

SUMMARY

BY ALYSSA BURNETTE

LEARN

BETTER

BY ULRICH BOSE



Summary of “Learn Better” by Ulrich Boser

Written by Alyssa Burnette

How to win at learning.

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Introduction

Have you ever crammed for a test? If you have, then you probably remember the grueling pressure of the all-nighter: that zombie-like haze of caffeine, exhaustion, and nerves in which you frantically try to stuff your brain full of as much information as possible. If you're lucky, maybe you'll remember some of it for tomorrow's test. Many of us have found ourselves in this unenviable position, but we would never want to spend our lives learning in this way! But unfortunately, if you have never been taught the best way to learn, your entire educational experience will feel like cramming. Even if you have all the time and study resources in the world, you'll always feel as though you're desperately packing facts into your head and hoping something sticks. That's no way to live! But if that's all you know, it's no surprise that many people come to hate learning and try to avoid it as much as possible. And that's why the author wrote this book: to remind everyone that learning can be a pleasure instead of a chore. In fact, with the right tips, you can not only enjoy learning-- you can become an expert on any subject! So, over the course of this summary, we'll explore the author's top tips to help you maximize your learning potential.



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Understand Your Learning Style

Everybody is different; we know that to be a fact. We know that some people are naturally outgoing while others are more shy. We know that people have different talents, skill sets, and abilities. But did you know that people also have different learning styles? That's right-- there's no such thing as a "one size fits all" approach to learning! In fact, many studies have proven that there are more than 70 different learning styles! But that's a bit too many to discuss in the context of one summary, so we'll rely on the common practice of categorizing these learning styles by their sensory approaches. Because there are four most common types of learning styles, they are often abbreviated by the acronym VARK. Vark stands for "**visual, aural, verbal [reading/writing], and kinesthetic.**"

Each of these words refers to a specific type of learning preference that resonates with each individual. For example, some people are visual learners; they might learn best by watching an instructional video or seeing someone demonstrate a task. By contrast, kinesthetic learners need to do it themselves in order to fully grasp the concept. Aural learners retain information better when they can listen to a lecture or be given instructions in a more conversational format. And learners who are reading/writing oriented absorb information most effectively when they can interact with material in a print form. These might sound like simple differentiations but they can make all the difference in the world!

After all, if you're a visual learner, you might be struggling in a class that is exclusively comprised of oral lectures. You know you're not stupid, so you might feel upset and insecure when you find that you've listened to every lecture and you still don't feel like you understand the information. This lack of information will, of course, impact your grades or your ability to do your job, and this creates needless frustration and anxiety. So, if you want to lifehack your way out of one of the most common learning traps, you can start by identifying your learning style! Once you know which style works best for you, you can pursue the tools that work best for you. And don't worry

about self-diagnosing; you can take an online VARK assessment that uses a detailed questionnaire to help you identify your learning style!



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Get Invested in Your Studies

Have you ever sat through a class and wondered, “When am I ever going to use this?” Whether the topic is high-school geometry or a professional development workshop, we’ve all been there. But imagine how your perspective would change if you were actually interested in your studies! What if, instead of a quiz on physics, you were taking a test about your favorite TV show? You’d probably be really invested then! But unfortunately, it’s unlikely that you’ll ever be in a position to learn about nothing other than your favorite things. So, if you want to hack your brain and improve your performance, you have to trick yourself a bit by convincing yourself that you’re interested in what you’re studying.

At first, that might sound both idiotic and overly simplistic. There’s no way that could work, right? Actually, wrong! The author’s research has discovered that learning comprehension is radically improved when a learner convinces themselves that they are interested in their subject. That’s why the first step for improving your learning skills starts by asking yourself the question: what value does this topic add to my life? You might be tempted to say, “Nothing!” but just hang in there. Let’s imagine a hypothetical scenario. Say you’re studying English Literature and you absolutely hate it. You have no use for the teacher’s endless droning about critical analysis and you don’t care if the fictional blue curtains are a metaphor for the author’s sorrow. After all, you’re a business major; what possible value could this class add to your life?

In this case, the topic might not be immediately relevant to your future career or even to your present course of study. But if you really immersed yourself in the assignment and got lost in the finer nuances of critical analysis, you’d see that analyzing literature can give you some valuable and transferable skills! For example, paying close attention to detail comes in handy in any job. And examining the intricacies of language is good practice for reviewing important legal documents that may cross your desk as a businessman. Applying this first step to your learning process might not be fun. But you

can always find a way to make it useful! And one day, every bit of information you learn will prove useful in one way or another. (Even if it gives you nothing more than a crazy story to tell at a party!)



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Break Your To-Do List Into Chunks

Learning how to prioritize your to-do list is one of the most important skills you'll ever develop! But unfortunately, it's not always taught in the classroom or the workplace. And that's why the author wants to bring this topic to the forefront: because once you learn how to break big goals into small, manageable targets, you can tackle any obstacle that comes your way! Here's how it works: let's say you have a massive to-do list and you're getting a little overwhelmed. When you're staring down a mountain of tasks, it's easy to get stressed out, confused, and flustered. That's why it's important to break that mountain down into small, manageable chunks by asking focusing questions. A focusing question is exactly what it sounds like; it's a question you can ask yourself to improve your focus on any given thing. It can help you with a simple task or your overarching life goals.

So, whether you're trying to organize your craft room or figure out the trajectory of your career, you can always ask yourself this question: "What's the ONE thing I can do right now that will make this situation better and simplify my to-do list?" If you're trying to look at the big picture and decide things like what college to attend, what major to pursue, or what job you should take, this question can help you. Because in this case, the answer would be dependent on the ONE thing you want to do with your life. And as you ask that question, you'll be able to feel your heart leaning toward that one thing. Similarly, on a more immediate level, this question can help you in the moment because it can guide you to the right decision for right now. This is helpful because it enables you to build a base of knowledge about the subject you're studying, whether that subject is a math problem or a life problem. You can't be an instant expert in everything, so take some time to gather your thoughts, build your base of basics, and break your goal into a small, manageable chunk.



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Embrace the Gift of Feedback

Nobody likes to be corrected. Whether it's being told that you got the answer wrong on a test or neglected an important part of your job, no one likes being told that they can improve. As a result, we tend to dread all forms of constructive criticism. And when someone tells us something that we don't want to hear, we often comfort ourselves by brushing it off with statements like, "They're just jealous!" or "They're just being mean." But the author asserts that feedback is actually invaluable-- provided that it's coming from someone who has your best interest at heart. And that's why the fourth step is all about embracing the gift of feedback. If you have a coach, mentor, or teacher who is trying to help you improve, their advice is a free opportunity to become your best self.

So, open yourself up to the possibility that you might not be aware of the areas in which you need to improve. Acknowledge that someone else might have some helpful insights-- and then take advantage of their advice! Once you've identified the areas in which you can improve, take this as a personal challenge to beat your own personal best. If you use this method to help you learn and grow, you'll find that your confidence and your performance will increase exponentially! And best of all, this method can help you whether you're studying for a test or improving your professional skills!



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Visualize

The author observes that whether you're a visual learner or not, visualizing your goals or the information you need to know can be a huge help! That's because visualization allows us to tap into our spatial memory. Although we frequently take it for granted, our spatial memory is actually more important than we think. In fact, we would quite literally be lost without it! If we didn't have our spatial memory, we would struggle to remember the basic navigational principles that help us stay on top of our daily lives. For example, imagine what your life would be like if, instead of forgetting the name of the person you just met, you regularly forgot how to get home from work! Sure, we could always plug our address into the Maps app, but how scary would it be if you often felt lost on your way to and from familiar places? What if you lacked the ability to remember where you had been before?

All of these freaky options would be on the table without our spatial memory, so if we had to choose what we're more likely to forget, it's probably easier to struggle with little things like names and dates! So, that's why our spatial memory is an awesome and essential part of our lives. But the good news is that our relationship with spatial memory doesn't have to be an either/or situation! In fact, we can train our spatial memory to help with our overall recall! All you have to do is create a mental "information super highway." Put simply, this life hack involves associating information you need to remember with a route you've often traveled before. Here's how it works:

For example, let's imagine that you're trying to memorize some facts about Bleak House by Charles Dickens for a test. But unfortunately, the story is a little long and... well... bleak! With over 1000 pages of verbose and antiquated language, how can you ever commit it all to memory? The author recommends that you start by taking select details that stand out to you and connecting them to a crazy story that will draw on your spatial memory. For example, if we use the analogy of connecting facts to your daily commute you might imagine that you're on your way to Dunkin Donuts to grab your morning coffee before school. But instead of the customary orange and pink

of your traditional Dunkin Donuts, the building is instead a large, gloomy looking mansion! (You can envision this house as the essence of Halloween on steroids-- bats, creepy music, the works!) And that's how you remember *Bleak House*.

This is a bit of a wacky example, but you get the idea! Whatever you're trying to remember, the point is to tap into your spatial memory. Because your spatial memory automatically registers locations that are significant to you and helps you remember them, associating information with a familiar physical place can hack your spatial memory and help you to remember other types of information as well. The key is simply to make that information wacky enough for it to stand out to you. And the best part is that you can apply this same principle to help you remember anything from someone's name to where you parked. And once you put this principle into action, you'll discover that you can actually remember anything!



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Final Summary

Human beings spend an overwhelming portion of our lives learning new skills and information. But unless you know the right way to learn, it can feel like an unbearable chore. And worst of all, you're unlikely to retain much of the information you've crammed into your brain! But by applying the author's steps for learning better, you can make your brain work for you. Just practice getting invested in your studies, breaking your tasks into small chunks, embracing the gift of feedback, and connecting with your spatial memory.



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