

How to keep up with Constant Learning?

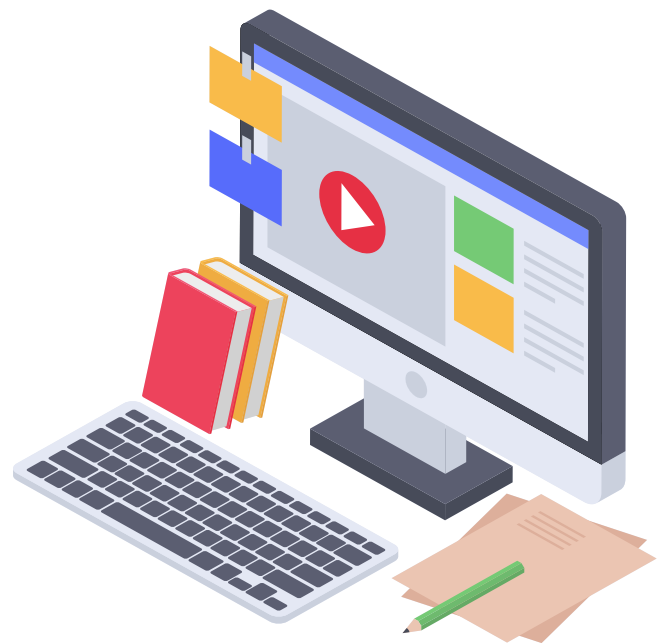


How to keep up with Constant Learning?

One common question we hear today is "How to keep up with technology and the pace of changes?". With the popularity of open source, rapid software upgrades from existing providers, new ideas, methods, and approaches springing up at every corner, and new products and technology being introduced at a fever pitch, it is extremely difficult to stay on top of it all, let alone get buried by it all. So, this question is a very good question indeed.

I personally felt that challenge a few years back. After a lot of thinking, I came up with a simple technique which has helped me put a method to the madness. I'm sharing a bit of my technique with the world through this article.

There is a common principle that **10,000 hours** of "deliberate practice" is needed to become world-class (extremely good) in any field. I rethought this a little bit and tried to rearrange this principle to something more manageable and to something that could be a tool I could draw on to consume all this change with. The end result was to define three effort levels (or effort boxes to put things into) of 1, 10 and 100 hours. As new things come to your attention, you need to ask yourself how much value this new thing has in your near future. Depending on the answer to that one question, you put that thing into one of these time boxes (1, 10 or 100 hours).



Here's what these boxes mean:

1 Hour - It is fairly easy to find an hour to explore any new thing that grabs your interest. Using an hour allows you to explore many things. Within an hour you can watch an intro video, read some article or check out the related sites. This hour will allow you to achieve the basic awareness of this new thing (whatever it was). If, after an hour, it feels like it might have much more value (than you're the one-hour investment so far), you can promote this to the higher boxes of 10 or 100 hours.

10 Hours - This amount of time investment will allow you to do things like do a trial of something, do a simple "Hello world" kind of application, and potentially compare it with other alternatives. This amount of time will also enable you to converse intelligently with others on this topic. The 10 hours can be split into smaller increments such as five 2 hour time segments, or two 5 hour segments as you see fit.

100 Hours - 100 hours correspond to around 12.5 days. This is a time investment to achieve a skill that you may want to be using in your work or personal life soon (within 6 months. Waiting longer than 6 months to start using a newly acquired skill usually translates into having to relearn it.). This 100-hour investment should provide you more than enough time to become proficient in that skill.

Of course, the **1, 10 and 100 hours** are just guidelines (not exact numbers) to help you time box things and avoid getting carried away or distracted. If you really find your passion you can extend it to **10,000 hours** to be world-class!





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