

Essentialism

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Staying Focused Is Very Challenging These Days.



- Too many options
  - In many directions
- Too much information
- We need to focus ...
  - ... in order to make any progress

The Essence of Essentialism



Choice: Billie Ward, flickr.com

We have **choice**:

"I have to" ➠

"I choose to"

The essence of Essentialism



Sensitive Noise, Milos Milosovic, flickr.com

There is a lot of **Noise:**

"It all matters" ➠

"Only a few really matter"

The essence of Essentialism



Fantastic formations in Lower Antelope Canyon, Frank Kovalchek, flickr.com

See the **trade-off:**

"I can do both" ➠

"I can do anything, but not everything"

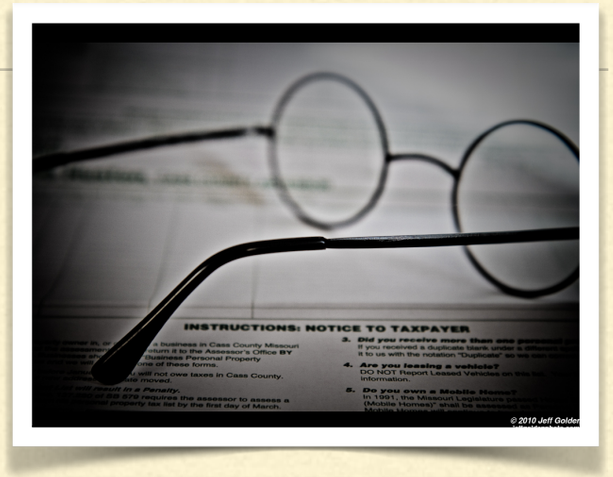
Steps

- **Cut the trivial many.**
  - Say no often.
- **Have clarity.**
  - Clarity of intent and mind to be able to say no.
- **Explore a lot.**
  - This is where clarity comes from.
  - Usually missed or ignored.



Steps, pawpaw67, flickr.com

Reading Research Papers



Read The Fine Print, jeff_golden, flickr.com

- Skim many many papers.
  - 5 minutes time max.
  - Go through title, and abstract; skim the intro, section titles, and conclusion.
- Select few (5-6 for a course project) to read with more care.
  - One hour maximum.
  - Focus on big picture (ignore details); pay attention to the story, figures, and the flow.
- Select 1-2 papers and read them in depth.
  - 4-5 hours.
  - You should know how to reproduce the results (e.g. proofs).

Writing Academic Papers



Writing Tools, Pete O'Shea, flickr.com

- Exploration is the secret key here.
  - You explore by writing, and revising.
- Start with an outline (skeleton).
  - Includes your section titles, and one sentence for each paragraph.
  - Revise the outline, over and over, until you are happy.
- Finally write the whole paper.
  - And then revise some more!

Your Future Career

- First: explore, explore, explore
  - Take different courses, do internships, attend events…
- Find your passion through exploring
  - It's usually not a love at first sight. :)
- Then, focus and narrow down
  - And get deeper into that area

Read The Fine Print, jeff_golden, flickr.com

References

[1] G. McKeown, Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less, 1st edition. Crown Business, 2014.

[2] S. Keshav, “How to read a paper,” SIGCOMM Computer Communication Reviews, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 83–84, 2007.