

10 Rules for Students and Teachers Popularized by John Cage

Avant-garde composer [John Cage](#) started out as a disciple of [Arnold Schoenberg](#). He greatly looked up to the exiled Austrian as a model of how a true artist ought to live. Cage, in turn, inspired generations of artists and composers both through his work – which incorporated elements of chance into his music – and through his teaching.

One of those whom he inspired was [Sister Corita Kent](#). An unlikely fixture in the Los Angeles art scene, the nun was an instructor at Immaculate Heart College and a celebrated artist who considered [Saul Bass](#), [Buckminster Fuller](#) and Cage to be personal friends.

In 1968, she crafted the lovely, touching [Ten Rules for Students and Teachers](#) for a class project. While Cage was quoted directly in Rule 10, he didn't come up with the list, as many website sites claim. By all accounts, though, he was delighted with it and did everything he could to popularize the list. Cage's lover and life partner [Merce Cunningham](#) reportedly kept a copy of it posted in his studio until his dying days. You can check the list out below:

RULE ONE: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student: Pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher: Pull everything out of your students.

RULE FOUR: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE FIVE: Be self-disciplined: this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE SIX: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE SEVEN: The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE EIGHT: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE NINE: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE TEN: We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities.

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything. It might come in handy later.