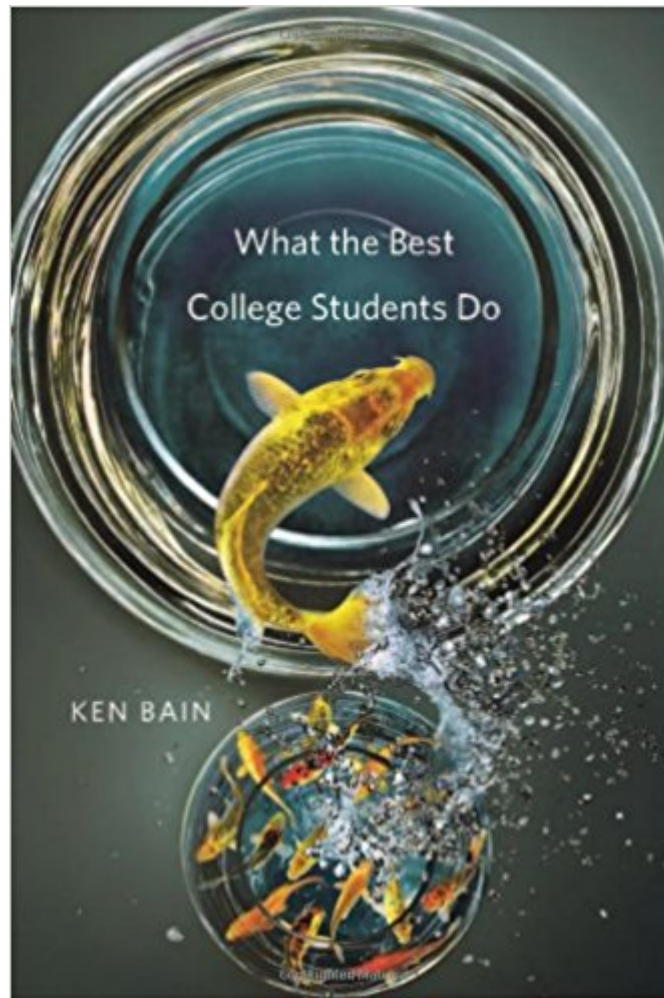




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# What The Best College Students Do



## Synopsis

The author of the best-selling book *What the Best College Teachers Do* is back with more humane, doable, and inspiring help, this time for students who want to get the most out of college—and every other educational enterprise, too. The first thing they should do? Think beyond the transcript. The creative, successful people profiled in this book—college graduates who went on to change the world we live in—aimed higher than straight A's. They used their four years to cultivate habits of thought that would enable them to grow and adapt throughout their lives. Combining academic research on learning and motivation with insights drawn from interviews with people who have won Nobel Prizes, Emmys, fame, or the admiration of people in their field, Ken Bain identifies the key attitudes that distinguished the best college students from their peers. These individuals started out with the belief that intelligence and ability are expandable, not fixed. This led them to make connections across disciplines, to develop a meta-cognitive understanding of their own ways of thinking, and to find ways to negotiate ill-structured problems rather than simply looking for right answers. Intrinsically motivated by their own sense of purpose, they were not demoralized by failure nor overly impressed with conventional notions of success. These movers and shakers didn't achieve success by making success their goal. For them, it was a byproduct of following their intellectual curiosity, solving useful problems, and taking risks in order to learn and grow.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I picked up this book in pursuit of straight A's. What I got instead was a chance to completely change the way I view education and learning. The goal of this book is not to teach you how to

make the grade (although there is advice for doing that at the end of the book) but to show you a process and viewpoint of education that leads to growth and success in life after school. Although the book is not perfect it did change my life, and perhaps save a doomed to fail college career. Here are some of the main things I liked and disliked about the book. Liked: (note the length of discussion of each of these topics varies)-How it encourages learning, growth, self discovery and curiosity over success and jumping through hoops (grades)-Encourages one to take control of your own education.

I had high hopes for this book, as it came highly recommended by a friend and I'm interested in the genre of achievement/self-improvement books. Unfortunately, this book was a let down. Save you money and read more helpful and interesting books (see my recommendations below).

**WHAT THE BOOK IS ABOUT** The central thesis of this book is: "Focus on growth and learning, rather than fixating on exam scores". As someone who works and teaches in higher education, I would agree with this idea. The best students that I have taught do this: they have a curiosity about things which drives their learning and pushes them to acquire a deeper understanding. They then do well because they have a deeper understanding.

**WHAT THE BOOK IS NOT: SUBSTANTIVE** Ken Bain spins the previous two sentences into a short book. Unfortunately, the book is short not because he is a master of argument (although the book is well written) but because there is very little substance in it. Most of his evidence, if it can be called that, comes from anecdotal stories about a few people who he has interviewed. He cites very little in the way of rigorous studies to back up his claims.

**WHAT THE BOOK IS NOT: FULL OF ADVICE** There's very little in the way of hard advice in this book, aside from a few suggestions in one chapter. This book gets two stars because it's well written and not entirely devoid of merit. But get it from your college library rather than buying it. Save your money and spend it on some of these other books:

I read "What the Best College Students Do" from the perspective of an educator with the goal of finding new ways to help stimulate and energize my students' to think critically and creatively. I wanted to help my students value their learning experience in a more transformative, and ultimately more useful way than simply getting good grades for the sake of enhancing GPA's. The key to any transformational process of this type is to have students embrace attitudinal behaviors that inspire persistent engagement of their innate intellectual curiosity. A by-product of exercising this personal choice is ultimately reflected in ancillary benefits to the community and society at-large. Any book that effectively describes how to achieve these outcomes is certainly a welcome addition to the

advancement of Education and its purpose. In "What the Best College Students Do", author and educator Ken Bain provides insights into ways to help students think critically about their own learning experiences. It tells a number of true anecdotes revealing how successful students used curiosity, discovery, and a willingness to risk failure. Some of the consistent themes are the pursuit of a life purpose, embracing interdisciplinary education, and achieving an enduring commitment to intellectual and personal growth. These true stories of perseverance, adaptation, and triumph were inspiring to read. The book is written in an informal and interesting writing style that students will relate to while also providing research-based conclusions that will appeal to educators and scholars.

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