

Improve How You Learn despite Poor Teaching

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Ten Steps

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 **despite poor teaching**. 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 to 10 Powerful Learning Tools, Tactics and Techniques you can use to improve the way you learn. 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 improve the way you learn even though you believe you are being taught inefficiently or at least in a way that does not seem to suit you.

In addition to genuinely poor teaching, it is also possible that that you are not aware of your preferred learning styles, or that you are not self-managing your learning as effectively as you might.

Sometimes it is easy to recognise poor teaching (see below) but spend some time thinking about yourself and the possibility that you also have poor learning habits. Some of the exercises below should help.

Possible Objectives. Tick the ones that appeal to you.

Analyse what is wrong with the way you are being taught	
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Analyse my own habits to see if they are contributing to the problem	
Take appropriate action to compensate	
Any other objectives?	
What is it that you find difficult or unsatisfactory at the moment in the way you are being taught?	
If you could change things – anything at all – what would they be?	

2 Be clear about why you want to improve your learning in spite of Poor Teaching

Why do you wish to improve in this area?

Increased confidence	
Greater self esteem	
Overcoming fear	
Overcoming frustration	
Feeling of being more in control	
Get better results	
Ensure I pass the required standard	
I am contemplating dropping out of the course	
I don't seem to learn as fast as the other students	

The teachers are always in a hurry	
Wasting precious time trying to learn	
List any others here:	

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



If you are that way inclined draw a picture of yourself **learning from poor teaching**. 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 classmate, friends or colleagues at work. 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 improved



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

Things I will know
Things I can say or do
How I will feel
Qualifications achieved
I know I will be making progress if...

This self-assessment is subjective but it helps you be realistic and not try too much at one go.



5 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?

Activist	This is me Not really sure No idea
Pragmatist	This is me Not really sure No idea
Theorist	This is me Not really sure No idea
Reflector	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.

Different types of learning

The types of learning involved in improving your **learning despite poor teaching** include

Practical Skills requiring practice and feedback to get right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging with the tutor in a way that gets cooperation (See Learning Assertion and Assertiveness)• Speaking up in class• Seeking clarification• Asking questions• Seeking feedback• Explaining your needs
Feelings and attitudes you need to get right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The belief that you are primarily in control of your learning• Confidence to seek to influence tutors and trainers

Understanding of concepts and theory

- How learning can be blocked or inhibited
- How adults learn best
- Difference between learning and training
- What makes for an effective teacher

Knowledge of Facts, things to remember

- What is actually expected of you
- Reading in advance
- Structure of the course/programme being taught

It is by understanding that different kinds of learning that are involved in improving your **Learning in spite of Poor Teaching** that appropriate tools tactic and process can be consciously adopted to improve your performance.

6 Explore learning tactics, tools, and techniques to improve HOW you learn despite poor teaching



1. Understand the difference between effective and poor teaching

Think of times when you felt you were well taught. What was it that worked well for you?

Compare your answers with the list below. How many of them apply to you?

- The aims were very clear
- We always knew where we were heading
- Examples were frequently given
- We had practical problems to solve

- The teacher knew his/her subject
- The teacher was enthusiastic
- We were encouraged to ask questions
- There was time to discuss and think
- The pace was just right
- The atmosphere was relaxed but focused
- The tasks we did were varied and interesting
- We had to go over material again
- Complex things were explained in simple terms
- The teacher was patient with us
- The teacher acknowledged contributions from everyone, even if they were not very good/completely accurate/fully comprehensive.

Think of times when you felt you were not well taught. What was it that did not work for you?

Consider these answers. How many of them apply to you?

- No clear plan
- We weren't clear what we were meant to be doing
- The teacher did not let us ask questions
- The atmosphere was tense
- There was little discussion
- Too much theory, not enough practice
- Jargon was not explained
- No opportunities to practice
- No repetition and rehearsal
- Teacher was easily distracted
- Teacher did not seem to care about the subject
- Teacher had pets as well as villains

2. Think about what leads to effective learning



What would indicate to you that teaching is effective? For this we need to look at Positive Indicators for effective learning. They are very important as they give meaning and concreteness and personalise it your needs. Positive indicators show effective teaching and Negative Indicators show poor teaching

If you want to learn more about Positive and Negative Indicators see [10 Steps to Improve Your Learning](#)

Positive Indicators	Tick if present	Negative Indicators	Tick if present
Participants are ready to learn and can see a reasons for learning		I don't really know why we are learning this	
The benefits of the learning are stressed early and often by the tutor		I cannot see the benefits to me	
The emphasis is on activities rather than as passive listening		All we do is sit and listen	
There is regular emphasis on the application of the learning to actual contexts		It is all theory and no practice	
Examples provided by the tutor are vivid and interesting		Few examples are provided and they are dull	
The learning appeals to all the senses (eyes, ears, touch)		There is variety at all in the sessions	
There is a pleasant and supportive atmosphere		The atmosphere is intimidating	
Critical aspects are repeated		There is no reinforcement of important messages	
As much as possible of the learning takes place in context (e.g. visits, practical examples, simulations)		We never leave the classroom	
The tutor listens to us and lets ask questions		The tutor does not encourage questions	
The tutor encourages us to think things through and discuss		There is no discussion in the classroom	

3. Analyse exactly why the teaching is poor



List your reasons (from the list above) why you think the teaching is poor and also what is good about it. Be as specific as possible.

Good things my teacher does that helps me learn

Poor things that make it harder for me to learn



Highlight those things that might be possible to influence.

Show this list to other participants on the course whom you can trust. Do they agree with you?

Can they add to your list? What action could you take?

4. Influencing the teacher



Get into the habit of asking the teacher to

- Repeat things you don't understand
- Explain things
- Explain jargon
- Clarify the end-point
- Give examples
- Explain why some things are necessary
- Allow more breaks
- Slow down at times
- Speed up if necessary
- Set out the structure of the course
- Recommend materials for review and preparation
- Explain what are the key components of the course
- Explain what you are expected to be able to do/understand upon completion of the course

5. Outside class tactics

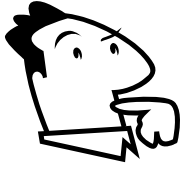


Ask fellow students to

- Repeat things for you
- Explain things
- Explain jargon
- Clarify the end-point
- Give examples
- Explain why some things are necessary
- Set out the structure of the course
- Recommend materials for review and preparation
- Explain what are the key components of the course
- Explain what you are expected to be able to do/understand upon completion of the course

Speak to the teacher/tutor, especially in a small group, and explain your problems.

6. Learning from the Greats



Think about these quotations. Discuss them with your friends.

1. I love to learn but I hate to be taught

(Sir Winston Churchill)

2. It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

(Albert Einstein 1879-1955)

3. He who can does. He who cannot, teaches.

(George Bernard Shaw 1856-1950)

4. 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.

(Eric Hoffer 1902-83)

5. Never seem wiser, nor more learned, than the people you are with. Wear your learning, like your watch, in a private pocket: and do not merely pull it out and strike it; merely to show that you have one.

(Lord Chesterfield 1694-1773)

6. No trace of slavery ought to mix with the studies of the freeborn man. ... No study, pursued under compulsion, remains rooted in the memory.

(Plato c. 427-347 BCE)

7. Spoon-feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.

(E. M. Forster 1879-1970)



Create a Personal Learning Plan

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)	
Why (your motives)	
The level you are starting out at (as precisely as possible)	
The level you wish to achieve (as precisely as possible)	
The specific actions you are going to take including the tools, tactics and techniques you are going to use	
This week	
Next week	
By the end of month one	
Month two	

Month three	
Month six	
Beyond six months	
How you will know you are making progress?	
How you will know you have succeeded?	

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 talk about 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.

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 to myself will be
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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.

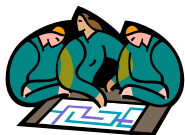
9 Keep going



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 inevitable
- 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
- Unexpected problems
- Pressures from other sources

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.

Learning to improve how you learn from poor teaching can be the difference between unlocking your own potential or not. This could change your life. It would make a huge difference to your work and personal life, how you behave, how you feel and how you are perceived. There is no formal recognition of this, but people you work and live with will see you as more accomplished, capable and knowledgeable.

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.