

1 Commencement Address by Steve Jobs
2 at the Stanford University, 2005 (Part 1)

3 I'm honored to be with you today for your
4 commencement from one of the finest
5 universities in the world. Truth be told, I
6 never graduated from college and this is
7 the closest I've ever gotten to a college
8 graduation. Today I want to tell you three
9 stories from my life. That's it. No big
10 deal. Just three stories.

11 The first story is about connecting the
12 dots.

13 I dropped out of Reed College after the
14 first 6 months, but then stayed around as
15 a drop-in for another 18 months or so
16 before I really quit. So why did I drop
17 out?

18 It started before I was born. My
19 biological mother was a young, unwed
20 college graduate student, and she
21 decided to put me up for adoption. She

22 felt very strongly that I should be
23 adopted by college graduates, so
24 everything was all set for me to be
25 adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife.
26 Except that when I popped out they
27 decided at the last minute that they
28 really wanted a girl. So my parents, who
29 were on a waiting list, got a call in the
30 middle of the night asking: "We've got an
31 unexpected baby boy; do you want
32 him?" They said: "Of course." My
33 biological mother found out later that my
34 mother had never graduated from
35 college and that my father had never
36 graduated from high school. She refused
37 to sign the final adoption papers. She
38 only relented a few months later when
39 my parents promised that I would
40 someday go to college. This was the
41 start in my life.

42 And 17 years later I did go to college.
43 But I naively chose a college that was
44 almost as expensive as Stanford, and all
45 of my working-class parents' savings

46 were being spent on my college tuition.
47 After six months, I couldn't see the value
48 in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do
49 with my life and no idea how college was
50 going to help me figure it out. And here I
51 was spending all of the money my
52 parents had saved their entire life. So I
53 decided to drop out and trust that it
54 would all work out OK. It was pretty
55 scary at the time, but looking back it was
56 one of the best decisions I ever made.
57 The minute I dropped out I could stop
58 taking the required classes that didn't
59 interest me, and begin dropping in on
60 the ones that looked far more
61 interesting.

62 It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a
63 dorm room, so I slept on the floor in
64 friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles
65 for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with, and
66 I would walk the 7 miles across town
67 every Sunday night to get one good
68 meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple.
69 I loved it. And much of what I stumbled

70 into by following my curiosity and
71 intuition turned out to be priceless later
72 on. Let me give you one example:

73 Reed College at that time offered
74 perhaps the best calligraphy instruction
75 in the country. Throughout the campus
76 every poster, every label on every
77 drawer, was beautifully hand
78 calligraphed. Because I had dropped out
79 and didn't have to take the normal
80 classes, I decided to take a calligraphy
81 class to learn how to do this. I learned
82 about serif and san serif typefaces,
83 about varying the amount of space
84 between different letter combinations,
85 about what makes great typography
86 great. It was beautiful, historical,
87 artistically subtle in a way that science
88 can't capture, and I found it fascinating.

89 None of this had even a hope of any
90 practical application in my life. But ten
91 years later, when we were designing the
92 first Macintosh computer, it all came

93 back to me. And we designed it all into
94 the Mac. It was the first computer with
95 beautiful typography. If I had never
96 dropped in on that single course in
97 college, the Mac would have never had
98 multiple typefaces or proportionally
99 spaced fonts. And since Windows just
100 copied the Mac, it's likely that no
101 personal computer would have them. If I
102 had never dropped out, I would have
103 never dropped in on this calligraphy
104 class, and personal computers might not
105 have the wonderful typography that they
106 do. Of course it was impossible to
107 connect the dots looking forward when I
108 was in college. But it was very, very
109 clear looking backwards ten years later.

110 Again, you can't connect the dots
111 looking forward; you can only connect
112 them looking backwards. So you have to
113 trust that the dots will somehow connect
114 in your future. You have to trust in
115 something — your gut, destiny, life,
116 karma, whatever. Because believing that

117 dots will connect down the road will give
118 you the confidence to follow your heart
119 even when it leads you off the well-worn
120 path.