

10 Commandments for Makers

by Adam Savage

From his 2014 Maker Faire speech, as written in a now-defunct Tested.com article

1. Make something. Anything

Weld, carve, cook, sculpt, sew. Make something in the world that wasn't there before. As humans, there are two things that make us truly unique: the ability to use tools and the need to tell stories. Making things is both. Everything made has a story embedded in it. When you make something, it becomes part of your story. Humans are natural storytellers, and when you make new things, you join in the most ancient and important story of all.

2. Make stuff that improves your life

...either mechanically or aesthetically. It doesn't matter which. Nothing cements a feeling of utility than using something you've made in the course of moving through life. Make useless stuff too, because that's fun and fine, but you'll cement your satisfaction by improving your surroundings.

3. Don't wait

You can start now with what's in front of you. As Goethe [may or may not have] said, "Begin it!"

4. Use a project to learn a skill

I don't know about you but I need a goal to learn a skill. I can't deconstruct and just learn welding for welding's sake. I need to have something that only welding will bring me. Look around and find something you need to build. Something you can't help but build.

5. Ask for help

People who make things love to share their ideas and knowledge. Makers love to talk about their work. Any husband or wife of a maker knows this is true. Learn how to work well with others and it will give back to you tenfold. Ask questions. Ask for advice. Ask for feedback.

6. Share your methods and knowledge

Don't make them a secret. Take lots of pictures and make notes. Make noise. You will forget key details unless you do. Recognize that no matter how esoteric the build or the process you're working on, somebody somewhere is interested in the same thing and will benefit from your experience, no matter how young you are. Nobody has the monopoly on being you. No one can steal that. Don't keep secrets!

7. Discouragement and failure are intrinsic to the process

Don't hide from these. Talk about them. They're not enemies to be avoided, they're friends, designed to teach your humility. Go easy on yourself. Don't compare yourself to others; go ahead and be envious of others' skills, because frequently you can't not. Use that.

8. Measure carefully

Have some tolerance. You know what tolerance is? If something fits tightly into something - that's a close tolerance. If something fits loosely, that's a loose tolerance. Knowing the difference between tight and loose tolerance is perhaps the most important measure of a craftsman.

9. Make things for other people

Nothing feels better than expanding your making beyond yourself. Make no mistake: you make yourself vulnerable when you give something to someone that you made, but the rewards are incredible.

10. Use more cooling fluid

If I could go back in time and tell my young self anything - any specific thing at all - it would be this: Use more cooling fluid!