

# Improve How You Learn

## From Reflection

Downloaded free from [www.michaelpearn.net](http://www.michaelpearn.net) (2006)

### Ten Steps to Effective Learning

In this Module you will be taken through the 10 steps to effective learning as they apply to your desire to improve the way you learn **from Reflection**. Steps 1 to 3 are designed to increase your motivation. The remaining steps are designed to help you succeed.

**1. Be clear about what it is you want to learn**

This step helps you clarify and define exactly what it is you are trying to learn and to what level of competence

**2. Be clear about why you want to learn**

This step helps you fully understand your reasons and the likely benefits to you of improving how you learn Assertion.

**3. Envision the end-point**

This step helps you imagine and visualise as concretely as possible having succeeded in achieving your learning goals.

**4. Create learning targets**

This step helps you formulate your learning goals in a practical way.

**5. Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed**

This step introduces you to the different approaches to learning that you can adopt (learning styles) and the different kinds of learning involved in learning to improve your learning.

**6. Explore tactics, tools, and techniques**

This step introduces you 10 Powerful Learning Tools, Tactics and Techniques you can use to improve the way you learn from Reflection. The exercises will help to *think* and deepen your understanding of the area you want to improve and actually suggests specific tasks you can *do* at your computer and away from it (in your work and life environment), to dramatically improve your capability.

### 7. Create a Personal Learning Plan

This step introduces you to a structured planning process to help ensure that you are clear about what you want to do and by when. The plan promotes commitment and the monitoring of progress.

### 8. Get going

This step helps you with the practicalities of starting to carry out your plan.

### 9. Keep going

This step helps you with the practicalities of keeping going especially in the face of disappointment, frustration, setbacks and pressure from other sources.

### 10. Celebrate success

This step encourages you to mark not only completion of the plan but key stages along the way. The message is simple. Give yourself the treat you promised yourself!

# 1 Be clear about what it is you want to learn



This module enables you to learn more effectively and more powerfully from **Reflecting and Reviewing**.

Possible objectives. Pick the ones that appeal most to you.

<b>Increase your learning skills generally</b>	
<b>Get a better understanding of the power and significance of reflection and review in the learning process</b>	
<b>You feel you could benefit from better reflection</b>	
<b>You feel you are too busy to stop and think</b>	
<b>Any other objectives that are important for you?</b>	



## **2 Be clear about why you want to improve how you learn from Reflection and Review**

<b>Why do you wish to improve in this area?</b>	
<b>Increased confidence</b>	
<b>Greater self esteem</b>	
<b>Admiration/respect from others</b>	
<b>Overcoming fear</b>	
<b>Overcoming frustration</b>	
<b>Sense of achievement</b>	
<b>Well-being</b>	
<b>Understand fully why certain things happen</b>	
<b>Greater sense of control</b>	

<b>Greater sense of balance in life</b>	
<b>Become less reactive</b>	
<b>Combat my tendency to react and move on too quickly</b>	
<b>Any other reasons?</b>	

## 3 Envision the end point



The next step is to imagine, as concretely and specifically as you can, that you have achieved your learning goals and picture yourself at the desired level of performance. Imagine yourself in a specific situation or scenario. Try and be as detailed as possible.

When? Weeks, months ahead?	
What will you be doing?	
What will you be saying?	
Where will you be doing this?	
How will you feel?	
How will others regard you?	

Can you imagine another situation or scenario?

When? Weeks, months ahead?	
What will you be doing?	

What will you be saying?	
Where will you be doing this?	
How will you feel?	
How will others regard you	

### Make a change shield



If you are that way inclined draw a picture of yourself successfully learning from Networks. Be creative, have fun with it. Try to capture the changes you want to see in yourself.

Create a Change Shield for yourself or better still with friends or colleagues at work. For guidance see [10 Steps to Improve Your Learning](#).



## 4 Create learning targets

Now the time has come to set formal learning targets. Learning targets are derived from the overall aim and

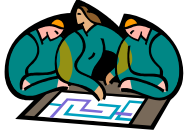
- Create greater precision
- Give you a sense of being in control and managing the process
- Help you monitor your own progress
- Give you the satisfaction of seeing progress
- Help you know when you have arrived



First you need to define your current level of performance

**In your own words describe your current level of performance**

**What aspects of your performance would you like to improve?**



Show your description to others whom you trust. See if they agree and add to or refine your assessment of yourself.

In terms of learning from **Reflection and Review** I plan to progress

**FROM**

- Absolute beginner (no real experience)
- Beginner (some experience)
- Intermediate (experienced but performance is unsatisfying)
- Advanced (on the whole competent but a few areas need improving)
- Mastery (able to teach others but still learning)

**TO**

- Absolute beginner (no real experience)
- Beginner (some experience)
- Intermediate (experienced but performance is unsatisfying)
- Advanced (on the whole competent but a few areas need improving)
- Mastery (able to teach others but still learning)



Think of some of the the things that will help indicate that you have achieved your goals

**I will know that I have improved from one level to the next because of....**

<b>Things I know</b>
<b>Things I can say or do</b>
<b>Qualifications achieved</b>
<b>I know I will be making progress if...</b>

These self-assessments are subjective but they help you be realistic and not try too much at one go.



## Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed

### Learning styles

In order to learn well you need to



- Have experiences and plenty of them
- Review and reflect on that experience
- Draw lessons and insights from the experience
- Plan to gain new experiences that result in improved performance

Most of us have strong preferences for one or more of four styles of learning. From your knowledge of yourself, do you know which your preferred learning styles are? If not, see the L2i Learning Styles Module.

<b>Activist</b>	This is me
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	Not really sure No idea
<b>Pragmatist</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea
<b>Theorist</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea
<b>Reflector</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea

If you are not sure about your preferred learning styles see [10 steps to improve your learning](#). If you have a strong preference for one or more of these modes that will indicate how you are likely to begin but it is important not to get stuck in one mode at the expense of the others.

## **6 Explore learning tactics, tools, and techniques**

### **Ten things you can do to improve your powers of Reflection and Review**



#### **1. Brainstorming reflection**

**What do you think are the potential benefits to you of effective reflection and review?**

**What are the potential disadvantages to you if you do not build effective reflection and review into your work/life?**

**For me, the implications are**

## 2. Understanding reflection

Reflection can be formal and informal, straightforward or elaborate.

At its heart lies a thinking process which



- Takes stock of what has or is happening
- Extracts lessons, pointers or insights and then
- Decides what if anything should be different, ideally leading to
- Action of some kind or another, and
- The process starts all over again.

It should be said that this is a particular concept of reflection as an integral part of a learning process. Other approaches to reflection embrace meditation and spirituality as an end in itself and as a source of well-being, which of course can be defined in a variety of ways.

We are reflecting and learning from experience most of the time, but most of this is done unconsciously. If we can make the process more conscious and more planned we can learn more powerful lessons and can extract more learning from experience in general and also from formal learning experiences such as courses.

Reading this and thinking about it is natural reflection.

### 3. Learn from the Greats



Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), *Reflections on the Human Condition*, 1973.

In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.

Victor Hugo (1802), *Les Miserables*, 1862

One is not idle because one is absorbed. There is both visible and invisible labour. To contemplate is to toil, to think is to do. The crossed arms work, the clasped hands act. The eyes upturned to heaven are an act of creation.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, 1798

With an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things

### 4. Hints and tips

The keys to successful reflection are

- Putting yourself in a relaxed frame of mind. It cannot be rushed or done when you are feeling tense or frustrated.
- Separating yourself in time from the experiences and the emotions involved.
- Using key questions which you can apply to your self as an individual (see below for suggestions).
- Using key questions which you can apply to yourselves as a group or team.
- Applying these key questions on a regular basis or at critical times.
- Writing down your conclusions, keeping them near you.

- Acting on the conclusions.
- Not making the process burdensome. Do it when you feel in the mood. If you want to make it a discipline and a commitment choose a time of day and a means that you will enjoy and look forward to.

## 5. Individual reflection



Key questions you can ask yourself are

- What for me personally were the key points to emerge?
- What have I learned from this experience?
- What can I do about it in the future?
- How can I apply what I have learned?
- Can I turn this into a practical guideline or piece of advice to myself?

## 6. Group reflection

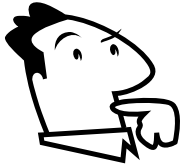


Key questions to pose are

- What have I learned as an individual?
- What do you think has been learned as a group?
- What are the implications for us as a group?
- What must we do as a group?
- What is my responsibility and commitment as a member of the group?

## 7. Knowing when to reflect

A good time to reflect is at the end of important meetings



- Did we meet our objective?
- What worked well?
- What did not work so well?
- How do we feel about the meeting?
- What can we improve next time?

Other useful times to reflect are

- At the end of a course and key sessions within it
- At the end/start of every day
- At the end/start of every week
- During and at the end of critical events in your work or life
- Frequently during a course or period of study or periods of intense or critical experience

## 8. Keep a Diary



Some people keep diaries to record the events of the day or week.

What happened?  
How did I feel?  
Implications for others?

Sometimes it is helpful to add a section: What did I learn today/this week?

This can be done all the time or only during critical events or phases such as a secondment or a visit to another company or country, a merger or acquisition or other critical event.

Diaries are useful because they are with you most of the time and are not a burden.

## 9. Keep a Learning Log



Learning logs can take any form but are usually dedicated to the purpose of recording what you have learned or wish to remember,

whether it is facts or information, concepts, insights, quotations you wish to remember, or whatever.

Learning logs can either be formatted to record different kinds of information such as date, context, activity, lessons learned, or they can be blank pages in a notebook in which useful information, insights, thoughts, inspirations are recorded as they occur for reflection and review later on.

Learning logs can be specifically created for courses or conferences so that the sheer mass of stimulus is separated from the key insights that you wish to retain.

## 10. Create Learning Histories



Learning Histories is a formal method for the evaluation of, and learning from, major processes such as product introduction, company acquisition and mergers, design projects, organisational change initiatives, but the method can be applied to individual learning, preferably with a clearly focussed event or period in mind.

The idea is to keep a file of information, written as an unfolding story that will enable you to answer questions such as

<b>BEFORE</b>	Were the objectives clear?	
	Did I fully understand them at the time?	
	Did everyone else understand them?	
	Were we fully prepared?	
	Was the planning organisation appropriate to the task?	
<b>DURING</b>	What actually happened day-by-day, week-by-week? Did we know?	
	What resources were deployed?	

	Was communication clear?	
	Were people really convinced?	
	Were the right people in the right roles?	
	Were roles clear and understood?	
	Were the plans realistic?	
	Did we try to anticipate problems/hazards in advance?	
	Were sufficient controls in place?	
	Were we able to learn from experience as we progressed?	
	Was evaluation on the way realistic?	
<b>AFTER</b>	Overall what worked well?	
	Overall what did not work so well?	
	What should we do differently next time?	
	What guidelines can we create?	
	What processes could be devised/improved?	
	People implications?	
	Resource implications?	
	Other implications	



## **7 Create a Personal Learning Plan to improve your learning from Reflection and Review**



Your personal learning contract is a statement of commitment to yourself and is also a means to monitoring progress.

The contract can be as detailed and as structured as you see fit (this varies greatly from person to person) but it should at least contain statements of

What you want to achieve overall (however you wish to express this) in the way you learn from <b>Reflection and Review</b> .	
Why (your motives)	
The level you are starting out at (as precisely as possible)	
The level you wish to achieve (as precisely as possible)	
<b>The specific actions you are going to take including the tools, tactics and techniques you are going to use</b>	
<b>This week</b>	
<b>Next week</b>	
<b>By the end of month one</b>	
<b>Month two</b>	
<b>Month three</b>	

<b>Month six</b>	
<b>Beyond six months</b>	
<b>How you will know you are making progress?</b>	
<b>How you will know you have succeeded?</b>	

Keep a record and look at it from time to time. If you can involve others in your commitment you will increase your chances of success.

## **8 Get going**



If you have got this far you are already going, but the critical thing is to take action that enables you to feel you are actually improving. There are several ways to do this.

- Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen in a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim.
- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Aim for early success. It reduces the risk of giving up early on.
- Remind yourself of the expected benefits and potential rewards. Look back at your envisioning exercise or your Change Shield.

# 9 Keep going



Getting going is hard enough, but to keep going is often harder still.

- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Recognise that guilt and anxiety about progress is normal as our aspirations often exceed our capacity to deliver. This is more often linked to constraints in our everyday life than it is to do with our ability to learn. It is better to modify your plans than give up.
- The great advantage of improving your skills in Reflection and Review is that it progressively increases your personal capacity to learn across a broad range of activity.
- Re-adjust goals and timescales to be more realistic in the light of experience.
- List early warning signs that may block you progress and think about responses that would help

Danger signs	Responses



Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen for a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim

Identify your personal reinforcers that will help you to keep going regardless of

- Set-backs
- Disappointments
- Frustrations
- Barriers to learning
- Unexpected problems

**What might they be?**

- Pressures from other sources

**What might they be?**

Reinforcers are REWARDS you can give yourself (treats) that you would not otherwise have had but for the progress you have made. They include a meal out, chocolates, an outing, champagne, a weekend away, etc or whatever takes your fancy.

Equally reinforcers can be PUNISHMENT that you inflict on yourself for lack of progress that you had committed to. This can be denial of the promised treats or something stronger like paying out to a charity. On balance rewards work better than punishments.

What support do I need and what can I put in place?

**My REINFORCERS are**



## 10 Celebrate success



Finally don't forget to mark the achievement of having moved from one level of performance to another. It is always a satisfying feeling to know that you have done it, but there is also the intrinsic satisfaction of performing at a higher level than previously.

Some forms of learning are acknowledged through accreditation and certificates, but vast amounts of personal learning and growth are not recognised in this way. Much of the most important learning (tolerance and understanding, effective parenting, leadership, teamwork) is not recognised in this way.

Try to find ways of expressing the pleasure of the learning you have achieved.

**If I achieve my overall goals my overall REWARD will be**

Ultimately, the best way is simply to think and act in new ways and feel the benefit for you and for others, and then commit yourself to further learning.