**College Dropout Survival Guide**

The no nonsense, practical guide to starting a life without college.



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INTRODUCTION

Dropping Out

This is a tangible action plan for what to do after you drop out of college. After reading this guide, you will know how to survive financially while being free to do what you love and live a balanced life.

This guide is broken into 3 parts:

1. Environment
2. Self-Education
3. Money

In the first part, you will begin to set up your ideal learning environment. This includes who you spend time with and what you do with your time.

Self-Education is a mindset. You will learn how to direct your own education through creating or producing something.

In the Money section, you will create a stream of income so you can survive and feed yourself for the time being.

People go to college for two main reasons:

1. To learn/prepare for a career
2. To meet people

College is a surely a great way to meet new people, but as I’m sure you know it’s not necessarily the best way to learn.

The simple truth is that there many ways to learn – college is only one of them, and it only works for only a certain group of people. People grow and learn in different ways. This guide will help you learn and grow in a way that is specific to you.

We grew up being told that life is simple:

*Get a degree → Get a job → Retire at 65 → happiness (finally)*

But it doesn’t have to be this way. More and more people are finding ways to create lifestyles that were previously unimaginable. When you break it down, life can be *anything you want.*

*Anything.*

That’s why you dropped out of school, right? You realized that you don’t want to do what everyone has done for decades. You have the ability to create any life you want, so why wouldn’t you? Sure, it will be difficult, but the best way to grow is by challenging yourself.

**Higher education can be viewed from two different viewpoints:**

Viewpoint B

Viewpoint A

You see college as the bottleneck between you and your success. To drop out would be to give up and fall behind everybody else.

You see college as an option to open one specific door, but you have no desire to open that door. Dropping out is simply shifting your focus towards another door.



If you are reading this, you view college from Viewpoint B, and by now, you have already decided that college is not for you at this moment.

If not, I highly recommend reading [**Undecided**](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B012KZS2E8). It is a step-by-step roadmap to finding your passion.

You should know **WHY** you dropped out and should be able to articulate it clearly. Taking a big step like quitting school requires a strong WHY to support your decision. This is helpful for when you explain yourself to people (especially your parents).

You clearly realize that you want to grow into a lifestyle other than the classic 9-5 job with benefits and a pension. In order to gain the freedom to live the life you want, you escaped the system because it fosters an environment focused on structure.

Knowing and owning why you dropped out should make you feel strongly about your decision. You might feel nervous and hesitant, which is OK because doing something uncommon sparks those feelings. After all, you are stepping way out of your comfort zone and doing something not many people have the balls to do.

Here are some of the worries you might have:

*What am I going to do all day?*

*How am I going to make money?*

*How am I going to make friends who are doing what I’m doing?*

*How am I going to learn what I need to know for my career?*

I had all these same worries, and they are what I aim to help you conquer in this guide.

What are you *actually* doing by dropping out of school?

Since you were 5, you were spoon fed information by an ‘expert’. You raised your hand to go to the bathroom, and memorized vocabulary words.

Your brain has been trained to let the structure of the school system carry you through life. To believe you will pop out the other end with all the knowledge and experience you always yearned for, ready to start your career immediately.

“We are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing.”

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

This is called *Learned Helplessness*: being dependent upon external sources to guide your education.

You are on this journey because you realize this and want to break free from Learned Helplessness. You want to take control of your education because you have much bigger goals than most.

By dropping out of school, you are *creating* a life for yourself. You are choosing how you think, how you act, what you do, what you say, and who you spend your time with. You are going out on a limb and building your own life to make it the way you want it to be.

You’re rewriting your social life, personal life, education, financial life, and your career goals.

You’re creating what *you* want to create and making your own unique impact on the world around you. That’s pretty cool.

*So what are you actually doing by dropping out of school?* It boils down to one thing:

Stuff you’ve never done before.

That’s all learning is.

“If you only do things you know how to do, you’ll never end up doing anything you can’t already do. That is to perpetually stay the same.”

**Alan Watts**

You’ve taken the first step and dropped out. That’s bold - something you’ve never done before. You have certainly learned and gained confidence from it.

But you can’t stop there. Keep doing things you’ve never done. It is the simple and absolute key to growth.

Create something and put it out there for people to use. Write a book, start a business, run an event, shoot a video. Meet new people and see new places. Start cool projects with people, get involved with groups and movements. Be audacious.

OK, enough with the motivational crap. Let’s get to the point.

PART I

Environment

The environment you are in and the people with whom you surround yourself creates positive and negative feedback loops for your brain. Let’s say fixing cars is one of your passions. If you are constantly around friends who don’t want to talk about it, you begin to feel insecure about talking about it with them. Your brain realized that every time it tried to express interest in fixing cars, it got negative feedback from its environment – in this case, the negative feedback is in your friends’ apathetic reaction to your passion.

Because of this negative feedback, the next time you feel the urge to discuss your passion with your friends, your brain reminds you that this is a bad idea by giving you an uneasy feeling. By the same token, if you always zone into a great conversation when the topic is brought up with your friends, your brain will have a good experience and push you to continue getting that result.

Most of this positive or negative stimulus comes from the people you interact with. Imagine if the most important people in your life disappeared. How different would it be without your family, best friend and significant other? Your environment and routine would be flipped on their heads. You will mold your entire life and career greatly around the people with whom you associate most. The most fruitful opportunities come from leveraging the strengths of multiple aligned people.

“You are the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with.”

**JJim Rohn**

The best thing you can do right now is to begin surrounding yourself with people who are doing what you want to do. Meeting the right people can be effortless. All you have to do is meet enough people, and with a big enough sample size some really important ones will surely bubble up.

You don’t want to aimlessly strike up irrelevant conversations just to say that you contacted a lot of people. There is a simple and focused way to “network” effectively. I have never liked the word “networking” because the classic image that comes to mind is this: an auditorium of enthusiastic college students competing to see who can collect the most business cards.

The people you want to meet are the ones who have core alignments with you. This means you share passions, values and ways of thinking. Meeting a wide range of people will definitely teach you valuable skills but only some will align with you most. For this to happen, you must have a clear grasp on your own passions and values.

So, where do you find people?

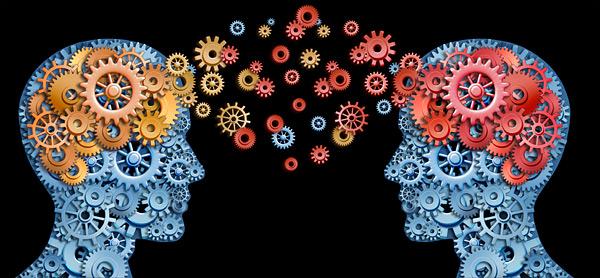
Find mentors who are doing what you want to do! Find out where they are and ask them for a job. If they can’t pay you, work for free. At least they won’t charge you tuition.

Use [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com). People hold very specific groups for financial advisors, real estate, music, meditation and more. Search anything you’re interested in and you should be able to find a local group of people who want to talk with you about it.

Go to conferences and events. There are ALWAYS events happening on a wide range of topics! Fitness, art, music, business, entrepreneurship, etc. Just google “fitness events in Chicago”. If you don’t have anybody to go with, then go anyways. It will force you to strike up conversations with people and step out of your comfort zone.

Talk to random people on the street or at a park. You’d be surprised what can come of this!

Join Mastermind groups. You can find these on Meetup in almost any city. Mastermind groups are usually entrepreneurs and creators meeting regularly to brainstorm and help each other. Some of my greatest mentors are from Mastermind groups I attended. The idea is that sharing ideas with somebody else creates a third mind between you that is intuitively connected to both of you. This concept is very well defined in Napoleon Hill’s [Think and Grow Rich](http://www.amazon.com/Think-Grow-Rich-Landmark-Bestseller/dp/1585424331/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1453337538&sr=1-1&keywords=original+think+and+grow+rich).



Go volunteer somewhere. Get a life coach. The list goes on and on, and nobody can do it for you. So pick something and go try it! It’s not that hard to talk to a human.

What are you going to do all day?

School used to occupy most of your time, but now there is a void that must be filled. It’s no lie that routines are HARD to keep up with when there is no external structure holding you to it. You’re counting on your own will power, and while we all hate to admit, it’s not always the most reliable.

Maybe you have a job or run a business and that occupies most of your time. Either way, you need to be working towards two things:

1. A long term project that gets you excited
2. A source of income to survive

The reason you decided to carve your own path was because you want to create things, not just consume. You’ve decided to adopt the creator’s mindset. Do anything but consume. We live in a society of consumers, and only the few who break that mindset are the most free of all.

Decide to create something **BOLD.** Set a deadline for something you’ve always wanted to do and start doing it. Whether you write a book, create a blog or YouTube channel, start a business or go on tour and travel the world, set out for what you want most. Your excuse was always that you didn’t have the time, but now you’ve got all the time in the world!

The more things you need to get done, the more productive you become. It is also true that everything must be had in moderation. Get out there and stretch your boundaries, but know when to keep that balance.

Spend half of your time working on a passion project and the rest making an income. Eventually, what you enjoy most will become a source of income, but for now, be patient and put in the work that is needed.

PART II

Self-Education

Divergent thinking is the ability to see many possible outcomes of a scenario rather than thinking linearly. Break Point and Beyond, by George Land and Beth Jarman, has a very in depth study on creative and divergent thinking.

In the study, people of all ages were asked to list how many uses they could think of for a paper clip. The idea is that people who are better at divergent thinking will be able to come up with many more uses because they are able to question everything about the paperclip: “What if the paperclip isn’t a normal paperclip? Can it be 200 feet tall? Made out of foam?” These questions open up another range of potential uses.

This study revealed two major findings:

1. That we are all born with a strong ability for divergent thinking
2. that it mostly deteriorates with time

But it doesn’t have to. And it shouldn’t, because creativity is what leads innovation, driving humankind to all sorts of new places and capabilities. Divergent thinking is what allows us to grow in the most genuine way.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age Group** | **% scored genius** |
| *4-6* | 98% |
| *8-10* | 50% |
| *13-15* | 32% |

Educating yourself is simple. Instead of waiting for the questions to be asked, start asking questions yourself. “Why?” is the most important question in the world. Asking why allows you to ignite your inner childlike curiosity. The deep sense of wonder that drove you to figure out how the world works.

Why did you go to school?

Everything can be broken down to be simpler than it initially seems. Richard Branson’s company, Virgin, has over 200 different companies within it. There are an endless number of systems that he (or somebody working with him) put into place.

Branson, like you and I, can’t do two things at once. There was a point when he spent most of his days calling everybody in the phonebook from a payphone to pitch his magazine, Student. This was one of the first actions in the chain of events that led to what Virgin is today.

Whether he was empowering somebody else to do something or doing it himself, Branson only did one thing at a time. That led to another thing, and so on, each being a single, simple step forward.

“[Kids] have spent 10 years of school being told there’s one answer, and it’s in the back. And don’t look. And don’t copy! Because that’s cheating. But outside schools, that’s called collaboration.”

**Sir Ken Robinson**

Everything can be broken down into single steps. Embracing this makes taking action seem much less daunting.

Simplicity is not the same as easiness. Some of the steps you take will be extremely difficult – but do not confuse their difficulty with complexity.

All it takes is some divergent thinking to think through the possibilities. Playing chess is a great exercise to practice type of thinking.

Thinking vs. Doing

All that stuff up there is great – but there must be a balance. Unfortunately you cannot achieve your dreams by only thinking through them. The *point* of the creative thinking is to allow it to drive your actions so you can… *create*.

*Doing* is experiencing the thing you previously thought through. While doing and thinking are both necessary methods of learning, doing is what creates the results.

When you are fully *doing*, you are not thinking about what is happening. In fact, your attention isn’t focused on anything other than doing in that moment. You are fully zoned in to the task at hand. Undividedly focused.

To do is to learn. And when you are driven by creativity and true curiosity, you create new things and your learning is intensified during the process. Then, you set your creation out to take on the storm of opinions that is sure to follow.

By doing this you are creating a feedback loop – based on the feedback you get, you take another step forward (or backwards) soaking up the new experiential knowledge the whole way. If you get good results, you are pushed to keep doing what you’re doing so you get more results.

If the results aren’t what you expected, correct course and continue to flow forward. That’s the whole point of doing.

Just as you cannot achieve your dreams by thinking through them, you also cannot achieve them through purely instinctual action. Focused *doing* creates focused results.

PART III

Money

After leaving school, your loans will start to kick in along with the rest of real life. Bills, rent, car insurance, the list goes on and on. One of the reasons most people don’t drop out of school is the “guarantee of a good job” after they graduate. You’ve officially forfeited that guarantee and taken the leap of faith in yourself.

Good news! Money will come – but with time.

So how can you make money now?

First off, don’t stress about it. Money isn’t that important when you break it down. But you still need it. How much do you actually need?

Not that much. [Check out this article](http://earlyretirementextreme.com/how-i-live-on-7000-per-year.html) to find out. That guy lives on $7,000/year. That’s pretty extreme, but it’s safe to say that most people can live comfortably on $20,000-$30,000/year depending on where they live.

That’s doable with almost any typical job. Become a server or work at Jiffy Lube. It’s worth spending the time to make money now while you figure out how to make money with your creative projects. This shouldn’t be a long-term plan, but it can be effective to get by.

By looking at your experience through your self-learning lens, a 6-month job at Jiffy Lube can teach you a lot about people too. Pay attention and remember that you’re a student of life. That is an example of learning through DOING. Interacting with people in a completely new environment teaches you about people.

Think of yourself as an investor. You now have two resources – time and money – to hand out at your discretion. How do you invest your time and money?

Invest in yourself. Read books, pay for high-level conferences, and get around a lot of people. Invest in experiences. One of the best investments you can make is going on a trip. The knowledge you gain from immersing yourself in a new culture is endless.

How do I know I’ll end up making money with my projects?

You don’t. It’s tough. You have to want it badly and be patient for a while. Here are some practical tips that worked for me:

Once you create something, the best way to make money from it is to get it out in front of people. Instead of reaching out to one person at a time, it is more efficient to attach yourself to an established network of people.

My first book sold about 80% of its copies within the first month by being featured on one blog: BuckBooks. They already had a HUGE established network of people who liked reading short cheap books. The ability that the internet has to connect groups of people makes marketing online incredibly easy. You can use one person to tap into a large network of people rather than reaching out to single customers at a time.

So when I wrote my book, I emailed somebody from the organization until they featured my book. I paid about $40 for the promo, but that investment quickly paid itself back and more.

It wasn’t easy to get featured – I had to reach out to about 25 different book blogs before one picked me up, but that’s what it takes.

That’s part of creating something new – it will affect people in many different ways.

The same principle applies with almost anything.

Find a blogger or website that aligns with your passions and email them. By searching around their site, you can typically find email addresses in a footer or a link somewhere. Keep searching!

As long as your project is creating some sort of value, there is a person out there who will benefit from the story. You simply need to find that person.

When reaching out, be sure to focus on why your story will help THEM instead of going on about how much it will help you. They don’t care (yet).

Don’t reach out to random people then get discouraged – think through this. What type of person will want to see what you are doing? Who will want to listen to you speak? Who will want to read your content? Where do they go and what grabs their attention?

The Point

The point is that marketing yourself is the first step that will lead you to getting paid to do what you love. Get in front of as many people as you can, and showcase your work. Take the feedback and use it to change your next project.

Thank you for reading! Hopefully you picked up a nugget that will help you in your journey.

Either way, pass it on to somebody who would benefit!

Questions or feedback?

[**email here**](mailto:simon@xplorflow.com)



Keep xploring.

~Simon