

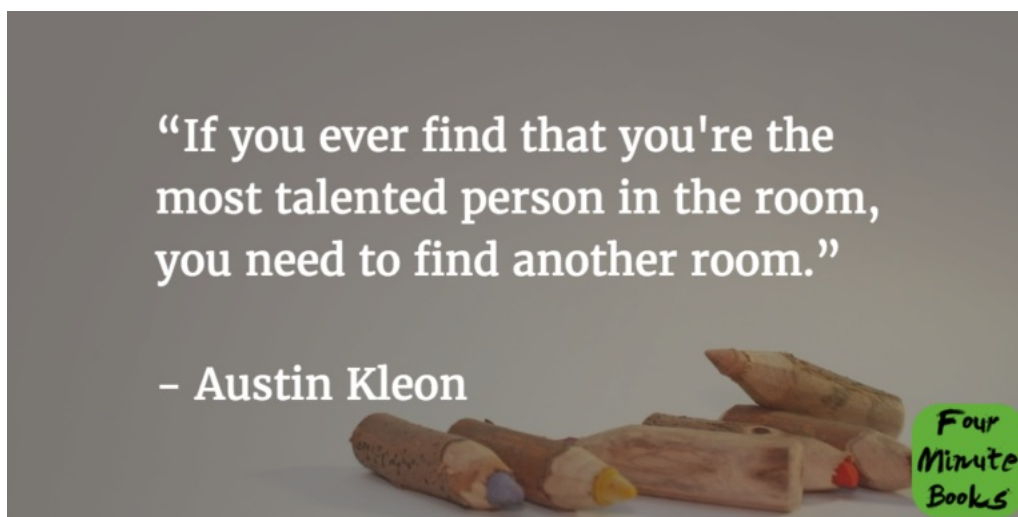
# Steal Like An Artist Summary

 [fourminutebooks.com/steal-like-an-artist-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/steal-like-an-artist-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Steal Like An Artist* gives you permission to copy your heroes' work and use it as a springboard to find your own, unique style, all while remembering to have fun, creating the right work environment for your art and letting neither criticism nor praise drive you off track.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



How many times have you heard this quote?

| *Good artists copy, great artists steal. ~Pablo Picasso*

While it's a very famous line, I doubt it's being used in the right context a lot. Picasso didn't literally steal other painters' work. He merely imitated his favorite artists a lot. So when your friend tells you this quote the next time you point out she just plain copied someone's homework, you can tell her that's not what Picasso meant.

But what *did* he mean? And why does it make sense for artists to imitate one another? That's what *Steal Like An Artist* is about. Austin Kleon is a writer who draws. He's written multiple New York Times bestsellers about the creative process of being an artist.

This one encourages you to not worry about being original and focus on getting started.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons:

1. Where you fail to imitate your favorite artists is where you'll find your own style.
2. If you're an artist, some procrastination is productive.
3. Enjoy the anonymity of being a beginner before the fame hits.

Have you been wanting to pursue something creative, but keep putting it off because you don't

know how to start something original? Don't worry, Austin's got you covered!

## Lesson 1: You'll find your own style where you fail to imitate your idols.

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Back in 2011, there was a huge uproar about our German then-minister of defence, Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg. Someone stumbled across a few un-cited references when reviewing his doctoral thesis and reported those to a newspaper. This launched a full investigation by the university, and led to a crowdsourcing project, where people dissect PhD theses to determine if they're plagiarized. Ultimately, Guttenberg lost his title and his job as Minister of Defence.

**That's the bad kind of copying.** Putting your name on other peoples' work isn't cool. Trying to *imitate* your favorite artists however, is a different story.

Especially when you're starting out, it'll be hard to come up with ideas and how to do things. But you can always start with re-building what someone else has done. For example, my very first website was the result of nothing more than me following a 2-hour, step-by-step, Youtube video tutorial on how to make a WordPress site.

The reason this works is that inevitably, at some point you'll realize you can't *exactly* copy any more, because it just won't work. **Where you fail to copy your chosen artist is exactly where it gets interesting.** In those gaps lies your own, unique way of doing things, and that's what you should explore to find the niche that'll define your career.

## Lesson 2: It's okay to procrastinate as an artist. Actually, you should!

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Being an artist is one of few professions where procrastination is actually quite productive. Because sudden insights and flashes of genius occur during down-time, when you let your mind wander, it's a good idea to make that down-time part of your routine.

**First and foremost, this means not giving up all of your hobbies and side projects when you start creating your art.** If you play the piano, love to sing karaoke or tend to your garden, keep doing it. It'll be the source of many new ideas for your paintings, writings or song lyrics.

That's because like with copying, an artist's output is always the result of all of the things that influenced her, and the more diverse your inputs, the more creative the outcome.

If you're not a person with many hobbies to begin with, don't fret though. **Your side projects don't have to be as creative as your actual art.** Even doing the dishes at night, taking care of chores and grocery shopping, as well as downright procrastinating by watching Youtube videos (one of my favorite ways to start the day) can have the same effect.

One caveat: Some procrastination is good. *Some*. But don't let the balance tilt entirely to its side.

## Lesson 3: Enjoy being anonymous. Fame will come soon enough.

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## **The good thing about copying others and procrastinating as an amateur is: no one gives a shit if you do!**

Imagine you're Brad Pitt announcing a new movie you'll be working on. Within 3 seconds, the entire world will judge you, throw their insanely high expectations at you and the pressure is on. "This movie better be good man!"

Most artists want to be famous, which is totally fine, but if you get it too early, you won't be ready for it, let alone be able to deal with the downsides.

When nobody knows your name yet, you're free to do whatever you want, run all kinds of weird experiments, most of which will fail, and make as many mistakes as you like.

It's a time you should enjoy while it lasts. Don't lament obscurity, revel in it and use it as your ultimate source of artistic freedom!

## **Steal Like An Artist Review**

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Before you think *Steal Like An Artist* is a book just for painters, look at Seth Godin's definition of an artist. If what you're doing requires even a pinch of creative salt, this book is for you. And if you've been an artist for a while already and are facing a slump, this will make you feel better and be a great pick-me-up.

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## **What else can you learn from the blinks?**

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- Why artistic influences are like DNA
- What your artistic family tree is and why you should create one
- Some examples of artists who successfully went from copying to emulating their heroes
- How to work towards fame while you're enjoying your initial anonymity
- The two sections your workspace should have
- How to deal with both criticism and praise

## **Who would I recommend the Steal Like An Artist summary to?**

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The 19 year old hobbyist watercolor painter, the 32 year old freelance writer, who struggles with making time for his novel project, and anyone who wants to be famous right NOW.