



# Don't Go Back to School: A Handbook for Learning Anything

*Kio Stark*

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## **Don't Go Back to School: A Handbook for Learning Anything** Kio Stark

Here is a radical truth: school doesn't have a monopoly on learning. More and more people are declining traditional education and college degrees. Instead they're getting the knowledge, training, and inspiration they need outside of the classroom. Drawing on extensive research and over 100 interviews with independent learners, Kio Stark offers the ultimate guide to learning without school. Don't Go Back to School provides models and methods for taking a new kind of path through learning, and transforming that alternative education into an exciting career path. This inspiring, practical guide provides concrete strategies and resources for getting started as an independent learner. If you're debating whether college, trade school, or independent learning will get you where you want to be, Don't Go Back to School is essential reading.

## **Don't Go Back to School: A Handbook for Learning Anything Details**

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## From Reader Review Don't Go Back to School: A Handbook for Learning Anything for online ebook

### Adnan says

I've always been a believer of life-long learning so not only did I enjoy the personal success stories in the book by self starters who've achieved in their respective domains without having to go to school for it, but it also gave me the proverbial kick to keep ploughing on in my area of interest. Highly recommended read.

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### Ng?c V? Th? says

t??ng t? quy?n 40 alternatives to college. ng??i nào mu?n gi?i ph?i có n?ng l?c t? h?c và s? ch? ??ng, sáng t?o trong vi?c tích l?y ki?n th?c

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### Billimarie says

backed this book on Kickstarter a while back and its been one of my favorite Kickstarter projects. very inspiring, some great interviews. pretty repetitive advice, which is good in a way because now we'll all know what's "tired and true" when it comes to independent learning. demographics are diversified in gender, not so much racially (if that matters to anyone besides me). overall i would recommend to others, just as an eye-opening alternative to institutionalized learning and as a cool reference for awesome stories about people's lives.

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### Mark Bao says

Not bad. This is a collection of short essays contributed by self-learners that talk about what they did. The actual essays themselves were somewhat lackluster, and I felt like they were missing the actual "how" people did their self-learning, like what kind of structure they used. It talked more about the "what" that they did. In addition, there were only two interviews with self-learned scientists, which was extremely disappointing.

Nonetheless, it was good to get a sense of structure for how to do self-learning. First is deciding whether you want to go for a knowledge-directed learning process or a project-directed learning process. Next, you decide whether you want to do a linear process of learning, like a textbook, or an associative process, which is more random. Then, get a community of people around you to support your learning, which is essential for learning itself as well as staying motivated. That's a good structure.

And to hear that these people were able to be independent learners and gain knowledge as well or even better than others, and go on to be successful in their fields—it's inspiring to hear that.

A few more gems:

- Independent learning != learning alone; just independent of schools. Independent learning is best done with others, and most of the people she interviewed talked about how important community and connections to

others was.

- Much as I suspected, the research suggests that intrinsic motivation leads to better learning.
  - You can get some of the same benefit of having professors by asking them specific questions or taking them out for lunch. Some will actually respond to this.
  - Self-learners have a different view of things than people who went through the traditional process, and thus are creative in a different way versus the traditional folks.
  - Read the fuck out of review articles.
  - Education, especially for art-based stuff, tries to teach unteachable things or things that are obvious that you could teach yourself.
  - To get access to people, a) work in the media, b) have something you can offer them, or c) both.
  - Know where to get access to people. Mailing lists are great for this.
  - Project-based learning lets you gain mastery \*and\* a feeling of competence/confidence at the same time. You need a "feedback loop that confirms your work is worth it and keeps you moving forward." (14)
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## Ellen Chisa says

I'm a little bit split on this book - I think it depends on who you are, how you learn, and what you're looking for (which actually completely agrees with the premise of the book!)

It's a really good start if you're looking to figure out how to teach yourself something for the first time. If you're looking for the practical, I'd start at the end (all the techniques) and then read all the anecdotes at the beginning to see how people applied them differently. Plus, then you can get to the end and re-read to see if you get something new out of it, or see the methods in a new light.

If you've already spent a lot of time thinking about education in formal and informal ways, you probably won't learn too much from the section at the end. It is a nice summary if you're looking for a refresher. The highlight is that case is really all the anecdotes about how different people have learned. Unexpectedly, I ended up being more fascinated with each of their individual areas than I did about the learning process - and kept hoping for more essays on every topic. In that way, it could be a catalyst for trying to learn something new in particular.

Plus it's a really nice, fun read that works well for short bursts (like being on the subway).

The reason I say I'm a bit split is that I finished the book and felt like I hadn't really started yet. I wanted a clearer "next step" (perhaps that's the linear learner coming out in me!) It could have come in advice about "well, how do I figure out what I want to learn?" because that's a big question on it's own. It could have come in some specific ways to reinforce what I'd just learned about learning, too. I haven't quite figured out what it was that was lacking, but I definitely got to the end and thought "okay, and?" (If you feel the same way and manage to put your finger on it better than I have, please let me know!)

ANYWAY. Despite my reservations with the end, I really enjoyed reading this. I think it will be a five-star experience if you haven't already spent tons of time on pedagogy, and refreshing/interesting if you have.

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## Tara Brabazon says

I am sick to bloody death of supposed consultants and self-appointed experts slamming schools and universities. This book is absolutely ridiculous. If the argument is to be believed, schools have failed.

Universities have failed. Qualifications are not longer required in the workplace. Self-directed learning can provide a guide through life, work and leisure.

There is only one problem. How do we know what we do not know?

There is some attention to MOOCs here. But this is such a disingenuous turn of argument. Public funding - public intellectuals - created the knowledge used in MOOCs. So - for example - my videos and podcasts have been used in MOOCs around the world. That is great. But the Australian and British taxpayer paid for my time to develop those resources. Supposedly 'entrepreneurial' startups did not.

Public education has value. It enables intellectual discipline and intellectual generosity. The time has come to value the history of education as much as the trajectory of digitization.

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### **John says**

This is a smart, smart book. While the target audience appears to be those who are on the fence about the value of college or grad school, I think the subtitle ("a handbook for learning anything") is closer to the mark. I'm one of those people who went to college and grad school, and I still find this to be filled with provocative ideas and practical suggestions.

It's dense, and I expect that I will go back to reread it more than once. That is not a bad thing, mind you -- it's actually very readable, and 'density' just refers to the sheer number of things for me to think about. I'm very impressed.

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### **Heriberto Cantú says**

So, in recent years I've been thinking and reading about education and learning. I'm on my last year at college and I've been incredibly disillusioned by the system and by my education. Every subject that I find incredibly interesting has been brutally murdered and butchered by my university. Making it as dull and as boring as intellectually possible. In contrast at work I'm constantly challenging myself to learn new things and more things that I thought I was able to. And there comes this book.

The best thing about this book is that you don't need my review. You can just read the book and hear my brain speaking through the author's words and through the interviewed.

That is all.

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### **Tara says**

Based on this: <http://www.brainpickings.org/index.ph...>

This looks so good! Even though I loved college, I am all about the self-learning...and I deeply believe that it's your responsibility, no matter your education, to learn how to teach yourself.

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## Jeremy Beasley says

I read this book a year ago and was reminded of this book after reading Karen Cheng's article on GOOD.is, "How to Become a Designer Without Going to Design School".

I revisited the book to use as inspiration for crafting a personal/professional development plan. I'm making a shift the focus in my career away from business/strategy and back to more technical and design. Very curious about how I could do this without having to go back to school.

After skimming through my scribbled annotations and highlights, I'm reminded how practical this book is. Full of tips to get your started and inspiring stories from others self-taught learners who have walked the path.

The only downside to the book (and all "self-help" books) is that there's no 100% guarantee of success. This is less of a criticism of the book and more a caution to readers. You won't find any "Top 5 Things to Do" lists or oversimplified philosophies.

If you're game to experiment and push yourself, then I highly recommend the book.

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## Betsy says

Nothing too surprising here, but still thoughtful enough to be helpful.

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## Hiep Le says

I was hoping for more structured theories about self learning. Instead, the author directly give us opinions of talented people who have gone through the education path without schools. While some conclusions I can make by myself, like most of independent learners have a curiosity for knowlegde, or people need a community to learn effectively, I think it would be better if the author can have some kind of anlysis or statistic on people she interviewed, saving me the time to find all the similarities and making comparisions between interviews.

One thing I learned is that there are many ways of learning, and we have to make experiments and find out which one is suitable for us.

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## Rosie Nguy?n says

Five star, because I'm an autodidact, and I'm into that area.

Initially I thought that I wouldn't learn anything new from this book since I already practiced my independent learning long enough. But it turned out that the author did a throughout research, digging deep and searching wide enough to include the profound ideas over a broad range of key areas. The great things are the summarized guideline of how to be an independent learner and the lists of resources to learn outside of school.

Reading the book, I feel like I'm among my peers and most of the ideas in it are relevant to my experience. I've gained more confidence and knowledge and reinforcement to step strongly on the path I chose.

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## **Girish says**

This book was ok. I'm not sure if I was the target audience (which seems like people on the fence about dropping mad resources to go to learn at an institution). This book felt mostly like a motivational poster about learning: "You can do it!"

The anecdotes were fun to read, and I like that this book exists. It seems to be another data point of the value drift towards self mastery and unschooling and learning beyond the walls of the ivory tower. I like its message that it's ok to learn on your own and that you're NOT giving up status points and stuff to do that. There wasn't much data to support this thesis, but I agree with the general arguments.

Sometimes Stark feels like she's being an iconoclast just for the same of being an iconoclast: for example, she harps on MOOCs as being shitty but her main criticism is that they don't have a good community of learners.

I liked Harper Reed's advice on contacting experts.

I'm not sure if people will get much actionable advice from this book, or if reading is is mostly an instance of confirmation bias. It's a fun read though, I just didn't find it very valuable.

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## **Huong Pham says**

Highly recommended book, especially for those who are about to embark on the self-taught road or just thinking of it.

An excellent practical book with real-life stories of autodidacts, useful how-to guides and sources for independent learning.

I would like to add some of my favorite websites as sources to learn and exchange knowledge:

- <https://www.quora.com/> : a question and answer website with unlimited topics and groups (You make it!)
  - <https://www.englishclub.com/>: learn English, make friends around the worlds...share to be shared ( You name it)
  - Google +: like Facebook, Twitter or other social networks (My priority)
  - <https://www.goodreads.com> : Should I mention it? :)
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