

Author of a Wimpy Kid



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Jeff Kinney, author of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, grew up in Forestville, Maryland. His father had a government job working at the Pentagon in nearby Virginia and his mother worked in education. He has an older brother and sister, and a younger brother.

Jeff says that he had a very normal, very American childhood while growing up in a quiet town in Maryland. He says that's why he writes about normal, everyday things that happen in a family. Jeff's older siblings were in their teens, his younger brother was little and cute, and Jeff was stuck somewhere in the middle, much like Greg Heffley in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Jeff says his middle school experiences were very similar to those of his character Greg Heffley, too.

Jeff didn't always want to be a children's book author—what he really wanted to do was create comic strips. He got his first chance to write comic strips in college.

Author of a Wimpy Kid

Jeff went to the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland, which is only about 20 minutes away from Washington, DC. The university sits on a large, beautiful campus with rolling hills topped with impressive, colonial-style buildings. They are classically styled brick buildings with grand front stairs leading to a large entranceway framed by two tall, white columns.

The University of Maryland (or just “Maryland,” as the college students call it) publishes a well-known student newspaper called *The Diamondback*. The newspaper is named for the university’s mascot, a diamondback terrapin named Testudo. A diamondback terrapin is a turtle commonly found in and around the state of Maryland.

Jeff began creating a comic for *The Diamondback* called “Igdorf” in the early 1990s. Igdorf was the name of the comic strip’s main character, and he was kind of a nerdy dufus. Dufus is an old word from the 1980s and 1990s meaning dorky and kind of clumsy (and definitely not on fleek). The comic itself was pretty cute and definitely as clever and funny as any comic you might find in a national newspaper like *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*.

Jeff continued creating his *Igdorf* comic strip for *The Diamondback* until he graduated from Maryland with a degree in Computer Science. While being a computer geek is more of a star-studded, nerdtastic career choice nowadays (think Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg), back in the 1990s, it was still just plain nerdy. That is not to say that Jeff Kinney himself was a big nerd—I’ve never met the guy—but that he was definitely surrounded by nerds throughout the course of his education at Maryland. It seems that Jeff’s experiences in and around the Computer Science building may have a big influence on the characters and situations he created for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. For example, many people who study computer science love video games. Jeff admits that he used to be addicted to video games himself, just like Greg Heffley.



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After graduating college, Jeff tried to get his comic “Igdorf” syndicated, which means that he tried to get a newspaper to print it and pay him to write it. But none ever did. Then Jeff had the idea for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. He felt like his illustrations were much better suited for kids than for adults. He worked on the book for eight years before it got published. And he’s so glad he did! Today, Jeff has written a total of 16 Wimpy Kid books. They’ve been translated into many different languages and sold all over the world.

Jeff Kinney at a book signing in Israel. He signs Hebrew translations of his books for his fans.



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