

# Learning from Observation and Study

Wooden's Wisdom — Volume 5 | Issue 237

August 02, 2023

<https://mailchi.mp/clinthurdle/wooden-wednesday-0xxvvk69lf?e=1e296d0947>

All of us would like to improve a little each day. One way to improve daily is to learn something new each day. In addition to listening, we can also learn by observation and study.

Coach Wooden described the opportunity to learn by observation this way:

We must be alert and alive and be observing constantly, seeing the things that are going on around us. Otherwise, we are going to miss so many things from which we could improve ourselves. We must not get lost in our own narrow tunnel vision and selfish ways. Abraham Lincoln once remarked: "I never met a person from whom I did not learn something; of course most of the time it was something not to do." But that's learning, just the same.

Coach used observation as one of his tools to learn how to coach. He gained his knowledge of basketball from his experience as a player and the wisdom of his coaches (Earl Warner, Glenn Curtiss and Piggy Lambert). As a college player, he interviewed opposing coaches to gain insight into their strategies. As a high school coach, he attended Frank Leahy's Notre Dame Football practices and learned time management.

Coach also used study as a means of improving his skills. At UCLA he took psychology classes to learn how to better interact with his players. After every season he sent out a research survey on a particular basketball topic to coaches who were outstanding in that field. Through the end of his career he attended every coaching clinic he could; always with an open mind, wanting to learn more. Although many considered him a "subject matter expert", he constantly sought more knowledge.

Denny Crum, a Hall of Fame coach from Louisville and former John Wooden assistant, felt one of Coach Wooden's greatest strengths was that: "He didn't feel he knew it all."

Coach was a voracious reader. His personal library had hundreds of books check marked and underlined in pencil with the lessons he was learning from each....

The range of people Coach learned from was wide: Abraham Lincoln, Mother Theresa, Lao Tse, a Chinese philosopher from 400 BC, Dwight Morrow, an American businessman and politician from the early 1900s, Viktor E. Frankl, Confucius, Ralph Waldo Emerson, St. Francis of Assisi, Winston Churchill, Gandhi, Benjamin Franklin and Harry Truman, just to name a few.

It is a great practice to keep a spiral notebook and at the end of each day, write *the date and here's what I learned new today*. If you are drawing a blank just Google *great ideas from* and put in one of the names listed above. You will quickly end your day on a positive note with a great idea.

Yours in Coaching,  
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