

Connecting the Dots

Comprehensive Guide & Examination Material • Glen Tutorials

About the Speaker: Steve Jobs (1955–2011)

Steve Jobs was an iconic American entrepreneur, business magnate, inventor, and industrial designer. As the co-founder, Chairman, and CEO of Apple Inc., he pioneered the personal microcomputer revolution of the 1970s and 1980s. This lesson is compiled from his legendary Stanford University Commencement Address, where he shared three pivotal life stories.

1. Introduction to the Lesson

Connecting the Dots is an inspiring, autobiographical address delivered by Steve Jobs to graduating college students. Instead of delivering a dry academic speech, Jobs relates three direct, raw stories of his personal journey: **Connecting the Dots**, **Love and Loss**, and **Death**. Through these tales, he outlines a philosophy of life based on trusting intuition, embracing failure, and recognizing the finality of human life as a force for positive change.

2. Story 1: Connecting the Dots

The Decision to Drop Out

Steve Jobs joined Reed College, but **dropped out after 6 months**. Because his biological mother wanted him to have a university education and his adoptive, working-class parents were spending all their hard-earned savings on it, he felt guilty taking required classes that held no value for him. Dropping out allowed him to exit boring classes and "drop in" on subjects that sparked his curiosity.

The Early Struggles

Leaving structured college life meant giving up its comforts. Jobs lived on friends' room floors, returned empty **Coke bottles for 5-cent deposits** to buy food, and walked **seven miles** across town every Sunday night to get his only square meal of the week at the **Hare Krishna temple**.

The Calligraphy Connection

Free from standard requirements, Jobs attended a calligraphy class at Reed, which offered the best instruction in the country. He studied **serif and sans-serif typefaces** and learned what makes great typography beautiful.

At the time, this knowledge had no apparent real-world application. However, ten years later, while designing the first **Macintosh computer**, Jobs integrated this typography into the Mac. It became the first computer with beautiful, proportionally spaced, multiple fonts.

Cause-and-Effect Relationship (Connecting the Dots)

Cause: Jobs trusted his intuition to drop out of Reed College and randomly study a beautiful, non-required calligraphy class.

Effect: The Macintosh computer got multiple fonts, which Windows subsequently copied, permanently changing typographic standards on all personal computers globally.

Section Key Takeaway: *You cannot connect the dots of your life looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. You must trust your gut, destiny, life, or karma.*

3. Story 2: Love and Loss

The Rise and the Fall of Apple

At age 20, Jobs and his partner Steve Wozniak ("Woz") started Apple in a family garage. Within 10 years, Apple grew from a two-man operation into a massive **\$2 billion company** with over 4,000 employees. However, following a disagreement with the board of directors, Jobs was **fired at age 30**. This public rejection was absolutely devastating.

The Rebirth: Next, Pixar, and Personal Love

Despite the trauma, Jobs realized he still loved his work. He let go of the pressure of maintaining a high-flying success profile and embraced the **lightness of being a beginner again**.

During the next five incredibly creative years, he:

- Started a new hardware and software company called **NeXT**.
- Founded **Pixar**, which became the world's most successful animation studio.
- Met and fell in love with **Laurene**, who became his wife.

Eventually, Apple bought NeXT, returning Jobs to the company he founded, and the technology developed at NeXT became the heart of Apple's modern-day renaissance.

Section Key Takeaway: *Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Do not lose faith. The only way to do great work is to truly love what you do. If you haven't found it, keep looking. Do not settle.*

4. Story 3: Death

The Diagnosis

Jobs was diagnosed with a severe pancreatic tumor. His doctors believed the cancer was incurable, advising him to "get his affairs in order" (a medical euphemism for preparing to die within months). However, a biopsy later revealed it was a rare, surgery-curable form of cancer. Jobs underwent the surgery and recovered.

The Lesson of Mortality

This close encounter with death crystallized Jobs' view on time. He warned the graduates that their time is highly limited, urging them not to waste it living someone else's life. He warned against being trapped by **dogma** (living with the results of other people's thinking) and emphasized that we must not let other people's opinions drown out our inner voice.

Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish

This was the famous farewell message of *The Whole Earth Catalogue*, a publication Jobs loved in his youth.

- **Stay Hungry:** Keep striving for more, constantly looking to learn and improve.
- **Stay Foolish:** Keep an open, humble mind, never assuming you know everything.

5. Key Vocabulary and Textual Terms

Textual Term	Contextual Meaning
Dropped out of	Discontinued or left school or college prematurely.
Drop-in	A student who casually attends college lectures without being officially enrolled in the degree.
Dorm	Short for dormitory; a building containing sleeping rooms for college students.
Typography	The art, design, and appearance of printed textual matter.
Devastating	Causing severe shock, overwhelming grief, and emotional distress.
Renaissance	A rebirth, revival, or major transition leading to new growth.
Dogma	Unquestioned beliefs or rules set by others that people are expected to accept blindly.

6. Common Student Pitfalls & Exam Tips

Avoid These Common Mistakes in Exams:

- **Incorrect Timelines:** Do not confuse the timelines. Jobs dropped out of college at 19/20, started Apple at 20, got fired at 30, and spent 5 years building NeXT and Pixar.
- **Literal interpretation of "Dots":** "Dots" represent discrete life events (like the calligraphy class or being fired). Do not define them physically; they are metaphorical experiences.
- **Misspelling Key Terms:** Always spell "*NeXT*", "*Macintosh*", and "*Renaissance*" correctly to retain high presentation standards.

7. Steve Jobs' 10 Golden Life Rules (Compiled for Exams)

1. **Don't wait:** Act on your ideas immediately.
2. **Make your own reality:** Shape your surroundings through belief and hard work.
3. **Control everything you can:** Master the detail and user experience.
4. **Own your mistakes:** Admit failure quickly to learn from it.
5. **Know yourself:** Be clear on your core values.
6. **Leave the door open for the fantastic:** Welcome unexpected opportunities.
7. **Don't hold back:** Give 100% effort to your craft.
8. **Surround yourself with brilliance:** Build teams of 'A' players.
9. **Trust your instincts:** Have the courage to follow your heart.
10. **Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish:** Never stop learning, never lose your humility.