis you have to understand that you have room to improve your tennis game. In order to learn about physics you have to accept that you don't know much about physics yet.

That is why being a learner is inherently vulnerable. You have to admit to yourself that you have room to improve.

Since humans don't really like to be vulnerable we have all kinds of psychological protections to hide our vulnerability from ourselves.

We might say to ourselves and to others, "I'm just not good at math."

We might insist that "This is boring."

We might convince ourselves that it isn't our fault, "They are not a good teacher."

We might convince ourselves that it is all our fault, "I'm not that smart."

We might gravitate away from some things that challenge us and towards some other things where we already have some level of comfort.

When faced with something where we might struggle, it is often easier to just do the things we are already good at?

The truth is, sometimes we do exactly that. We gravitate towards the things we are already kind of good at, the things we already kinda know. Video games, social media, streaming video and audio services know this. They have algorithms that keep us in the comfort zone of what we already know.

Even traditional schools help you avoid the psychological pain of being a vulnerable learner by making things required, by giving you a simple path to follow. After all, you don't have to worry about why you are stuck in this chemistry class, it isn't your own fault. It was required.

It is convenient to have someone else to blame or to believe that you didn't have a choice.

Which is why believing that you are listening to your intrinsic motivators can sometimes be fool's gold.

The good news is that this too is part of your Learning Journey. Coming to understand, listen to, and trust your intrinsic motivators is part of the path in front of you.

It might take time. You might make mistakes along the way. That too is part of the journey.

If there are no requirements. If you have permission to go ahead and do whatever you want, in any way that works for you, and also decide how or even if you are being graded. If you have all the choices, won't you choose to avoid the hard stuff, avoid the extra work, avoid being a vulnerable learner?

A big part of that work is understanding your motivations. Even the ones that lead you to avoid the difficult and the challenging.

Let's look at the question *Why*. Out of: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How, Why is the big one. It is the one that only you can answer. Another person can look at a Learning Opportunity and from the outside being able to describe Who, What, When, Where, and How. The answer to those questions are pretty obvious. But only you can answer the question, Why.

Why did you take that class? I wanted to know more about the topic.

Why did you read that book? I like the author.

Why did you work with that partner? They are my friend.

Why did you research the Galapagos Islands? I am interested in tortoises.

Why did you volunteer at the senior center? It makes me feel good to help people.

Why are you learning Spanish? I want to travel to South America.

Why do you take a walk every afternoon? It helps me deal with stress.

Those are specific to you. Someone else could do the exact same Learning Opportunity but have a very different answer to Why.

So, number one. Why is about you. It is your answer and your reasons. You are worthy of having your own reasons.

If we break down some of the most common approaches to answering the question Why, we find; curiosity, exploration, interest, enjoyment, passion, meaning, creativity, expressing yourself, reaching goals.

- I was Curious about it and/or I wanted to Explore more about it
- I Enjoy it and/or it is Fun
- I wanted to use my Creativity and/or Imagination
- I am Interested in it and/or I always Like learning about it
- I am Passionate and/or Driven to learn about it
- It brings Purpose and/or Meaning to my life
- I wanted to Express Myself
- It is related to a Goal of mine

Those answers are about you. They come from inside of you. They are intrinsic motivations.

There are also typical answers to the question "Why" that are driven by extrinsic motivation.

- I heard it was important.
- My family will be mad if I don't do it.
- My family will be happy if I do it.
- I'm getting paid to do it.
- It is required.

The simple answer is that being driven by intrinsic motivation tends to make for a better Learning Journey. If you want a guiding principle for making decisions during your Learning Journey:

"Pay attention to intrinsic motivation."

But we aren't here for simplified explanations. There is a deeper truth we should explore.

The question "Why" is like an onion. It has layers (h/t Shrek).

If you have a younger sibling or if you have spent some time around a young person between the ages of 2 and 6 you will know the power of the Why question.

Why is the snow man getting smaller? They are melting.

Why are they melting? It is warm today.

Why is it warm today? The sun is out.

Why is the sun out? Because there are no clouds today.

Why are there no clouds today? Ummm, because that's the weather today.

Why is that the weather today? It just is. Ok?

There are other ways to answer the last why question. You could keep going if you wanted? You could study a little meteorology and probably answer why there aren't clouds today. But you know there will be another why and you aren't sure you will ever get to the center of the onion.

You can just keep asking Why and it changes the nature of the question. It digs deeper. It opens up new layers.

We can learn a little bit from that curious kid. We too can keep asking ourselves questions about our motivations. But we don't have to be annoying about it.

Why did you read that book? I like the author.

Why do you like the author? They are pretty funny and the situations they create are pretty absurd and hilarious.

Why not read more of their books? This is the second one but it is a lot like the other one I read.

Why don't you plan on reading everything by this author? Not right now. Maybe at some point in the future I will. I was in the right mood for this book and it made sense at the time. I don't feel the need to read everything they write but if the situation calls for it, I will look at other books they have written.

If you keep peeling back the onion you can get a deeper and more meaningful answer to Why.

Let's try another one.

Why did you study the Galapagos Islands? I am interested in tortoises and there are interesting tortoises on the Galapagos Islands.

Why are you interested in tortoises? I like animals in general, especially in the wild. I like tortoises because they live a long time and they seem pretty gentle.

Are there other animals you are interested in? Of course. Most of them, actually. But studying the Galapagos Islands was really interesting because they have been isolated a long time and you can kind of see evolution in action.

Are there other places like that, places that have been isolated? Yes. I saw that there have been instances of tiny elephants that have shrunk because they have lived on an island for thousands of years. I love the idea of tiny elephants. That is my next research project, animals that have shrunk.

Why is a pretty powerful tool. Peeling back the onion can reveal deeper truths. It can even open up places to go to next.

Why can even help you find intrinsic motivations inside of what appear to be extrinsic motivations.

For example,

Why did you take that class? It is a required math class.

Required by whom? By the college I am planning on attending.

Are there other ways to meet that requirement? I am not sure. I haven't asked. This seemed like the easiest way to meet that requirement.

Why do you want to attend that college? It totally makes sense for me, location-wise, cost-wise, size-wise, plus they have a program I want to study there.

Will math classes be a part of that program you want to study? Yes. There are a couple of math classes I will need to take. It makes me a bit nervous.

Is it fair to say that taking this math class now is part of your longer term goal of attending this college and studying in this program? Yes, I suppose.

So maybe this math class isn't so much a requirement as it is a challenge that is going to help you down the road? That's fair. I still don't love math classes and I am still nervous about math classes in college.

That's fair. Maybe we can rephrase your first answer? Sure. I took this math class because I want to study a specific program at a specific college and that program has some math requirements. So this math class is going to help me get into my preferred college and also prepare me to get through the math requirements of my program. But I still don't like math.

Sometimes there are hoops to jump through. Sometimes there are requirements we can't avoid. If you want to drive, you will need to pass a driver's test.

Sometimes we can find small cracks in the requirements and craft creative and imaginative ways through them. Sometimes we can't.

A college admission department will probably accept an alternative way of demonstrating your math competence. Your state's Department of Motor Vehicles will not allow you to create your own driver's test.

But, remember, the motivation and the answer to Why belongs to you. If you can find the intrinsic motivations that might be hidden inside of the extrinsic you might be able to rewire your mindset around the requirements.

Let's look at another example.

Why did you volunteer at the senior center? My mom told me it was important.

Why did she think it was important? She thinks it is important that I do something to "give back".

Do you agree? I don't know. Maybe. But that wouldn't have been my first choice.

Why not? I wasn't a big fan of the smell in there. It is kinda like a hospital.

Did you mention that to your mom? Yes. She said, I would get used to it.

Did you? Not entirely.

Do you think your mom would be ok if you did a different volunteer activity to "give back"? I think so.

Do you think your mom is right that it is important for you to "give back"? I mean, I guess I get it. It was kind of nice to go somewhere and have them be appreciative of me being there. Teenagers aren't always welcome at places, if you know what I mean?

That makes sense. Would you be willing to explore other volunteering opportunities, maybe one that you enjoy more? Yes. I think I would be ok with that.

Would you be willing to tell your mom that you found a different way to "give back"? Yeah, I don't think she would be bothered by that. The reason I ended up at the Senior Center is because she knew someone there who could get me in as a volunteer. I think she would be fine with an alternative.

Do you like it when your mom gives you "requirements"? No. I mean, I get it. She wants me to do things that she thinks are important. She isn't always wrong, either. But I just wish she let me come to the realization on my own. She also isn't always right, by the way.

Part of becoming more autonomous is managing these types of conflicts. It is natural for a family to want to make sure you are "on the right path." Even if they believe in you and want you to take a Learning Journey, they might have an idea of what is "important" and they might make suggestions, present options, or even give you requirements.

Peeling back the onion of "Why" can help you manage these kind of conflicts. It might help you understand their point of view, it might help them understand yours. It might present solutions that satisfy everyone. You might also come up to a non-negotiable requirement. That happens. "I'm doing this because it will keep my mom happy" isn't the best answer to Why but you might be able to find your own intrinsic motivation inside of it. Maybe keeping your mom happy is a reasonable goal that allows you to do other things. Maybe you can rephrase it, "I'm doing this because I choose to keep my mom happy." Very subtle change but it puts you in the decision making position.

Summary

What does it mean to Make Decisions?

Your Learning Journey is going to be all about making decisions. You will decide what Learning Opportunities to pursue and why it makes sense for you. You will decide who to learn with and when to try something completely different.

You will learn to listen to your motivations and let them guide your decision making. Most importantly you will decide what living a good life means for you.

The process of making these decisions will not only propel you on your Learning Journey they will play a big role in helping you develop autonomy and confidence.

I THINK I CAN DECIDE
WHAT A GOOD LIFE
MEANS FOR ME?



Now let's take a look at the second strategy to use on your Learning Journey, Explore Widely.

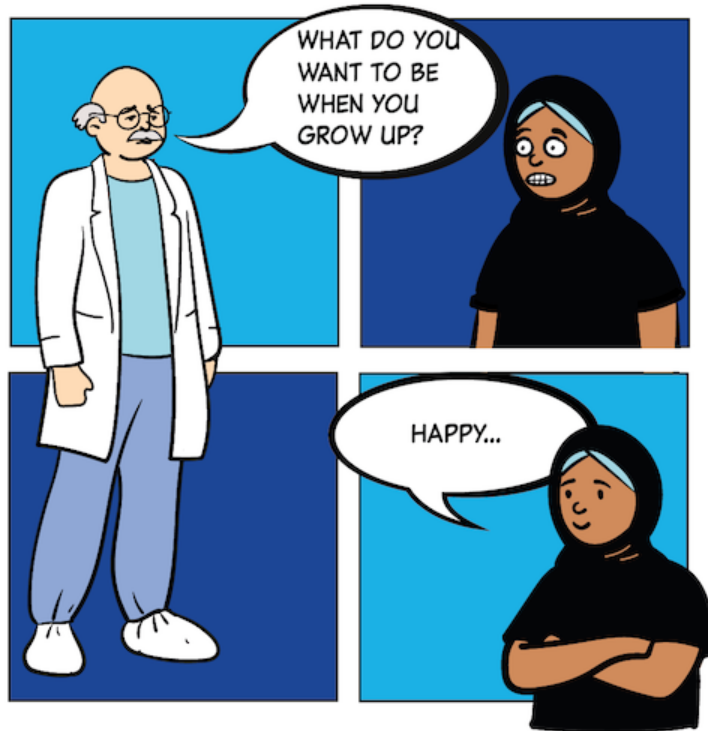


Key Strategy Two: Explore Widely

The second of our key strategies is to Explore Widely.

At some point in your life you have probably been asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

Please forgive the adults in your life who ask you this question. It is possible that they don't know how to talk to young people and this is the only question they can think of. It is possible that they don't know the answer for themselves and they are looking to you for some ideas.



Feel free to answer like a teenager, “I want to be alive.” “I want to be taller.” “I want to be happy.” “I want to be older.”

You don’t need to know the answer to that question. At least not in the way that they mean it.

Let’s talk about ways to plan your Learning Journey even when you don’t really have a plan for your life. Even if you do have a plan for your life, these ideas might help you too.

This strategy is called, *Explore Widely*. It is all about pushing yourself to see the bigger world, trying new things, considering new ideas, and seeing ways that you might find your place in the bigger world.

Remember, you don’t even know what you don’t know, yet. You might be smart and talented and a very nice person but it is a big world out there. There is nothing wrong with not knowing everything. This strategy is all about being open to new things.

One of the hardest parts of this strategy is being open to “not knowing”. It is not about demonstrating how smart you are, showing off your abilities, or proving that you already know everything. It is quite the opposite.

To be successful at exploring widely you need to be fine with being a beginner. You need to think like a Kindergartener and embrace the excitement of encountering new things every day. Kindergartners aren’t worried about “not knowing” they have a beginner’s mindset and gobble up all the excitement around them.

Traditional schools are designed around graded classes. You take a class that has homework, quizzes, tests, papers, projects. Each of those things is graded. In some ways the entire class is designed around the need to assign a grade at the end. That creates a mentality in which grades and learning go hand in hand.

In a traditional school success is measured by getting a good grade. A good grade is earned by demonstrating that you accomplished what was asked of you. So we come to equate success with showing off that we can follow directions. If we do what is expected of us we get a good grade.

It is a simple idea but very pernicious. It doesn't leave room for having a beginner's mindset. It is also exactly the wrong attitude when using the Explore Widely strategy.

You need to approach learning from a very different mindset. Embracing a beginner's mindset means being ok with being vulnerable, looking for things you haven't done, yet, seeking out things you haven't learned, yet, experiencing things you haven't experienced, yet, and not worrying so much about being graded or showing off what you already know.

Let's get into the weeds and figure out what this might look like in practice.

If we start with the idea that a strategy of Explore Widely means being exposed to things that you don't know about, that creates a conundrum. How do we know what to explore if we don't even know what we don't know about?

In a traditional school, they approach this problem by making sure that every student takes a minimum amount of classes in a select group of subject areas, like math, history, science, etc.

On your Learning Journey there are no requirements like that. Requiring specific subjects doesn't make much sense for a Learning Journey.

In fact, you already know that Learning Opportunities aren't only about subject areas. You have options. You can decide who you learn with, how you learn it, how long it might take. You can learn by creating something or learn by doing something. You can combine topics, practice skills, develop habits, and much more.

When you Explore Widely you can explore different kinds of content but you can also explore different methods of learning, different mindsets, different skills. You can combine things and invent unique Learning Opportunities or you can find an existing Learning Opportunity in your community.

Exploring Widely means exploring all of the various ways you can answer the who, what, when, where, why, and how questions.

There is no straightforward answer to the question, "how widely is widely enough?"

That is up to you to decide.

Section four gives you some examples and exercises that you can use to explore various ways to think about what a strategy of Explore Widely could mean for you. There is no checklist for you to work through or prescribed path to follow, instead exercises around Explore Widely are meant to give you options to consider when planning your Learning Journey.

The simplest approach to Explore Widely is to consider all of the different types of Learning Opportunities that are possible and make sure that you are pushing yourself to try new things.

A Learning Opportunity can take place at different types of locations; online, in a classroom, at a museum, outside, while traveling, on a campus, at a coffee shop. Are you pushing yourself to learn in different locations?

EXPLORE WIDELY



A Learning Opportunity can be done alone or it can involve different people. Are you always learning with the same people or from the same people? Are your Learning Opportunities always teacher-led? Maybe you could find a mentor or guide? Maybe you could be a mentor or tutor to a younger student? Are you usually learning alongside people your own age? Can you find or create a Learning Opportunity that allows you to learn with older people or younger people?

A Learning Opportunity can be short or long, intense or stretched out. Are all your Learning Opportunities the same length and same schedule? Perhaps you could focus on only a single project for a period of time and see if that is a good way for you to learn. Maybe take on an activity, learn a skill, or develop a habit that is ongoing with no fixed start and stop dates.

Not every Learning Opportunity needs to be a teacher-led class. There are a lot of ways to learn something. Learn by Creating, Learn by Doing, Learn by Discovery. Volunteer, intern, job shadow. Play a sport, join a club, try out for a play, perform in public, put on an event. Read a book. Write a book. Go to a concert. Hike in the mountains. Learn to swim. Play games, make art, fix things. Do these things because you want to try new things and have new experiences. Not everything has to be preparation for a future career. Doing different things in order to Explore Widely is all the reason you need.



Summary

What does it mean to Explore Widely?

The strategy of Explore Widely is one of the four strategies to guide you on your Learning Journey. To Explore Widely means to push yourself to try new things, to find out what is out there for you, and to help discover where you might fit in.

Exploring Widely is not just about the content or what you are learning about. It means to explore different ways of learning, different places and settings, and different people. To Explore is to adopt a beginner's mindset and be open to discovering new and interesting things.

So far, we know our Learning Journey should include Making Decisions and Exploring Widely, now let's look at strategy three, Dive Deeply.



Key Strategy Three: Dive Deeply

Our third strategy is to Dive Deeply.

One of the purposes of all of the decision making (strategy one) and exploring (strategy two) is to help you identify your strengths and find the things that bring meaning and purpose to your life.

To Dive Deeply is to go beyond the surface. When you Dive Deeply you build on your existing knowledge, habits, and skills. You push yourself to understand better. Dive Deeply is about building up competence and mastery. It is more than introducing yourself to a subject, it is digging deeper and developing skills and expertise.

The strategy of Dive Deeply is about developing Competence. It is meant to help you find the strengths and abilities you have and to develop them and apply them to reaching your goals. It is not only meant to help you find the areas that bring your life joy and meaning but also to actively engage with them and develop them.

Dive Deeply is about having the Confidence and Connection to engage your gifts and talents with the world around you. It is about understanding yourself enough to trust in your abilities. It is about knowing that you can overcome hurdles and challenges because you have already done it before.

Dive Deeply is about having enough Autonomy to acknowledge and follow your interests and passions and goals. It is an ability to say, “my road leads this way and I am capable of following it.”



To be clear, Explore Widely and Dive Deeply are not opposites. They interact with and support each other. They are mental models to use when thinking about your Learning Journey.

It might help to give some examples of how these two strategies differ and interact with each other.

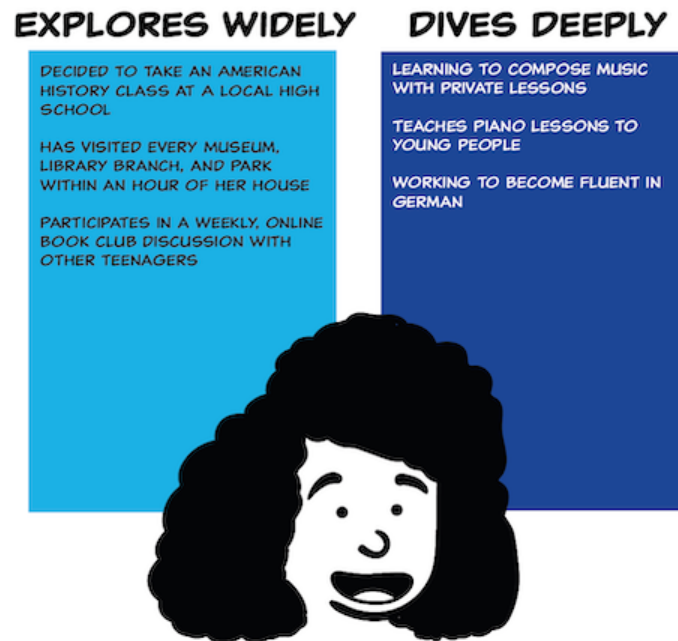
Explore Widely might mean...

Reading a book that grabbed your attention. Maybe it was recommended by a friend. Maybe you liked the cover. Maybe you read the blurb and were drawn in.

Dive Deeply might mean...

Reading a book that grabbed your attention and then diving deeper into the topic. Perhaps the book was about the experience of a young American fighting in the Vietnam War and that made you want to learn more. You found a couple of other books to read and a movie to watch. Later you find out that your grandfather has some friends who served in Vietnam and a few others who protested the war. You decide to interview them all and create a radio documentary (because you also wanted a chance to write some soundtrack music because you are learning to use your new MIDI keyboard.) You decide to ask your friend to do some artwork to accompany the audio documentary and she wants to be involved. She makes charcoal portraits of each interviewee and designs a logo for what is now becoming a limited series podcast. You sign up for an audio mixing class with an online music school because you want this to turn out good and you could improve your skills. Out of curiosity you look up some old, local newspaper stories about war protests in your town and you find a story that included one of your interview subjects.

The important thing is that both Explore Widely and Dive Deeply are important for their own reasons. The first example of just reading a book that grabbed your attention is just as valid as the second example. They are different. They accomplish different things but they both have value on your Learning Journey.



Let's try a different example.

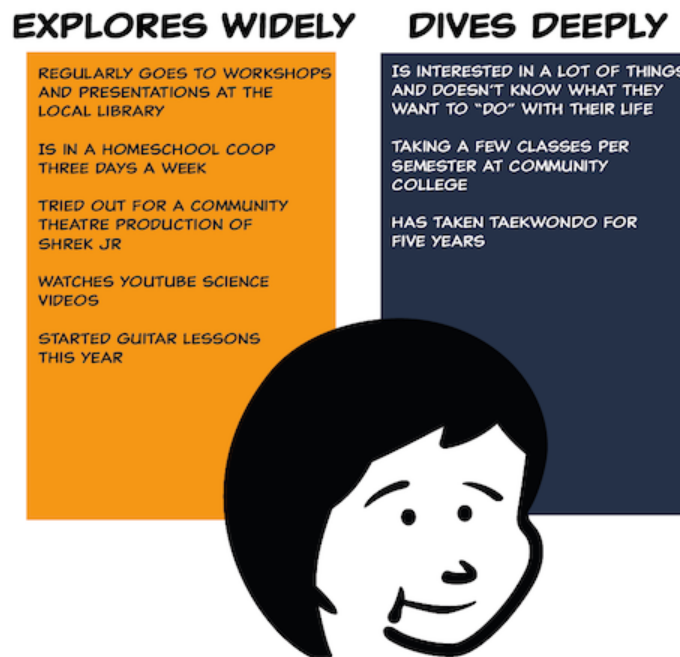
Explore Widely might mean ...

Signing up for an American History class at your local high school. You never loved history but you figure it is probably important to have some background knowledge.

Dive Deeply might mean ...

Signing up for an American History class at your local community college or university. You are ready to take on the challenge of a college level class and the American History class seemed like something that you could handle and even enjoy.

Again, both are valuable. In the Explore Widely example you are pushing yourself out of your comfort zone because you felt being exposed to history could have some value. In the Dive Deeply example you are challenging yourself to work at a higher level. It will require academic skills and discipline to do well in the college class and that is the challenge you are giving yourself.



Here is a third example.

Explore Widely might mean ...

Learning to play the piano because you think it will be fun to know how to play a little bit.

Dive Deeply might mean ...

Studying classical piano and preparing yourself to compete in a judged recital.

EXPLORES WIDELY

IS WATCHING A LIST OF "CLASSIC" FILMS WITH HIS SISTER

TRIES TO DO AN ACTIVITY "OUTSIDE" A COUPLE OF TIMES PER WEEK

HAS VOLUNTEERED AT A RETIREMENT HOME, AN ANIMAL RESCUE, A COMMUNITY GARDEN, AND A POLITICAL EVENT

DIVES DEEPLY

HAS READ EVERY JRR TOLKIEN BOOK

LOVES HISTORY AND AIRPLANES

TOOK FIRST PLACE IN MULTIPLE GAMING TOURNAMENTS

BUILDING A MOPED FROM SCRAP PARTS

WANTS TO STUDY ENGINEERING IN COLLEGE



Another example.

Explore Widely might mean ...

Going to see a poetry reading at a local independent book store and buying the poet's book to read later because she was very inspiring.

Dive Deeply might mean ...

Going to see a poetry reading at a local independent book store and buying the poet's book to read later because she was very inspiring. Then starting a local Guerilla Poetry Society where you secretly hide poetry in public places for people to discover, organizing pop-up poetry readings, and writing a Guerilla Poetry Society manifesto that will guide and inspire the Society members even after you go off to college.

Explore Widely and Dive Deeply serve different purposes.

To Explore Widely is to allow yourself the freedom to try new things, to be exposed to new ideas, to see what is out there in the world. It allows you the flexibility to discover things about yourself and test out ideas without much pressure.

When you Explore Widely it isn't about demonstrating your skills or knowledge. It is your chance to discover things about yourself and try things on for size. Perhaps your curiosity led you to read more about gray wolves in Yellowstone National Park. There is great value in allowing yourself the luxury of listening to your curiosity. And perhaps it ends there. You need to have the freedom to follow your curiosity and that includes the freedom to stop and move on to something else.

Explore Widely comes pretty naturally to teenagers if they are given a chance to explore and not punished for taking chances. Humans enjoy learning for its own sake. It doesn't all have to lead somewhere.

To Dive Deeply is to go beyond the surface. As opposed to Explore Widely, Dive Deeply is about deepening your skills and knowledge. When you Dive Deeply you dive into a topic and push yourself. It might be the difference between visiting a mountain and climbing a mountain.

Dive Deeply could look like an internship or getting an article published or leading a team in a project. Dive Deeply is when you are challenging yourself with something bigger, more complex, more difficult.

Dive Deeply usually requires relying on and building upon existing skills, habits, and knowledge during a Learning Opportunity. It could mean tapping into your passions and motivations. It might even be a little bit intimidating. When you Dive Deeply you might have an opportunity to show off, to play to your strengths, to demonstrate your Competence.

It is important to remember that at this point in your life both Explore Widely and Dive Deeply are important. You need to see what is out there and try new things but you also want to begin building on your strengths and developing expertise.

While the strategy of Dive Deeply is about developing specific skills, habits, and knowledge it is important to remember that the particular sets of skills, habits, and knowledge that you decide to develop should be based on what you are drawn to, interested in, and driven to do. You are building up the tool box that will help you live the life you want to live.

Dive Deeply is about developing competence but competence is not defined by reaching a certain level on a predetermined set of skills, habits, or knowledge. There is no test that says you need to score above a 90% on Creative Thinking and at least 80% on Quantitative Thinking in order to move on.

The competence you are developing with Dive Deeply will be individual to you and your strengths, interests, and goals. The skills, knowledge, and habits you are focusing on should be in relation to your interests and plans. You are building a tool kit that will help you accomplish your goals.

One way to think about diving deeply is to label some of your Learning Opportunities as “Signature Learning Opportunities”. Those are the ones that you are particularly proud of. The ones that most define you and your Learning Journey.

If someone were to ask you to talk about your Learning Journey, you might first describe these Signature Learning Opportunities because they are the ones that will best tell your story. Perhaps it was a big project you completed or an internship. Maybe you learned to speak another language or took an advanced class in a topic you love. You could have spent four years gradually developing your skills as an animator and the progress you made over the years represents your Learning Journey.

Not every Learning Opportunity where you dive deeply will become a Signature Learning Opportunity but every Signature Learning Opportunity is a deep dive. Remember that one of the objectives of Exploring Widely and Diving Deeply is to find ways that you can bring your strengths and talents to the world, to find the places where you fit in.

Diving deeply is a chance to develop your strength (skills, knowledge, mindsets, and habits) that have meaning for you and to explore ways those strengths can contribute to the world around you.

In Section four we examine some specific approaches you can take to apply the Dive Deeply strategy to your Learning Journey.

Summary

What does it mean to Dive Deeply?

The strategy of Dive Deeply is the third of the four strategies to guide you on your Learning Journey. Diving deeply means pursuing the things that bring meaning and purpose in your life, and developing the skills, knowledge, and habits that will allow you to accomplish the goals you have for your life.

Diving deeply is about developing competence and confidence in the things that are most important to you.

We have talked about Making Decisions, Exploring Widely, and Diving Deeply now let's look at the last of our four strategies, Reflect on It



Key Strategy Four: Reflect on It

The last of the four key strategies is to Reflect on It.

A reflection is when you look back at yourself as if you are looking at a mirror. The key strategy “Reflect on It” is all about looking at yourself and your Learning Journey and telling yourself a story. It is the process of thinking about what you have done, what you are planning on doing next, and what it all means to you.



The process of reflecting is when you look back and capture your feelings, experiences, thoughts, and any evidence you have produced about your Learning Journey or individual Learning Opportunities. It is your chance to explore what worked, what didn't work, what surprised you, what made you anxious, what excited you.

A reflection is an opportunity to look back to why you decided to pursue a particular Learning Opportunity and analyze if that answer still makes sense. It is a chance to think about what role your decisions played in your journey and what it might tell you about any future decisions.

A reflection can be done in writing, audio, video, or using an interview. The format isn't as important as the act of reflecting. It is called a reflection because you are taking an honest look at yourself, something analogous to looking in a mirror. The real audience for a reflection is yourself. In many ways, you are talking to yourself about your experience.

Here is a list of questions to help you understand some ways to reflect. These are just examples, you are welcome to come up with your own questions.

- Tell me why you decided to participate in this Learning Opportunity?
- Did this Learning Opportunity meet your expectations? In what ways?
- What were you anxious about going into this Learning Opportunity? Did this come to pass? How did you respond?
- What were you excited about going into this Learning Opportunity? Did this come to pass?
- What will you take away from this Learning Opportunity?
- What tangible, sharable things are left behind after this Learning Opportunity?
- If you could re-do your participation in this Learning Opportunity, what would you do differently?
- Does this Learning Opportunity lead you towards other Learning Opportunities or directions to pursue for your Learning Journey? In what ways?

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

- What did you learn about yourself because of this Learning Opportunity?
- Did you learn anything during this Learning Opportunity that changes how you see the world?
- How does participation in this Learning Opportunity contribute to the story of your Learning Journey?

These questions aren't required; they aren't homework. They are examples of guiding questions that might be useful to you.

Notice that the focus of these questions is you. Reflecting is about describing what the experience meant to you.

One function of the key strategy, "Reflect on It" is to get you to think about what worked, what didn't work, what could have gone differently, and what to do next time. It is a way for you to place your experiences into the context of the rest of your life. Living a good life means examining yourself. This kind of exam is not like an end of the semester test. It is a true and honest examination.

A second function of reflecting during your Learning Journey is to help you develop a regular habit of reflecting on your life. This is a habit that will help you work towards Autonomy and Confidence. It will help you understand yourself as a learner and as a person. It will also help you understand what works for you and what gives you problems.

The third function of making a habit of reflecting is that it helps you learn. The process of looking back and analyzing a Learning Opportunity is a chance to process and deepen the learning that happened during that Learning Opportunity.

The final function, that we will talk about, is integrating your Learning Opportunity into your overall Learning Journey. Even if a Learning Opportunity didn't go how you expected, there are things to be learned from it. Perhaps you found out that you weren't ready for that content, yet. Maybe you discovered that you underestimated or overestimated the time required to complete something. Maybe you discovered that you can't do everything yourself and next time it might make more sense to work with a team.

Failures, mistakes, missteps, wrong directions are all part of a Learning Journey. The reflection is a chance to rewrite the narrative. It gives you a chance to see the failures and mistakes as lessons learned. Rather than writing a mistake off as a permanent failure, you can rewrite the story and take something away from it.

Reflecting can be useful in identifying your signature strengths, interests, and motivations. It is a chance to think about what connected with you, what came easy for you, what inspired you. In reflecting you might imagine future steps on your Learning Journey. You might find a way of learning that is a good match for you, a content area that intrigues you, or skills that you want to continue working on.

There isn't a single method to reflecting that works for everyone. You are free to create a reflection in the manner that works best for you. You are also free to invent a tool or process of your own. The important thing is to capture your thoughts and experiences related to your Learning Opportunities.

Let's run through some methods for reflecting. Perhaps one of these will feel comfortable for you or perhaps they will trigger your own unique approach to reflecting.

Reflection as a Conversation

You might find that you reflect best when you do it as a conversation with a friend or mentor. Even though a reflection is all about you it doesn't mean you have to do it alone.

Perhaps you want to record an interview that a friend/classmate/parent conducts with you. Maybe you turn that into a podcast or video channel where each episode is a reflection on a finished Learning Opportunity. Be creative.

Your friend will act as the interviewer and ask some guiding questions that help capture what happened on a Learning Opportunity and what you are going to take away from the experience. Your interviewer can use prepared questions or if they are already well versed in the concepts of a Learning Journey, they can be less formal and more conversational.

If you would rather not be captured on audio or video, an interview can be written down or even conducted over email or text messaging. The important thing isn't the way it is being recorded, the important thing is having a meaningful conversation that allows you to reflect on and capture your thoughts about an experience.

Reflection as a Diary

Maybe you enjoy writing in a diary format and that method will enable you to best capture your thoughts. Some people enjoy the intimacy and secrecy of writing to a diary. If this is true for you, use that as a manner of capturing your thoughts about your experiences on your Learning Journey.

While some methods of reflecting are directly tied to the end of a single Learning Opportunity, a diary is more commonly tied to reflecting on the end of a day or a week. You can use either approach.



You could write a diary entry along the lines of, “Dear Diary, I just finished my art project ...”

Or “Dear Diary, this week I was working on ...”

Whether you are structuring your diary entry around the completion of a Learning Opportunity or around the passage of a day or a week or a month, the important part is that you are examining your choices and your experiences, you are thinking about what worked and what didn't work, you are finding meaning, and you are imagining your next steps.

Reflection as Filling Out a Form

Maybe you do best with a fixed set of questions and you systematically answer those questions one at a time at the end of a Learning Opportunity.

There are some advantages to answering the same questions over time. For one, it is simple. The questions are already created, your job is to just go through them and honestly answer.

In addition to being simple, this method creates a structured record to allow you to directly compare and contrast your answers over time. You can easily see patterns develop or changes that occur because you are always examining your Learning Opportunity using the same set of questions.

If this method makes sense for you, take a look in Section Four for some templates you can use or adapt for capturing your reflections.

Reflection as a Scrapbook

When people go on a vacation they sometimes keep a scrapbook of their adventures. Photos, mementos, merch. A scrapbook serves as a storytelling and memory tool, it helps the traveler capture and keep a reminder of what happened. You can use a similar approach to reflecting on your Learning Journey. Collect and organize the scraps that help you tell a story about your experiences.

Take photos of your internships and travels. Save the writing and drawing you are doing. Use the Learn by Creating method so that evidence of learning is created naturally as you go.

Hopefully your Learning Journey is full of memorable moments, important lessons, and meaningful experiences. Human memory is fleeting. The process of capturing, re-remembering, integrating, and reflecting on an experience is one way of making a memory last. We take photos and make photo albums to help us remember events, people, places. They are extensions of our memory.

We capture events on video so that we can rewatch at some point down the road. We write diaries to help us remember and process our thoughts. We tell stories with each other to refresh and relive memories. We buy mementos, t-shirts, coffee mugs, hats as a way of capturing the experience of a trip or an event so that it stays with us in some form.

If you have ever sat around looking at a photo album reminiscing with a friend or relative or asked someone about a knick knack from a trip and suddenly watched their memories come back to them, you have experienced how the memories come flooding in and the stories start flowing. You might recall things you haven't thought of in a long time. You suddenly start integrating old events into the present world. It gives you an opportunity to not only remember but also to reconsider and recalibrate.

A scrapbook can serve as an external storage mechanism. After all, your experience of an individual Learning Opportunity will soon take a backseat to new experiences and new Learning Opportunities. One way of storing those experiences is to leave behind a mental trigger in the form of Evidence of Learning. The evidence isn't just meant for an external audience as proof of your learning, it is also meant as a trigger for your own memories. As a way of helping you integrate the learning you just did into your overall Learning Journey.

Summary

What does it mean to Reflect on It?

The final strategy in our tool kit, Reflect on It, asks you to take some time out of your schedule to think about your Learning Journey. Reflect on the decisions you have made so far and the decisions in front of you, reflect on your explorations and your deep dives and make connections with your interests, passions, and goals.

Your Learning Journey isn't mapped out for you. It isn't a path that you blindly follow. It requires you to make choices and pick your own paths to go down. In order to make those choices, it will benefit you to do some regular reflection.

The manner and method of your reflection is up to you. Whether you like to write, or talk, create, or just contemplate, the important thing is that you take the time to reflect.

Now let's talk about how you are going to tell the story of your Learning Journey. That is the subject of section three.



Telling Your Story

The Learning Opportunities you pursue during your Learning Journey not only work to help you develop autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection, they also work towards giving you insight about the journey itself. Each individual Learning Opportunity can help guide the next Learning Opportunity. Reflecting is a process of evaluating your journey and making future decisions but it is also a way of leaving a trail of where you have been so that at any point in your Learning Journey you can look back and see how far you have traveled and tell a story about what has gotten you to this point in your journey.

Obviously, when it comes time to tell your story, you will be glad that you have a record of not only what you have accomplished but why you made the decisions you made and what the experiences meant to you.

Traditional schools also tell a story about you but they make an attempt to standardize it. They use the language of grades and credits and requirements and test scores so that your experience can be simplified, measured, categorized, sorted, and compared to others.

A story about your Learning Journey does something very different. Perhaps even something radical. A Learning Journey treats you like a unique individual. It starts with the belief that everyone has a compelling and completely unique story to tell about their life. The story about your Learning Journey doesn't need to be measured, categorized, or sorted. It's a story. It should narrate the story of your journey with all of its choices, wrong turns, surprises, and revelations.

Let's start with the first rule, you are the first and most important audience for your story.

It all starts with the process of reflecting. It doesn't matter what manner or method you chose to use when reflecting, a reflection is you in the process of writing your own story.

By taking the time to reflect on your Learning Journey you are already starting to craft a narrative and make meaning out of your experiences. This process of thinking and pondering and evaluating and putting your experiences into context is fundamental to a Learning Journey. It is the first draft of your story.

Once again, it is the process that is most important.



Telling Your Story to Yourself

You should be able to look back and see the journey you are on. You should be able to trace the progress you have made and understand the choices that have gotten you here.

You should also be able to look forward and see the possibilities in front of you and understand how to use the skills, knowledge, and habits you have acquired to continue reaching for your goals.

The ability to understand your personal Learning Journey as “your story” will help you continue to grow towards autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection. Instead of being a passive student following a fixed path to graduation, you are the hero of your own adventure story.

Hopefully, by this point you are beginning to see ways that you can connect to the communities you belong to, opportunities to offer your strengths to the world around you, and places where you feel that you belong.

In that way, you are the most important audience for your story. It helps frame your learning as a journey. That doesn’t mean there aren’t other people who want to understand your story, too. Friends and family might be invested in your success and want to know what is happening in your life. Being able to explain

your decisions, describe your experiences, and explain what is next for you can help bring them into your Learning Journey as a support system.

Telling Your Story to Others

You are the most important audience but you aren't the only one. Classmates, partners, co-workers, and supervisors might want to understand where you are on your journey as a way of connecting with you or tapping into your strengths and skills.

Pursuing a valuable internship, interview, apprenticeship, job, or opportunity might require you to explain a little bit about yourself and your journey. Your ability to tell your story and explain your strengths and plans for the future could be a key to opening doors.

Near the end of this Learning Journey you might decide to apply to college, learn a trade, get a job, start an apprenticeship, or create a business. Colleges and jobs typically have formal processes for applying. If you have been reflecting and capturing evidence of learning along the way, it shouldn't be hard to translate your story into a college application or a resume. An application and a resume are nothing more than a type of storytelling. They just have a specific format to keep in mind.

If you need one, you can also create a type of transcript that tells your story. There is no reason it needs to be a narrow and limited story. You aren't limited to talking about credits and grades; you have the freedom to talk about the choices you made on your Learning Journey and what your experiences meant to you. You can relate your choices to your goals and your strengths. You can highlight your Signature Learning Opportunities. You can discuss your path to autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection.

A college admissions officer, hiring manager, potential mentor, or even investor can come to understand you as a well-rounded individual who took control of their education and turned it into a Learning Journey

Section 4 includes templates and examples that you can use to create a transcript that summarizes your Learning Journey into a story about you

Examples, Templates, Prompts, and Exercises

This section of the field guide is meant to be a bit more practical. You will find examples and suggestions for finding or creating Learning Opportunities. You will find creative approaches and prompts to make sure you are Exploring Widely. You can find examples of ways you could Dive Deeply. Finally, you will find templates and examples for telling your story.

Below is an outline of what you can find in this section.

1. Finding Learning Opportunities
 - a. Traditional Classes in Your Community
 - b. Traditional Online Classes
 - c. Learning in Your Community
 - d. Learning Online without Classes
2. Making your Own Learning Opportunities
 - a. Using Intentional Constraints
 - b. Be Inspired by Examples
 - c. Adapt, Remix, and Alter an Example
 - d. Mixing and Matching
 - e. Learn by Creating
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 - g. Learn by Discovery
 - h. Design from Scratch using Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How
 - i. Using What as a Starting Point
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3. Making Sure You Explore Widely
 - a. Explore Widely by Trying Different Subject Areas
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 - d. Autonomy Habits
 - e. Habits of Competence
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 - g. Habits of Connection
 - h. Mindsets
 - i. Explore Widely by Trying Different Answers to Where are You Learning
 - j. Explore Widely by Trying Different Answers to Why are You Learning This
 - k. Explore Widely by Trying Different Answers to How are You Learning This
4. How to Dive Deeply
 - a. Dive Deeply by Using Your Signature Strengths
 - b. Dive Deeply by Combing Skills and Knowledge with Exploring Widely
 - c. Dive Deeply by Pursuing a Long Term Goal

- d. Dive Deeply by Pursuing Signature Learning Opportunities
- 5. Learning Opportunity Examples
 - a. Example 1: Appreciating Jazz
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- 6. The Interview as a Learning Opportunity
 - a. The Information Interview
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- 7. Telling Your Story for College
 - a. Demonstrating You can be Successful
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 - c. What Will Your Story Look Like
 - d. Translating Your Story
 - e. Hours to Credits and Credits to Hours
 - f. What Content are Your Hours in
- 8. Examples of "A Summary of a Learning Journey"

Finding Learning Opportunities

If you are a student at a traditional school you have a list of classes you can take and clubs, activities, and sports you can join. If you are lucky enough to attend a well-funded and large school, you might have many options to pick from. As a student on a Learning Journey, your menu of choices is even greater. The down side is that those options aren't always obvious.

Here are some ideas of places to look for Learning Opportunities.

Traditional Classes in Your Local Community

This is going to sound strange but ... if you are looking for Learning Opportunities you can always start by exploring what is available at your local public high school.

We can't speak for every state or every district but it is not uncommon for a student to be able to take a single class or participate in an activity or club at their local high school. Rules vary so make sure and check with an official at your local school to see what is allowed.

Perhaps you want to be able to take a photography class or you want to do chemistry with a fully stocked lab. Perhaps you want to try out for a play or join a choir.

It might be possible to do that through your local high school without having to become a full-time student at the school. Again, the rules will vary. Some schools might have rules you have to follow. Some activities might require you to be a full-time or half-time student. Sports and other competitive activities might have strict rules that are dictated at the state level. But it is worth exploring if that is something that interests you.

The first step would be to talk to a counselor at your local high school and explore what options are available.

You might find that having the freedom to decide what parts of the public school experience you want to engage with is exactly the right strategy for your Learning Journey. There is nothing wrong with tapping into traditional schooling, if it makes sense for you.

You can also explore private school options and homeschool groups in your local area. They might not be as open to making individual classes and activities open to you but it might be worth a shot. Start with their admissions office and ask what options exist.

If you have a local community college, you can look into what classes are available for high school students. Typically community colleges have programs that allow high school students to take classes before they graduate high school. The rules will vary by area but it is another idea worth exploring, if it interests you.

A community college might have rules you need to follow such as: the student needs to be at least 15, needs the permission of a parent and/or counselor, they are not eligible for financial aid, they can only take a certain level of classes, etc.

Be prepared to do some research and figure out what is required for a current high school student to take one or more classes at your local community college.

Taking a college level class at a community college is a good opportunity to dive deeply into a subject that has meaning to you or to challenge yourself with a college level class.

Because community colleges often serve non-traditional students; working students, commuting students, and older students they often offer classes in the evenings, on weekends, in compressed formats, and online. You can explore any of those options if they make sense for you and your family.

If you have a college or university in your area, you can explore whether they have opportunities for high school students to take classes. Traditional colleges and universities might not be as open to high school aged students as community colleges but it is worth exploring.

You can start by searching the college's website or contacting the admission's office. The experience of taking an on campus class at a university alongside other college students can be very valuable.

In addition to the content of the class, you can gain confidence in yourself, get a taste of what an on campus class experience is like, and complete a Learning Opportunity that will demonstrate to yourself and others that you can be successful academically and socially in a campus classroom.

Traditional Online Classes through a Public School, Community College, or University

In addition to in person classes, many public schools, community colleges, or universities make online classes available for high school aged students. If you are in a community that does not have easy access to a community college or university, this might be an option to explore. It also could be an option if your local schools do not offer a class that you would like to try out and you can only find it outside your area in an online format.

Many states have online public school programs for students in that state. You will need to explore what the opportunities are available for taking individual classes without being enrolled as a full-time student. You could start by contacting a counselor in your local school district or searching the internet for online high school options in your state. Just read carefully, there are many private online schools that make it seem as if they are part of the public school system but they are not.

Both in person and online classes are more or less traditional in their approach to learning. They are teacher-led. They happen over the course of a semester. They are graded. The main difference is that you are only taking the classes you want in an ala carte manner rather than as a full-time traditional student.

There are some good reasons to take some traditionally taught classes whether in person, online, at a public high school, or at a college.

One, it gives you experience in a traditionally structured class. If you are planning to head off to college eventually, the odds are good that the college you attend will offer most courses in a traditional format. Taking a few traditionally taught courses during your Learning Journey will give you experience and confidence learning in this format.

Two, when you apply to college and they see the non-traditional path you took on your Learning Journey, they might wonder if you can succeed in a more traditional environment. Taking a class or two can help answer that question.

Three, you will have an opportunity to work with teachers and students that you might not otherwise interact with. You might find another person who shares your interests or passions. You might find a teacher that you enjoy learning from or people you enjoy learning with.

Four, in your Learning Journey you have the opportunity to explore topics in a manner that works for you. That is a great advantage and a great way to learn. But academics don't always explore topics in such an open manner. It might be helpful for you to understand how traditional academics approach a topic, even if you find their approach too limiting. There might be some value in understanding their perspective.

Learning in your Community Beyond Traditional Classes

There are a lot of opportunities in your local community that might not look like a traditional class but can still offer good Learning Opportunities for you. A lot of communities have what are called "community education classes" or "enrichment classes" or "non-credit classes" through libraries, community colleges, museums, historical societies, etc.

These community classes might be structured like a traditional class, they often meet in a classroom, lab, or workshop. They are often teacher-led. They meet regularly over a fixed period of time. But they aren't graded and they don't typically give you "official" credit for completing them. They are meant for people who just want to take a class for their own enjoyment. The students in these classes often have a wider range of ages and a wider range of reasons they are taking the class.

You can search the internet for community enrichment classes in your area and see what is available. You can examine the websites of local museums, libraries, community colleges, even public schools and see if they list classes aimed at the broader community.

In a similar manner to enrichment classes, libraries and museums and the like, often have community events and workshops. These are typically shorter in duration, perhaps a single day event or a couple of weeks in a workshop. They might revolve around a guest speaker or an annual event. Just because these events are shorter doesn't mean they aren't valuable.

Remember a Learning Opportunity doesn't have to be any particular length. It might serve as a good introduction to something you want to explore deeper on your own. It might be a chance to meet other people interested in something that you are interested in. It might be a chance to learn about something that you know nothing about but you are willing to be open minded.

These type of events and programs are happening all of the time but you might need to do a bit of research to know they are out there. You can search your local newspaper or library. You can look for postings on bulletin boards at coffee shops. These types of events happen all around you; you just have to be open to noticing them.

There are often community groups that you could tap into. Community theater, community choir, music, sports that you could participate in. There are community groups that meet regularly around a particular topic like reading clubs, gardening clubs, mystery writers, model airplane enthusiasts, astronomy clubs, historical societies, and many more. These, of course, will vary by your community but it might make sense for you to join a community group as part of your Learning Journey. It will allow you to plug into your local community and meet other people who share a common interest.

Social learning is a very powerful way to learn. You benefit from the lived experience of those around you and you learn in a way that isn't competitive or stressful but is instead collaborative and cooperative.

Most communities have places for learning that aren't structured at all like a classroom. Museums, zoos, libraries, parks, monuments, markers, trails are all places that are meant for learning but in a less structured way. They are open ended. You can engage with them at your own pace and manner. But they are there for you to learn.

Many places like museums and zoos change during the year with new exhibits, guest speakers, workshops and classes. Keep your eye on them, even if you visited once, you can always go back for more. You could also look at taking day trips to other communities and exploring the libraries, parks, and museums that they have available.

The existence of these places as "forms of learning" are a good example for your Learning Journey. The statement "Not all learning happens in classrooms" isn't that controversial, there are places all over your community that "teach" in all different kinds of ways. So when you are thinking about your Learning Journey and Learning Opportunities remember and be inspired by the fact that the world is full of things that don't look like classrooms but are still in the business of learning and teaching.

Even places that aren't explicitly about learning like parks and trails and nature can be part of your Learning Journey. Whether you are getting exercise, practicing mindfulness, experiencing awe, finding a quiet place to read, or breathing fresh air, the world outside is something that is worth including in your Learning Journey.

Learning Online without Classes

There are other ways of learning online that don't look like a traditional class.

MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Course. They are typically free. They typically have thousands of students in them. They often are self-paced. They often cover college-level material and are often repurposed college courses.

You can find MOOCs that cover a wide range of topics. The material can be equivalent to the material in an undergraduate college course but these classes are usually not graded. They are designed so that as many people around the world have access to the class material as possible.

The advantage to you is that you have access to some of the world's best content. The disadvantage is that it is up to you to engage with the material and motivate yourself to finish. For a self-directed learner, MOOCs are a wonderful resource. But, to be fair, the vast majority of students who sign up to take a MOOC never finish the material. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. They are an option worth exploring.

There are other types of online learning that aren't structured like traditional classes at high schools and colleges.

There are commercial providers of training classes that are typically aimed at developing specific skills. While they are presented much like a class, they are not really academically focused but instead aimed at developing skills. Many are aimed at technical skills like programming, graphic design, productivity applications, databases, etc. There are also classes aimed at art skills, music skills, crafts, etc. You will find them from providers like Lynda.com or Skillshare.com. It is not unusual for your local library system to license with one of these types of online training providers. You might find that having a library card gives you access to these classes for free.

There are apps and websites that you can visit, download, or purchase that can make for a good Learning Opportunity. You can practice a language using something like Duolingo, Mango, or Rosetta Stone. You can learn to play or compose music or learn music theory. You can learn to type, learn to program. You can learn via gaming and play. Learning via apps and games is very different than learning via a class. This type of learning is more hands on, less teacher-led. They are a good option to include in your Learning Journey.

There are also lots of even less formal ways to learn online. Youtube is full of lectures, presentations, documentaries, and other educational material. Some of it comes from formal institutions and some of it from amateurs who want to share their passion. There are reading lists, discussion groups, encyclopedias, and every manner of content you can imagine. It might not be structured in such a way that it feels like a class but it doesn't mean it can't be a part of your Learning Journey. You have the freedom to engage with material online and pull it together in a manner that works for you.

Your community and the internet is full of pre-built, ready to go Learning Opportunities. Your Learning Journey can include some things that are more traditional in structure.

What if you can't find a Learning Opportunity that speaks to you or you are the type of person who likes to do it yourself. Can you just invent your own?

Yes.

Making Your Own Learning Opportunities

Let's explore some ways you can design your own Learning Opportunities. If the world is your classroom and you recognize that learning happens all of the time, you will also recognize that the possibilities for making Learning Opportunities are almost unlimited.

It is a little bit of a good news/bad news situation. The good news is obviously that there are so many Learning Opportunities for you to participate in. The bad news is that there are so many Learning Opportunities for you to participate in that you might have trouble deciding where to start.

This is called a Blank Page Problem. A Blank Page Problem is the frozen feeling you get when you are given a completely open-ended choice. When you have the option of doing anything, sometimes it is hard to decide what you want to do.

Imagine an adult who gives a blank sheet of paper to a group of teenagers and says, "Draw whatever you want."

A few people will relish the blank page and draw something they are comfortable drawing.

A few will doodle squiggles in the upper right corner trying to look like they are drawing until the adult walks away and leaves them alone, then they will stare at the page.

Many will look up and shrug, "I don't know how to draw," they will say. "I don't like to draw."

They will look over at the person next to them and see what they are drawing. "Maybe I will just do what they are doing," they will think. Even though the instructions were simple, the lack of rules, directions, and ways to measure success made it a tougher task than it might seem.

Blank Page Problems are hard.

Blank Page Problems are especially hard for teenagers.

"You mean I am going to be judged not only on how I draw but also on what I choose to draw? Ugh."

You have been led to assume, by society, by the media, and by schools that there are always right answers and wrong answers. Just by being a part of our culture you are led to believe that your job is to figure out the right answer, do that, and you will be fine.

Blank Page Problems challenge those assumptions.

Blank Page Problems say, "the world is much bigger than right and wrong answers", "the world is an open-ended problem without many instructions."

If you grew up expecting that there were going to always be right and wrong answers, Blank Page Problems can be very challenging.

But there are approaches to solving Blank Page Problems. Let's look at one.

If, instead of saying "Draw whatever you want," what if the adult in our example said, "Draw a cat." It would be a little bit easier for most people.

Sure, some will still groan because they don't feel comfortable drawing but at least they will have a starting point. Some will draw a quick cartoon cat. Proud of their speed. Some will sketch a life-like cat. Proud of their skill. Some will write the words, "A Cat". Proud of their cleverness.

Some will look at their neighbor and share. "What did you draw? I drew this." Trying to get any kind of positive feedback.

Some will hunch over their drawing so no one can see it, convinced that they drew the wrong kind of cat.

For many, "Draw a Cat" is much easier than "Draw whatever you want." It is still hard but at least it gets you drawing something.

The directions to "draw a cat" is a way to narrow down the options.

You just learned one approach to deal with Blank Page Problems. If "draw a cat" is easier to tackle than "draw whatever you want" we can apply this truth to other kinds of Blank Page Problems.

The instruction to "Draw a cat" is called an Intentional Constraint. It allowed you to get started because it limited your thinking to drawing a cat. When you were told to draw anything you had an unlimited set of choices; when you were told to draw a cat, the range and number of choices was reduced.

You might not have needed Intentional Constraints when you were in kindergarten. At five years old, "draw whatever you want" isn't really a problem. Five year olds just start drawing.

But you are older and you are more aware of the social world out there. You have learned that your choices have consequences. Your choices will be judged. You aren't as carefree as you used to be.

While it might seem a little bit sad to realize that now you are a little bit more anxious about how the world might see you. It is also a good thing. You think more deeply and are more intentional about your choices. That is a sign of your growing autonomy.

Remember, autonomy is one of the qualities we are working towards.

There is a big difference between being "independent" which means to be or act alone and being autonomous which means being or acting of your own volition or free will.

Blank Page Problems can be hard because they ask us to be autonomous and to use our own free will to decide where and how to start. Blank Page Problems challenge us to be autonomous and sometimes we aren't ready for that.

The good news is that increasing your sense of autonomy has some real payoffs. The work of social scientists Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, in particular, talks about the positive outcomes of autonomy.

- Positive affect: having a genuinely optimistic outlook
- Performance: being able to do the job you are trying to do
- Psychological Well-being: having a healthy mental outlook
- Conceptual Understanding: getting it
- Creativity: coming up with unique and useful ideas, approaches, and solutions
- Productivity: getting things done that you want to get done
- Persistence: being able to stick to it despite obstacles
- Healthier Lifestyle

All of this is to say that being able to confront Blank Page Problems is good practice for developing autonomy.

and

Creating your own Learning Opportunity is a Blank Page Problem.

so

Creating your own Learning Opportunity is a good way to develop autonomy.

Let's examine some techniques you can use to design your own Learning Opportunities.

Using Intentional Constraints

We can use the approach of creating Intentional Constraints to tackle the problem of creating your own Learning Opportunity.

Let's imagine our fictional adult who asked us to "draw a cat" is now saying, "create your own Learning Opportunity." But to make it easier we are going to add in an Intentional Constraint.

What if they said, "create your own Learning Opportunity involving a cat?"

What kind of Learning Opportunities could you create that involved cats?

You could write a short story with a cat as the main character. You could research the best breed of cat to get as a pet. You could do a survey of everyone you know and ask about their attitudes towards cats and then use the data to create statistical charts and graphs. You could explore the history of domesticated cats and create a timeline. You could interview a veterinarian about taking care of cats. You could study cat anatomy. You could create a video about cats who have appeared in paintings over the centuries. You could start a cat sitting business. You could design costumes for cats.

That is just a start.

There are many many ways you could incorporate cats into a Learning Opportunity.

We used "cats" as our Intentional Constraint and it opened the floodgates of ideas.

But maybe cats aren't your thing.

No problem. You can use the same strategy but with different Intentional Constraints. Dogs. Jazz. History. Hot Air Balloons.

Remember, one big problem with creating your own Learning Opportunity is that the options are endless. But stick an Intentional Constraint in there to limit the options a little bit and it can help get your thinking started.

Here are some more approaches to Creating your own Learning Opportunity for you to consider.

Be Inspired by Examples

This approach is pretty simple. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. There have been learners before you. Take a look at what they did and see if it might be something that you want to do, too.

There is nothing wrong with duplicating or cloning someone else's Learning Opportunity. In this guide there are examples that you can use for inspiration. Some were done by people we worked with, some are ideas we have developed on our own, some are borrowed from projects we have seen elsewhere.

Even if you clone a Learning Opportunity it will still be unique to you. No two people learn the same lesson the same way. We all bring our personal prior experience, our unique perspectives, our individual signature strengths to each Learning Opportunity. So don't worry about copying, it will still be unique to you.

With that said, don't be afraid to adapt, remix, and change any example Learning Opportunity you like.

Adapt, remix, and alter an existing Learning Opportunity

Maybe while looking at examples you will find one that intrigues you, it involves developing a skill that you also want to develop only you might want to do it in your own way so you remix the idea and change how you plan on learning.

Maybe you see a Learning Opportunity where a learner is going to learn to knit from their grandmother and that idea inspires you to learn knitting but you do it by watching YouTube tutorials because your grandmother can't knit.

Or maybe you decide you want to learn something from your grandmother who can't knit but she can teach you how to change the oil in a car. You remixed the idea but you changed what you are learning even though you kept how you were learning it.

Look at a list of examples of other people's Learning Opportunities and either clone the idea completely or adapt, remix, or alter the idea by replacing individual elements.

Mixing and Matching

This activity allows you to create a research topic or subject of study that you can use in a self-directed project, or as a subject for a creative or research project.

The Mixing and Matching activity involves generating a few lists and then creatively combining them to create a unique topic or approach that interests you.

For example, if you generate three lists, List A is a group of starter phrases. List B is a list of subjects. List C is a list of places or times and activities.

Pick a starter phrase from List A and match it with content topic that interests you from List B or List C or an idea that is triggered by looking at the lists.

Using this strategy we might come up with "The History of Women in Space" or "The Top 10 Vegetables from Asia" or "A Comparison Between LGBTQ+ Actors in the 20th and 21st Century" or "The Physics of Exercise".

The lists are meant to help trigger connections you might not come to on your own. Don't make the mistake of thinking there is anything magical about these lists. Make your own. Organize them in a way that works for you. Throw a bunch of stuff on them and see if it might trigger a fresh idea for you.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

List A	List B	List C
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The history of ...• The science of ...• The art of ...• The top 10 ...• A comparison between ...• The physics of ...• Surprising facts about ...• Today I learned ...• How to ...• The best way ...• ___ vs ___• In my opinion ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women• Animals• LGBTQ+• Workers• Athletes• Actors• Political Leaders• Governments• Conditions• Musicians• Vegetables• Dairy• Meat• Cars• Airplanes• Teenagers• Children• Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Space• Africa• Oceans• Hollywood• United States of America• World• Asia• 21st Century• 20th Century• Sports• Breakfast• Exercise• Sleep• Travel• Outdoors• The Future

The next step in this activity, if you want to take it this far, is to take your research phrase such as “The History of Women in Space” and combine it with something from the next set of lists; Learn by Creating, Learn by Doing, or Learn by Discovery.

For example, if you take “The History of Women in Space” and match it up with the Learn by Creating list you might come up with “Create a Infographic Timeline of Milestones for Women in Space” or “Write a Short Story from the Perspective of Valentina Tereshkova, the First Woman in Space.”

Learn by Creating

- Create a physical product
- Create a digital product
- Write creatively
- Write analytically
- Produce a video
- Produce an audio product (music, sound design, podcast)
- Create visual art
- Create a graphic or illustration
- Choreograph a dance
- Start a business or organization
- Invent something

If you took the research idea, “The Top 10 Vegetables from Asia” and combined it with something from Learn by Doing you might come up with “Cook a Meal For My Family Using Some of the Most Popular Asian Vegetables” or “Deliver a Pecha Kucha Presentation on the Top 10 Vegetables from Asia” or “Make kimchi and sell it at the local Farmer’s Market.”

Learn by Doing

- Perform publicly (acting, presenting, dancing, music, sports)
- Direct a performance (play, choir, dance, sports)
- Manage an event
- Deliver a presentation
- Teach, tutor, mentor
- Hands-on learning
- Learn or practice a skill (music, sports, exercise, language, art, craft, hobby, outdoors, etc)
- Give back to your community
- Join a community or a network
- Lead a committee or project
- Volunteer or work on a service project
- Get a job
- Raise money for a cause
- Sell something
- Help someone else

If you took the research topic “A Comparison Between LGBTQ+ Actors in the 20th and 21st Century”, you could take a look at the Learn by Discovery list and plan to “Conduct Historical Research on Known LGBTQ+ Actors to Determine When Their LGBTQ+ Status Became Publicly Known and How it was Made Public” you could even combine that with an opinion piece on the ethics of “outing” LGBTQ+ celebrities.

Learn by Discovery

- Conduct a science or social science experiment
- Identify or uncover a problem
- Find a solution to a problem
- Conduct historical research
- Investigate a mystery
- Collect data about something
- Curate or organize information to give new insight
- Design and conduct a poll, survey, or study
- Travel somewhere new
- Try something new

The purpose of this strategy is to open up your thinking. Sometimes by mixing and matching you stumble upon really good ideas that wouldn't have emerged on their own.

In the same spirit, you can take Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How questions and pursue a similar strategy of triggering fresh and original ideas.

Design from Scratch using Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How

One way to think about Learning Opportunities is to use Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions.

This is a technique that journalists, detectives, and lawyers use to make sure that they fully understand an event.

Who was involved? What happened? When did it happen? Where did it take place? Why did it occur?
How did it go down?



We can use those same type of questions to think about our Learning Opportunities.

Who did you learn from and who did you learn with? What did you learn about? When did the Learning Opportunity take place? How long did it last and what was the schedule? Where did the Learning Opportunity take place? Why did you decide to participate in this Learning Opportunity? How did you learn?

You can use those questions to describe a Learning Opportunity after the fact but you can also use them to design one from scratch.

As an example, let's start with Who.

Let's imagine that you want to create a new Learning Opportunity but you don't know where to start. A Blank Page Problem.

The only thing you know is that you want to work with your friend on something.

That is a good place to start, actually. You already know the answer to *Who*. You want to learn with your friend.

At that point you probably want to sit down with your friend and brainstorm some ideas. You can talk about *What* you might want to learn together, or *How* you might want to go about learning it, or *When* you can fit it into each other's schedules. You are no longer starting completely from scratch.

Is there a *What* (as in subject area, content, skill, habit, or mindset) that you both are interested in? Are you both interested in a specific topic like sports, history, gaming, music? Do you both have a skill that you want to develop like writing, juggling, exercise, cooking? Do you both want to work on a habit like giving back to your local community or developing healthy sleep habits?

Perhaps one good question for you both to think about is *When*. Perhaps neither of you can drive and you can only get together once a week for a couple of hours because you have to wait on someone to drive you to meet up. That is a limitation that you are going to have to consider. If *When* or *Where* is going to be a limitation, you want to make sure you take that into account.

How about *How*? Do you two want to create something together? Maybe you are both excited to create a comic book. Fill that in under *How*. Now that you have decided you are going to learn by creating a comic book you can think about filling in the *What*. What will your comic book be about? Telling an original story? Recreating a story from literature or history? Explaining a concept in environmental biology? Visualizing the lyrics of a song or a poem?

Creating a comic book will be a good way to leave behind tangible evidence of your Learning Opportunity. No matter what the content of the finished product, the process of creating a comic book will require skills and habits like writing, drawing, graphic design, managing a project, working as a team, accepting responsibility, patience and persistence, self-control and self-discipline, embracing an open-ended problem.

You can combine the project of "creating a comic book" with a content area that you are both interested in exploring and learning about but please remember, you don't have to turn every project into an "educational" version of something cool. If you just want to make a comic with original characters and original stories without turning it into a "history" or "science" assignment. That is perfectly ok. If, on the other hand, you want to explore African Folk Tales and turn them into comics. That is perfectly ok, too.

That Learning Opportunity started with being able to answer *Who*.

Let's examine what might happen if we used all of the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions as starting points for designing a Learning Opportunity from scratch.

Using What as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

Let's imagine starting with *What*. In particular the kind of *What* that has to do with content. Content has to do with the subject or topic of what you are learning about. It could be a broad category like Science or it could be very specific like the impact of radiation on the human body.

Remember the trick to this technique is to just start somewhere. This is just like when we added Cat as an Intentional Constraint to help trigger ideas.

So when we think of *What* we could start with, as in, "I want to learn more science" or "what happens to the human body when it is exposed to radiation." Both are starting points. One is more specific and probably gets us closer to an idea. But, truthfully, both are fine starting points.

If you said, "I want to learn more science" we can take a look at a list science topics and start getting more specific.

We could also combine science with a different content idea or subject area and see what happens.

What if you combined "Science" with "Current Events" and explored some of the latest news stories in science. Or you found some social media accounts that keep up with current topics in Science and you could start following them.

You could combine "Science" with "Computers" and try to understand the scientific underpinnings of your computer or phone.

What if you combined "Science" with "Literature" and looked for a book or movie or poetry that explored science through a literary lens.

What if you combined "Science" with "Feminism", "Science" with "LGBTQI+", "Science" with "Dance", "Science" with "Entrepreneurship", "Science" with "Dessert". There are all kinds of ways to narrow down to get to a topic that excites you.

Maybe you already have a specific content topic? Like, "The impact of radiation on the human body." You probably don't need to narrow that down by combining it with other content area.

Instead, we are going to combine it with *How*.

Using How as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

How can refer to the manner or method in which you are learning something as in teacher-directed, student-driven, self-paced, as a project, in a classroom, synchronous, asynchronous, hands-on, internship, etc.

Let's imagine you are going to use one of those *How* methods to narrow down your Learning Opportunity.

What if your *How* method is "learn in a classroom." You want to learn about "the impact of radiation on the human body" and you are going to do that by taking a series of classes that will eventually get you there. A physics class, a chemistry class, an anatomy class, a history class (covering World War II). You could probably piece together a way to understand the impact of radiation on the human body with a series of traditional classes. It might take a while but in the meantime you will probably have learned a lot of stuff.

Maybe you are in a bigger hurry to understand radiation's impact on humans and you don't want to take years to learn about it. Perhaps you want it to be led by a teacher but you can't find a class with that specific focus. Maybe you could interview some college professors about the answer. Maybe you can find a lecture or two posted online that cover that specific topic. Maybe you can just search using the question, "what is the impact of radiation on the human body." There is a good chance someone else has had the same question and left a trail of breadcrumbs to the answers.

There is another way to think about *How* besides as a method of instruction. There are three special kind of *How* options that are very valuable ways to go about learning. They are to Learn by Creating, Learn by Doing, and Learn by Discovery. We explored those a little bit above.

Let's examine a way we can design a Learning Opportunity around "the impact of radiation on the human body" by combining it with one of these three special *How* options.

Learn by Creating has to do with creating something. In the end you will have a product of some type that can be shared. Learn by Creating is not only a great way to learn it is a great way to end up with evidence of your Learning Opportunity when you are done. By its very nature Learn by Creating produces something tangible.

There are a lot of things you could create but let's imagine a few for this Learning Opportunity.

You could explore "the impact of radiation on the human body" by creating an infographic, an animation, a documentary, a comic book, a Post Apocalyptic Field Guide, a song, a musical, a play, a podcast episode, a wiki page, an invention, a 3D model, a game.

Each one of those creative projects will require you to research "the impact of radiation on the human body" and then apply that research to your final product. It will require understanding your audience, communicating your message, and being accurate with what you say. In the end, you will not only learn a lot about "the impact of radiation on the human body" but you will have something tangible to demonstrate what you have learned.

Learn by Doing has to do with learning in a hands-on, active way. Internships, shadowing, interviewing, project-based learning, developing hands-on skills, practicing, teaching, performing, and working for a cause are all types of Learn by Doing.

It is a bad idea to explore "the impact of radiation on the human body" by exposing yourself to radiation. While it is certainly hands-on, it is a terrible idea.

For this particular topic, radiation's impact on the human body, the type of Learn by Doing activities need to keep safety in mind. But perhaps you could explore places that use radiation and see what they do to protect the people who work there or visit.

Dental offices, doctor's offices, hospitals, universities are places that use radiation. Perhaps you could arrange a visit to see what precautions and technologies they use to protect the human body. You could interview the technicians about what they do and why they do it.

Maybe you could shadow dental and medical technicians for a day and see what steps they take to protect themselves and others from radiation.

Maybe you could find other businesses and institutions in your area who use radiation and visit their facilities. You could reach out to professors and professionals who study radiation safety and interview them in person or remotely and ask about their work.

Within the category of Learn by Doing are things like teaching or delivering a presentation. You could learn about the impact of radiation and deliver a presentation to an interested audience. When you teach or present you need to know a lot about your topic, typically a lot more than what you will ever say. You also have to understand your topic well enough to summarize it and explain it to your audience. Coming up with images, graphics, metaphors, and explanations is a very good way of going deeper into a topic and making sure you really understand it. Putting yourself in a position to teach a topic or present on a topic will be good motivation to understand your topic in depth.

Another method in the Learn by Doing arsenal is to get involved in a cause. You could find an organization that deals with radiation and its impact and join, volunteer, or help raise money. Maybe the organization you are interested in doesn't exist or doesn't have a chapter in your community and you could lead the process of starting one.

The final of our three special *How* options is Learn by Discovery. This involves learning through the process of discovery. It is important to understand that learning isn't only being exposed to and memorizing existing knowledge. Sometimes it can involve creating new knowledge or presenting that knowledge in a new way.

It can involve doing actual science, uncovering problems, finding solutions to problems, conducting historical research, investigating mysteries, collecting data, curating and organizing information to give new insights, conducting polls and surveys, traveling somewhere new, or trying something new.

Some ways you might Learn by Discovery for "the impact of radiation on the human body" could include:

Borrow or buy a consumer-level geiger counter and test the base level of radiation around your home and your community.

Do a historical review of the use of medical and commercial radiation in your community.

Research old news reports and documents related to building nuclear power plants in your community. Were there protests or concerns at the time? Perhaps you could follow up with the people involved and conduct an oral history of the events.

Conduct a scientific survey to capture a community's attitudes towards the use of x-rays or radiation or towards nuclear power or nuclear weapons.

Gather data about illness and death due to radiation exposure and develop an infographic, presentation, database to communicate the statistics to a specific audience.

So far we have used *What* and *How* to create Intentional Constraints when creating a unique Learning Opportunity from scratch.

Can we do a similar exercise with the other questions?

Let's return to *Who*.

Using Who as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

We explored the idea of working with your friend. What other kinds of *Who* can we consider?

Who can refer to anyone involved in a Learning Opportunity, who you want to learn with, who you want to learn from, even an audience for your creating or your performing, it can refer to co-workers, supervisors, and mentors.

Do you want to learn in person with other people your age? Do you want to learn with people in your local community? Do you want to learn with an online community? Do you want to reach a particular audience?

You might find groups of your age peers in a community group, at a school, at church or temple or mosque. Maybe there is already a class or activity that you can join or maybe you can create something with them. It is obviously a lot more complicated to create something from scratch with a group of people. It is far easier to come up with an idea to work on with a single friend. But it isn't impossible.

If the most important element of this new Learning Opportunity is to work with a group of people similar in age to you, well ... that is the place to start.

Perhaps you could start a club of people interested in anime or k-pop or ragtime music. Perhaps you could organize a field trip to a local museum or an outing to a park. Perhaps you could start a choir or volleyball team or dance troupe. Maybe you could make a Book Club, Knitting Circle, Clean Up Crew, Study Group. Maybe you can run a bake sale, yard sale, arts and crafts fair. Maybe you can setup a poetry slam, TED

Talk, open mic night. You could raise awareness for a cause that has meaning to you with a protest, demonstration, or fund raiser.

Who can also mean the person from whom you are learning. Teachers come in all kinds of forms. Some are classroom teachers but some might be authors, YouTubers, podcasters. A teacher might be a mentor or tutor. A teacher might be a person you interview.

If you start with *Who*, you might decide to read all of the books by a particular author because you love their writing style. You might make a habit of listening to a particular podcast or YouTube channel because the host is someone you admire or find interesting.

Maybe there is someone who is willing to be a mentor for you. So you develop a Learning Opportunity where they can provide advice or feedback on your work.

Maybe you want to learn from a lot of experts in a content area that interests you. You could arrange to interview experts in the field or perhaps professionals. It gives you a chance to ask them questions about their own Learning Journeys or what it is like to be a professional in their field. Maybe you turn the series of interviews into a book, documentary, or podcast. Maybe you work with other students and each interview a few people and then those collected interviews turn into a bigger project.

All of these ideas start with *Who*.

Using *When* as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

When might seem like a strange one to use as a starting point or Intentional Constraint. *When* has to do with time. How long did you spend on a Learning Opportunity? What was the schedule for the Learning Opportunity? Was it a one time event or did it happen over the course of a long time? Did you complete it in a set amount of time or did you keep returning back until it was done? Did you control *When* or was it predetermined by someone else?

Most of traditional school is built around time. The total length of a course, the length of time for each class session, the number of days it meets, those are all set in stone. You have no ability to control that. It also feels a bit arbitrary. Did you ever find it strange that the length of time to learn math or biology or French or computer programming is exactly the same? It doesn't matter the subject, the schedule says that 5 days a week for 50 minutes over 18 weeks equals a course.

You are smart enough to know that a school schedule is for the benefit of the school and doesn't reflect the needs of the people learning those subjects or the nature of the subjects themselves.

Luckily, your Learning Journey isn't limited by the scheduling needs of a school. You have the ability to think about time differently. You can figure out what works for you and your personal schedule.

It is probably true that you won't typically use *When* as a starting point when designing a new Learning Opportunity. That doesn't mean you can't do it. There are a few practical applications for starting with *When*.

What if you have a small slice of time that you want to fill with something? Let's say there is a 20 minute break between one activity and another and you don't want to just spend time on social media. Perhaps you could think of a habit or skill that you could practice to fill that time. Maybe it is as simple as making a choice to use that time to read a book, practice card tricks, draw, meditate, people watch, write poetry, do a crossword puzzle, go for a walk, listen to music. The starting point was filling the twenty minute block of time.

Maybe the *When* is an upcoming change of seasons. The weather is getting warmer and you would like to spend some more time outside so you design a Learning Opportunity that gets you outside. Again, the idea started by giving consideration to *When*.

Maybe *When* is a length of time. You look at your calendar and realize that you have a 1 week break in your schedule and you think maybe you should come up with something that you can accomplish in one week that gives you a break from the schedule you have been keeping. Maybe sitting down and devouring a book you wanted to read or watching all of the episodes of a David Attenborough documentary series that you have been wanting to watch. It could be learning how to bake a good pie crust or write and record a song.

The key is that you had a week of time and you used that as your starting point.

Using *Where* as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

Let's talk about *Where*. *Where* is a reference to the place where you are learning. It could be a reference to a classroom, a university, your bedroom, online, outside, on a trip, at a museum, at a job, etc.

Where might be the question to start with if you are really driven to be somewhere. Maybe you really want an excuse to go on a trip so you design a Learning Opportunity that gives you the chance to head to Chicago or to a lake or to the mountains or anywhere that isn't your hometown.

Imagine that you really want to go to a National Park and so you design a bird watching Learning Opportunity (because you also love birds.) In preparation you can learn about the birds who are native to that park and what season is the best chance to see them and then convince whoever you need to convince to take you on that trip. You pack up binoculars and a camera and a field guide to birds and you head out for a few days of bird watching.

Where can be local, too. Maybe you enjoy working at an area coffee shop so you design a Learning Opportunity that you can do while sipping a latte at the coffee shop. Maybe you love spending time at the aquarium so you design a research project that gives you an excuse to observe the sealife for hours on end.

Maybe you just realize that spending a little time in the woods does wonders for your state of mind and so you develop a regular habit of taking an hour long walk in the woods a few times a week.

All of these things make valuable Learning Opportunities and they all started by first considering *Where*.

The last one on our list is *Why*.

Using *Why* as a Starting Point for a New Learning Opportunity

Thinking about *Why* is one of the most important things you can do during your Learning Journey.

Why is all about you. It is asking why did you want to take on a particular Learning Opportunity. The answer can sometimes be quite simple, "I was curious about whether any birds cross the Atlantic Ocean and I wanted to know the answer."

Sometimes the answer can be more complicated, "My mom asked me if I thought I might like learning about Chemistry and I hadn't really given it any thought before but my friend Charlotte was going to sign up for a Chemistry class and I thought that it might be fun to do a class with Charlotte even though I still didn't really know much about Chemistry. But it is a science and I tend to like things about science so I thought why not give it a try."

When we think about *Why* there are some common answers for why someone might pursue a Learning Opportunity. You can use these common answers to think about reasons to design a new Learning Opportunity.

Common Answers to Why

Curiosity. Sometimes we just are curious about something. It can be something small like, “What was the name of that actor in that one show?” We just need an answer to the question before we can move on. Sometimes we are curious about something bigger, “If I were moving at the speed of light, what would a beam of light look like?” Einstein asked himself that question and it led to radical insights that changed our understanding of gravity.

Curiosity seems to be a pretty normal human trait. You should listen to your curiosity. It can be a good place to start when creating a Learning Opportunity.

Exploration. Humans also like to explore new ideas, try new things, see what is around the corner, find out something they didn’t know before.

Exploration is another good way to start creating a Learning Opportunity. Find something you don’t know about and start there.

Passion, Fun, Enjoyment, Interest. There are somethings we like to do. There are somethings we love to learn about. Somethings bring us joy. Somethings are fun.

“I want to learn how to make good music.” “I enjoy making my friend’s laugh.” “I am interested in space travel.” “I like reading about the middle ages.”

Listen to your heart. Feel free to follow it. If there is something that brings you joy and happiness, make sure and include it on your Learning Journey. Of course, not everything you learn about has to fit this category but don’t be afraid to enjoy yourself.

Purpose and Meaning. Somethings give meaning and purpose to your life. “I want to make a difference in the world.” “I want to help people.” “I want to understand the problems of the world.” “I want to fix problems in the world.” “I want to create art that inspires.” “I want to feel like my life has meaning.”

If there is a cause that you believe in, a problem you are hoping to solve, a drive to improve the world around you, this is a great source of inspiration for creating a Learning Opportunity.

Short and long term goals. Sometimes we want to accomplish something and there are steps along the way that have to be completed to reach our goal.

“I want to be able to drive but to drive I have to pass the driver’s test.”

“I want to get a good job but I have to get some experience in order to get hired.”

“I want to live in Japan but I need to understand Japanese culture and I need to speak and understand the Japanese language, first”

“I want to be a good guitar player but I will need to practice.”

Sometimes goals require us to complete steps that aren’t exactly the first things we want to do. But we are driven to reach our goals and so we can be motivated to do the steps necessary to achieve our goals.

A Suggestion. Sometimes other people have ideas for us. They might suggest a book you might like, a movie they think you'll enjoy, a subject that makes sense for you. Sure, sometimes they are just plain wrong and you think, "they don't even know me." But sometimes they are on to something. Sometimes they open up a new world. In the process of creating a new Learning Opportunity you should be open to suggestions.

Requirements. You don't fully control your life. Sometimes you gotta do something because that is the way it is. Some colleges require you to take a standardized test in order to get admitted. Some states require you to take a test to graduate high school.

Even if you run into a requirement that you aren't happy about, you can often tie it to an intrinsic motivator like a short or long term goal that is more motivating for you.

For instance, maybe you aren't excited about taking the SAT or ACT test but you know that it is related to a bigger goal you might have like getting into a college of your choice. So, while you aren't interested, curious, or driven to do well on the standardized test for its own sake, you are motivated to get into college.

Even though you might run into requirements on your Learning Journey you can often find a way to tie those requirements into other motivations.

A lot of times the *Why* question will be answered by a combination of motivations.

I want to drive so I can have freedom, get a job, and visit friends. I like to drive.

But there are requirements like a written and driving test in order to drive. I don't have a passion for taking the test but I am driven by the end result of being able to legally drive.

Sometimes you have to take tests to get to your goals.

You are motivated by the opportunities that being able to drive opens up. At the same time, you are required to pass a driving test. You can think of it as a combination of motivations.

Your Learning Journey will be full of various ways of answering the *Why* question. You have the opportunity to decide why things are important to you. Why they make sense for you. Why they will help you on your Learning Journey. If you do run across a requirement that you can't work around, you can see it as being related to your overall Learning Journey. You can see it as a hoop you need to jump through. You can also find the other motivations driving that Learning Opportunity and focus on those reasons.

Thinking about why you might decide to try a particular Learning Opportunity can give you insight into yourself and your journey. It is one of the most important questions for you to consider. It is at the heart of reflecting. In that regard it is a helpful tool not only when designing a Learning Opportunity but also when looking back at a your overall Learning Journey.

Making Sure You Explore Widely

One of the harder things about being in charge of your Learning Journey is knowing what might be out there in the world for you to learn about. It isn't too hard to listen to your own interests and follow your curiosity. It might be a little hard pushing yourself into the unknown.

This section gives you some prompts and ideas you can use to make sure that you are exploring widely. They are meant to generate ideas and open up your thinking. It is still up to you to make the decisions about what Learning Opportunities to pursue but the ideas below might help.

Explore Widely by trying different Subject Areas

One approach to planning your Learning Journey using a Explore Widely strategy is to look at a list such as this and try and make sure you cover a wide range of subject areas.

There are some obvious disadvantages to this approach; a list like this isn't all that inspiring, you might not know what these subject areas even mean, it feels pretty traditional (isn't this supposed to be a new way to look at school?).

All that is true. This is just one approach.

Before we throw it out, let's think about the advantages of this approach.

One, it aligns with how classes will probably be offered at high schools and colleges so if you were interested in taking an in-person or online class this list might be helpful.

Two, it uses language that traditional schools understand so if at some point you need to translate your story to clarify what you did during your Learning Journey this list could help you translate it into language that traditional schools use.

- English - Creative Writing
- English - Analytical Writing
- English - Literature
- Math - Algebra
- Math - Geometry
- Math - Trig
- Math - Pre Calculus
- Math - Calculus
- Math - Statistics
- Social Studies - American History
- Social Studies - World History
- Social Studies - Government
- Social Studies - Human Sciences (Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology)
- Social Studies - Politics
- Science - Biology
- Science - Chemistry
- Science - Physics

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- Science - Earth Science
- Science - Human Biology
- Science - Environment and Sustainability
- Science - Lab
- Science - Animal Science
- Agriculture and Horticulture
- World Language
- World Cultures
- Business
- Entrepreneurship
- Service, Volunteerism, and Community
- Leadership
- Personal Finance
- Visual Arts
- Music - History
- Music - Instrument Performance
- Music - Vocal Performance
- Music - Theory or Composition
- Performing Arts
- Theater
- Physical Education
- Health and Nutrition
- First Aid and CPR
- Computer Science - Programming and Scripting
- Computer Science - IT/Networking
- Computer Science - Robotics
- Culinary Arts
- Construction and Wood Working
- Electrical
- Metalwork and Welding
- Electronics

This list could go on for pages but hopefully this is enough to give you a good look at what kind of traditional subject areas are out there.

With a little bit of imagination this list doesn't have to be so boring. For one, we can simply combine subjects and make them a little bit more interesting.

What if you don't love history but you do love theater? Combine them and you have ... the History of Theater.

What if you enjoy computer programming but don't love algebra? Could you do a project in which you write computer programs that make algebraic algorithms, using your strength in writing programs to help you understand ideas in algebra?

Take a look at the list, find something you can connect with and see if you can build a way to incorporate it with a subject you might not fully connect with, yet.

Culinary Arts with Chemistry, World Languages with Business, The Physics of Music, Literature and Politics, Nutrition and Visual Arts.

Now things are getting slightly more interesting. You can take it a step deeper. What if we pulled out some subtopics from within these subject areas and creatively combined things?

Part of Animal Science includes pets, and you love pets. What if you studied .. The History of Pets in America. Pets in Literature (or Pets in Theater or Pets in Music or Pets in Art). The Science of Pets (why are some animals able to be used as pets while others are not.) Pets and the Law. The Psychology of Pet Ownership. Pets Across Cultures. The Health Impact of Pet Ownership. Building a Dog House. The Business Side of Pets. Amazing Pet Statistics that You Never Knew.

Personal Finance is a relevant topic but it can also open some interesting doors. What if you studied The Personal Finances of Genghis Khan? What if you wrote a short story in which a family budget drives the plot? What if you designed a budget for an electronics project you wanted to build? What if you created a periodic table of budget elements? What if you created a personal investment portfolio that helped reduce carbon emissions by investing only in companies that are working towards a carbon neutral future?

Maybe you love gaming and love/hate gaming fandoms. You could do an anthropological comparative study of different fandoms. You could explore the place of gender in gaming characters. You could research the business side of gaming, the art of gaming, the music of gaming. You could explore the research on mental health and gaming. You could analyze virtual economic systems inside of gaming worlds. You could explore the rise of esports and gaming tournaments.

To review, so far we are planning without a plan by using a Explore Widely strategy with the following possible approaches:

Approach 1. Take a look at the big list of subject areas and make sure to hit a broad range of them.

Approach 2. Combine two subject areas and come up with something a little more interesting.

Approach 3. Find interesting topics within the list of subject areas and combine them to create something interesting.

Those approaches are directly related to the question of What is your Learning Opportunity about. In particular it is looking at the content of a Learning Opportunity. We already know that Learning Opportunities are about more than just content. They have a Who, What, When, Where, Why, and a How.

We can take each of these and do a similar exercise.

Explore Widely trying different answers to Who Are You Learning With?

Let's start by looking at options for answering the question, "Who". Who did you learn with? Who did you learn from? Who did you work with? Did you have an audience for your work or performances?

- I learned along with a small group
- I learned along with classmates
- I learned along with adults
- I learned along with a peer
- I learned alone
- I learned in a community
- I learned from a teacher
- I learned from a mentor
- I learned from an expert

- I learned from a peer
- I learned from a group
- I taught a beginner
- I taught a peer
- I taught a group
- I taught a community
- I taught myself
- I created for people
- I created for myself
- I created with people
- I performed for people
- I performed with people
- I worked with people
- I worked for people
- I solved problems for other people
- I solved problems with people
- I provided service or support for people
- I provided service or support with people

As you go along your Learning Journey, consider this list and make sure you are challenging yourself to try different approaches on learning with other people. Perhaps you typically seek out solo Learning Opportunities, and it is time that you try finding a group to learn with or joining a community. Perhaps this a chance to explore Learning Opportunities where you learn from a peer instead of from a teacher or expert. Sometimes our peers can explain ideas or offer feedback in a way that an adult, a teacher, or an expert can't. Perhaps you can find a partner and you can each trade off teaching each other.

Remember that experts and teachers and mentors come in many forms. They don't have to be a formal teacher, after all you can learn from an author, a YouTuber, a mechanic, a librarian, a public speaker, a politician, a grandparent, an artist, a podcaster, or an older sibling.

In that same spirit you can be a teacher, too. You could give a speech, write instructions, create a video, curate a collection, give lessons, and even teach a class.

Don't forget to think about the intended audience for the things you create or perform. Consider who might be helped when you volunteer and who you might work along side.

At its heart, learning is a social activity. It involves people learning with and learning from each other. Make sure you don't limit your approach to a single kind of Who.

Explore Widely by trying different answers to What Are You Learning?

Let's move over to thinking about ways to answer "What." One way to think about "what you are learning" is to focus on the content of your Learning Opportunity. At a traditional school, you are learning by focusing on the subject area of a class, like math, science, history, etc. but "What" is bigger than just content.

What can also include skills, habits, and mindsets. Let's look at a big list of skills and you can use it to make sure that you are covering a range of them in your Learning Journey.

- Project Management
- Time Management

- Budgeting
- Planning
- Interpersonal Skills
- Researching
- Reading
- Written Communication
- Verbal Communication
- Visual Communication (illustration, photography, graphic design, 3D design, graphing)
- Scripting or Computer Programming
- Summarizing - Note taking, Outlining
- Synthesis or Integration - combining or comparing across ideas or subjects
- Public Speaking and Presentation Skills
- Video Making
- Critical Thinking
- Decision Making
- Storytelling
- Test Taking
- Active Listening
- Memorization and Recall
- Creativity
- Problem Solving
- Athletic Skills
- Mechanical Skills
- Artistic Skills
- Musical Skills
- Performing
- Improvising
- Craft making
- Cooking
- Budgeting

As part of your Explore Widely strategy you can use a list of skills like this to make sure you are developing different skills along the way. You can use your imagination to include some of these skills when we create a Learning Opportunity. Perhaps you always rely on your writing skills and it is time that you tried to communicate visually so instead of writing a Reflection on the last book you read, you are going to try and illustrate a comic that captures your thoughts.

Now that you can drive, it wouldn't hurt to learn some car maintenance and develop some mechanical skills. At the same time you can design a set of instructions to teach your future self because you are certain that you won't remember how to change your tire when the time comes.

You can use the list of skills and design a Learning Opportunity around it or you can use the list of skills and find a way to make sure you add it to a Learning Opportunity designed around something else.

You might try out a skill and come to realize that it is something you would really like to develop in order to improve your competency in the skill. It could turn out that you really enjoy the problem solving and physicality of fixing up your car. It could also turn out that you can appreciate the skill required to fix your car but it isn't something that you want to develop further. You are happy to pay an expert but at least you have a better understanding of what it involves.

Another way to think about “What” is to consider the habits that are involved in a Learning Opportunity. We can tie certain habits directly to the four qualities that are associated with living a good life.

Autonomy Habits

- Being a Situational Learner, Knowing How To Put Yourself in a Better Mental and Physical Position for Learning
- Reflecting on Mistakes and Growing
- Taking Initiative
- Speaking for Yourself
- Leading When Necessary
- Being an Advocate for Yourself
- Understanding the Quirks of the Human Mind and How Humans Learn
- Accepting Responsibility
- Accepting that You Are in Charge of Your Own Learning Journey
- Listening to and Following Your Curiosity
- Listening to and Following Your Passions
- Listening to and Following Your Interests
- Finding and Following Things That Bring Meaning and Purpose to Your Life
- Being open to having a Beginner’s Mindset

Habits of Caring

- Contributing to a Community
- Developing an Attitude of Savoring
- Developing an Attitude of Gratitude
- Developing an Attitude of Forgiveness
- Experiencing Awe
- Considering Others using Kindness, Altruism, Compassion, or Empathy
- Developing Healthy Habits like Sleeping, Eating, and Exercise
- Being Mindful
- Developing and Maintaining Social Connections

Confidence Habits

- Being Playful and Having Fun as a Part of Learning
- Embracing Open Ended Problems
- Eliminating Envy, Jealousy, and Unhealthy Comparisons
- Seeing Yourself as a Work in Progress Who is Capable of Growth and Change
- Pursuing Meaning and Purpose in Your Life
- Being Willing to Seek Out Help, Criticism, Critique, and Feedback
- Being Willing to Try New Things or Explore the Unknown

Habits of Connection

- Chopping Wood or Practicing Deliberately
- Making a Commitment to Showing Up and Doing the Work
- Managing or Leading an Individual or Group Project
- Demonstrating Patience, Persistence, and Perseverance
- Facing Obstacles and Keeping Going
- Demonstrating Self-Control and Self-Discipline
- Relying on Yourself to Do the Work
- Relying on Yourself to Act Appropriately
- Relying on Yourself to Do the Right Thing
- Using Your Signature Strengths. Strengths That are Deeply Characteristic of You.

As you reflect on your Learning Journey consider how often your Learning Opportunities set you up to work on these kind of habits. If you find you are not hitting some areas of this list, think about ways that you can incorporate these habits into future Learning Opportunities.

Maybe you are being a bit too serious and it is time to be a bit more “playful” in your learning. Maybe you have been ignoring the importance of getting out into nature and it is time to find a way to add a bit of “awe” into your schedule.

Maybe you have a tendency to put yourself in a position where you don’t need any help and it is time to be open to criticism and critique.

We all have a tendency to fall back into habits that we are already comfortable with. One of the dangers of being completely in charge of your Learning Journey is that you might rely too heavily on existing habits and strengths and fail to seek out opportunities to stretch and grow.

This list of habits related to Autonomy, Competence, Confidence, and Connection is something you can use to make sure you are challenging yourself. It can be used as a creative starting point for selecting or designing a Learning Opportunity or it can be combined with any of the other approaches from this chapter.

Another approach to answering “What” has to do with mindsets. A mindset can be related to a subject area but isn’t really the same thing. A mindset has to do with a specific set of skills and knowledge and approaches to solving a problem or seeing the world. Journalism and Law are different subject areas but they both rely heavily on an Empirical Mindset. No one would confuse a weatherman with a basketball coach but they both use data and statistics to make decisions, they both use a Quantitative Mindset in their work.

Take a look at the list of mindsets. You might consider checking against this list as you think about how to Explore Widely. Make sure you try out different mindsets in your Learning Journey or use the ideas below to create a Learning Opportunity or even combine different Learning Opportunities.

Mindsets

Quantitative Mindset : Using logic, computation, modeling, data and measurement to understand and explain the world and to communicate to others. Think like a Mathematician, Statistician, Businessman, Coach, Trainer, Weatherman.

Empirical Mindset : Using investigation, inquiry, analysis of evidence, or the scientific method to solve problems or discover solutions. Think like a Scientist, Detective, Investigative Journalist, Doctor, Lawyer.

Societal Mindset : Using critical analysis and diverse perspectives about people, places, environments, human behavior, human expression, institutions, and systems. Think like a Sociologist, Historian, Economist, Politician, Anthropologist.

Creative Mindset : Using observation, questioning, ideating, communication, and openness to solve problems, innovate, or challenge the status quo. Think like an Artist, Musician, Inventor, Entrepreneur.

Nurturing Mindset : Using empathy, compassion, generosity, listening, and advocacy to benefit someone else or a community. Think like a Caregiver, Teacher, Parent, Doctor, Community Organizer.

Well Being Mindset : Using mindfulness, exercise, activity, nutrition, and social connection for your own happiness and well being.

Competitive Mindset : Using healthy competition and challenges to drive your performance. Think like an Athlete, Gamer, Adventurer.

Performer Mindset : Using observation, improvisation, listening, and communication to reach an audience. Think like an Entertainer, Speaker, Chef, Writer, Comedian, Actor.

Critical Mindset : Using knowledge, experience, judgment, and wisdom to provide feedback, advice, opinions about someone or something. Think like a Judge, Critic, Referee, Manager.

Beginner's Mindset : Approaching a problem from the point of view of not knowing anything. Sometimes we make assumptions, overly rely on past experiences or rigid knowledge, or try and hide our misunderstanding. A beginner's mindset strips things down to the basics. Think like a 2nd Grader.

Explore Widely by trying different answers to Where Are You Learning?

By now you know that learning shouldn't be limited to inside the walls of a classroom. Hopefully by this point in the book that much is obvious. So, if not in a classroom, where can learning take place?

- At home
- Online - using digital resources, apps, and media
- Online - conducting research
- Online - in a virtual community or using social media
- Online - in a structured course or class with a formal institution or organization
- In person - a class or a workshop with a formal institution or organization
- In the community - service, volunteer, work, internship, shadowing, interviewing
- In the community - club, activity, group
- In the community - exercise, nature, sports
- In the community - workshop, studio, library, makerspace
- Traveling or Field Trip

Your answer to "Where" might be limited by your personal situation and circumstances. If you can't drive or you don't have access to a car you might be limited by your transportation options. If you are 13, 14, or 15 years old you might not be able to volunteer or work or take a college class. The size of your town might limit the quality and kind of community services you can participate in. Somethings are out of your control but it still doesn't hurt to give some consideration to the various places where you can learn.

Learning at home doesn't have to only mean taking online classes. Not all at home learning needs to be in front of a screen. You can paint, write, read, play music, dance, exercise, conduct science experiments, grow plants, interview experts, talk with friends, write letters, take photographs, cook food, build things, repair things, sew, knit, meditate, make movies, bird watch, create a zine, watch a documentary, record an oral history, juggle, bike ride, make costumes, put on a puppet show, to name just a few.

Learning online doesn't have to only mean taking formal online classes. You can conduct research, learn to code, learn a language, follow topics of interest on social media, join a virtual community, write for an authentic audience, share your art, review books, argue politics, connect with peers, watch a documentary, listen to music, create music, visit a museum, plan a trip, play games, to name just a few.

So even if transportation is limited, being at home and online can still open up quite a range of Learning Opportunities.

If you are lucky enough to have access to transportation you might consider adding your local community to your "Where" options. Libraries, museums, aquariums, zoos, parks, trails are kind of like open-ended classrooms. They have something to teach you but they are open enough for you to connect in your own way. Many communities have clubs, groups, and societies that you can join. Look for community sports, theater, music, and art. Seek out ways to contribute to your community through service and volunteering or activism. Some communities have workshops you can join for pottery, art, woodworking, small engine repair. Some communities have makerspaces to get hands on experience with electronics, robotics, 3D printing, and fabrication.

And of course, there is nothing wrong with taking classes in person at a high school, college, community center, or library. Or signing up for private lessons to learn an instrument, sing, act, dance. If you are the right age, maybe even driving lessons.

Being stuck in a classroom all day isn't the ideal way to learn; being stuck in front of a computer isn't ideal either. Find a way to mix it up even if you can't always leave your house.

Explore Widely by trying different answers to Why Are You Learning This?

Why learn something? What is your motivation? Let's examine a list that we can use as we plan out a Explore Widely strategy.

- I am curious about it
- I want to explore more about it
- I enjoy it
- It is fun
- I am interested in it
- I always like learning about it
- I felt it was important to learn about it
- I am passionate about it
- I am driven to learn about it
- I wanted to challenge myself
- It brings purpose and/or meaning to my life
- It is related to a short term goal of mine
- It is related to a long term goal of mine
- It is a requirement and/or expectation for me

This is a list of common ways you might answer “Why.” There are probably many more but this is a good start. You might notice that they go from very intrinsic reasons (coming from inside you) to more extrinsic reasons (coming from outside of you.)

You will probably find your reasons are a combination. Maybe you are “curious” but it is also something that is related to “short term goal.” Or maybe it is “required” but that requirement is tied to a “goal” of yours. For instance, you are required to pass the driver’s test but you are studying for it because your goal is to be able to legally drive.

Sometimes you don’t fully consider our reasons “Why” until after you have already started a Learning Opportunity. Still, you can use the list of “Why” answers to help plan an Explore Widely strategy.

Are you doing enough to listen to our curiosity? Have you given some consideration to what brings purpose or meaning to you life? Have you thought about what steps we might need to reach your short term or long term goals?

Explore Widely by trying different answers to How Are You Learning This?

How you learn has to do with the methods and strategies that you use to learn about something, or to practice or develop a skill, or to work on a habit. A teacher-led course in a classroom is one method for learning but it is far from the only method.

The following lists give you some idea of the variety of methods at your disposal.

- Self-directed learning
- Self-directed project
- Self-directed group project
- Self-directed research
- Self-directed reading
- Online class
- College class
- Self-paced class
- Teacher-directed class, workshop, or seminar
- Tutoring or lessons
- Group project or activity
- Club, organization, society, or affinity group
- Internship/volunteer/work
- Travel or field trip
- Authentic learning
- Experiential learning
- Project based learning
- Games and play
- Sports team
- Service project
- Expert speaker
- Theater, choir, music or performance group
- Committee or government
- Apprenticeship or mentorship
- Political or social action
- Community project

- Entrepreneurship
- Book club

The next list has to do with an approach called, Learn by Creating. You can learn facts, ideas, mindsets, skills, and habits in the process of creating something. The idea behind this approach is that the process of creating something sets you up for learning other things while you are creating.

This is a list of various types of things you could focus on making. One advantage of this strategy is that it naturally leaves behind tangible evidence of your Learning Opportunity. You can also easily combine anything on this list with items from any of the other lists we have looked at.

- Create a physical product
- Create a digital product
- Write creatively
- Write analytically
- Produce a video
- Produce an audio product (music, sound design, podcast)
- Create visual art
- Create a graphic or illustration
- Choreograph a dance
- Start a business or organization
- Invent something

The next list is for an approach called, Learn by Doing. This means being active and hands-on while learning instead of being a passive recipient of information. Once again, look at this list while thinking about planning your Learning Journey

- Perform publicly (acting, presenting, dancing, music, sports)
- Direct a performance (play, choir, dance, sports)
- Manage an event
- Deliver a presentation
- Teach, tutor, mentor
- Hands-on learning
- Learn or practice a skill (music, sports, exercise, language, art, craft, hobby, outdoors, etc)
- Give back to your community
- Join a community or a network
- Lead a committee or project
- Volunteer or work on a service project
- Get a job
- Raise money for a cause
- Sell something
- Help someone else

Finally let's look again an approach called, Learn by Discovery. Not everything that is worth knowing is already out there. Sometimes the best way to learn is to go out and find your own answers. To make sure

that you are Exploring Widely, consider basing a Learning Opportunity around one of these ideas or combine it with something from one of the other lists.

- Conduct a science or social science experiment
- Identify or uncover a problem
- Find a solution to a problem
- Conduct historical research
- Investigate a mystery
- Collect data about something
- Curate or organize information to give new insight
- Design and conduct a poll, survey, or study
- Travel somewhere new
- Try something new

Ways to Dive Deeply

Dive Deeply by Using Your Signature Strengths

Researchers Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania identified and classified 24 positive character strengths and virtues. They cataloged these as recognized historically and across different cultures as representing goodness in humans.

Most people have varying degrees of all 24 strengths and generally recognize the positive value of them all. But each individual person has certain of these strengths that are more important and natural to them. Some of these strengths we identify with closely and think of as part of our identity. Those strengths from this big list of 24 are called our Signature Strengths. They are the top three to five strengths that you most identify with.

Further research by Claudia Harzer from Medical School Hamburg and Willibald Ruch at University of Zurich showed that the more we make use of our Signature Strengths in our day to day work, the more we see that work as a “calling” instead of a “job”.

To figure out your personal list of Signature Strengths you can take a free quiz at The VIA Institute on Character’s website (www.viacharacter.org). Or you can look at the list of all 24 strengths and self-identify the ones that speak to you personally.

Wisdom Strengths: Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning, Perspective.

Courage Strengths: Bravery, Honesty, Perseverance, Zest

Humanity Strengths: Kindness, Love, Social Intelligence

Justice Strengths: Fairness, Leadership, Teamwork

Temperance Strengths: Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, Self-Regulation

Transcendence Strengths: Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, Spirituality.

One approach you can take is to identify your personal Signature Strengths and then make sure that you are using them during your Learning Opportunities.

Let's look at some examples.

What if you identify with the strength, Zest?

Zest refers to being energetic and enthusiastic. Someone who identifies Zest as a Signature Strength is going to do best in active and engaged activities. You might not do as well in passive learning settings. You might look for ways to do hands-on activities, internships, volunteering, project-based learning, and group work.

Compare that to someone who identifies with Prudence.

Prudence is about avoiding unnecessary risk, planning in advance, making sure that you can control for the unexpected. Someone who identifies Prudences as a signature strength might be most comfortable with a plan book that helps structure their days. They might not enjoy open-ended projects without clear cut outcomes. Working with ad hoc groups might be stressful. On the other hand, being able to plan out a Learning Journey with clear milestones might be a smart strategy.

If Creativity is one of your Signature Strengths you might get energized by the Learn by Creating list. Someone who is high in Curiosity might find inspiration in the Learn by Discovery list.

Whatever strengths make up your list of 4 or 5 Signature Strengths, look for ways to include them in your Learning Journey. It will not only make the journey easier and more enjoyable, it will also help you understand how to apply your Signature Strengths as a part of your life.

A good life, for you, will include utilizing your Signature Strengths.

Dive Deeply by Combining Skills and Knowledge with Exploring Widely

One approach to Dive Deeply is to seek out opportunities to practice and improve on skills and knowledge that are important and meaningful to you. A great way to to practice those skills or go deeper with knowledge is do apply it directly to key strategy number two, Explore Widely.

Let's look at a couple of examples to explain this idea.

Marjory enjoys writing. It is something that she considers a strength already but she wants to keep building on that strength and keep improving as a writer. She has a mantra that she tells herself, "writers write." Marjory has decided to apply her strength as a writer to the task of Exploring Widely. In her head she is creating a kind of magazine and she has created a list of topics that she is going to write magazine articles about. Each month she will decide what articles to write for the next "issue" of her magazine. This approach will give her a chance to research and learn about a wide range of topics including American History, science, psychology, religion, mythology, and technology. It will also give her an opportunity to practice her writing skills.

For Marjory, she will be Diving Deeply with her writing skills but also Exploring Widely by applying her writing skills to a wide variety of topics. In the process she will be developing her love of writing while exploring.

Let's try one from the other direction.

Jamar loves anything to do with flying and space. Ever since he was young, he loved airplanes and pilots and astronauts. Jamar is using his love of flight as a starting point for exploring other topics. Jamar is Diving Deep into flight and learning more about history (eg. history of powered flight, the space race, the role of air power in World War II), science (eg. the physics of flight, the design of aircraft, aerodynamics, the biology of flying insects and animals), and art and literature (books, movies, and art related to flying and space).

Jamar is also Diving Deep into flying and space and exploring different ways of learning. His is Learning by Creating by trying his hand at animation and creating short animations of birds in flight and space craft. He is Learning by Doing with paper airplanes, balsa wood planes, and saving up money to buy a drone. He is Learning by Discovery by testing different wing designs in a do-it-yourself wind tunnel that he learned to build by watching YouTube videos.

Jamar's knowledge about flight is growing deep but it is also serving as a vehicle to Explore Widely.

You can see from the examples of Marjory and Jamar, having a passion for a skill (like writing) or a topic (like flight) can be a great starting point. It combines the key strategies of Diving Deep and Exploring Widely by following your passions.

Dive Deeply by Pursuing a Long Term Goal

Not everyone has a specific skill or topic that they are passionate about. Sometimes they have a long term goal that they are pursuing, even if it isn't tied to a skill or topic. Let's examine a Dive Deeply strategy that involves a long term goal.

Let's imagine a planner like Earl. They are in their freshman year but are already looking far into their future. For a long time they want to go to college and study something to do with wild animals. They have done some research on careers and college majors and think they are heading towards something along the lines of zoology, wildlife management, or wildlife biology but they aren't 100% sure yet. That makes them a touch nervous because they like to have everything lined up. For right now they think they are heading in the right direction.

Earl knows they will need to have some knowledge and skills in the areas of science and math and so they are mentally planning ways to get that accomplished in the four years of high school. Their plan is to take one or more lab science classes at a local community college before they graduate. They might take a math class, too. Earl's local community college requires you to be 16 years old before you can take a class on campus so that gives them a couple of years to prepare and be ready for the community college classes.

In the meantime, Earl is going to pursue a mix of self-directed projects, online classes, in person classes, and field experiences. They heard that their local zoo allows high school students to do internships, so that is definitely something they are going to look into. They also like hiking and camping and so they are planning weekend trips and looking into joining a local bird watching group.

Because Earl likes to be busy and likes to know their schedule, they are planning out their Learning Journey months and years in advance. This isn't the way everyone likes to operate but it works best for Earl.

Earl uses a paper date planner and schedules out their weeks in advance. They start with any Learning Opportunities that have fixed schedules. For instance, they are taking a photography class through their local high school and it meets three days a week in the morning. They also have an online biology class that meets two days a week. Those are the first things that are locked down in their schedule.

Being a planner, Earl puts specific times on their calendar to work on their self-directed projects, independent reading, and any homework from the two structured classes they are taking this semester. Earl pencils those times in, so they can be erased if necessary. They don't like erasing but sometimes they have to.

As a self-directed project, Earl has decided to read a few books from a list of banned and removed books they saw online. Earl wants to know why these books have been banned or removed from libraries and schools. They plan on reading a few of the books and then writing an Op-Ed or letter to the editor of their local newspaper. They doubt that they would actually submit it to the local newspaper and even if they did, they doubt the paper would print it, but who knows. They still want to get their thoughts on the page and organizing it as an Op-Ed is helpful. It gives them an audience to consider while writing.

Math was never Earl's favorite subject in school but they also understand that it might be part of their life if they want to pursue wildlife biology. They also think that if they can control the pace of what they are learning about, they might not hate math as much as they used to. It's a theory.

Earl's plan for math this semester is to use an online math program that allows them to go at their own pace and also work with a tutor once a week to answer questions, and explain concepts, etc. They have put slots for "work on math" and "meet with a tutor" into their date book. Eventually Earl would like to be confident enough in their ability to learn math that they can take a math class at their local community college. If they can slowly build up to the community college math class, they are sure that once they go off to college, math won't be as intimidating.

Earl plans on capturing weekend hiking and birding trips as Learning Opportunities including considering the planning of those trips as separate Learning Opportunities with their own Records. They plan on doing trips for all of the years of high school and decided that the best approach would be to create a new Learning Opportunity for each season.

Earl's plan, as of now, is to try to be ready to graduate high school in 3 years and either travel for year before going to college or to go to college a year early. Some of it will depend on how well they end up doing in the community college classes. That will probably give them a pretty good sense of how ready they are to handle college level classes.

As far as using Explore Widely and Dive Deeply, Earl plans on going deep in the areas of math, science, wildlife, and animals. That will allow them to develop the right skills, habits, and knowledge in this area and also be a good test if that direction is really where they want their life to head. It will be a good preparation for their long term goal of studying wildlife in college.

The Learning Opportunities that will be part of the Dive Deeply strategy will include high school classes, community college classes, internships, and self-directed projects.

At the same time, Earl will keep their mind open with an Explore Widely strategy. The banned books Learning Opportunity came to them in a flash when they ran across a story online. They would like to always have one or more self-directed Learning Opportunities going, even if they are just re-watching David Attenborough documentaries.

Not everyone will be as committed to planning out their Learning Journey like Earl. Even if you are not as organized, you can use long term goals to drive the places where you Dive Deeply.

College classes, internships, big projects, jobs, travel, are all examples of Learning Opportunities where you can Dive Deeply. If your long term goals include going to college or starting a business or learning a language or becoming proficient playing an instrument, that goal can help drive you to Dive Deeply.

Dive Deeply by Pursuing Signature Learning Opportunities

In the course of your Learning Journey you may complete certain Learning Opportunities that truly represent who you are and what you are capable of. It could be getting a major part in a community theater production, completing an internship at an architectural firm, publishing a short story in a literary magazine, producing a fashion show to raise money for a cause, passing a college algebra class, or making a documentary about your local skateboarding scene. Those are called Signature Learning Opportunities.

When someone asks you about your Learning Journey, those would be the first things to come to mind to brag about. They are kind of like the highlight reel or featured stories.

Signature Learning Opportunities are almost always places where you dive deeply. They are not only chances for you to practice and develop skills, they are places where you get a chance to utilize the skills and knowledge you have built up along the way.

You might be ready to tackle a Signature Learning Opportunity on the first day of your Learning Journey or you might build up to it and seek out Signature Learning Opportunities closer to the end of your Learning Journey. There is no right or wrong way to go about it. The important thing is that the Signature Learning Opportunity makes sense for you.

Think of it this way, this is your chance to do something to impress yourself. What is on your bucket list? What kind of activity makes you think, “I want to do that!” What kind of Learning Opportunity would you be excited to brag about?

Don't worry if you can't answer those questions yet. You might need to spend some time Exploring Widely before an idea for a Notable Learning Opportunity comes to you. That is normal. Sometimes a Signature Learning Opportunity presents itself to you when you aren't expecting. Be open to ideas and opportunities.

In the meantime, here is a list of Signature Learning Opportunity ideas that might help trigger something that makes sense for you.

- Become an Eagle Scout
- Take an on campus college class
- Hike the Appalachian Trail
- Write and record an album
- Put on a gallery show of your artwork
- Start a business
- Restore an old car
- Plant a garden
- Write a novel
- Give a public speech
- Learn to bake
- Volunteer with a local service project
- Run a half marathon
- Conduct original historical research on a local event or location
- Interview an expert in a field that interests you
- Design a costume
- Learn how to make furniture
- Start a live stream channel
- Make a short animated film

- Get a job
- Teach yourself how to ride a unicycle
- Perform stand-up comedy
- Teach a class or workshop
- Visit a National Park
- Create a family cook book
- Make an app
- Develop a daily habit of mindful meditation
- Help someone complete their own Notable Learning Opportunity
- Paint a mural
- Research your family tree
- Become fluent in another language
- Learn to weld
- Read every J.R.R. Tolkien book
- Do a project with someone from another country

Learning Opportunity Examples

This section is nothing more than a selection of examples of Learning Opportunities presented in the Who, What, When, Where, Why, How format and written from the point of view of the learner.

Maybe these examples can generate ideas in your mind about Learning Opportunities you could pursue.

Example 1 : Appreciating Jazz

WHO :: Me and my friend (and the jazz artists)

WHAT :: I explored content within Music, Music History, American History, Jazz, African American History, 20th Century Art. I did research. I practiced active and passive listening. I led and recorded a discussion with my friend.

WHEN :: It took a few months for this overall. I started out thinking that if I end up falling in love with Jazz maybe it will go on longer but I was willing to give it a bit of time to see if I could at least make an informed judgment about what I think about jazz. In the end I probably spent about 100 hours on it.

WHERE :: Lots of places. I listened both passively (in the background) and actively (like really concentrating on what is happening.)

WHY :: My friend and I were talking about what kind of music we like. At first we were like, “we like all kinds of music” and then we started listing the music we don’t like, “well ... I don’t like country.” We both started by saying that we don’t really like jazz and then we admitted that we really didn’t know much about jazz and maybe it is wrong to say that we “don’t like it” when in reality it is more like “we don’t get it.” So... we thought maybe we should give it a try. So we came up with a strategy to make an effort to understand and appreciate jazz and then we could decide if we liked it or not.

HOW :: We did a little bit of research on the history of jazz and found a few lists of the best jazz artists and performances and we came up with a weekly playlist and then we agreed to meet at the end of each week and discuss what we listened to. We also agreed that listening one time wouldn’t probably give us enough to make any judgements so we agreed that we would listen through each week’s playlist at least a few times and we would listen both actively and passively so that we could give it a chance. We decided to record our conversation on video and maybe later (probably not ... but maybe) we will edit it and put it up on Youtube.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING :: We captured our conversations on video and they are stored on Google Drive (we might put them on Youtube eventually). We also wrote evaluations for each other based on our contributions to the project and also our interpretations of each other’s taste in music. We did a little list at the end of the evaluation that said things like, Jazz artist that ____ would most want to hang with and Jazz track that ____ would play on a sad, rainy day. We have like 25 of those statements. Then we guessed how the other person would answer. That is included on the Google Drive along with the videos. Finally, I also did a Reflection on the whole Learning Opportunity.

Looking at this example we can see that it initially comes from a Explore Widely approach. This person admits that they don’t know enough about jazz to make a determination about its value and strategizes a way to expose themselves to jazz. That is very much an Explore Widely type of approach.

Thinking a little deeper about this approach we can also see how this person is consciously incorporating some Dive Deeply concepts. By forcing themselves to listen multiple times and come together to discuss their thoughts, they are going a little bit deeper. You could imagine that this project could lead into something bigger. For example, they could use the same strategy for other genre of music, classical, opera, country, world music, etc. Each individual genre of music would be done in an Explore Widely approach but overall, the concept of a regular program of developing an appreciation of various genre of music is a Dive Deeply strategy. They would be developing skills of research, listening, analysis, communication. They would also be developing habits that could go beyond music. The habit of holding off judgment until you have some deeper understanding and appreciation is applicable and valuable in ways that go well beyond this single learning opportunity related to jazz.

The same type of approach could be taken for films, books, poetry, dance. In some ways it could be adapted and extended into a lot of topics. So, if this person found value in this approach to learning, this could point to future learning that combines Explore Widely and Dive Deeply.

If you notice, this all started with a conversation with friends. There wasn't a grand plan to find a way to learn about jazz. It was created organically because the person was open to following their curiosity and interests and even challenging their own opinions.

A lesson to learn, sometimes good ideas come out of nowhere, be open to them.

Example 2 : Learning How to do Hand Lettering with an Online Class

WHO :: Me (and the instructor of the class)

WHAT :: Video lessons on how to do hand lettering for invitations, signs, illustrations, etc.

WHEN :: There was almost 2 hours worth of lessons in total. They were presented as short 10 - 20 minute videos. I also spent a few hours practicing after each lesson. It ended up being about 20 hours of my time total spread over three weeks.

WHERE :: The lessons were online and I watched them in my bedroom and I did all of the practice exercises in my bedroom, too.

WHY :: I do a lot of art. Mainly drawing characters. Some are characters that are in videogames and anime and some are original characters. My mom suggested I check out a website that offers video training classes in various art forms. She thought I would want to do the character drawing classes but I looked through all the different stuff they offered and I decided that the hand lettering class sounded kind of interesting. If I am being honest, I'm pretty self-taught on character drawing and I kind of want to keep it that way (at least for now). I have my own technique and I do the characters just for fun and I'm not ready to really develop the "right" technique just yet. Maybe one day. When I saw the hand lettering, first I really liked the first sample that the instructor posted. It just looked cool and I thought I wouldn't mind knowing how to do that. And then I thought maybe I could learn how to hand letter stuff and make gifts for family and friends or something. It turns out that I am not too bad at it (at least so far) although I still have a ways to go to get good enough to feel comfortable giving them away as gifts.

HOW :: I am following a class on a website that has a lot of "how-to" videos for art skills. It isn't really a class. More like a bunch of videos on a topic and then some assignments to go along with the videos. You can upload your assignments and the instructor will give you feedback but it isn't required. I didn't think I was going to upload anything but I ended up posting mine and I got some very positive feedback. That was nice.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING :: I have all of the assignments that were required in this class and I have scanned them in. If I end up continuing to make hand lettered art as gifts or something, I will try to remember to keep scanning them in so that I can see my progress over time.

In this second example we can see them make a very deliberate choice to Explore Widely instead of Dive Deeply. When presented with an opportunity to learn more about art skills they decided to learn about something new instead of furthering skills that they already had. There is nothing wrong with that choice. Reading the learner's Why response helps us understand that this choice has its reasons and even holds open a few ways that they can Dive Deeply on the same topic in the future.

It is possible they will go from this Learning Opportunity into another in which they concentrate on developing their hand lettering skills to the point where they can make gifts or products. Perhaps in the future they will focus on using this newly developed skill to start a business or offer their services in the community. Or maybe they will return to character drawing and elect to follow the format of the website to develop and build up their skills in character drawing.

This Learning Opportunity started with a suggestion from a mom. Sometimes our family and friends have ideas for us. As in this case, the idea might not be perfect but it still served as a good starting point. When your friends and family know you are on a Learning Journey they might be excited to share ideas of what you can do next. Their ideas might be great or might be terrible. You should still be at least a little bit open to suggestions.

Sometimes the kernel of a good idea is in there if you are willing to pull it out.

Example 3 : The Woodfield Neighborhood Community Garden

WHO :: The community garden is a bunch of people from this area of the city who get together to run a garden. It is led by Margot who has been leading this project for a long time. She helped me get set up. I also had a small team that I usually worked with. Sometimes I worked with other people, too. They are just regular people who volunteer at the garden. Most of them are a lot older than me (although I never really asked anyone their age.)

WHAT :: It is a garden near my house that grows vegetables and flowers. It is run by volunteers who want to work in the garden. We have a small booth that we sell flowers and vegetables to the public and that money goes into buying stuff to keep the garden going. We also donate some of what we grow (although I wasn't involved in any of that stuff, I just worked in the garden.)

WHEN :: I signed up for two days a week for 3 hour shifts. I ended up coming a little bit more than that though. I think I ended up spending about 100 hours total from the early Spring until the Fall. I skipped a few shifts here and there when the weather was bad.

WHERE :: It all took place outside at the garden. I was able to ride my bike there.

WHY :: I was at the Farmer's Market with my friend and her family. We walked passed a booth where they were asking for volunteers to join the community garden. We looked at each other and said, "we should sign up." I thought it would be a good excuse to get out of the house and it was close enough that I could ride my bike there. Neither of us had ever done gardening before but maybe we were inspired by all the flowers and vegetables and berries at the Farmer's Market. In the end, my friend didn't end up doing any volunteering at the community garden. She does serious violin lessons and I think it was going to take up too much of her time to do the garden. It doesn't really matter though. I made some new friends (even if

they are closer in age to my grandparents than to me.) We still had a lot of fun together and I'm really glad I signed up for it.

HOW :: It is very much hands-on learning. You show up and they give you shovels and stuff and show you some basic stuff like weeding and watering. But mainly it is just you and a small team working together on a section of the garden for a few hours. The cool part is that it isn't just about gardening. I learned a lot about the people I worked with. I loved listening to their stories and asking them questions about what it was like when they grew up. They are really funny and have some crazy stories about what it used to be like in this town.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING :: Each time I did a shift I took a few photos of us working and the progress of our plantings and stuff. I also took lots of selfies with my new friends.

Once again we can see a Learning Opportunity that came about because the person was open to having a new experience. Even though it started out as a shared experience with a friend, it ended up becoming something else. They demonstrated confidence and autonomy by continuing on with the Learning Opportunity after their friend dropped out. It is also a good example of finding connectedness as the experience was not only connected to a garden in their neighborhood but also introduced them to a whole group of people and stories about their hometown.

Example 4 : Business Law Class

SUMMARY :: I signed up for a basic Business Law class at my local high school.

WHO :: I took the class along with other high school students. It was taught by a teacher from the high school. We also had a few guest speakers from local businesses. Each student learned the same material. We had one group project where I worked closely with three other students to write a case study.

WHAT :: The content of the class included subjects like Business, Law, Government, Entrepreneurship. It required skills like reading, written communication, verbal communication, summarization, project management, test taking, time management, memorization and recall. It required habits like developing social connections, managing a group project, patience and perseverance, and seeing myself as a work in progress and continuously growing.

WHEN :: The class took place three days a week (Mon, Wed, Fri) for an hour each day. It lasted one semester (4 months). It was a total of around 100 hours.

WHERE :: The class was at my local high school in a 3rd floor classroom.

WHY :: I am interested in maybe majoring in Business in college and I wanted to take this class to get an idea of what it might mean to study Business in a classroom setting. I am also hoping to start my own business soon and I thought maybe I could use this class to learn about some of the business laws that might apply to me starting a small business as a teenager. I was hoping to talk to the teacher and see if they can provide me some guidance in starting my own business but it never happened. I kind of chickened out. The class was mainly related to two goals. 1. Majoring in Business and 2. Starting my own Business.

HOW :: This was a teacher-led class and so the teacher really dictated that. There were readings and homework to do. The teacher lectured each class, we took notes and then we were quizzed on our notes once a week. There was one group project during the term. For the group project we wrote up a case

study. There were also exams at the end of each unit. I also completed an individual project. I am going to record that project as its own Learning Opportunity.

Example 5 : Volleyball Team

SUMMARY :: I played volleyball on a youth community volleyball team at a nearby gym.

WHO :: There was a coach and an assistant coach. There was also my teammates. Finally there were the fans, the officials, and the other teams we played.

WHAT :: The content for this Learning Opportunity is sports, exercise, volleyball, community. It required developing volleyball skills, getting in better condition, being a good teammate, listening. It required habits like developing social connections, deliberate practice, patience and perseverance, and seeing myself as a work in progress and continuously growing.

WHEN :: We practiced two nights a week and then had games on the weekends. It started in September and ended in November. It was a total of about 125 hours.

WHERE :: We practiced and played games at the local gym down the street from my house. We also played some tournaments in nearby towns. We had one tournament that we drove 3 hours to get to.

WHY :: Even though I am not the best player on the team, I loved playing volleyball. I loved just hitting the ball around. But I also enjoyed hanging out with my teammates and being a part of a team. The games make me nervous but I still like having all the fans watching and cheering us on. I even kind of enjoyed when the other team's fans cheered from them. It is fun being a part of the game. I hope to keep getting better at it and keep playing because it is good exercise and I really do enjoy most parts of it.

HOW :: The coaches helped us with skills and strategy and sticking together as a team. My teammates helped keep me motivated. They also helped me with my skills. A few of my teammates are really good at giving me pointers and I learned a lot from them. I also learned by watching other players. It is mainly a “learn by doing” activity although we did have to read the rule book and complete a quiz at the start of practicing.

Example 6 : Moby Dick by Herman Melville

SUMMARY :: I read the book Moby Dick by Herman Melville

WHO :: I elected to read this book on my own so it was mostly me. But it was written by Herman Melville and so this Learning Opportunity wouldn't exist without him.

WHAT :: The content was American Literature, History, and Science. In addition to reading skills, I had to look up a few things (vocabulary and events and places) so it required some research skills, too. I had to use the habits of perseverance (some of the book dragged on) and being a situational learner (I read before bedtime and that helped me develop the habit of reading and honestly helped me sleep). I also used the habit of seeking out help since my mom had read the book, she helped me understand a few things in it. I also demonstrated self-discipline. I told myself I wanted to finish it (as a challenge) and I held myself to that.

WHEN :: I made a habit of reading each night before bedtime. It took me a few months (probably about 25 hours to finish it).

WHERE :: I mainly read it in my bed at night. But near the end, when I wanted to finish, I took it with me and read when I had down time.

WHY :: I saw the book on my bookshelf (thanks mom) and I had heard of it. So I was a little bit curious since it is a known "Classic". It seemed kind of thick and a bit intimidating. I thought I might be up to the challenge.

HOW :: Mainly just reading on my own. I selected the book. I held myself to account for finishing it. Maybe it helped that I told my mom I was going to finish it (she didn't think I would) and I took that as a bit of a challenge.

Example 7 : Internship with City Council

WHO :: Me and the members of the City Council.

WHAT :: I did a semester internship with my local City Council. I spent two afternoons a week at the City Council office helping around the office with various chores like answering phone calls, filing stuff, making copies, helping make Powerpoint slides, troubleshooting computer problems. I also attended all of the council meetings for that semester. I also had lunch with each of the members of City Council at one point or another and they asked me a bunch of questions and answered any questions I had. I suppose the content of this Learning Opportunity would be Government but it also covered things like community service, law, business, communication, problem solving. I developed some office skills and had to be professional.

WHEN :: I did it from late August to late December. It was two afternoons a week plus lunches and council meetings. I didn't have to do too much outside of the time I was there. In total it was around 100 hours.

WHERE :: It mainly took place at the city government building.

WHY :: I have been kinda into politics for that past couple of years and I was looking for a way to get some real world experience. I follow national politics but I figured it would be hard to do an internship in Washington DC but it might not be impossible to do one here in my hometown. They didn't have anything listed on the website about it but I called up and asked if they took on interns. They told me that they typically had college student interns but if I was serious they would be willing to have a younger person as an intern (unpaid of course). Everyone told me that I was more mature and professional than many of their college student interns. I'm not sure if they were just saying that to make me feel good but I'll take it.

HOW :: It was an in person, unpaid internship. I didn't have to write a report and I didn't get a grade but a couple of city council members said they would write a letter of recommendation for me for college. I wrote a Reflection on my experience.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING :: I wrote a Reflection about my experience. I also have two letters of recommendations, so far, from city council members that I have digitized.

This example is a Dive Deeply strategy. The learner wanted an experience that built upon their interest in politics and brought it into the real world. The learner had to have some initiative to secure the internship and some willingness for it to be a bust, given that they didn't typically do internships for younger students there was a chance it wasn't going to be valuable.

The learner's interest or passion for politics drove this Learning Opportunity. Without that motivation it is unlikely they would have made a cold call after not finding internship information on the city council

website. As is often true with Dive Deeply, this Learning Opportunity will probably end up serving as a very important moment in this Learning Journey. It is an experience that can be a highlight of your story as a Signature Learning Opportunity, it could produce a good example of this person's interests which will serve as a guide for where to go with the next stage of their life and help communicate that fact to college admissions. In addition it provided letters of recommendation from public officials which will tell more of a story than a good grade in a traditional government class.

This person is using their interests and passions to drive the path of their Learning Journey. They had an idea of the type of experience they wanted to have and they found a way to make it happen even if it required taking a small chance.

The Interview as a Learning Opportunity

One of the simplest ways to learn about something is to sit down with another person and ask them questions. There is a reason that radio, television, magazines, podcasts, and newspapers rely on interviews. They work. There is something about humans in dialog with each other that captures our attention.

It seems like we should be able to take advantage of such a useful technique. Here are a few ways that you can use interviews in your Learning Journey.

The Information Interview

If you are interested in finding out about a particular career, business, organization, or field, do a little research, find a person that seems interesting, and reach out and request an informational interview. It might sound strange but an informational interview is actually a thing. It is understood to be an informal request for a short conversation to learn more about a company, organization, or career field.

Most people don't like reaching out to someone they don't know. It is referred to as a "cold call" and many people dread them. Don't be embarrassed if this gives you a bit of unease. Here are a few strategies to make it slightly easier:

Start with someone you might have a connection with. Someone your family knows. Someone who goes to your church or lives in your neighborhood.

Give them an out. It is sometimes easier to get to a "yes" when you give them an easy way out. Say something like, "If you are not available, can you suggest someone else that I could speak with." Even if they say no, they might connect you with someone else.

Start with an email and follow up with a phone call. If you start with an email you can introduce the idea of an informational interview and then later follow up with a phone call and reference your email. "I am following up on an email I sent last week about setting up an informational interview."

Let them know that you aren't looking for a job, selling anything or asking for a favor, you just want to learn more about their business or industry or field. Also make sure they understand that you are a student.

Ask for 15 or 20 minutes. Most people will find it easier to fit in a 20 minute time slot rather than an hour.

An informational interview is usually designed to allow you to learn some of the ins and outs of a career or job. It is assumed that you will come with some questions in mind but also be prepared to allow it to go in directions that the other person takes it.

Before you start, do some research about the person you are interviewing. If possible find out a little bit about their background and use that in your questioning. Don't be afraid to tell them a little bit about yourself and what you are interested in learning about. Remember, people like helping out younger people. Don't be surprised if they have advice, recommendations, and warnings for you.

The Research Interview

Another type of interview you can implement in your Learning Journey is seeking help with research questions. In this type of interview you are reaching out to an expert and asking for their help in understanding a topic. This could be a professional, an academic, or even a hobbyist.

While the informational interview was about a career or industry, the research interview is about a content topic. Perhaps you are writing a paper, creating a podcast, giving a presentation, or just learning about a topic. One of the sources you can use is an expert in the field.

Like the informational interview, it can be intimidating to reach out to an expert to ask some questions. Don't be surprised if they are more than happy to answer your questions. Especially if you have interesting questions to ask.

The Peer Interview

A few chapters ago we talked about Evidence of Learning. If you remember, Evidence of Learning is what is left over at the end of a Learning Opportunity. It might be an activity log, an essay, a video, a reflection, or any of a number of other tangible, sharable items that can be used to represent your learning. Ideally this Evidence of Learning is more than just proof of what you did, it should also contribute to making the Learning Opportunity deeper and more meaningful.

One way of capturing Evidence of Learning for a Learning Opportunity is to arrange a Peer Interview. While you might be able to Google "Informational Interview" and find lots of examples and advice, the Peer Interview is kind of our own concept. Googling it might not help.

A Peer Interview is when you find a partner who is willing to ask you some questions about your Learning Opportunity. The Peer can be a friend, a classmate, a family member, a teacher, or anyone willing to help you out by playing the role of "the interviewer" to your role as "the expert".

Let's imagine a Peer Interview about a book you just finished reading. Remember reading a book is a good example of a Learning Opportunity that doesn't naturally leave behind any Evidence of Learning. Your partner, the interviewer, in the Peer Interview is going to ask you, the expert, about your book.

Interviewer: I understand that you just completed a book. Can you tell me a little bit about it?

You: Yes, that's true. I've been reading it for a couple of weeks and I just finished this week. It is a book about a woman who studies Mountain Gorillas in Africa and details the dangers and difficulties they face.

Interviewer: That sounds interesting. What made you want to read this book in the first place?

You: Well, I've always been interested in apes ever since I went to the zoo when I was little and I saw a chimpanzee exhibit. It's been a topic that I dive into now and again. When I saw this book, I thought it might be pretty interesting.

Interviewer: And was it?

You: Totally. I mean I think I am even more interested today than even when I was a kid. I mean she studies them in the wild and spends hours and days at a time with them. You really get a sense of how they live. But it also goes into the politics and economics of the region and how that impacts their survival. It's something I never would have thought about looking at them at the zoo.

The Peer Interview is a conversation between peers. It isn't a test or an essay. It isn't meant to demonstrate your expertise as much as it is meant to allow you to have a meaningful conversation about what you just learned. It should flow kind of naturally. Hopefully your partner takes an interest in what you are saying and asks questions out of curiosity and interest rather than obligation.

The Peer Interview can be used for a wide variety of Learning Opportunities whether they naturally produce Evidence of Learning or not. It is an easy and effective way of capturing your thoughts. The interview can be recorded as audio, video, or transcribed to text.

The Reflection Interview

The Peer Interview can be applied to capturing Reflections as well. A Reflection Interview takes the same approach to Reflecting but instead of writing down your thoughts, it is captured in a conversation with a peer. Just like in the Peer Interview, the interviewer can be a friend, classmate, family member, or anyone else who is willing to play the role of interviewer.

While the Peer Interview might be more focused on capturing the content of your Learning Opportunity, the Reflection Interview is focused on capturing your thoughts about the experience of the Learning Opportunity. Why you chose it, what worked, what challenges you faced, what you plan on pursuing next.

Of course, nothing is stopping you from combining the Peer Interview and Reflection Interview into a single Evidence of Learning.

The Self Interview

If you are having trouble finding a partner to do a Peer or Reflection Interview, you can always interview yourself. This might sound silly on the surface but there is actually a tradition of the self-interview. Literary and artistic luminaries such as Vladimir Nabokov, Oscar Wilde, Truman Capote, Glenn Gould, and Philip Roth were known to conduct self-interviews.

In the Self Interview you will be playing the role of the interviewer and the subject. That gives you great latitude in ensuring that you ask the right questions. But it doesn't mean you have to go easy on yourself. Feel free to play the role of interviewer as antagonistically as you like.

It is easy to conduct a self interview using text but you could also get creative and interview yourself over audio or video.

Telling Your Story for College Admissions

When you are the audience for your story, you are free to tell it anyway you like but if you are telling your story for a job or college admissions, you might need to make sure it is structured in a way that communicates to your audience.

So let's examine what colleges are looking for when they are admitting new students to their campuses. We don't have to examine every single college or look at their individual requirements, instead we can put ourselves in their position and we can come up with a much broader strategy that is usable for almost any college.

On some level, colleges need to figure out the answer to two big questions ...

“Will you be successful at our school?”

“Are you and this school a good match?”

That is it, mainly.

Sure there are details we are skipping but if you just concentrate on having a good answer for those two questions you will be in good shape.

Colleges are investing in you. They have to decide whether you are worth the investment of their time, their open slot, the commitment they will need to make in you. Their investment in you pays off if you stay for four years (or more) and graduate. For the college, getting you to graduation day is their biggest goal.

They need some confidence that you are capable of graduating. Graduating means that you will need to be successful in and out of class. It means that you will be able to handle the full college environment, that includes being successful in the classroom, fitting in to the cultural of the school, adapting to the change of place, being to handle the financial cost of school, and having the capability of solving your own problems and seeking out help when you need it.

Colleges recognize that getting good grades is only a piece of the puzzle. Success in college requires a broad skill set. Luckily, a Learning Journey is a good way to prepare yourself for success in college.

The second big question has to do with being a good match.

Even if you are capable to being successful, is it the right place for you? Does the college have the kind of programs you are interested in? Will you fit into the college culture? Will you contribute to the college community? Does this college make sense for the next stage of your Learning Journey?

The truth is that you are investing heavily in them, too. You also have to decide if this is a good investment of your time, energy, and money. You should also want to know if you will be successful at this school. You should also want to know if this school is a good match for you.

It sounds kind of simple right?

Let's start with the first one. Being a successful student.

Demonstrating You Can Be Successful

Can you demonstrate that you can be successful at this college?

You can answer this question in a lot of ways.

Traditionally, one approach a college will take, will be to examine the classes you took, your grade in those classes plus your score on standardized tests.

Numbers can lie. Numbers can tell an incomplete story.

Colleges know that numbers don't tell them everything but sometimes it is the only thing they have to go on.

If you have these kind of numbers, you can use them. There is nothing wrong if you want to share numbers as part of your story.

Maybe you took some classes at a community college or a university and received good grades. That can help show that you are capable of working at the college level. It shows you can be successful in the classroom.

Maybe you have good scores on standardized tests like the SAT or ACT? That can be a part of your story, too. A college admissions counselor might interpret good scores on a standardized test as evidence that you can be successful in the classroom.

But we know that numbers don't tell the whole story. And we know that being successful can be measured in other ways. So whether or not you have numbers to share, there are many other ways to tell your story and show that you can be successful in and out of the classroom.

Maybe your story can demonstrate success because you showed you can overcome obstacles. College is going to be full of unexpected obstacles. Being able to demonstrate that you can adapt, change, adjust, improvise, and persevere is a powerful way to show that you will be successful. It is a story that numbers can't fully tell.

Maybe your story can demonstrate success because you showed you are willing to take chances and challenge yourself. Being successful in college is not about just following a checklist, it requires you to push yourself and challenge yourself. Telling a story that includes evidence that you are not afraid to push yourself is a way of demonstrating that you can be successful.

Success in college requires a bit of confidence. Confidence means knowing yourself, knowing your strengths, knowing when you need to seek out help, knowing what you are capable of. It is hard to demonstrate confidence with numbers. It is much easier to do it with your story.

Successful students don't do it alone. They have communities of support. Colleges know that the most successful students are those that are engaged with others. Can you demonstrate that you will be a successful college student by telling a story about your engagement with various communities of support? Can you show the way that you connected with co-learners, teachers, advisors, parents, friends? The story is yours but it probably includes a bunch of other people. Telling that story is a good way of showing that you will be a successful student at college.

Successful students learn outside the classroom. A lot of what you will learn in college will be outside of the classroom. Can your story demonstrate a learner who doesn't need a formal classroom or teacher to engage with the world? Travel, internships, jobs, volunteering, real world projects, independent research,

creating/doing/discovering, these are ways to show that you can be successful in more ways than taking a quiz and following a syllabus.

Successful students have goals and find ways to reach them. But really successful students understand that goals can change. Sometimes reaching a goal might require you to adapt and adjust. Your story can demonstrate that you have experience working towards goals. It probably also includes plenty of times that you had to make adjustments. Your story doesn't need to be a straight line. Most people's life stories are full of unexpected turns, changes of heart, and finding new opportunities. You can demonstrate that you know how to live life as a journey. Colleges know that students change majors, discover new life goals, and encounter unexpected obstacles in the course of their studies. Your story can show that you already know how to do that.

Success in college is more than a numbers game.

By telling your story you are already demonstrating that you understand there are many paths to success and many obstacles to overcome. You are demonstrating that you know that it isn't a numbers game. It is a complex, complicated, adventurous journey. The first step in demonstrating that you can be successful is demonstrating that you understand what success means.

Demonstrating That You are a Match

Can you demonstrate that you are a match for this particular college?

The second question you need to answer for the college you are applying to is, are you a good match? Are you, as a person, a good match for them? Are they, as an institution, a good match for you?

It sounds kind of simple but it is an important question for them. It is also an important question for you.

Even if you can demonstrate that you can be successful as a student, they still need to know if it makes sense for you to be a student at this particular school.

Do they have the programs and majors that you want to study?

Is the location and type of school (private/public, large/small, competitive/open, traditional/non-traditional) a match?

Do they have the type of campus, facilities, faculty, extra curriculars, reputation that is a match for your goals and interests?

Do you have any personal experience with this college (you took a class here, you have a relative who is an alumnus, you have visited, you have done your research)?

Do you understand the history, reputation, personality, vision, goals of this college? And do they match your own values and goals?

Are you someone who is going to contribute to making the college a better place? Will you engage with the community? Will you seek out ways to give back? Will you fit in?

For the college, this is a hard question to figure out. The typical numbers like grade point average and standardized tests that they might use to decide if you will be successful don't really tell them much about whether you are a good match.

They can look at your extra curricular activities, what clubs you joined, what leadership opportunities you participated in, what sports you played. They can also read your essay and see if you say the right things. They might have to rely on things that don't typically show up on your school transcript.

Today's students and families have learned how to game their extra curriculars and how to craft an essay to say the right things. Students might participate in clubs or volunteer at a not for profit out of a desire to show off for a college not out of true interest or passion.

You will have an advantage because you will have gone on a Learning Journey and have a story to tell about it. Your story will be much harder to game. Your story will not only help answer the question of whether you and the college are a match, your story will help you find a good match in the first place.

As you can probably tell from the questions above, finding a college that is a good match for you can be hard. There are a lot of things to consider. But you have been on a Learning Journey. You have experience making decisions about your Learning Opportunities, about Learning Widely and Learning Deeply, about what Evidence of Learning to capture, about where to go next.

You understand yourself as a learner. You know your strengths. You know how to seek out help. You know how to create your own Learning Opportunities. You know how to put yourself in the best position to be successful. That is what your Learning Journey was all about.

Finding a college that is a good match for you should feel like a natural part of your continuing Learning Journey. Telling a story that shows that you are a good match for that college should also feel like a natural part of telling your story.

At this point in the journey you should be able to say ...

Here is what I want to do next.

Here is why I want to do that.

Here is the evidence that shows why this next step makes sense.

Here is a place that will help me in the next step of my journey.

The question, "are you a match for us and are we a match for you?" should emerge naturally from your Learning Journey. It should flow from your story.

What Will Your Story Look Like?

Nuts and bolts. What is your story going to look like? How is it formatted? Is there a template?

Well ... everyone's story will look a little different. There aren't any hard and fast rules. Feel free to tell your story in a way that makes sense for you.

On the other hand, you might find it helpful to look at a format that you can use and adapt.

Whether your story will be in the form of an "official transcript" or as a supplemental to another "official transcript." You can use the following basic structure.

- Contact Information
- Overview of a Learning Journey and Why You Learned This Way
- Highlights of Your Learning Journey

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

- List of Completed Learning Opportunities
- List of Formal Learning Opportunities taken at a HS or College
- In Progress and Future Learning Opportunities
- Portfolio or Signature Learning Opportunities
- Overview of Your Future Plans and How Your Learning Journey Prepared You
- Graduation Date
- Signature

You will want to make sure there is a section of required information like your name, contact information, birthdate, graduation date (or expected graduation date).

It might be helpful to have an “Overview” section explaining a little bit about how you approached your high school years. Not everyone will be familiar with all of the ideas in this Field Guide so it might be helpful to explain what it means to be on a Learning Journey, the idea that you are working towards Autonomy, Competence, Confidence, and Connection, how the idea of a Learning Opportunity captures all the various ways you can decide to learn something, how your Learning Journey included Reflecting and capturing Evidence of Learning.

You can't exactly attach this entire Field Guide to your story but you can include some short explanations to give some context to how you approached your Learning Journey.

There are some templates below to help you.

Your story can include a section that you can think of as “Highlights of My Learning Journey”. This can include information about the personal goal(s) that drove your high school Learning Journey and your personal goals for your college Learning Journey. It can highlight any Signature Learning Opportunities and how they are reflections of who you are. This section can emphasize any Learning Opportunities or Evidence of Learning that helps tell the story you want tell. You can look to any Dive Deeply examples, specific demonstrations of Autonomy, Competence, Confidence, and Connection, or any Evidence of Learning that stands out to you as being good representations of who you are.

This section isn't meant to be comprehensive, it is meant to be the strongest ways you can answer the questions “will you be successful?” and “are you a good match?”

The next section is where you can be comprehensive. It will include a full listing of “Completed Learning Opportunities”. This will be more of a Explore Widely focus. It will list all of your Learning Opportunities including a title and brief description. You can organize these around any schema you think best tells the story you want to tell. You can organize them around their principle content area. You can organize them chronologically. You could organize them around How you learned. Even though this is a big list of Learning Opportunities, you can organize in a way that continues to tell a good story.

If you completed any Learning Opportunities at a formal institution like a college, high school, etc. You can list them under “Formal Learning Opportunities”. You will also want to send any official transcripts from these institutions. Listing these separately will indicate to them that there are other records to support these Learning Opportunities that they should be on the lookout for.

If you decided to collect any of your Evidence of Learning into a “Digital Portfolio”, you can link to it here or link to any Signature Learning Opportunities that you would like for them to review.

Finally, you can include the date for your expected graduation or the date on which you already graduated.

Finally you can include your name and signature. This is signaling to them that you are the responsible party who is telling this story.

Even with this structure, the reality is that your story doesn't look like a traditional transcript. Sometimes colleges might ask for an explanation or for more details. Don't take that to mean they won't read it carefully. They just might need to have some clarification.

Don't be surprised if some admissions counselors tell you that they enjoyed being able to have a more complete, holistic picture of you. They process a lot of traditional transcripts every year. Yours will be different. That is ok. It is probably to your advantage.

Translating Your Story

There is a chance you might have to translate your story to something that reads more like a traditional transcript. Many colleges and universities will gladly review a narrative transcript in the form of your story and be able to make an admissions decision on that alone. But if you are in a situation where it is necessary to make your story read more like a traditional transcript, here are some strategies you can use.

Hours to Credits and Credits to Hours

In traditional schools, a credit is a rough reflection of the number of hours you spent in a classroom. For high school that typically means that one high school credit is equivalent to a full year in a full-time classroom.

A class that meets 5 days a week for 50 minutes a day for a full year is 1 credit. So in some ways you can think of 1 credit = 1 year.

Some colleges might list a recommended pre-college high school program to potential students. They often represent it in years ...

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Social Studies
- 3 years of Math
- 3 years of Science
- That same list could be represented in credits4 credits of English
- 4 credits of Social Studies
- 3 credits of Math
- 3 credits of Science

That is how many high school programs will represent credits. If you only took 1 semester or $\frac{1}{2}$ year of a class, it would be called $\frac{1}{2}$ credit. So for high schools, a credit is usually equivalent to a year of a full time course.

Colleges on the other hand, and sorry if this is confusing but it just is the way it is, use a slightly different system. Colleges call them credit hours (or Carnegie Credits). They have a slightly different formula.

A college credit is a representation of the number of hours the course meets per week during a single semester. So a course that meets three times a week for 50 minutes per class is a 3 credit hour class. A course that meets two times a week for 100 minutes per class is a 4 credit hour class.

A college credit is something close to a measure of the hours per week that a semester long course meets.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

If you wanted to translate a college course into a high school course, you typically would say that a semester long college course (3 or 4 credit hours) is roughly equivalent to a year long high school course.

There are lots of details that we are going to skip over and this isn't true in every high school nor every college but to make our translation simple we will use a formula like this.

- 1 high school credit \approx 1 year of a high school course
- 3 college credit hours \approx 3 classroom hours per week of a semester long college course
- 3 or 4 college credit hours \approx 1 high school credit

You can see from this formula that credits are closely related to time. You can figure out the credits if you can figure out the amount of time spent in a classroom.

In the language this Field Guide, a high school or college credit tells you about When. In particular, it tells you how long something took. If you are describing a Learning Opportunity using When you are talking about things like when it started, when it stopped, total hours spent, what was the regular schedule, etc.

A high school or college credit doesn't say anything about Who, What, Where, Why, or How. It is mainly a measure of When.

So, if you captured information about When for your Learning Opportunity, you should be able to roughly translate that into credits.

If one of the things you captured was total hours spent or if you could estimate that number, you should be able to describe it using the language of credits.

Just remember, the most important thing is for you to take a Learning Journey, to Explore Widely, to Dive Deeply, to have a variety of types of Learning Opportunities. Not all of your Learning Opportunities will easily translate into a credit system. This translation is not going to be perfect.

For this part of the translation you are going to be paying attention to the total hours spent and then we will use a formula to calculate how that will translate into a high school credit system.

Let's think about some examples.

You read a non-fiction book about the Civil Rights movement in 20th Century United States. Total time spent reading and reflecting \approx 12 hours

You volunteered at a local animal shelter, wrote a Reflection, helped them setup a social media account, took photographs and created graphics for their new social media presence. Total time spent \approx 120 hours

You spent 30 minutes a day practicing drawing portraits every day for a month. Total time spent \approx 15 hours

You and a friend visited a local art museum and spent some time researching a few of the artists on display. You interviewed each other as a Reflection. Total time spent \approx 6 hours

You did a research project on your favorite historical building in your town. You combed through the local history section of the library, found old newspaper stories, a profile of the architect, historical photos, and advertisements for the previous tenants. You organized all of the information into a graphic poster and shared it with the current owner. They were impressed with your work and agreed to hang the poster near the checkout register. Total time spent \approx 80 hours

Since these Learning Opportunities don't exactly translate to "1 year of full time class" we will need to instead figure out what "1 year of a full time class" equals in "total time spent."

A typical high school class seems to run somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 to 160 hours. We will use 120 hours as a rough guide. Just remember that a typical high school class isn't necessarily 50 minutes of work. We can use 120 hours as a tool but not get too caught up in counting minutes exactly. A rough guide will work just fine.

We can roughly state that 1 year of a full time course \approx 120 hours of time spent

Using that guide we can come up with the following translation:

- Civil Right Book \approx 12 hours = .1 credits
- Animal Shelter \approx 120 hours = 1 credit
- Drawing Practice \approx 15 hours = .125 credits
- Art Museum \approx 6 hours = .05 credits
- Local Building Research \approx 80 hours = .67 credits

You can see that our credit numbers are going to include a fair number of decimal points or fractions. That's ok because our next step is going to add them up into a few limited categories.

What Content are Your Hours In?

When we talked about Explore Widely we mentioned that one approach is to consider academic subjects as a way of touching on a wide variety of topics. Most colleges are organized around academic subjects. They might have colleges or departments whose focus is Math or Science or Literature or Business or Engineering. There are many subtopics within those disciplines, African American History, Latin American Literature, Horticulture, Accounting, etc.

If we look at the five examples above we can come up with subtopics and academic subjects that describe those Learning Opportunities.

The truth is that a lot of the other What categories have as much or even more value overall than the content area but for the moment we are only going to focus on the content areas to make our point. In a minute we will bring in the other areas.

Just focusing on academic subject areas we can come up with the following...

- Civil Rights Book = History, American History, African American History, 20th Century History, Reading, Writing
- Animal Shelter = Animal Science, Business, Not for Profit, Graphic Design, Communication, Social Media, Photography, Art
- Drawing Practice = Art, Drawing
- Art Museum = Art History, Art
- Local Building Research = History, Local History, Architectural History, Graphic Design, Art

We can already see from this list that there are some overlaps in content area.

The Civil Rights Book, Art Museum, and Local Building Research all have a history element.

The Animal Shelter, Drawing Practice, Art Museum, and Local Building Research all mention art.

The Art Museum and the Local Building Research have both art and history in them.

In a traditional school a course is usually only officially in a single content area. It isn't usually both art and history. That doesn't entirely make sense. After all, most subjects overlap with other subjects. Why not acknowledge that?

We are going to slightly tweak our language to allow for the reality of cross-disciplinary learning. Instead of saying "4 credits of Social Studies". We will say "4 credits that involved Social Studies."

That little tweak will allow us to acknowledge credits that work across subject areas. From our examples we could say,

- ".82 credits that involved Social Studies."
- "1.8 credits that involved Art."

Here comes the fun part, because you are still in control of how you tell your story, you can tell a unique story even when you are translating it into more traditional language like credits.

- "1.8 credits that involved Art including 1.67 credits focused on Graphic Design."

Because you are in charge of telling your story, you can organize the information in such a way as to tell the story that you want to tell. Obviously you should tell a story that is true and accurate but it can still be a story structured in a way that makes it uniquely about you.

In our examples above, you can highlight a focus on Graphic Design and back it up with a record of how many credits you focused on Graphic Design.

So far we have only looked at a small number of credits. By the time you graduate you will have probably completed dozens and dozens of Learning Opportunities. If you did your work recording them and tagging them with Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How data, you should be able to tell a complex story that not only shows what subject areas you concentrated on but also How you learned, Who you learned with, Where you learned, and What habits, skills, and mindsets you focused on during your Learning Journey.

Not only will you have a narrative story to tell, but you will also have a story that can be told in the language of credits

Examples of “A Summary of a Learning Journey”

Here are a few examples of what a Summary of a Learning Journey could look like. This document would be your official transcript. Obviously the details of your own Summary will be specific to you.

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

SUMMARY OF A LEARNING JOURNEY

STUDENT: First_Name Middle_Initial Last_Name

DATE OF BIRTH: Month, Day, Year

EXPECTED DATE OF GRADUATION: Month Year

OVERVIEW

During my high school years I made a decision to go on a learning journey. The goal of my learning journey was to discover what the world had to offer and to find my place in it. My journey allowed me to make progress towards autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection. Each activity on a my learning journey, whether a class, a workshop, a self-directed project, a rabbit hole research, an internship, or a self-guided field trip is referred to below as a Learning Opportunity. Every Learning Opportunity represents a choice I made about what to learn, how to learn it, and who to learn it with. The requirement I gave myself was to Explore Widely and Dive Deeply.

HIGHLIGHTS

My overall goal during my Learning Journey was to discover what the world had to offer and to find a place where I could use my strengths and passions. This process wasn't always straight forward or predictable. I have always been interested in making art. I spent a lot of time during my high school years developing art techniques through formal and informal classes and through self-directed practice. I am not surprised that I still have a passion and interest in creating visual art. What surprised me was how interested I would become in history and different cultures. I came to realize that the sensibilities of an artist can go far beyond artistic techniques.

After a visit to a group of New York art museums, I returned to my community and designed a Learning Opportunity that involved me interviewing local working artists. This challenged me to get out of my comfort zone to reach out, schedule, and conduct interviews. What I learned from them went beyond my expectations. I expected to learn about picking an art school or learning the craft, instead I had conversations with interesting human beings who had a variety of life experiences and a variety of approaches to their work.

Combining this Learning Opportunity with learning about Japanese culture, history, and language, exploring the painful histories of genocide, and even a local history project about an old building in my community opened up my thinking about the world. I still see myself as “Thinking like an artist” but now my conception of what that means has become much larger.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

The following Learning Opportunities were self-designed and self-directed. The list includes independent research and projects, group projects with friends, travel and field trips with friends and family.

- ACT Prep - small group workshop
- Book Club - small group discussion
- Afro Futurism - research project
- League of Nations - small group role playing game
- World History - small group reading and discussion
- American Presidential History - research project
- Articles of Impeachment - research project
- Holocaust and Genocide History - research project
- Holocaust Museum Visit - travel/field trip
- Japan History and Culture - research project
- NYC Art Museum Tour - travel/field trips
- 21st Century American Art - research project
- Kitchen Chemistry - hands-on research and experiments
- Film Festival - small group film making challenge project
- Creative Writing - small group workshop
- Fear of Public Speaking - small group workshop to overcome our fear of public speaking
- PreAlgebra - self-paced, online
- Algebra - self-paced, online
- Geometry - self-paced, online
- Sandwich Squad - small group service project to benefit community shelter
- Tennis - small group activity

SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

I signed up for courses at my local high school to experience learning in a classroom setting and to spend some time with friends.

- American History - Central High School
- Photography - Central High School
- Theatre - Central High School
- Journalism - Central High School

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The following learning opportunities took place in my local community.

- Shrek Jr - Community Theatre Production
- Community Garden - volunteer service project
- Interviews with Working Artists - research interviews with working artists in my community
- Drawing Workshop - community class at the Springfield Art Museum
- Painting Workshop - community class at the Springfield Art Museum
- Aquarium Internship - summer internship with the Springfield Aquarium
- Concession Worker - summer job with the parks department
- History of 893 Oak Avenue - local history research project

COLLEGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of my overall learning journey I decided to challenge myself with college level coursework. This challenge allowed me to stretch my academic skills and also test whether learning in a college classroom fit my overall goals. I completed the following Learning Opportunities.

- Japanese 1 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A
- Japanese 2 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A
- American Literature - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade B
- Biology 1 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A

CURRENT AND FUTURE LEARNING PLAN

The following Learning Opportunities are ongoing or planned for the last few months of my high school learning journey.

- Japanese 3 - Ozarks Technical Community College, currently enrolled
- College Algebra - Ozarks Technical Community College, currently enrolled
- Japanese 4 - Ozarks Technical Community College, planned for spring 2023
- Illustration 1 - Ozarks Technical Community College, planned for spring 2023
- Book Club - Small group reading discussion. Ongoing
- Community Garden - Volunteer Service Project. Ongoing
- Art Practice - Self-directed art and illustration. Ongoing

GRADUATION

I expect to complete my high school learning journey by May 2023 and fulfill my stated goal of being prepared for entry into a four year college. I am ready for the challenge of continuing to work towards autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection at the college level.

In the next example, the same information is organized a little bit differently. Instead of organizing the Learning Opportunities around their method and location, the information is organized around traditional subject areas like Science, Math, and Language Arts.

The way you organize your "Summary of a Learning Journey" is up to you. There are not right or wrong answers. Just remember it is a summary. It should be somewhat short and easy to digest but you should use it to tell your story in a way that makes sense for you.

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

SUMMARY OF A LEARNING JOURNEY

STUDENT: First_Name Middle_Initial Last_Name

DATE OF BIRTH: Month, Day, Year

EXPECTED DATE OF GRADUATION: Month Year

OVERVIEW

During my high school years I made a decision to go on a learning journey. The goal of my learning journey was to discover what the world had to offer and to find my place in it. My journey allowed me to make progress towards autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection. Each activity on a my learning journey, whether a class, a workshop, a self-directed project, a rabbit hole research, an internship, or a self-guided field trip is referred to below as a Learning Opportunity. Every Learning

Opportunity represents a choice I made about what to learn, how to learn it, and who to learn it with. The requirement I gave myself was to Explore Widely and Dive Deeply.

HIGHLIGHTS

My overall goal during my Learning Journey was to discover what the world had to offer and to find a place where I could use my strengths and passions. This process wasn't always straight forward or predictable. I have always been interested in making art. I spent a lot of time during my high school years developing art techniques through formal and informal classes and through self-directed practice. I am not surprised that I still have a passion and interest in creating visual art. What surprised me was how interested I would become in history and different cultures. I came to realize that the sensibilities of an artist can go far beyond artistic techniques.

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Combining this Learning Opportunity with learning about Japanese culture, history, and language, exploring the painful histories of genocide, and even a local history project about an old building in my community opened up my thinking about the world. I still see myself as "Thinking like an artist" but now my conception of what that means has become much larger.

SCIENCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Kitchen Chemistry - hands-on research and experiments
- Biology 1 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A

MATH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- PreAlgebra - self-paced, online
- Algebra - self-paced, online
- Geometry - self-paced, online
- College Algebra - Ozarks Technical Community College, currently enrolled

LANGUAGE ARTS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Book Club - small group discussion
- Creative Writing - small group workshop
- Fear of Public Speaking - small group workshop to overcome our fear of public speaking
- Journalism - Central High School
- American Literature - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade B

SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- League of Nations - small group role playing game
- World History - small group reading and discussion
- American Presidential History - research project
- Articles of Impeachment - research project
- Holocaust and Genocide History - research project
- Holocaust Museum Visit - travel/field trip
- Japan History and Culture - research project
- American History - Central High School

- History of 893 Oak Avenue - local history research project

ARTS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Afro Futurism - research project
- NYC Art Museum Tour - travel/field trips
- 21st Century American Art - research project
- Film Festival - small group film making challenge project
- Photography - Central High School
- Theatre - Central High School
- Shrek Jr - Community Theatre Production
- Interviews with Working Artists - research interviews with working artists in my community
- Drawing Workshop - community class at the Springfield Art Museum
- Painting Workshop - community class at the Springfield Art Museum

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Japanese 1 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A
- Japanese 2 - Ozarks Technical Community College, Grade A
- Japanese 3 - Ozarks Technical Community College, currently enrolled
- Japanese 4 - Ozarks Technical Community College, planned for spring 2023

OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- ACT Prep - small group workshop
- Sandwich Squad - small group service project to benefit community shelter
- Tennis - small group activity
- Community Garden - volunteer service project
- Aquarium Internship - summer internship with the Springfield Aquarium
- Concession Worker - summer job with the parks department

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The following Learning Opportunities are ongoing or planned for the last few months of my high school learning journey.

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- Book Club - Small group reading discussion. Ongoing
- Community Garden - Volunteer Service Project. Ongoing
- Art Practice - Self-directed art and illustration. Ongoing

GRADUATION

I expect to complete my high school learning journey by May 2023 and fulfill my stated goal of being prepared for entry into a four year college. I am ready for the challenge of continuing to work towards autonomy, competence, confidence, and connection at the college level.

If you felt it was necessary, you could include the total number of hours spent per Learning Opportunity or per subject area. You could even convert those total hours to the equivalent in credit hours. In some cases, it might be important to do those translations.

A Field Guide to Your Learning Journey

Just be careful, if you go to great lengths to try and make your Learning Journey read like a traditional transcript you run the risk of losing what is unique and valuable about your journey. As far as college admissions go, most colleges will be glad to receive a transcript that tells a more complete and interesting story about you. Don't lose that advantage by trying to sound like everyone else. Lean into the uniqueness of your Learning Journey and you will also be leaning into your own uniqueness.