

The Short but Powerful Guide to Finding Your Passion

by Leo Babauta

☐ “The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.” - Arnold Toynbee

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☐ Following your passion can be a tough thing. But figuring out what that passion is can be even more elusive.

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☐ I’m lucky — I’ve found my passion, and I’m living it. I can testify that it’s the most wonderful thing, to be able to make a living doing what you love.

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☐ And so, in this little guide, I’d like to help you get started figuring out what you’d love doing. This turns out to be one of the most common problems of many Zen Habits readers — including many who recently responded to me on Twitter.

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☐ This will be the thing that will get you motivated to get out of bed in the morning, to cry out, “I’m alive! I’m feeling this, baby!”. And to scare your family members or anyone who happens to be in yelling distance as you do this.

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☐ This guide won’t be comprehensive, and it won’t find your passion for you. But it will help you in your journey to find it.

☐ Here’s how.

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☐ 1. What are you good at? Unless you’re just starting out in life, you have some skills or talent, shown some kind of aptitude. Even if you are just starting out, you might have shown some talent when you were young, even as young as elementary school. Have you always been a good writer, speaker, drawer, organizer, builder, teacher, friend? Have you been good at ideas, connecting people, gardening, selling? Give this some thought. Take at least 30 minutes, going over this question — often we forget about things we’ve done

well. Think back, as far as you can, to jobs, projects, hobbies. This could be your passion. Or you may have several things. Start a list of potential candidates.

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□2. What excites you? It may be something at work — a little part of your job that gets you excited. It could be something you do outside of work — a hobby, a side job, something you do as a volunteer or a parent or a spouse or a friend. It could be something you haven't done in awhile. Again, think about this for 30 minutes, or 15 at the least. If you don't, you're probably shortchanging yourself. Add any answers to your list.

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□3. What do you read about? What have you spent hours reading about online? What magazines do you look forward to reading? What blogs do you follow? What section of the bookstore do you usually peruse? There may be many topics here — add them to the list.

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□4. What have you secretly dreamed of? You might have some ridiculous dream job you've always wanted to do — to be a novelist, an artist, a designer, an architect, a doctor, an entrepreneur, a programmer. But some fear, some self-doubt, has held you back, has led you to dismiss this idea. Maybe there are several. Add them to the list — no matter how unrealistic.

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□5. Learn, ask, take notes. OK, you have a list. Pick one thing from the list that excites you most. This is your first candidate. Now read up on it, talk to people who've been successful in the field (through their blogs, if they have them, or email). Make a list of notes of things you need to learn, need to improve on, skills you want to master, people to talk to. Study up on it, but don't make yourself wait too long before diving into the next step.

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□6. Experiment, try. Here's where the learning really takes place. If you haven't been already, start to do the thing you've chosen. Maybe you already are, in which case you might be able to skip to the next step or choose a second candidate to try out. But if you haven't been, start now — just do it. It can be in the privacy of your own home, but as quickly as possible, make it public however you can. This motivates you to improve, it gets you feedback, and your reputation will improve as you do. Pay attention to how you feel doing it — is it something you look forward to, that gets you excited, that you love to share?

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□7. Narrow things down. I recommend that you pick 3-5 things from your list, if it's longer than that, and do steps 5 & 6 with them. This could take month, or perhaps you've already learned about and tried them all out. So now here's what you need to ask yourself: which gets you the most excited? Which of these can produce something that people will pay for or get excited about? Which can you see yourself doing for years (even if it's not a traditional career path)? Pick one, or two at the most, and focus on that. You're

going to do the next three steps with it: banish your fears, find the time, and make it into a career if possible. If it doesn't work out, you can try the next thing on your list — there's no shame in giving something a shot and failing, because it'll teach you valuable lessons that will help you to be successful in the next attempt.

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□8. Banish your fears. This is the biggest obstacle for most people – self-doubt and fear of failure. You're going to face it and banish it. First, acknowledge it rather than ignoring or denying it. Second, write it down, to externalize it. Third, feel it, and be OK with having it. Fourth, ask yourself, "What's the worst that can happen?" Usually it's not catastrophic. Fifth, prepare yourself for doing it anyway, and then do it. Take small steps, as tiny as possible, and forget about what might happen — focus on what actually is happening, right now. And then celebrate your success, no matter how small.

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□9. Find the time. Don't have the time to pursue this passion? Make the time, dammit! If this is a priority, you'll make the time — rearrange your life until you have the time. This might mean waking earlier, or doing it after work or during lunch, or on weekends. It will probably mean canceling some commitments, simplifying your work routing or doing a lot of work in advance (like you're going on a vacation). Do what it takes.

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□10. How to make a living doing it. This doesn't happen overnight. You need to do something, get good at it, be passionate about it. This could take months or years, but if you're having fun, that's what's most important. When you get to the point where someone would pay you for it, then you're golden — there are many ways to make a living at that point, including doing freelance or consulting work, making information products such as ebooks, writing a blog and selling advertising. In fact, I recommend you do a blog if you're not already — it'll help solidify your thinking, build a reputation, find people who are interested in what you do, demonstrate your knowledge and passion.

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□I told you this wouldn't be easy. It'll require a lot of reflection and soul-searching, at first, then a lot of courage and learning and experimentation, and finally a lot of commitment.

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□But it's all worth it — every second, every ounce of courage and effort. Because in the end, you'll have something that will transform your life in so many ways, will give you that reason to jump out of bed, will make you happy no matter how much you make.

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□I hope you follow this guide and find success, because I wish on you nothing less than finding your true passion.

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□□“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” - Confucius