

Education in The 21st Century

Originally written in September 2011, when we first began our unschooling journey. Updated a few points and links.

A [study published in July](#) showed that people have become less likely to remember things that they know are only a click away on the Internet. In other words, our selective memory has expanded to exclude things easily found via a web search. I interpret this revelation as meaning that people are selectively remembering the things that matter most to them in their everyday lives. All else are easily accessible, so why waste brain matter remembering them? Small example, I remember far less phone numbers than I used to thanks to my cloud-based contact list. I'll get back to why I started with an explanation of this study.

Things We Learn in School

When I venture into the land of memories and journey back into my school days, I can't help but wonder about what I've retained from all the things that K-12 public school taught me. I would say that 90% of what I learned was practically useless (not to mention how much of it was wrong). Reading, writing, and arithmetic have been the most useful, but throughout the course of my life in K-12, most of what I learned I've forgotten, and everything else is just a Google search away. Those things that have been the most useful I've taught myself. I test software for a living, but all of my computer experience was self-taught. I have a passion for religion, economics, and political philosophy. All self-taught.

The Internet

Anything and everything can be found on the Internet. It has been the one indispensable tool in my self-education. It helped me find answers to my [endless list of questions](#) about religion. It was through the Internet that I [discovered economics](#) and the Austrian School. It's through the Internet that I have engaged in a

countless number of debates and discussions with a countless number of people, many of which I have never met in person, yet I consider them my friends. There has been a major paradigm shift in the world thanks to the Internet.

Khan Academy / University of The People

Over the last decade, colleges and universities have begun offering their programs over the Internet. Virtual classrooms have been replacing the traditional classroom. Unfortunately, thanks to [government intervention in education](#), tuition is still astronomically high, but I believe that the Internet is starting to force a major change. Enter [Khan Academy](#) and the [University of the People](#). Khan Academy is a collection of thousands of free instructional videos on subjects ranging from [Algebra](#) to [Finance](#) to [Biology](#), and their database is [growing](#). The University of the People is a virtual college devoted to [tuition-free](#) higher education. They currently offer Bachelors and Masters programs in [Business Administration](#) and Bachelors in [Computer Science](#) and [Health Science](#).

What both institutions demonstrate is just how feasible it is to create and receive a quality education over the Internet. I predict that both institutions are just the beginning of yet another paradigm shift, this time in higher education. No longer would a professor need to spend countless hours lecturing students. He could simply record his lectures (or use others'), assign them as homework, and use classroom time, either traditional or virtual, for discussion. In other words, both teaching and learning are becoming *more efficient*.

Unschooling

My wife and I have been studying various homeschooling philosophies over the last year, and have become increasingly intrigued with "[unschooling](#)". Unschooling is the belief that kids learn best when their engaged in what interests them most. Not classrooms, curriculum, lessons, or lectures. When kids are free to explore the world around them, with the parent serving as a facilitator, they learn better than when they're forced to learn what they may not even be interested in. We believe that unschooling our kids is a better way to achieve the goals we have for them, ie. we want them to understand that they are free to

pursue their own interests, that they are in control of their own lives, and that no matter what course they choose in life, we love them [unconditionally](#). Their life is in their own hands, with all the liberty and responsibility that this entails.

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This brings me back to where I started. Apparently, we remember what we need to, and forget what can easily be found on the Internet. So why are we sending our kids to school and forcing them to learn things they don't need, and quite possibly what they don't care to learn? I believe that unschooling, from birth until death, is the education model of the 21st century and beyond. The Internet has grown to unthinkable heights. People no longer need traditional schools, public or private, to teach them someone's version of History, or Social Studies, Geography, and any other practically useless-in-our-everyday-lives subject. If we need to know something, we can find it in a matter of minutes. Let's instead help our children discover their talents and passions, and to develop them in a non-compulsory, safe environment.

It's a new day. Times have indeed changed. Don't be left behind, and don't be left with a bad education and the unnecessary stress that K-12 education creates for both parent and child. Enter the 21st Century, the century of unschooling and free education. My wife and I are proud to say that we're unschoolers. We will be facilitating our children's interests, and mentoring them along the way. It's an exciting day for all of us!