



The How-To Manual That Anyone Can Write or Edit

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How to Become a Philosopher

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Have you ever thought you could be just like Aristotle - if you just had the right push? Well, here it is. These are instructions on how to become the philosopher you have always wanted to be.

Steps


1. Think about things outside your normal range of thought, like the future of civilization and what creates meaning in life. Be the source of your own investigation. Since you're always available to yourself, any line of investigation about yourself (and there can be many) allows you to always make *some* progress. Consider the basis for what you believe. Why do you believe what you [believe](#)? Start from scratch and identify your reasoning.
2. [Write](#) down what you think about these subjects, including ideas you think you shouldn't write down (possibly because you think others may think they are stupid). While you may not be arriving at any striking conclusions, you will be exposing your own assumptions to yourself. You will probably marvel at how silly some of your assumptions can be, and in the process you will mature.
3. Re-write your ideas more formally and let others read your work, so you can get others to hear your ideas. You can ask [friends](#), relatives, [teachers](#), or classmates if they could offer some thoughts on your work, or you can post your writings online (through a website, a blog, or a message board) and look for responses there.
4. Engage in any [debate](#) possible. This will increase your ability to think freely. Keep in mind however, that you are *not* engaging in intellectual Olympics. There will always be someone who knows something better than you, and arrogance will stop you dead. You will need a healthy measure of humility.
5. Read philosophy copiously, learning new questions and problems to think about and past solutions, and their criticisms. Pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree in philosophy is a good way to structure these studies, but many great philosophers were also self-taught.

- Pursue philosophy as a career by acquiring a doctorate in philosophy and getting a professorship at a university. This can be highly competitive, expensive, and challenging, but getting paid to think can be extremely rewarding.

Tips

- As George Bernard Shaw said: “If you have an [apple](#) and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.” Don't be scared of having your ideas stolen by others when you share it with them. Having people hear your ideas will spark criticism and contribution within them, only strengthening your own thoughts and counter-argumentation.



- Don't be afraid to philosophically challenge *anything*  Assumptions are the bane of philosophy and of fresh, intelligent thought. Never stop asking "why?"
- Don't hesitate to argue positions that are the opposite of what you believe. Being able to see as many sides of an issue as possible is an excellent [intellectual](#) exercise. A supreme philosopher can (and probably will) challenge even the most basic beliefs and ideals the human race stands for without [fear](#) of [criticism](#).

Warnings

- Don't be afraid to voice a radical [opinion](#). But letting its novelty and originality turn into arrogance will only blind you from seeing the validity of more conservative ideas, thus destroying philosophy, which is centered around questioning and finding the truth, not around satisfying your desires.
- You need to be able to accept criticism, and work with it. As a philosopher, you will have a lot of criticism. This is because you are one of those radical thinkers who make the ideas rather than just agree with them.
- By philosophizing, you will mature, so much so that you may outgrow friends. This is normal, though it can be isolating. If you like, you can try to share your conclusions, or even your works-in-progress so that you aren't so isolated, but you will need to accept that many (perhaps most) people live unexamined lives.

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