

How do you learn new things outside of formal school?

Safa = BLUE

Gizelle = GREEN

Sedar = ORANGE

Q1: How do you intentionally learn new things outside of formal school?

Gizelle: Depending on the topic I like to use online educational courses. For example, if I wanted to learn something in Math I would use Khan Academy or if I wanted to learn a new language I would use Duolingo. It helps me keep track of my progress and I can always refer back to it. It also teaches me how I would be learning if I was in a school setting. If it's a topic that I need more understanding of I would typically read books or articles on it. Like doing a qualitative study on it, if I break it down into simple terms it helps me gain a better understanding. If it is something that involves physical movement I like to practice doing it. If I want to learn how to cook a specific dish I would watch videos and read recipes and then try it out by following directions and creating the dish. The best way to learn something new is by teaching someone else about it. That makes me feel like I have acquired the right knowledge and I'm able to use it.

Safa: Thanks to the many resources and technological advancements we have today, intentional learning is fast, convenient, and at our fingertips. For most cases and situations, I use an online search engine such as Google. Intentional learning is learning that is, as the name states, intentional in regards to purpose and motive. The resource or platform I choose for intentional learning depends on the concept and purpose for learning. Traditional books, online resources, innovative technologies and digital applications, etc. are all examples of resources and platforms available for the average learner, like myself, to take advantage of while on a learning journey.

Sedar: I think it depends on the topic. Usually, I like to use educational courses like, for example, if I want to learn something in math, I will use Khan Academy because they are videos that teachers have recorded themselves. And they help breakdown problems and teach students how to solve math problems. So, I would use something like that. Or you know, right now I'm learning a new language. I'm trying to learn Italian, and I'm using the app called Duolingo. And in this app, it's very self-paced. It's independent, and it helps me kind of like, keep track of where I'm at in my process. And I can always refer back if I forget a vocabulary or anything. They have options there. It also teaches me kind of like how I would be learning in a formal school setting which I benefit from that myself. If there's another topic that I need more information on, I

would have to read up on it, read books, articles especially scholarly articles, because I know they have done their research. It's kind of like doing your own qualitative study when you're teaching yourself, because you have to find the resources that are correct with information, and you have to find a way that you're able to teach yourself. But if, like, let's say something like a physical movement that I have to learn, or a game that I have to learn. Usually, a YouTube video would help me if I want to learn something new. I love to cook. So, if I want to learn a new recipe, I'm going to look up When they write it down like the recipe. And I'm also going to look for videos that I can reference and watch someone actually do it. But I just have to make sure that they have the required knowledge to teach me. Yeah, I think every topic is very different for me. Like with math, I need videos, I need something. I prefer a teacher teaching me because I'm not really good at teaching myself the topics that I'm not knowledgeable on.

Q2: How do you unintentionally learn new things outside of formal school?

Gizelle: I learn best through experiences. Maybe having conversations with knowledgeable people on the topic can help me gain a better understanding. I like to question and see why people choose their answers. This also helps me learn about their way of thinking. Also, listening to podcasts or on social media I tend to learn about different topics that interest me. Sometimes it helps to observe something to learn about it. Usually, at work, I like to observe teachers' classroom management styles or how they introduce difficult topics to their students so I can use them in my class. I like to see what works and what doesn't.

Safa: As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn." Unintentional learning occurs when one does not have a specific intention to learn, but is provided with the opportunity. Telling me is not sufficient enough; I need to learn through observation and involvement.

Sedar: Unintentionally, most likely I would learn through experience. Maybe I would have a conversation with someone that I know that is knowledgeable on that. Or maybe I ask questions about the topic. Listening to podcasts I've learned a lot through listening. And social media, you know, has lots of different topics that interest me. And I just sat there and I could watch videos. And I'm not really thinking that I'm learning. I'm not really going out of my way to study that topic but it is something that I do unintentionally. I like to observe teachers with their classroom management, to see how they introduce difficult topics, so that I can practice on my own and use the same ones in my classroom. So definitely through like experience. I love to see people do

things so that I can see whether it works or not, or and if I can repeat it kind of like an owl right like a child likes to copy and repeat. That's me!

Q3: What would you say is your learning style?

Giselle: I think I am a mixture of a couple of learning styles. Visual learning is my top pick for a style of learning because I am able to have an image of the new information. From there I can break down the new information and arrange it with visuals that are familiar to me. Writing and reading new information also helps me learn and process the information. I think connecting my hand movement with retaining the information helps me. This style would also connect with kinesthetic learning. I like to do things physically and practice with the new information given. This helps me retain the information and recall it with the physical memory that I create when putting it into practice.

Safa: If I had to choose one particular learning style that I believe to be a representation of how I learn, it would have to be the visual learning style. In addition to visual cues, pictures, and videos, I need to see and observe aspects of whatever it is that I am learning.

Orange: I think I'm a mixture between a visual learner because I definitely have to see stuff so that my brain can break up the new information like anchor charts, graphs. They help me understand information better, and then I think I would. I benefit more from writing things down, like writing and reading information when my brain connects. When my hand connects with my brain, it helps me remember, like retain the information. But yeah, I would say, I'm in a mixture of those two.

Q4: Which online platform do you find yourself using the most? (most convenient, useful, etc.)

Gizelle: TikTok. I can go into details with this one. Haha!

Other than Google's search engine, I would have to say that TikTok is the most useful and convenient online learning platform that I turn to for a wide array of topics and needs ranging from recipes to reviews and local, national, and international news and even travel itineraries can be found and presented to learners in a straightforward manner that is relatable and easy to understand!

Sedar: This is going to be very controversial, but I am obsessed with TikTok. I don't know if you're on the app. It's addicting. You have to be careful. Okay, so let me summarize TikTok as short as I can. So, TikTok are short videos like a minute or two minutes the maximum. And

they're just videos that can contain information. Let's say, you want to learn about a disease. It takes a two-minute video and it'll explain what the disease is, the symptoms and all that. I use TikTok to learn new centers for my classroom. A Teacher goes on there and they show you how they do their center. So, I kind of get an idea and I start brainstorming to see what I want to learn. Sometimes, I watch it because there's funny videos there. I like to cook. So, I learn like, it's two minutes. It's like a process of just a recipe very quickly. And then, if you want to have the full recipe, they usually like to put links up for like a YouTube channel or what not. But it's very addicting. It's like super. And like, I can be there for hours, that on my phone I have to put a lock. I have like an hour, a whole day. That's my limit. I can only do an hour, and then my phone locks the app for me until tomorrow. Oh, you should give it a try. I know Facebook has. What not, butler. Some things are called reels that they're like short videos of stuff. So, Facebook kind of has what TikTok has. It's just, I guess. I mean, I feel like everything goes on TikTok first, like anything that you're going to see on Facebook was already on TikTok. But you should try it out on Facebook. I know they have, like, an option to see reels. And they're literally like 1 min videos on a topic.

Q5: How valid or trustworthy would you consider information outside of a formal school setting to be?

Gizelle: Since a lot of my information comes from social media I am aware that I have to be careful. When I see something interesting or new I look for other sources that confirm the information. Even reading the comments I can get a jist if the information is valid or not. Other people who doubt the information usually comment and will tell people where they got their information. Its like factcheck.org. If I get information from a scholarly article I usually know that it will be a reliable source since research has been done. I think with any information even in a formal school setting should be questioned if theres any doubt. Some information is solid and doesn't require questioning but majority we have to find valid resources and put things into perspective.

Safa: Credibility, bias, reliability, and accuracy are factors that impact the trustworthiness of an informal school setting. That being said, I believe that crowdsourcing via social media platforms can be trustworthy to a certain extent.

Sedar: So, since I get my information from social media, absolutely not valid at all. I have to like when I see something interesting or new, I look for other resources that can confirm that that information is real, like. I even read the comments just to get information whether or not like, hey, did you see this somewhere else? Is this? Is this accurate or not? I would think that it's better to learn new information in a formal setting because you're using reliable sources like we use textbooks, scholarly articles like I know we use it a lot during our Program. So, I think I know I have to be careful with the information that I learn informally, because it might not be accurate. So, I have to do my extra search on whether or not it's real. Especially with AI. Now you can't even like now sometimes you can't even tell if the video is real or not, it looks so real. You believe. But with AI, I've seen some videos where I'm like, did that really happen? But they use AI for it.

Q6: Which do you prefer: formal school settings or informal independent learning? Follow up with: Why do you think this is so?

Gizelle: Formal school setting. Structure and discipline is there. Without it I am responsible for ensuring to take the steps to acquire the information. In school the syllabus is outlining everything that will be covered to ensure I learn about the topic in full details. That outline is very important in learning because you can see the new topic broken down and see what's expected from you within the process of learning. I love To-Do Lists. They help me keep myself organized and guide me. They show me where I'm suppose to be and what I'm working on at all time Independent learning can lead to abstract thinking which can lead to wrong answers. Being taught something can help break down concepts. Sometimes teaching myself can become overwhelming and when I have questions it'll sometimes feel like I'm stuck. I think that physical presence you get when you're learning in a school setting really helps to eliminate distractions and answer questions you might have in the process of learning new things.

Safa: The consistency, structure, and reliability of formal school settings is unmatched. Despite that informal independent learning can be tailored to one's specific needs and learning styles, it is also applicable to the formal school settings during and after learning times. Studying is something that students of both formal and informal learning settings take part in, and with a formal learning environment, you are allocated time to study and review. A dedicated learner can incorporate independent learning during this time to help master the skills and content provided in the formal lessons.

Sedar: Personally, I would prefer a formal school setting. I need structure and discipline when it comes to learning. Without it, I'm responsible to ensure that I get the acquired information correctly, and I think that's a lot of anxiety for myself. In a school, the syllabus is outlined. Everything that we're going to cover is there. And they're going to ensure that I learn everything that I need to learn for that topic. And I benefit from that. I like to do lists. That keeps me organized, and it guides me and I am more of an effective learner at the end because I have that structure. I think that informal learning or like independent learning can lead to thinking abstractly, which can lead me to the wrong answers. So, I do feel like I do need that teacher, that Professor, that can guide me when I have a question because when I'm teaching myself and I have these questions, I have to go and look for the answers myself, and I'm scared that I might not get the credible information that I need.

Q7: What's your studying method to help with the retention of information?

Safa: I try to break down the topic I am studying into bullets or points to help me better understand the content. I also repeat important pieces of information out loud and try to teach others about it. Teaching the lesson, or simply sharing the newfound information helps the human mind retain the data.

Sedar: I think just breaking down the topic. For example, you know our questions that we got for our exam that we're going to have on Monday. What I do with that is, I broke it up into sections that I understand that I know. Just so that I can connect them in a way where I can remember the information. And then it's easier for me to retain everything that I just wrote down. It's definitely about breaking the hard questions and like breaking into sections that I'm comfortable with and I know and then I can study a bit more.

Q8: What are the disadvantages of formal and informal learning?

Gizelle: Formal learning does require a schedule which may cause some issues with people. Everyone learns differently sometimes following those schedules can become difficult or it might not reach certain interest. With formal learning comes tests. I myself am not a good test taker. Even when I know the information I fold under pressure. Instead of seeing my potential I am overshadowed by a score that doesn't represent me. Informal learning is based on your motivation. The challenging part is to keep yourself accountable. Virtual learning is difficult for me. I have to be very disciplined with my schedule and tasks. I like to finish things as soon as I

can so I can review it on time or even have some time to myself. Some weeks that's not possible which gives me anxiety.

Sedar: Formal learning does require a schedule which may cause some issues with people. I think everyone learns differently and it takes some people a little bit more time to learn the information. So, trying to follow that schedule can be frustrating and discouraging. With formal learning comes tests. I know I'm not a good test taker. Even when I know the information I fall under pressure. So, I can see that being an issue for someone who doesn't like to take tests or isn't good at it. Instead of people seeing my potential, I'm overshadowed by a grade that I'm going to get on the test that I know I didn't perform well. And I think in informal learning you're going to need that motivation. And if you don't have that motivation, you're going to fail. You need to push yourself, because no one's going to be there to keep track of you, of your goals. But that's the challenging part to keep yourself accountable. I know during virtual learning I am struggling because it's all about you and your time, and you have to figure it out. So, you have to be disciplined. Someone who is not a good time manager they're not going to succeed because timing is key when you're teaching yourself in an informal setting. I like to finish things as soon as I can. So, that's why formal settings work for me because there's a deadline, there's expectation which helps me.

Q9: Who do you think benefits the most from formal school settings?

Gizelle: Children, people with learning disabilities, people who don't have the resources to teach themselves.

Safa: While formal school settings aren't the only settings for learning, they tend to benefit many people of different ages, genders, and backgrounds, especially those who require consistency and routine. Formal school settings help learners by exposing them to a variety of different school subjects and topics, providing them with a fixed schedule, reliable and accredited curricula, and guaranteed professionals to deliver course content.

Sedar: I think children. Children when they're starting to learn, they need foundation. They need structure. So, I think they're the ones that are best in informal settings, so they can learn efficiently. Also, people with disabilities since they're going to need that extra help, that resource. They would benefit more from a formal setting - something that they wouldn't get as in an informal setting. Also, people who don't have access to resources. Sometimes, you're trying to learn

something and if you don't have the criteria, the curriculum it'll be very difficult for you to understand and learn.