

21 ideas from the book - Steal like an Artist

- How does an artist look at the world?
First, you figure out what's worth stealing, then you move on to the next thing. That's about all there is to it. When you look at the world this way, you stop worrying about what's "good" and what's "bad"—there's only stuff worth stealing, and stuff that's not worth stealing.
- Every new idea is just a mashup or a remix of one or more previous ideas. The artist is a collector. Not a hoarder, mind you, there's a difference: Hoarders collect indiscriminately, artists collect selectively. They only collect things that they really love. Your job is to collect good ideas. The more good ideas you collect, the more you can choose from to be influenced by.
- Chew on one thinker—writer, artist, activist, role model—you really love. Study everything there is to know about that thinker. Then find three people that the thinker loved, and find out everything about them. Repeat this as many times as you can. Climb up the tree as far as you can go. Once you build your tree, it's time to start your own branch.
- You have to be curious about the world in which you live. Look things up. Chase down every reference. Go deeper than anybody else—that's how you'll get ahead.

- Carry a notebook and a pen with you wherever you go. Get used to pulling it out and jotting down your thoughts and observations. Copy your favorite passages out of books. All the world's a stage. Creative work is a kind of theater. The stage is your studio, your desk, or your workstation. The costume is your outfit—your painting pants, your business suit, or that funny hat that helps you think. The props are your materials, your tools, and your medium. The script is just plain old time. An hour here, or an hour there—just time measured out for things to happen.
- In the beginning, we learn by pretending to be our heroes. We learn by copying. Plagiarism is trying to pass someone else's work off as your own. Copying is about reverse engineering. First, you have to figure out whom to copy. Second, you have to figure out what to copy. Whom to copy is easy. You copy your heroes—the people you love, the people you're inspired by, the people you want to be.
- What to copy is a little bit trickier. Don't just steal the style, steal the thinking behind the style. You don't want to look like your heroes, you want to see like your heroes. If you just mimic the surface of somebody's work without understanding where they are coming from, your work will never be anything more than a knockoff.
- At some point, you'll have to move from imitating your heroes to emulating them. Imitation is about copying. Emulation is when imitation goes one step further, breaking through into your own thing. Copy your heroes. Examine where you fall short. What's in there that makes you different? That's what you should amplify and transform into your own work.

- Write the book you want to read. Think about your favorite work and your creative heroes. What did they miss? What didn't they make? What could've been made better? If they were still alive, what would they be making today? If all your favorite makers got together and collaborated, what would they make with you leading the crew?
- Take time to be bored. One time I heard a coworker say, "When I get busy, I get stupid." Ain't that the truth. Creative people need time to just sit around and do nothing. I get some of my best ideas when I'm bored, which is why I never take my shirts to the cleaners.
- Tomlinson suggests that if you love different things, you just keep spending time with them. "Let them talk to each other. Something will begin to happen." The thing is, you can cut off a couple passions and only focus on one, but after a while, you'll start to feel phantom limb pain. It's so important to have a hobby. A hobby is something creative that's just for you. You don't try to make money or get famous off it, you just do it because it makes you happy.
- You're only going to be as good as the people you surround yourself with. In the digital space, that means following the best people online—the people who are way smarter and better than you, the people who are doing the really interesting work. Pay attention to what they're talking about, what they're doing, what they're linking to.

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- People will misinterpret you and what you do. They might even call you names. So get comfortable with being misunderstood, disparaged, or ignored—the trick is to be too busy doing your work to care.
- Instead of keeping a rejection file, keep a praise file. Use it sparingly—don't get lost in past glory—but keep it around for when you need the lift.
- The truth is that even if you're lucky enough to make a living off doing what you truly love, it will probably take you a while to get to that point. Until then, you'll need a day job. A day job puts you in the path of other human beings. Learn from them, steal from them. Freedom from financial stress also means freedom in your art.
- Creativity is subtraction. Nothing is more paralyzing than the idea of limitless possibilities. The idea that you can do anything is absolutely terrifying. It seems contradictory, but when it comes to creative work, limitations mean freedom. Don't make excuses for not working—make things with the time, space, and materials you have, right now.

- Recommended reading -
 - Linda Barry, What It Is
 - Hugh MacLeod, Ignore Everybody
 - Jason Fried + David Heinemeier Hansson, Rework
 - Lewis Hyde, The Gift
 - Jonathan Lethem, The Ecstasy of Influence
 - David Shields, Reality Hunger
 - Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics
 - Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird
 - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow
 - Ed Emberley, Make a World