



HOW TO LEARN:

STRATEGIES FOR STARTING, PRACTICING & MASTERING
THE SKILLS
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

A SKILLSHARE CLASS
BY
MIKE BOYD

This class is taught by filmmaker and educational youtuber Mike Boyd. It is an experience-backed class on how to pick up a new skill, make effective progress, and avoid common pitfalls.

"For the last 3 years, I have been learning skills as quickly as possible...and over that time I have studied the learning process empirically. This class will take you through my findings, my practices and how to avoid difficulties I've struggled with on my learning journey."

MIKE'S METHOD TO LEARNING

1. Start immediately, as soon as the idea jumps into your head. Leave no time for backing out. You'll find you try more things this way, so rather than hesitating - jump right in!

2. Do very little background research on equipment or techniques beforehand. Sometimes you can find yourself put off if you look into it too much.

3. Always set a well-defined goal, clear concise and unambiguous. Having a clear goal means when you achieve it, there is no muddiness. You achieved this, you have a reason to celebrate!

4. Journal your progress. Whether it be in a book, filming yourself or taking photos. It will help you see your success and this will keep your morale and motivation levels high. It also allows you to recall the struggles you endured and makes the success even more rewarding, hopefully changing how you see struggle; it is no longer something that held you back but something you have overcome.

5. Stay disciplined and motivated with practice, this can be hard, especially when you are in the 'dip'. Use the 'practice smart' techniques to get you through this. (detailed later)

6. Embrace struggle as part of learning process

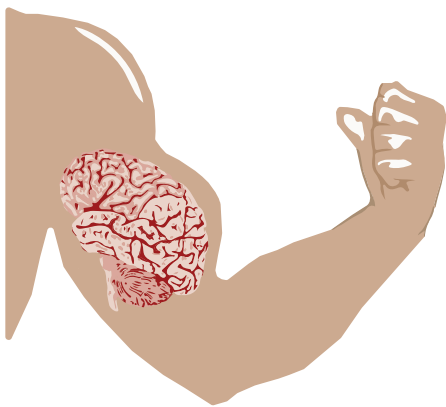
CALL TO ACTION:

Identify specifically what you' like to learn for your particular skill. Make it a tangible, bitesize chunk of the skill. For example, learning to play 3 chords on the guitar, or learning to write 1 simple programme in python.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND HOW OUR

BRAINS LEARN

The brain is much more analogous to a muscle than we previously thought. It can grow, change, adapt diminish and thrive throughout life.



If there is something you are not good at you can train and become better at it. You are not born with set skills, nor are you stuck with the abilities you currently have. You can work on new skills, train your body and mind to become better at... Anything you like.

"THE MIND IS NOT A VESSEL TO BE FILLED,
BUT A FIRE TO BE KINDLED".

Learning something new can be seen as training your brain. By learning new skills your brain is fitter and stronger and this fitness can be transferred into learning really important skills. This mindset can really help with how you approach and deal with struggle. Treating it as a hard day's training rather than a setback.

CALL TO ACTION:

Learn something that's fun but with no immediate obvious use. Do this just because it keeps you sharp. I recommend the Rubik's cube class (because it's my class!).

GETTING STARTED :

FINDING YOUR PASSION AND STARTING TO ACT

We are often told 'follow your passion' but that doesn't really help you if you don't yet have one. Passion is cultivated, you are not born with a passion. You need to work on it. It comes from trying lots of different things and then finally finding something that spikes your interest and you feel is worth investing your time in. Passion is something that needs to be uncovered and discovered.

You are not necessarily born with an inherent talent, but you can foster and kindle a passion and that passion can drive you to become an expert in your chosen field. You need to have an underlying interest to get you through the learning curve but the only way to find out if that is there and it's worth pouring your time into is by trying and quitting lots of different things. That's all part of finding and cultivating a passion.

CALL TO ACTION:

Try one of the classes you think you might like to learn. Just jump right in and get started. Don't hesitate any further. Maybe you won't enjoy it.

Don't feel bad about it. Feel free to try as many as you like.

Eventually, you will find something that really takes hold of you. And that's when you can really start making strides.

HOW TO PRACTICE SMART:

MAXIMISING THE EFFECT OF PRACTICE

GETTING STARTED.

One of the hardest things about practicing is finding the time. Carving out that hour from a busy schedule to sit down or go outside and put in a good practice session. I've found one of the easiest ways to get practice in with a busy schedule was really working it around your daily routine.

When I was learning to solve a Rubik's cube, I was able to squeeze in 15 minutes of practice just by having the cube at my desk. But sometimes, it's not that simple. You need to find a way that requires the minimum amount of change to your day. If you can do this; reduce the barriers to practice, you'll find yourself naturally practicing a lot more.

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE.

The pomodoro technique is about engaging in deliberate practice for 25 mins. Then taking a break for 3-5 minutes. This cycle should be repeated 4 times before taking a longer break of around 15-30 minutes.

It seems reasonable to take a break after some time, but more often than not, people tend to practice much longer than is productive. This is essentially just a waste of time. Our brains, just like muscles, get tired.

BLENDING FUN PRACTICE WITH DELIBERATE PRACTICE.

I've found, broadly speaking, there are two types of practice. Fun and deliberate. Fun practice is stuff you are comfortable doing; stuff you enjoy. Easy stuff. This is useful. You need to enjoy what you are doing, so ensure you have a lot of this "fun" time. However, practice can be accelerated hugely, when you blend fun time with deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is all the stuff you know works, but isn't so fun to do. Isolating weak areas, doing exercises, theory, focusing on what you suck at, repetition, deliberately making it difficult in order for you to expand your skill.

SELF DIAGNOSES.

We need to self diagnose issues. The technique is pretty easy. You have a problem, you want to solve it. You probably already have a pretty good idea of what is causing the issue. You have probably narrowed it down to one or two things. Isolate the issue, practice exclusively on that. Change one thing at a time. Monitor the results. Write them down. Did it work? Did it have a negative impact? Repeat this until you crack it.

CALL TO ACTION:

Next time you practice, try to practice smart using the techniques outlined in this class. It will not be as enjoyable as your usual practice. Try to get comfortable using this technique.

PUSHING THROUGH: THE LEARNING CURVE AND FRUSTRATION

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE DIP IS REAL.

IT HAPPENS.

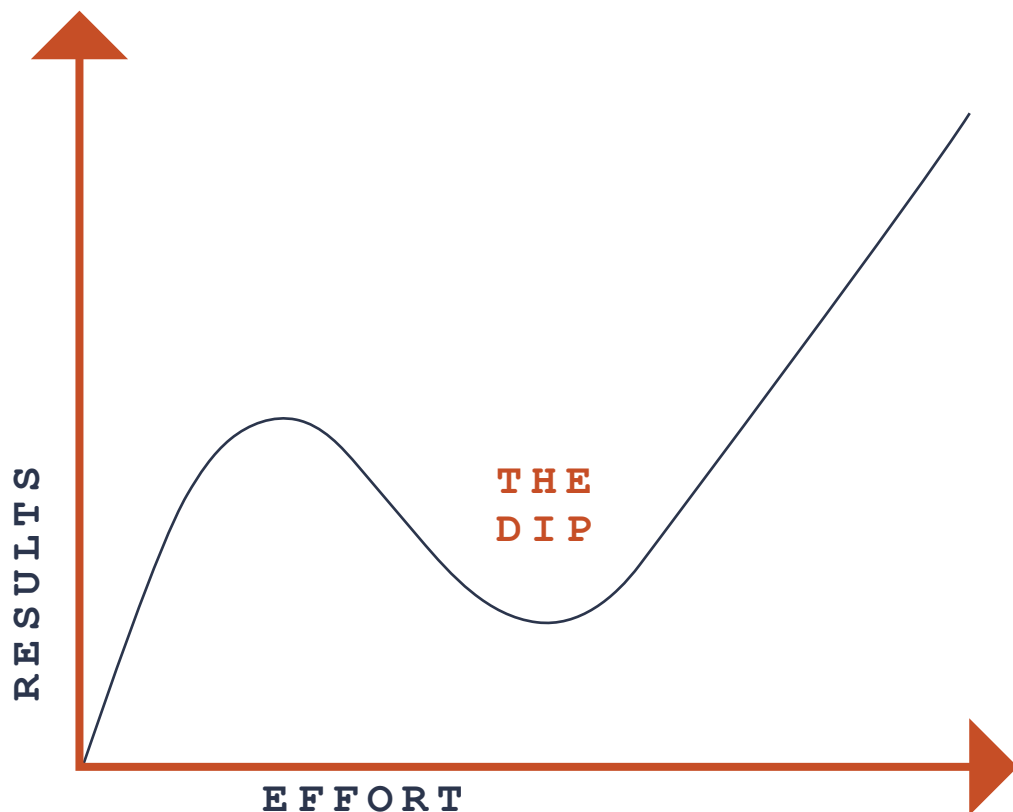
IT'S HAPPENING TO YOU WHEN YOU ARE FRUSTRATED.

YOU ARE IN THE DIP.

THIS IS THE **WORST** TIME FOR YOU WHEN YOU ARE LEARNING.

WHEN YOU ARE **MOST LIKELY** TO THROW IN THE TOWEL.

JUST KNOWING THAT YOU ARE IN THE DIP ALREADY, FOR ME,
MAKES IT MUCH MORE TOLERABLE TO EXIST THERE.



WE WANT TO MINIMIZE TIME SPENT IN THE DIP.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS I DO TO MAKE IT MORE
TOLERABLE BEING IN THE DIP.

1. Put into action the "practice smart" techniques.
2. Remember how we have fun practice and deliberate practice? Move the scale slightly towards fun practice, whilst still getting enough focused practice in.
3. Shorten sessions to avoid poor morale. Take a few days off and let your muscles or your mind do something else for a little while. You'll be amazed at how a cup of tea, a good night's sleep or even a few days off makes all the difference.
4. Understanding what is happening and that you are in the middle of the learning curve, not the end, is key.
5. Try to further split the skill into its component parts. Sometimes, little successes can be overshadowed by a sea of failures. Isolating components of the skill can make it clearer when you are improving at something, which will help boost morale until it all starts to come together.
6. Isolating issues can possibly shed light on what the issue is. Often it is something so simple that is holding your entire progress back.

CALL TO ACTION:

Next time you experience "the dip". Try to rationalize what is happening. Employ your "smart practice" techniques to reduce the time spent in this region of the learning curve.

SUCCESS

The best way to see success is when you clearly achieve a goal you have set earlier. Setting goals isn't easy though because it's usually the first thing you do. Before you begin learning any new skill, you will set a goal. However, missing the mark when setting goals can be problematic.

By setting overly ambitious goals, you may completely overlook many smaller successes. These smaller successes will become overshadowed by the enormous cloud of failure in trying to achieve an overly ambitious goal.

At the other end of the scale, goals must have some weight to them in order for you to enjoy success. No one wants to enjoy a hollow victory.

So we have this fine line to tread when setting goals in order to achieve success. Not too ambitious so that it's impossible, but not so easy so that it's not worthwhile.

The answer to this problem, is to pivot and refine goals as you progress. Rather than abandon your goals altogether, and aimlessly try to continue, my advice is to just shift the goal posts as you progress.

Don't be too proud to change, alter and redefine your aim as you learn more of the intricacies of your chosen field. To further that, don't be afraid to change direction entirely.

The aim here is to maximise your enjoyment, that dopamine hit you get from learning a new skill. Stubbornness with goals, whilst admirable, can cause you to consider your project as a failure, which can cause you to quit.

Always have a goal, but as you learn, feel free to pivot and refine, so that you can enjoy a well-deserved, achievable, success.

CALL TO ACTION:

Celebrate success next time and refine / pivot goals as you progress