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The High-Speed Learning Method

"The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else."

— Eric Ries

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Introduction

It is possible, within a matter of weeks, to enter the top 5% in the world at any given skill with consistent practice and an open mind. Through a **set of 7 principles** and **7 actionable steps**, you will be able to accelerate your progress and become an expert in short order.

I used this method to learn basic Mandarin Chinese in college, to study for and ace any test, and to learn how to run a multi-million-dollar restaurant.

By putting this method into practice:

- You will have the tools to excel at any skill you choose to learn.
- You'll realize you've never really failed at anything. You just hadn't stayed long enough to succeed.
- You will take your preparation and work ethic to another level.
- You will have more control over what you previously thought uncontrollable.
- It doesn't take great effort to rise above the crowd. You will be able to break that glass ceiling in record time.

This method will not only help you learn better and faster, but it will help destroy the limiting thoughts and beliefs you may have in your own mind about what you are truly capable of.

Let's get to it!

7 Principles for High Speed Learning

1. Margin of Safety

How bad could you mess something up and still come out successful? When choosing a skill to learn or an endeavor to invest time into, do so in a way that even in the worst-case scenario, you succeed.

- The best chess players never give up a piece unless they know they can get something back in return.
- I started a blog for two reasons:
 - Build forward: sharpen writing skills and build an online business.
 - Build a safety-net: If everything fails, my website will serve as proof-of-work—a resume, should I ever have to seek employment.
- Warren Buffett buys stocks at a discount, so he can do well even in the worst-case scenario.

Set yourself up to win even when you lose.



2. Failure Points

Think of some projects/endeavors/skills/time commitments/etc. that you quit at some point in your life prior to completion. Identify the reasons why you might have failed. Some might include:

- Lack of self-discipline
- Too many inputs (information overload)
- Too many tools (apps, gadgets, unnecessary complications)
- Level of skill needed seemed too intimidating (lack of self-belief)
- Process seemed too complicated

Be honest with yourself. Take ownership of your failures and ask yourself what role YOU played in failing. The sooner you can honestly identify your own failure points, the sooner you will be able to address and prepare responses for them in the event that they occur.

3. Materials over Methods

What you study is more important than *how* you study.

If you have the wrong material, it doesn't matter how well you study. You're still studying the wrong things.

- If learning how to speak Chinese, learn from native books instead of Google translate.
- If learning how to cook, consider *the source* of the recipes. Are you learning from Emeril Lagasse or some kid in a college dorm room?

Choose material that appeals to you. To learn Chinese, you wouldn't read about the Chinese soccer team if you hate sports.

Commit yourself to a daily practice. Look for *reps hidden in plain sight*.

- When learning Chinese, look for Chinese food menus, Chinese subtitles in shows and movies, read Chinese advertisements as you stroll through the mall.

In setting yourself up for success, every detail matters.

4. Pareto Principle

Often known as the 80/20 principle, it states that in a majority of situations in life, 80% of outputs are produced by 20% of the inputs. It's not an exact science, but because of how often it does show up in life, it should be applied liberally to your lifestyle and productivity.

- 80% of the work is done by 20% of the workers
- 80% of revenue is contributed by 20% of all customers
- 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of their citizens in 1890s.
- 80% of what we read is a result of 20% of our language.
- 80% of the wealth is held by 20% of the population.
- 80% of muscle gain results from 20% of the time spent at the gym.

Build the habit of looking for the 20% of decisions that impact 80% of your day. Look for the 20% of sources that will teach you 80% about any given skill.



5. Parkinson's Law

This law states that "work expands as to fill the time available for its completion."

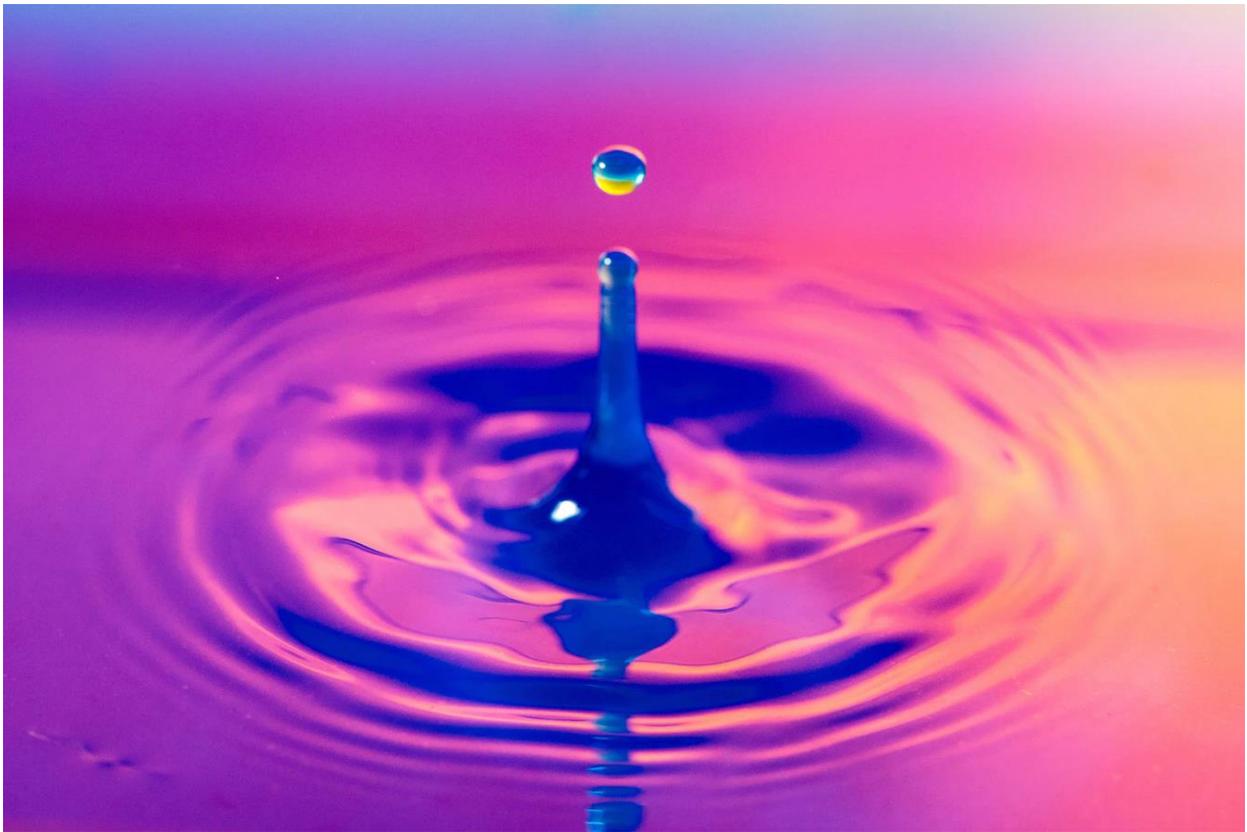
Work is water. Your time is the container. It doesn't matter how wide you make your container, the water will spread out as far as it can to fill the bottom.

If you give yourself a week to complete a project, it will take a week. Give yourself 2 days to complete the same project? You will find a way to make it happen in 2 days.

Use this law to your advantage.

Your mind will say it is impossible to get something done in an inordinate amount of time. Set the deadline for half the time you think is reasonable and see what happens.

Do the impossible and you will see it just wasn't so.



6. Embrace failure

"If you're going to be wrong, at least be wrong in a way that stimulates further research."

–Neil DeGrasse Tyson

The problem with failure is that most people frame it the wrong way.

- You most likely didn't fail. You just didn't stay long enough to succeed.
- Failure is fuel. Failure is data.

If you look at it any other way, you'll be in for a hard life.

Life is a series of guesses. The more you guess, the more you learn. The more you learn, the better you guess. The more you iterate, the faster you iterate, the better off you will be.

Make mistakes now to save your future self the trouble. Be kind to your future self. They will thank you one day.

If you're stuck in a rut or don't know what to do in life, find something to fail at. I guarantee it will get you unstuck.

7. Execution is the Only Differentiator

Strive for imperfection before inaction. The worst thing you can ever do is stay still. To go anywhere in life, you have to move forward or fall backward.

Develop a bias for action. Instead of writing it down on a piece of paper and stashing it away for later, just do it now.

To be prolific, put in your reps. Your ability to execute consistently will set you apart from your competition.

To put in your reps, you will need to maximize, be effective, and be efficient in the time you use.

The amount of wasted skill and talent in the world is unimaginable. Most often it is because people are just too scared. Of success? Of failure? Of discomfort? Of their shadows?

Take action.

7-Step High-Speed Learning Method

The High-Speed Learning method fits neatly into the acronym: **D.E.S.I.R.E.S.** After all, you can't learn and grow in life without the desires to do so!

Dissect the skill into smaller pieces.

Extract the most important, most common pieces.

Sequence those into an order that allows you to achieve the desired result.

Incentivize yourself. Celebrate milestones, or bait yourself into them, so you can stay on track and achieve the goals you've set.

Reduce information down to a physical index card.

Exercise your newfound knowledge to solidify it.

Secure your knowledge so you can become an expert.

1. Dissect

First, you must reverse-engineer the skill you want to learn. If you want to learn how to run a pizza shop, you might ask: "how does a restaurant pump out hundreds of pizzas per night?" In addition, to stay in business they must be fast, and the pizzas must be of at least decent quality.

If you look at the situation as a whole, the intimidation factor will be enough to stop you in your tracks. You have to break it down into bite-sized pieces.

Dissect the pizza-making process:

- Type of flour/ingredients in the dough
- Ingredients in the sauce
- List all of the ingredients of all pizzas offered. Note the pizzas that have common ingredients.
- Oven temperature and cook times.

This step alone allows you to eliminate the intimidation factor and approach the learning process in a systematic, digestible way.

2. Extract

Of the elements from dissection, what 20% will bring 80% of the benefit?

Spend 80% of your time on those 20% of variables.

Identify the MED: Minimum Effective Dose for studying your skill.

- 90-120 seconds of tension will be enough for most muscles, not two hours at the gym.
- 1200 highest frequency words in a language, not sorting A-Z through 20,000+ words.
- Most pizzas will have the same 10 (dough ingredients, sauce ingredients, cheese, toppings) out of 50 possible ingredients.

This will form a base of knowledge that, when it becomes second nature, will feed your momentum for learning the nuances of your skill.

Test, test, test. In any situation where you are unsure of where to look, focus on the highest frequency moving pieces.

Get yourself into the habit of addition by subtraction.

- Messy desk? Identify 20% of the essentials, get rid of the 80% of inessentials. Do the same with information intake.



3. Sequence

You wouldn't cook the pizza dough before you put the toppings on.

You wouldn't dry your clothes before washing them.

You wouldn't drive the car before turning on the ignition.

You need to arrange the items you've derived from the first two steps into a logical sequence for two reasons:

- Achieving desired results that are effective in getting you to your goals.
- Building a solid base of knowledge in your brain for you to build upon.

Start from the end point, and work your way back *in theory*, so you can more easily work your way forward *in practice*. You will see there is a logical order to almost anything. You will begin to notice crucial patterns.

If you are learning directly from someone, beware of non-verbal and verbal expertise. Most high performers could *show* you how they do something, but they could never explain it in words if asked. Cherish your beginner's mind. This is the time to ask crazy questions that experts won't think of.

4. Incentivize

Set milestones for yourself that will keep you motivated. It helps to do it at three different levels to keep a proper perspective: micro, intermediate, macro.

Link rewards (or punishments) to those milestones.

- Micro: Don't leave the room until you finish your designated daily goals.
- Intermediate: Go get ice cream after learning 70 new words in a week.
- Macro: Give a painful amount of money to a friend or family member. If you don't achieve your goal, they must donate it to an "anti-charity" or an organization you strongly dislike.

Put skin in the game. Put your money where your mouth is. Put your name on it. Take ownership of your commitment.

5. Reduce

Remember Spark Notes? Or handmade cheat sheets in school? Or writing formulas on the inside cover of your calculator before a calculus test?

(Note: I do not condone, nor have I participated in such behavior 😊)

Good news, you're not in school anymore. There is no such thing as a cheat sheet. If you don't know something, you can Google it! But for our purposes, we will implement this method in order to condense and solidify our information.

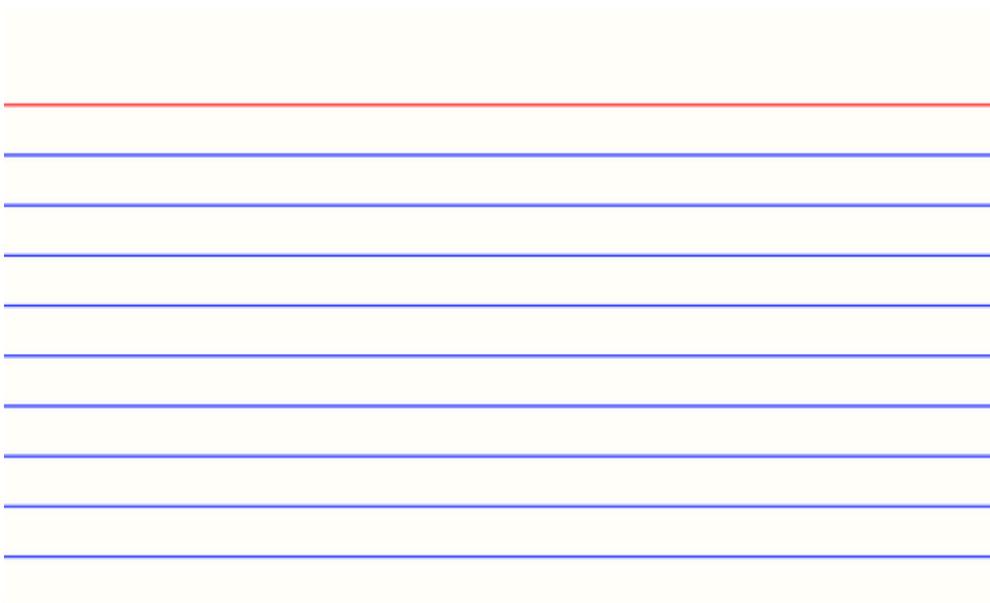
The Index Card Method

Condense the elements you've boiled down from your chosen skill and put as much as you can fit onto a 4x6 index card. 3x5 if you are ambitious.

You can use both sides. I've tended to use one side for the basic rules of performing (deductive approach), and the other side for real world examples that you can practice with and spot patterns (inductive approach).

Make a new card every week. Put information that you still find challenging, and remove information that you have already mastered. As your brain indexes new knowledge, you'll be able to put newer, fresher knowledge on that card for repetition each week.

The purpose of the physical card, as opposed to using your phone is its finite space. You will be forced to boil your information down even further to the most important points. You will be more concise in discussion as a result.



A template for an index card. It features a light yellow background. A solid red horizontal line is positioned near the top. Below this red line, there are ten horizontal blue lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a grid for writing. The right side of the card has a grey shadow effect, suggesting it is a physical card.

6. Exercise

Set a schedule for exercising your fresh knowledge. Consistency will deliver most of your results. Make sure you return to your information daily, so it stays fresh in your mind. This is the reason why I had Chinese class scheduled five times a week in college. After 65 class sessions in a single semester, basic fluency was almost a given.

Do not confuse iteration with repetition!

Iteration is trying different approaches until you find one that works.

Repetition is just replicating your results from iteration.

Both are particularly important. But remember, there is a proper order to everything. Iterate before repeating. You wouldn't repeat the wrong basketball shooting form. You would iterate until you get the correct form down, then repeat. (Remember **Sequence**)

Track your iterations. Then track your replications. Over the long run you will be able to spot patterns. Recognizing patterns in your learning process will naturally make you better at forecasting. You will be able to see when you work the best, when you learn the best, when you perform the best.

7. Secure

Secure your knowledge through any means possible. In addition to repetition, there are a few cognitive tricks you can use:

- Use acronyms- ROY G. BIV for the rainbow, PEMDAS in math, or anything that might suit your needs.
- Use imagery- 人 (Rén) means "person" in Mandarin. "Looks like someone walking." This is a simple example, but you can visualize (like clouds shaped as dinosaurs) almost any concept you are trying to learn.
- Cicero's Memory Palace

Other tricks/methods

- Setting a table:
 - Knife and Spoon (each with 5 letters) go on the Right (5 letters) side of the plate. Fork (4 letters) goes on the Left (4 letters)
- Encryption: create a coded system, not for secrecy, but for memory (if numerically inclined)
- Study before you sleep. In my experience, studying deeply before bed creates an almost lucid studying scenario once you fall asleep.
- Sleep. The more quality sleep you get on a consistent basis, the easier it will be for knowledge storage and retrieval.
- Study your notecard, then try to replicate it on a blank card.

In Closing...

Follow this method for any complex set of information, any skill, or any subject you are trying to learn. I've used this method consistently in the past for college course, new jobs, and everything in between.

If you approach your learning with consistency and dedication, there is no reason why you can't enter the top 5% in the world in any given topic in a matter of weeks.



What is Unparalleled Live?

Unparalleled Live is a four-week, nine-session intensive online course designed give you the tools you need to build your career and thrive in an uncertain future.

If you want to take an active role in building and shaping your future, and if you've enjoyed my blog and my newsletter, then this course and community will be THE perfect environment for you. It takes the ideas I've written about in black and white ink and brings them to life in an array of vibrant colors.

In this course, you will embark on a four-week transformational journey, that includes:

- **9 one-hour live sessions** packed with actionable insights, real-world examples, and exclusive information you won't find anywhere else.
- **8 modules** mapping out each of the areas of a well-oiled online content business.
- **5 deliverables:** assignments designed to develop a prolific publishing habit and put you on the road to abundance.
- **4 supplemental sessions** designed to destroy creative blocks and expand your comfort zone.
- **Live interaction** with students from across the country and around the world for feedback and sharing of ideas.
- **Endless tools** to help you enhance your career or create a new one from scratch.

Course Promise

You will learn what the future of work looks like through building your online presence, creating quality content, and cultivating a loyal audience, leading to self-actualization, recognition of your ideas and abilities, and a higher sense of connection with the world.

For more information, visit joebalcom.blog/course