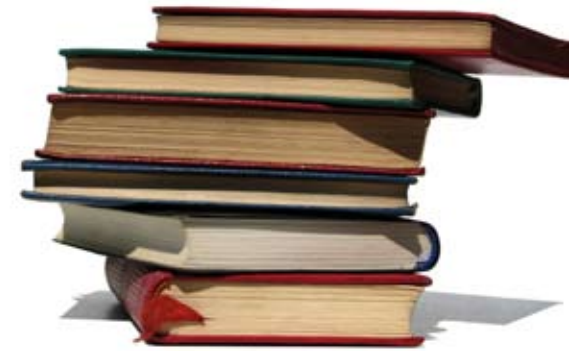


# **The Self-Education Manifesto**

**for Hacking High School**

[HackingHighSchool.wordpress.com](http://HackingHighSchool.wordpress.com)

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## What is Hacking High School?

**Hack, v., to devise or modify, usually skillfully.**

The dictionary definition works. Hacking high school is either devising (creating) your own high school curriculum or modifying what's available to you at your public high school.

Hacking High School focuses on legal—always legal!—ways to hack your education.

### Creating your curriculum

Creating your curriculum is legal in every state. By following homeschooling laws, you can create your own education.

Traditional homeschooling is an option, but not the main focus here, because it often demands too much of parents. Instead, creating your education focuses on you as the driving force. You decide:

- what you need to learn
- how you learn best
- where and when you'll learn
- who will teach you

**Example:**

You take college-level physics from a Harvard professor through iTunes U, then go on to your personalized English assignments from your aunt

who has a Master's degree in Literature. You also go to the zoo once a week and help feed the animals. You have a part-time job as a cashier, so when you come home from that, you write a short journal entry on the economics lessons learned there. The money you earned at your job goes towards your future study abroad to Germany.

Education is everywhere and there are often small things you can do—like the economics journal mentioned above—to turn things you'd be doing anyway into a real class that teaches you better than you could ever learn in an ordinary classroom.

This option is not for everyone, but is life-changing and spectacular.

### Modifying your education

An education outside the public school system is not always viable, so I also write about making the most of your high school education while you attend an ordinary high school. Topics here include graduating early, extracurricular goodness, mad test-taking skills, and more.

### It's up to you

You're at the point where you have the ability to choose your education, not just take whatever's been given you. Your education can make or break you—if it's good, you'll go anywhere. If it's bad, you're stuck. You don't have to settle for whatever quality your school happens to have. Create the quality.



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## Who am I?

I was excited as a freshman. I'd always liked school, even though "everyone" hated it. I participated on the cross country team, in orchestra, and took all honors classes.

But by the time sophomore year came around, I was quite disillusioned. I wasn't learning much. Social life was the focus of high school: learn to be just like everyone else. And I hated it.

School was like a jail. It even looked like it, with beige rows of lockers, high fences, and a policeman standing watch at the front entrance.

And then there was the Columbine shooting a few states away. And copycat threats at my own school. I heard a few whisper about the guns they'd stashed in their cars, just in case.

Who could stand three more years of such a life?

So I began to dream. I had to get out—way out. Study abroad on the other side of the world.

Only the study abroad programs were incredibly expensive: impossibly so. But I didn't give up. After researching enough to choose the country I wanted, it so happened that my grandparents knew a family living there. A few emails later, and I had a cheap room and board set up. I applied to go to the local school.

Meanwhile, a friend-of-a-friend took the California High School Proficiency Exam and graduated high school as a junior.



I didn't know what my fate would be after I returned from studying abroad, so I took the test, too. It was ridiculously easy. Easier than the PSAT I'd taken, easier than most ordinary tests at school.

So I finished high school, lived on the other side of the world at 16, and returned shortly after my 17th birthday to start college.

It was one of the best decisions of my life and I owe my success to it. But I wouldn't have known it was possible to graduate early if my friend's friend hadn't done so. I wouldn't have known it was possible to study abroad without the huge expense of a fancy program if my grandma hadn't been so closely in touch.

I consider myself lucky: avoiding two years of high school was a close call. I've created Hacking High School to give the options to you.

## Is Hacking High School for you?

I'm glad you asked. I happen to have a handy flowchart available for you at [hackinghighschool.net/flow](https://hackinghighschool.net/flow).

Hacking High School is not for everyone. If you're content to be like everyone else or if you're satisfied with the education you happen to be getting, we'll go our separate ways in peace.

But if you want to be truly educated, if there are things you want to learn, things you want to do, places you want to go, hacking is for you.



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Hacking High School is not for the lazy soul. It's not impossibly hard or anything, but it does take time and effort. A hacked education is only as good as you make it. If you can't get off your butt, stick with public school.

## Hacking Culture

You probably understand this already, but for any adults reading, "hacking" does not mean the same thing as "breaking in and destroying stuff for the heck of it."

In an interesting article on computer hacking, "How to Become a Hacker" (at <http://www.catb.org/esr/faqs/hacker-howto.html>), hacking is described perfectly:

A hacker is someone that takes "delight in solving problems and overcoming limits."

The hacker attitude has 5 aspects:

1. The world is full of fascinating problems waiting to be solved.
2. No problem should ever have to be solved twice.
3. Boredom and drudgery are evil.
4. Freedom is good.
5. Attitude is no substitute for competence."

"Becoming a hacker will take intelligence, practice, dedication, and hard work."

Think of that applied to education. The world is full of fascinating problems. The point of an education is to give you the tools to find those problems and solve them.

No problem should have to be solved twice. Once you really learn something, don't waste your time re-learning because you forgot the topic since it was so boring in the first place or because the rest of the class is behind. What a waste.

Boredom and drudgery are evil. This is the root of why most people hate school. It's boring. It's busy work. Pointless.

Freedom is good. Freedom to stretch your intellect, to go as far as you can, without teachers or "the system" holding you down. Freedom to use your time wisely, not wasting it on meaningless homework assignments or compulsory pep rallies.

Attitude is no substitute for competence. The essential thing is competence, education, learning what you need to know.

And, yes, it takes intelligence, practice, dedication, and hard work.

I think you'll discover something all hackers do: hard work is fun, when it is work you choose and in a method you choose.



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## History of Hacking Education

Formal education, especially the way it exists in schools today, is a relatively new thing.

Schools, as they exist today, were created in the Industrial Age to churn out obedient little factory workers.

Before that, the things we'd consider as hacking today--self-education, homeschool, apprenticeships, tutors, and books--were the norm.

### Built-in Hatred

Most people hate high school. Adults expect that you hate school. But they make you go because it's the lesser of two evils: either be ignorant and uneducated, or suffer through high school so you have a chance to make your own future.

That's the problem with school. Education is vastly important, but it appeals to almost nobody, the same way that spinach-and-anchovy-flavored ice cream sounds disgusting. What if we spit the bad flavor out of our mouths and get some real ice cream? A real education that is not only worthwhile in the end, but worth the time now. None of this "you'll thank me when you're older" crap. Your education needs to be worthwhile to you today.

Think of your own childhood. How did you learn to walk and talk? Did you hate learning as a kid? Even if you hate school now, I would bet it is not learning that you hate, but school itself.

So let's remove school from the equation. Keep learning, keep the education, but remove the school and the teachers and the fences and policemen. Remove the social conformity and the false age dichotomies. Remove the useless administration crap, your prisoner-like status.

### What's the Point?

Education by public school is like forcing you to write one hundred words by hand in calligraphy. If you enjoy it, great. If you don't enjoy it or aren't good at it, what is the point? You can get those hundred words typed up in about two minutes, so why spend five hours handwriting in fancy calligraphy that nobody can read anyway?

Studies show that when you enjoy something, you'll remember it better. Instead of slugging through facts and classes you don't care about, find either a method or a topic you enjoy and the facts come naturally. If you like sports, think of all the figures, players, and statistics you have memorized. Just because you like it. What if you liked chemistry? Think of all the theory, the applications, the facts you could memorize just as easily.

## How to Hack Your Education

1. Work backwards from your end goal.
2. Who are you? Maximize your skills, learning styles, and interests.
3. Utilize different methods.



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## 1. Work backwards from your end goal

What is the point of school? On graduation day, what knowledge do you want to have? Where will you be going—a job? college? Will you be able to speak a couple languages or master English? Are things like AP tests and the SAT important?

## 2. Who are you? Maximize your skills, learning styles, and interests.

Once you figure out what you need to learn, decide how you will learn. You learn best if you are interested in something and if it appeals to your learning styles.

## 3. Utilize different methods.

There are countless ways to learn things. A classroom with a lecturing teacher is not your only option. Explore Hacking High School to find different ways to learn, whether it be iTunes U or field trips, part-time public school or study abroad.

## Challenges Education Hackers Face

### Parents

Parents are such a huge influence in your life that you should do everything humanly possible to convince them to be on your side in your education plans. Don't worry—there are tools to help!

- Business plan. Grab a business plan template from the internet and write as if your education were your business. The sheer formality of it often convinces parents of your seriousness and willingness to work for your education.

- The end result. List out all the things you want to know on graduation day. Bring the list to your parents, along with different ideas on how to learn those things.

- Daily Logs. Essential! Keep a running record of what you do daily. Categorize by subject or time. Include your resources, like teachers, books, and so forth. This also makes things like college applications easier.

### The system

If you intend to stay in public high school and hack, the school system will resist.

Once you fulfill the requirements of law, you can ignore the high school system, but the college system is another animal. Keep a daily log. Consider checking out a book like [Homeschoolers' College Admissions Handbook](#), which has other ideas on how to prepare for college.

### Conformity and Social pressure

Whenever you go out to do something great, something tremendous, you'll find pressure to put your head down and be like everyone else. In ancient times, the Roman Empire ruled many different countries and cultures. They



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generally allowed people to keep their normal way of life, as long as they followed the cardinal rule: Don't make waves. If you made waves, if you stuck out, you were dead.

Death isn't the consequence now, but social pressure is pretty strong. Naysayers will predict your failure. Jealousy will try to tear you down. Critics will tell you how wrong and stupid you are. Don't listen. Don't let them put your education to death.

## Motivation

In a public school, you show up. It's illegal not to.

In a hacked education, you don't have teachers and administration and police officers enforcing attendance. I do suggest you find someone--your parents if possible--to be accountable to, but, still, there's nobody forcing you to be educated at gunpoint.

So on some days it will be hard to get out of bed and go learn something. Some days you might lose your vision, cloud your dreams, stumble a bit.

And that's okay. You will recover. And you'll find tools to help you maximize your motivation and minimize the forces that sap your drive for success.

Every Wednesday, my posts focus on motivation: something to inspire you, tools you need to stay on the ball, or ways to minimize the blah, unmotivated days.

## The Business Plan

Hacking High School is a resource for high school students who want to create or modify their education. I always advocate legal means of hacking your education and eschew dropping out.

I honestly believe that you can get a high-quality, college-prep education by creating your own curriculum or by improving and modifying the public education given to you.

To declare the ideas of Hacking High School to the world, I post at least three times a week. I have a list of over 100 aspects of Hacking High School to cover, and I add to that list daily.

I do have enough material for a book, and I'll eventually publish it, but first I want to refine it and see what it is you need that book to say.

I also intend to create products to sell, but, again, only after I find what you need most. And there will always be plenty of free materials on the site to help you hack your education.

I do make occasional use of affiliate links, but I never promote something that I do not believe in, nor will I promote something for the sole purpose of having an affiliate link.

