

Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered

by Austin Kleon · Language: EN

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Overview

Show Your Work! is a practical guide for creative people who want to share their process and build an audience without self-promotional sleaze. Austin Kleon argues that creativity is not a solitary genius act but a collaborative, ongoing conversation. He encourages readers to think of themselves as amateurs who are constantly learning, to document their work in small pieces, and to share those pieces generously with others. The book is structured around ten short, punchy chapters, each offering a specific tactic or mindset shift, from "You don't have to be a genius" to "Go offline." Kleon's main argument is that by showing your work—the sketches, the failures, the questions—you invite others into your process, which can lead to opportunities, connections, and a more fulfilling creative life.

The book is not just about self-promotion; it's about building a community around your work. Kleon emphasizes that the goal is not to be famous but to be known for something, to be findable, and to connect with people who care about what you do. He draws on examples from artists, writers, and musicians, and he uses his own experience as a cartoonist and author to illustrate his points. The book matters because it offers a humane, sustainable alternative to the relentless self-marketing that often feels necessary in the digital age. It's a call to be open, generous, and curious, and to treat your creative practice as a gift to others, not just a private pursuit. In a world where attention is scarce, Kleon shows that the most effective way to get discovered is to be genuinely useful and interesting, not to shout the loudest.

Key Takeaways

- You don't need to be a genius; you just need to be an amateur who is willing to learn in public and share your process.
- Document your work in small, shareable pieces—like sketches, notes, and behind-the-scenes shots—and post them regularly.
- Share something every day, even if it's imperfect; consistency and volume matter more than perfection.
- Teach what you know to attract an audience; people love to learn and will appreciate your generosity.

- Don't be afraid to show your failures and unfinished work; they make you relatable and invite collaboration.
- Build a network of people you admire and want to help, not just people who can help you.
- Embrace the 'stock and flow' model: share both the ongoing flow of your daily work and the stock of your best, most polished pieces.
- Take time to go offline and recharge; your best ideas come from quiet, focused time away from the noise.

Chapter Summaries

You Don't Have to Be a Genius

Kleon challenges the myth of the lone genius, arguing that creativity is always a collaboration with the past and with others. He encourages readers to embrace being an amateur, someone who is passionate and willing to learn in public. The chapter emphasizes that you don't need to be an expert to share your work; you just need to be a student of your craft. By sharing your process, you invite others to learn with you, and you create a community around your interests. The key is to be open, curious, and generous with what you know.

Think Process, Not Product

Share Something Small Every Day

Open Up Your Cabinet of Curiosities

Teach What You Know

Don't Turn into Human Spam

Learn to Take a Punch

Sell Out

Stick Around

Go Offline

Themes

- Sharing process over product
- Building community through generosity
- Embracing the amateur mindset
- Consistency and daily practice
- Balancing online and offline life

- Overcoming fear of criticism

Notable Quotes

- "You don't have to be a genius. You just have to be an amateur who is willing to learn in public." — From the first chapter, 'You Don't Have to Be a Genius,' where Kleon argues that sharing your learning process is more important than being an expert.
- "The best way to get started on the path to sharing your work is to think about what you want to learn, and make a commitment to learning it in front of others." — From the first chapter, encouraging readers to embrace the amateur mindset and share their learning journey.
- "Share what you love, and the people who love the same things will find you." — From the chapter 'Open Up Your Cabinet of Curiosities,' about sharing your inspirations to attract like-minded people.
- "If you want to be a writer, you have to write. If you want to be an artist, you have to make art. If you want to be a musician, you have to make music. And then you have to share it." — From the introduction or early chapters, emphasizing the necessity of both making and sharing your work.
- "The work doesn't speak for itself. You have to speak for it." — From the introduction or early chapters, arguing that you must actively share and explain your work to get discovered.
- "Don't be afraid to be an amateur. The word amateur comes from the Latin word amare, which means to love." — From the first chapter, redefining 'amateur' as someone who does something for love, not for money.
- "You can't control the response to your work. You can only control the work itself." — From the chapter 'Learn to Take a Punch,' about dealing with criticism and focusing on what you can control.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is *Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered about?*

It's a practical guide for creative people who want to share their process and build an audience. Austin Kleon argues that by documenting and sharing your work—sketches, failures, and questions—you invite others into your creative life, which can lead to opportunities and connections. The book offers ten specific strategies, from sharing something small daily to teaching what you know, all aimed at helping you get discovered without resorting to aggressive self-promotion.

Is *Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered* worth reading?

Yes, especially if you're a creative professional or hobbyist who wants to build an audience or network. It's short, engaging, and full of actionable advice. Kleon's approach is refreshingly humane and practical, avoiding the hype of typical self-promotion guides. Many readers find it motivating and return to it for a boost. If you're already familiar with Kleon's previous book, 'Steal Like an Artist,' this is a natural next step.

How does *Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered* end?

Spoiler: The book ends with a chapter called 'Go Offline,' which reminds readers to disconnect from the digital world and recharge. Kleon emphasizes that while sharing your work online is important, you also need time for quiet, focused thinking. He suggests taking walks, reading, and having real-world conversations. The final message is that a sustainable creative life requires a balance between sharing and living, and that your best ideas often come when you step away from the screen.

Who should read *Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered*?

This book is for anyone who creates—artists, writers, designers, musicians, programmers, or even entrepreneurs—and wants to share their work with a wider audience. It's especially useful for those who feel uncomfortable with self-promotion or who are just starting out and don't know how to get noticed. It's also great for people who want to build a community around their interests or who need a nudge to start sharing their process. The advice is universal and easy to apply.

How long does it take to read *Show your work: 10 ways to share your creativity and get discovered*?

The book is about 224 pages, but it's a quick read with lots of illustrations and short chapters. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes roughly 2 to 3 hours to finish. Many readers finish it in a single sitting or over a weekend. The chapters are concise, so you can also dip in and out as needed. It's designed to be a fast, inspiring read that you can return to for a boost.