

"Learning to learn - how to be an independent learner."

Independent learning is the gaining of skills by your own efforts. It does not require a tutor to teach you, but for you to gain knowledge from a number of sources. These sources can include the Internet, books, magazines, audiocassettes and videos. To be a successful independent learner you need...

Personal Organisation - To be able to organise yourself to allow and set aside time

Personal Discipline - To keep to the time you have allocated yourself and to complete the work on time

A good understanding of your learning methods, and so how best to learn the necessary information for you.

Spare time, or the ability to create time in which you can study and the willingness to put learning above other commitments.

The will to continue and a desire to achieve, and a mentality that will help.

Primarily the individual must have self-discipline and be able to keep to decisions made about the stages of work. A good independent learner requires organisation, and a timetabled program whereby certain goals will be met in the specified time. Regular learning, often in shorter sessions, and self-tests to highlight weak areas and so target learning required. Independent learning has a number of advantages over tutored learning. Independent learning can make much better use of resources and time and can allow for faster progression.

As an Independent learner each of the 4 following steps should be taken when creating a piece of work.

1. Planning a piece of work

- Identify what needs to be done to complete the activity
- What resources can be used?
- To what level the work needs to be completed

2. Undertaking the work

- Completing the task that has been set
- Noting new points and highlighting these
- Summarising the work into key points which are new and important

3. Reviewing the success or effectiveness of the work done

- Were the aims achieved?
- What was gained by the activity?
- Can another activity be devised to aid the understanding of complicated concepts?

4. Improving Technique in future

- Were time and resources well used?
- Were the resources appropriate, at a suitable level?
- Find what you learnt about self-management

An Independent learner needs to assume responsibility for their own learning, acquiring skills and strategies by the individual's own effort. Independent learners need to be keen, and so take every opportunity to learn, as they are motivated to do so

There are four different styles of learning. Each individual person will prefer one of these methods to another.

1. Activists

These people will try anything new, and approach it with enthusiasm. They tackle problems without bias and are willing to try something at least once.

2. Reflectors

These people will be cautious. They will collect data, information and will spend time considering an appropriate evaluation of the problem.

3. Theorists

They will rationally and logically come up with a suitable conclusion. They will use analytical skills, but need a purpose to aim too and find a task without a clear goal hard to motivate themselves for.

4. Pragmatists

They are keen to try out new ideas and will search for new activities and experiences. They learn best when there are links from one area to another, and they can see a clear path to follow from one goal to the next.

People can have trouble learning due to a misconception about their current ability, seeing things through a narrow view and seeing no need for change, because of fear or insecurity, they are unwilling to take risks, they have poor communication skills, they have had previous bad experiences, they find the area, environment or surroundings unsupportive to learning.

To learn efficiently you need the following skills:

- The ability to establish effectiveness criteria for yourself
- The ability to measure your own effectiveness
- The ability to identify your own learning needs
- The ability to plan personal learning
- The ability to take advantage of learning opportunities
- The ability to manage your own learning processes
- The ability to listen to others
- The capacity to accept help
- The ability to face unwelcome information
- The ability to take risks and tolerate anxiety
- The ability to analyse what other successful performers do
- The ability to know yourself
- The ability to share information with others
- The ability to review what has been learnt