

7. Queen's

In 1990, Elon Musk, seeking a balance between rigorous academics and a vibrant social life, chose Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, over Waterloo. At Queen's, Musk was placed in an international themed dormitory where he met Navaid Farooq, forming his first meaningful friendship outside his family. Both sharing interests in computer and board games, obscure history, and science fiction, they quickly became close friends. Musk's academic performance was strong in subjects like Business, Economics, Calculus, and Computer Programming, although he had room for improvement in Accounting, Spanish, and Industrial Relations, receiving B's in these areas. Despite this, Musk valued the collaborative and Socratic learning methods he engaged in at Queen's, which were preparatory for his future endeavors.

Musk was deeply engrossed in philosophical discussions and strategy games, finding both an intellectual and strategic challenge in the latter. Games like Diplomacy and Civilization allowed Musk to practice his negotiation, strategy, and tactical thinking, which would later become central to his business and innovation approaches. His mastery in reversing engineer game logic showcased his analytical prowess, evident in a class project simulation game focused on business strategy.

The text also recounts how Elon and his brother Kimbal leveraged their curiosity and networking skills to secure a summer job with Peter Nicholson, a top executive at Scotiabank, by literally cold-calling individuals they found intriguing from the newspaper. This initiative not only demonstrated their eagerness to learn and connect with established professionals but also resulted in a summer job offer for Elon in strategic planning, directly under Nicholson, marking an early foray into the world of business and strategy.

Elon Musk's time at Queen's University was formative, mixing academic achievements, the development of critical social and intellectual relationships, and the early demonstration of his distinctive approach to learning, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. His exploits, from winning strategy games to securing strategic internships, laid the groundwork for his future entrepreneurial endeavors, highlighting a blend of intellectual curiosity, strategic acumen, and the ability to leverage connections for practical opportunities.