



# SOFT SKILLS

(ACADEMIC GUIDE / TEACHING MATERIALS)

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# CONTENT

A faint, grayscale background image of a large group of graduates wearing caps and gowns, seen from behind, filling the lower half of the page.

Page 4

## PREFACE

Page 10

## MODULE DESCRIPTOR

Page 15

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOFT SKILLS

Page 35

## Chapter 2: SELF-MANAGEMENT

Page 92

## Chapter 3: CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT

Page 126

## Chapter 4: REFLECTIVE THINKING AND WRITING

Page 140

## Chapter 5: PRESENTATION SKILLS

Page 166

## Chapter 6: ACADEMIC DEBATE

Page 192

## Chapter 7: GROUP WORK

Page 223

## Chapter 8: PEER-TO-PEER INTERACTION

Page 246

## SUMMARY

Page 245

## REFERENCES

Page 257

## ANNEXES & RESOURCES

# PREFACE

This E-Manual was designed under the EU Tempus Impress Project “Improving the Efficiency of Student Services” funded by the European Commission and lasts from October 15, 2012 - October 14, 2015 (Project number 530534-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-UK- TEMPUS-SMGR ).

The main purpose of the project is to improve “students’ experience” in higher education in Ukraine, which will enable Ukrainian Student Services to get acquainted with the European standards and as a result to meet the modern education quality standards in accordance with the Bologna Process requirements.

One of the areas of the project is “Dynamic development of social competence of students” – Soft Skills.

The proposed E-Manual and course Soft Skills, which it provides, corresponds to the above-mentioned direction, although it contributes to a large extent to the implementation other purposes of the project. For in the first place, its implementation will enhance the competitiveness of graduates in the labor market, successful employment and career development, the universal self-realization.

The consortium of the participants of course development E-Manual Soft skills includes the following partners:

1. Project coordinator: Northumbria University (Great Britain);
2. Donetsk National University, Ukraine;
3. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.
4. V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine;
5. Ivan Franko Lviv National University, Ukraine.

## WHY SOFT SKILLS?

A recent outcry in this regard came from the British Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), which recently reported that “Employers say many graduates lack ‘soft skills’, such as team working” and “They go on to explain that candidates are normally academically proficient but lacking in soft skills such as communication as well as verbal and numerical reasoning.” (AGR, 2007) Already more than 40 years ago the German Engineering Association (VDI) recommended that 20% of courses of the engineering curricula should be soft skills. Engineering graduates should bring along knowledge of foreign languages, cultural awareness, should be team workers, and should perhaps have attended a Rhetoric course (Ihsen, 2003).

“What exactly are soft skills?” This basic question is not easy to answer, because the perception of what is a soft skill differs from context to context. A subject may be considered a soft skill in one particular area, and may be considered a hard skill in another. On top of it the understanding of what should be recognised as a soft skill varies widely. Knowledge in project management for instance is “nice to have” for an electrical engineer, but it is a “must to have” for a civil engineer. Training in cultural awareness might be useful for a chemist, but it is an absolute necessity for public or human resources management in societies of diverse cultures.

Generally, soft skills may be subdivided into three basic categories:

- Personal qualities
- Interpersonal skills
- Additional skills / knowledge

*(Bernd Schulz, 2008).*

These categories are very broad and include many different skills. Unfortunately, it is not possible to teach all varieties social skills in one course. We chose not to go in latitude but go in depth in coverage required skills. In order to take the best sample of those skills that will be a priority in this project, we looked at the almost general set of soft skills contained in ‘The Workforce Profile’, a survey conducted by the Smyth County Industry Council.

They defined 60 “soft skills”, desired by employers. These soft skills are applicable to any type of work/field, and according to the study are the “personal traits and skills that employers state are the most important when selecting employees for jobs of any type.”

[www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm](http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm)

This list includes:

1. Math
2. Safety
3. Courtesy
4. Honesty
5. Grammar
6. Reliability
7. Flexibility
8. Team skills
9. Eye contact
10. Cooperation
11. Adaptability
12. Follow rules
13. Self-directed
14. Good attitude
15. Writing skills
16. Driver's license
17. Dependability
18. Advanced math
19. Self-supervising
20. Good references
21. Being drug free
22. Good attendance
23. Personal energy
24. Work experience
25. Ability to measure
26. Personal integrity
27. Good work history
28. Positive work ethic



29. Interpersonal skills
30. Motivational skills
31. Valuing education
32. Personal chemistry
33. Willingness to learn
34. Common sense
35. Critical thinking skills
36. Knowledge of fractions
37. Reporting to work on time
38. Use of rulers and calculators
39. Good personal appearance
40. Wanting to do a good job
41. Basic spelling and grammar
42. Reading and comprehension
43. Ability to follow regulations
44. Willingness to be accountable
45. Ability to fill out a job application
46. Ability to make production quotas
47. Basic manufacturing skills training
48. Awareness of how business works
49. Staying on the job until it is finished
50. Ability to read and follow instructions
51. Willingness to work second and third shifts
52. Caring about seeing the company succeed
53. Understanding what the world is all about
54. Ability to listen and document what you have heard
55. Commitment to continued training and learning
56. Willingness to take instruction and responsibility
57. Ability to relate to coworkers in a close environment

58. Not expecting to become a supervisor in the first six months
59. Willingness to be a good worker and go beyond the traditional eight-hour day
60. Communication skills with public, fellow employees, supervisors, and customers.

Based on this extensive list (and other sources), we have chosen 7 key universally important skills that are included in our course: Self-management (which includes Self-motivation, Taking responsibility, Task setting/prioritizing, Time-management), Critical thinking development, Reflective thinking and writing, Communication with audience, Academic debate, Group work and Peer-to-peer Interaction.

- Chapter “Introduction” was designed in Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (S. Paschenko).
- Chapter “Self-management”, as the mostly volume, was designed by two universities: V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (paragraphs “self-motivation”, “taking responsibility” V. Pavlenko and O. Lutsenko) and Donetsk National University (paragraphs “task setting/prioritizing”, “time-management”, O. Klimenkova).
- Chapter “Critical thinking development” was prepared by representatives of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.
- Chapters “Reflective thinking and writing” and “Academic debate” were designed by representatives of Ivan Franko Lviv National University. More exactly paragraph “Reflective thinking and writing” was prepared by O. Senyk, and paragraphs “Communication with audience” and “Academic debate” by R. Kalytchak.
- Chapters “Group work” and “Peer-to-peer Interaction” were created by representatives of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, in particular, “Group work” was wrote by G. Kharlamova and paragraph “Peer-to-peer Interaction” was wrote by S. Paschenko.

Preparation of course and E-Manual was carried out with active participation and supervision of representatives of Northumbria University - Project Manager Prof. A. Moscardini, Dr. T. Vlasova, Dr. R. Strachan and E. Picard. S. Young gave invaluable assistance in software and information support.

The project coordinators from Ukrainian Universities rendered permanently great organizational assistance: prof. O. Chernyak from Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, prof. V. Aleksandrov and J. Mahanova from V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, O. Sydorchuk from Donetsk National University and M. Zubrycka from Ivan Franko Lviv National University.

The course is designed primarily as active, as it is only 20-30% of the material provided by teachers monologue presentation, and 70-80% - on active learning methods. These methods include active testing, essay writing, group discussions, case study, work with video, etc.



The methods for success assessment are also active and non-traditional for Ukrainian education. Provided assessment does not imply classical exam but includes formative, intermediate and summative assessment, which consists of writing diaries and portfolio formation, group discussion and create your own Personal Development Plan.

Successful performance of Soft Skills Course is confirmed by a TEMPUS certificate, which also would become a part of the student's portfolio, which he / she can use in job search and career building.

We hope that the efforts of all project participants, who sincerely tried to create a modern and effective training product will lead to its successful implementation, and it will turn into students' knowledge, abilities and skills which will be acquired with interest, enthusiasm and pleasure.

Title of module: Soft Skills

Credit points: 3

Year long or semester based: semester based

Type of module: Standard

### **Location(s) of delivery**

- Donetsk National University
- Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
- Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
- V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

# MODULE DECSRIPTOR

## SYNOPSIS OF MODULE

The module is centred on your learning and development. It aims to help you to become effective, independent and confident self-directed life-long learners by improving your capacity in self-management, critical and reflective thinking, and communication with audience, academic debate, group work, and peer-to-peer interaction.

- Learning outcomes: oral and writing communication skills; interpersonal skills; problem-solving skills; organizational skills.
- The course will be presented in lectures, workshops, trainings.
- You will produce Portfolio (essay, presentation, mental map etc.), Joint Project, Academic debate, Personal Development Plan.
- This will enable you to record your personal objectives and evaluate your progress towards the achievement of your goals in personal, professional and career development.
- The portfolio and joint project will be used to give formative feedback. Summative feedback will be based on academic debate and personal development plan (PDP).
- This will facilitate and enhance your life-long learning skills and career perspectives.

## OUTLINE SYLLABUS

1) Introduction to the purpose and process of Soft Skills (10%)

2) Learning skills (40%)

- Self-management (20%)
- Critical thinking development (10%)
- Reflective thinking and writing (10%)

3) Communication skills (50%)

- Presentation skills (10%)
- Academic debate (15%)
- Group work (15%)
- Peer-to-peer Interaction (10%)

## AIMS OF MODULE

The module content is centred on your learning and development. It seeks to motivate you by helping to become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learner by improving your capacity to understand what you have learned and how and when you are learning, and to encourage you to monitor, reflect on, evaluate, plan and take responsibility for your learning. In particular, the module aims to develop and enhance:

- self-management
- critical and reflective thinking
- communication skills
- group work and peer support strategies.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

You will be able to:

- Apply reflective practice to understand your learning processes and articulate and evaluate personal objectives and motivation
- Assume responsibility for your learning and self assessment
- Manage your time prioritising tasks and construct personal strategies for independent learning
- Communicate clearly and precisely to interested audience in a range of different contexts
- Consider and respect others' points of view in offering constructive feedback to others
- Reflect on and react to, constructive criticism provided by others in order to enhance your learning
- Work in team or lead the team during implementation of learning tasks
- Articulate and record personal development plans to make most efficient and effective use of your learning experiences

## LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

This module will be delivered using a combination of lectures, workshops and trainings. You will construct a portfolio which will, in the first instance, be used as a repository for seminar exercises, work in progress, reflections on learning, etc. This portfolio will be shared with tutors from the beginning, so that formative feedback can be given whenever appropriate and your progress monitored.

You will be required to produce PDP in order to enhance your life-long learning.

## ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK STRATEGY

### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND RATIONALE FOR TASKS

The final assessment which will be a reflective essay backed up by a PDP.

A middle point assessment which is an academic debate featuring ‘for’ / ‘against’ and objective observation.

The ability to provide evidence on which valid judgments can be made about progress and achievement is one of the key skills required by university education. A taxonomy developed for the assessment of PDP will be used for summative assessment.

The academic debate will offer you a ‘real life’ experience of engaging in a constructive debate whilst being observed by the peers and they will assess based on the rigor of your argument, sufficient in-depth subject knowledge of the topic and your ability to engage in the debate.

### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

A portfolio containing evidence of skills, achievements, self-evaluation and self-assessment, with clearly thought-out personal development planning. The basis for assessment will not be solely the quality of the tasks submitted, although that will be taken into consideration. The aim of the portfolio and the learning environment provided is to enable you to effectively evaluate your capabilities, to articulate them in response to the requirements of the learning process, and to provide appropriate and relevant evidence of these competences, your understanding of the relevant legal, ethical and academic issues.

Additional Formative assessment is the joint project aiming at team building, organizational and communicative skills development, and goal achievement.

Indication of how you will get feedback and how this will support your learning.

Formative feedback will be given periodically during seminars. Indicative reading list or other learning resources.

## INDICATIVE READING LIST AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

Blum-Kulka, S. & Dvir-Gvirsman, S. Peer Interaction and Learning. *International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition)*, 2010, 444-449

Brockbank, A., McGill, I. (2007). *Facilitating reflective learning in higher education*. 2Nd edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press

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*Critical Thinking Assessment and real-world outcomes: Cross-national applications. Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 7, 112-121.

Chivers B., Shoolbred M., (2007) *A Student's Guide to Presentations Making your Presentation Count*, SAGE

Cottrell, S. (2013) *The study skills handbook*. 4th edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

*Developing and Assessing Personal and Social Responsibility in College: New Directions for Higher Education*,

Number 164 \ Robert D. Reason (Editor) ISBN: 978-1-118-82805-2 January 2014, Jossey-Bass - 104 pages

Drew, S., Bingham, R., (2010) *The Guide to Learning and Study Skills: For Higher Education and at Work*, Gower

Freeley, A., Steinberg, D., (2008) *Argumentation and Debate*, Cengage Learning

Gravells, A., Simpson, S. (2010). *Planning and Enabling Learning in the Lifelong Learning Sector*, SAGE

*Handbook of motivation science* / edited by James Y. Shah, Wendi L. Gardner (2008), New York, The Guilford Press

Levin, P. (2005) *Successful teamwork!:* for undergraduates and taught postgraduates working on group projects. Maidenhead: Open University Press. (also available as an eBook via the Library Catalogue)

Moon, J. (2005) *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice*, London and New York, Routledgefalmer

Rybold, G. (2006) *Speaking, Listening and Understanding: debate for not native English speakers* International Debate Education Association Starkey L. *Critical thinking skills success.* - NY: LearningExpress, LLC, 2004. – 169 p.

Van Emden J., Becker L., (2004) *Presentation Skills for Students*, Palgrave Macmillan





## CHAPTER 1:

# INTRODUCTION TO SOFT SKILLS

[Introduction](#)

[Learning Objectives](#)

[Definitions](#)

[Soft Skills Categorizing](#)

[Integral Parts of Soft Skills](#)

[Outcomes of Soft Skills Development](#)

[Personal Developmental Plan \(PDP\)](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further Reading](#)

# INTRODUCTION TO SOFT SKILLS

## INTRODUCTION

According to researches conducted in Harvard and Stanford Universities only 15% of your career success is provided by your hard skills, whilst other 85% by so called soft skills. “Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career” (*Peggy Klaus*).

“Soft Skills” correlates with some terms of a very close meaning: “Life Skills”, “Emotional Intelligence Quotients”, “Social Skills”, and “Interpersonal Skills”.

**Soft skills** is a term often associated with a person’s Emotional Intelligence Quotient, the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, managing people, leadership, etc. that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills, also known as people skills, complement hard skills to enhance an individual’s relationships, job performance and career prospects. It’s often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get – and keep – the job.

Unlike hard skills, which comprise a person’s technical skill set and ability to perform certain functional tasks, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable across job titles and industries. Many soft skills are tied to individuals’ personalities rather than any formal training, and are thus considered more difficult to develop than hard skills. Soft skills are often described in terms of personality traits, such as optimism, integrity and a sense of humor. These skills are also defined by abilities that can be practiced, such as leadership, empathy, communication and sociability.

Soft skills could be defined as **life skills** which are behaviors used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life. The subject varies greatly depending on social norms and community expectations. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. They represent the psycho-social skills that determine valued behavior and include reflective skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, to personal skills such as self-awareness, and to interpersonal skills. Practicing life skills leads to qualities such as self-esteem, sociability and tolerance, to action competencies to take action and generate change, and to capabilities to have the freedom to decide what to do and who to be.

Life Skills-Based Education has a long history of supporting human development. Life skills-based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of youth development and thematic responses including as expressed in World Youth Report (2003), World Program for Human Rights Education (2004),

UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005), the World Development Report (2007), and so on. Expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that related to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management and communication and inter-personal skills.

**Social skills** are any skills facilitating interaction and communication with others. Social rules and relations are created, communicated, and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways. The process of learning these skills is called socialization.

**Interpersonal skills** are sometimes also referred to as people skills or communication skills. Interpersonal skills are the skills a person uses to communicate and interact with others. They include persuasion, active listening, delegation, and leadership. The term “interpersonal skills” is used often in business contexts to refer to the measure of a person’s ability to operate within business organizations through social communication and interactions. Interpersonal skills are how people relate to one another.

## WHY SOFT SKILLS?

- *Self* - An awareness of the characteristics that define the person one is and wants to become.
- *Opportunity* - An awareness of the possibilities that exist, the demands they make and the rewards and satisfactions they offer.
- *Aspirations* - The ability to make realistic choices and plans based on sound information and on self–opportunity alignment.
- *Results* - The ability to review outcomes, plan and take action to implement decisions and aspirations, especially at points of transition (*Kumar, A., 2007*).

In order to SOAR students need two things:

### *Academic Roots*

- Discipline based knowledge and understanding

### *Academic Wings*

- The ability to enhance that knowledge and understanding with awareness (self and others), critical thinking, reflective practice.

### The specificity of Soft Skills

- Discipline specific
- Placement / employability preparation
- Lifelong learners
  - Learning how to learn
  - Reflective practitioners



*Fig. 1.* Soft Skills

Soft skills focus more on people than processes. Today's service economy and ascendance of work teams in large organizations puts a new premium on people skills and relationship-building (Kocon, L.).

**Soft skills = People skills = Street Smarts**

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The module content is centered on students' learning and development. It seeks to motivate students by helping them to be more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners by improving their capacity to understand what they have learned, how and when they are learning, and to encourage them to monitor, reflect on, evaluate, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

The Main tasks of the Soft Skills module are to develop and enhance:

- Critical and reflective thinking;
- Self-management and self awareness skills;
- Communication skills, including interpretation and use of feedback;
- Team working and peer support strategies.

## DEFINITIONS

“What exactly are soft skills?” This basic question is not easy to answer, because the perception of what is a soft skill differs from context to context. A subject may be considered a soft skill in one particular area, and may be considered a hard skill in another. On top of it the understanding of what should be recognized as a soft skill varies widely.

*Generally, soft skills may be subdivided into three basic categories:*

1. Personal qualities
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Additional skills/knowledge

### *Soft Skills:*

Critical thinking	Communication Skills
Listening to others	Reflective Practice
Group Work / working with others	CV and Applications
Self assessment	Professional practice
Assertiveness	Creative problem solving
Mentoring and peer support	Information Literacy
Digital Literacy	Portfolio management
<i>(tools for delivery, recording and reflection)</i>	

Soft skills complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are broadly applicable.

While your technical skills may get your foot in the door, your people skills are what open most of the doors to come. Your work ethic, your attitude, your communication skills, your emotional intelligence and a whole host of other personal attributes are the soft skills that are crucial for career success.

Soft skills are often broken down into categories, or types of skills according to the level of complexity and interaction. An example of one way of categorizing social skills can be found in the table below:

## SOFT SKILLS CATEGORIZING

Skill Set	Used for	Examples
Foundation Skills	Basic social interaction	Ability to maintain eye contact, maintain appropriate personal space, understand gestures and facial expressions
Interaction Skills	Skills needed to interact with others	Resolving conflicts, taking turns, learning how to begin and end conversations, determining appropriate topics for conversation, interacting with authority figures
Affective Skills	Skills needed for understanding oneself and others	Identifying one's feelings, recognizing the feelings of others, demonstrating empathy, decoding body language and facial expressions, determining whether someone is trustworthy
Cognitive Skills	Skills needed to maintain more complex social interactions	Social perception, making choices, self-monitoring, understanding community norms, determining appropriate behavior for different social situations.

*Table 1. (Canney and Byrne, 2006)*



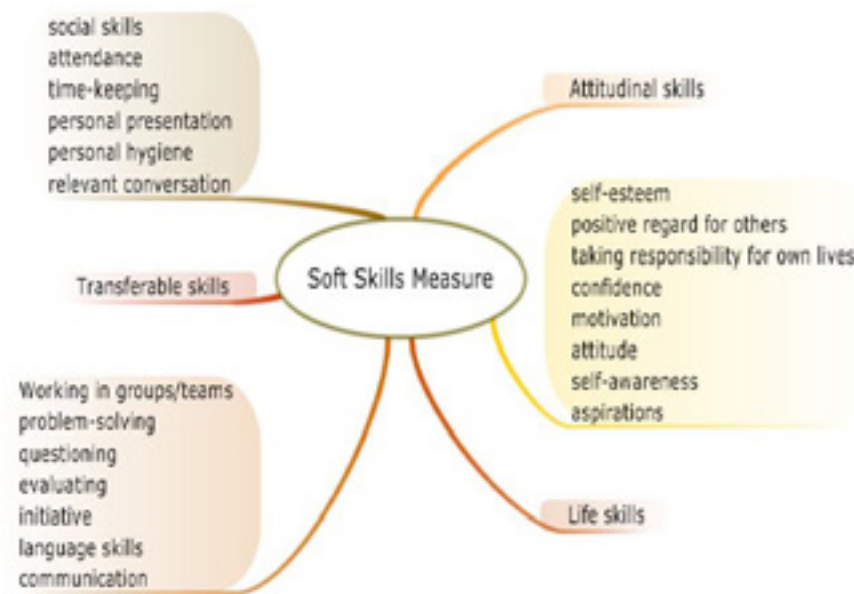


Figure 2. Soft Skills Differentiation

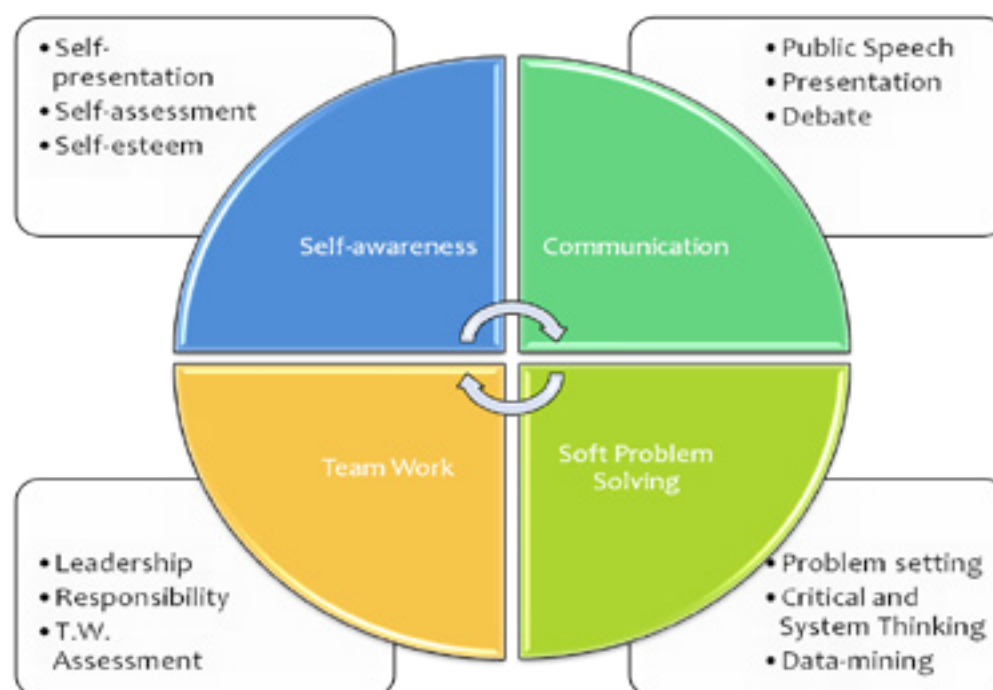


Figure 3. Soft Skills and Outcomes

**Self-awareness** includes identifying knowledge gaps, taking responsibility for own learning and development, understanding the impacts of self-efficacy, dealing with pressures and emotions, reflective practice, professional development and current awareness.

The mentioned skills assist students in understanding the learning process and constructing their own Selves in academic and professional activities. They become apparent in

- Surface / deep / strategic learning
- Self-efficacy
- Requires reconstruction of known events in their own lives
- Constructing a self-MAP
  - Motivation
  - Ability
  - Personality

## INTEGRAL PARTS OF SOFT SKILLS

***I. Self-Management System*** consists of Self-motivation, taking responsibility, task setting/prioritizing, time-management. The structure of Self-Management System is detected in the Table below.



*Figure 4. Self-Management Structure*

## II. Critical Thinking:

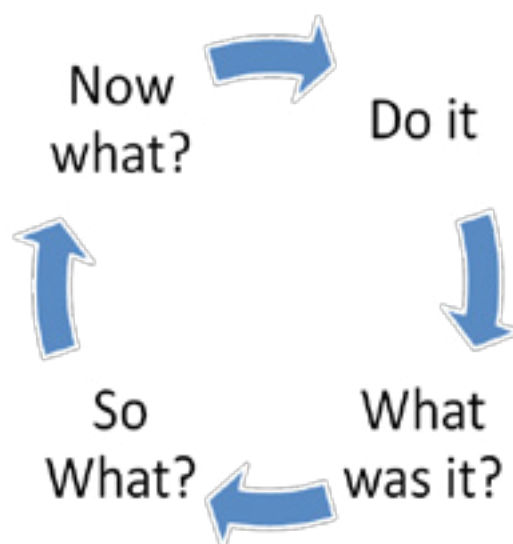
- «thinking about thinking» (Raiskums, B. W.)
- «this way of thinking, which does not accept the arguments and conclusions blindly, rather, it examines assumptions, recognize hidden values, evaluates the data and conclusions» (Mayers, D.)
- «reasonable reflective thinking, aimed at deciding what to trust and what to do» (Ennis, R.)
- “An expert is a man (*woman*) who has made all of the mistakes which can be made in a very narrow field” (*Bohr, N.*)
- “Imagination is more important than knowledge” (*Einstein, A.*)
- Critical thinking is the ability to question and to cope with uncertainty, without which none of the above would be possible.

**Critical Thinking Characteristics** include logic; imagination; risk; “accepting nothing, questioning everything”, reaching your own conclusion; being prepared to change that conclusion in the light of emerging evidence; “The world was flat until we discovered it wasn’t...at the minute we believe it’s a sphere...”.

### Example of Critical Thinking:

- Experimentation (lab / hypothesis testing)
- Social research
- Data interpretation and explanation
- Creative problem solving
- Identify the issue
- Come up with alternative solutions
- Learning to cope with uncertainty and embracing it as a learning tool (*Pickard, A., 2010*).

**III. Reflection** is a form of thinking used to fulfill a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding that we already possess.



**Fig. 5.** Reflective Practice Circle

**Reflective Practice** is triggered with the help of Self assessment questions:

- What am I trying to do exactly?
- Why am I doing it?
- What went well and why?
- What went less well and why?
- How could I do better next time? (Shenton, A., 2012)

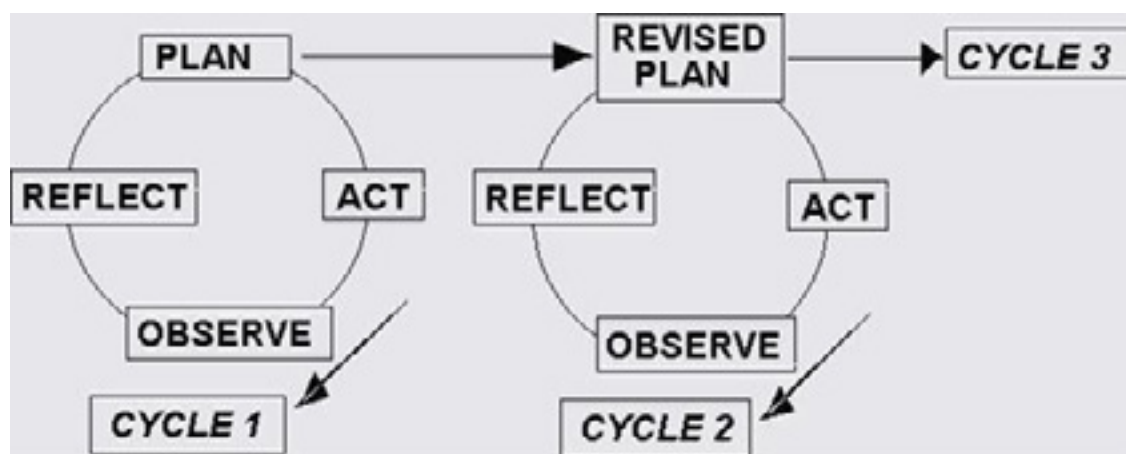


Figure 6. Reflective Practice (Kolb, 1984; Carr & Kemmis, 1986)

Another scheme of **reflective practice** consists of 1) the reflective diary; 2) description; 3) interpretation; 4) outcome which involves hard systematic thinking and soft insight, intuition and tacit knowledge leading to a plan of action based on critical evaluation of all the available evidence.

#### IV. Communication and Interaction

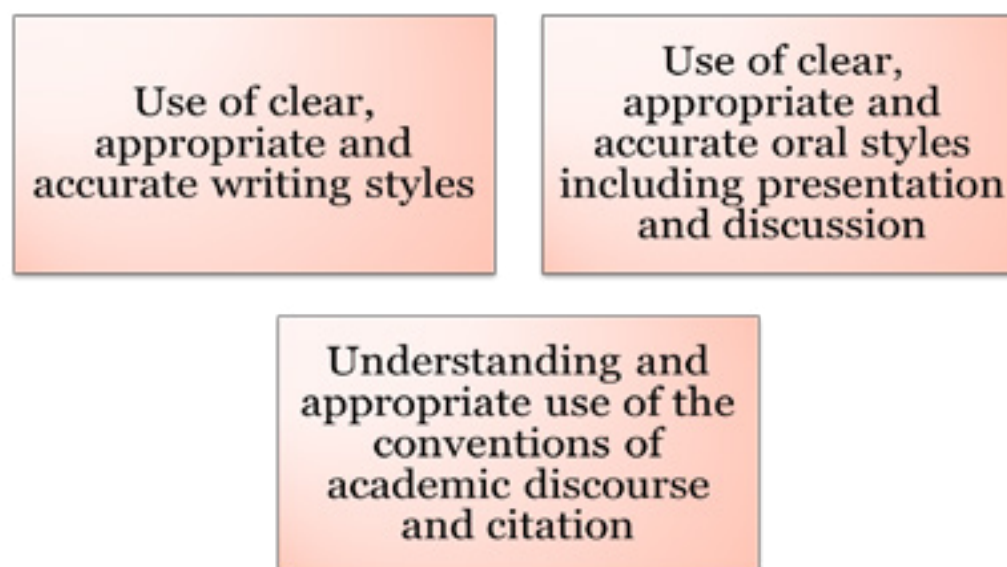


Figure 7. Effective Communication



Effective communication provides for high level of

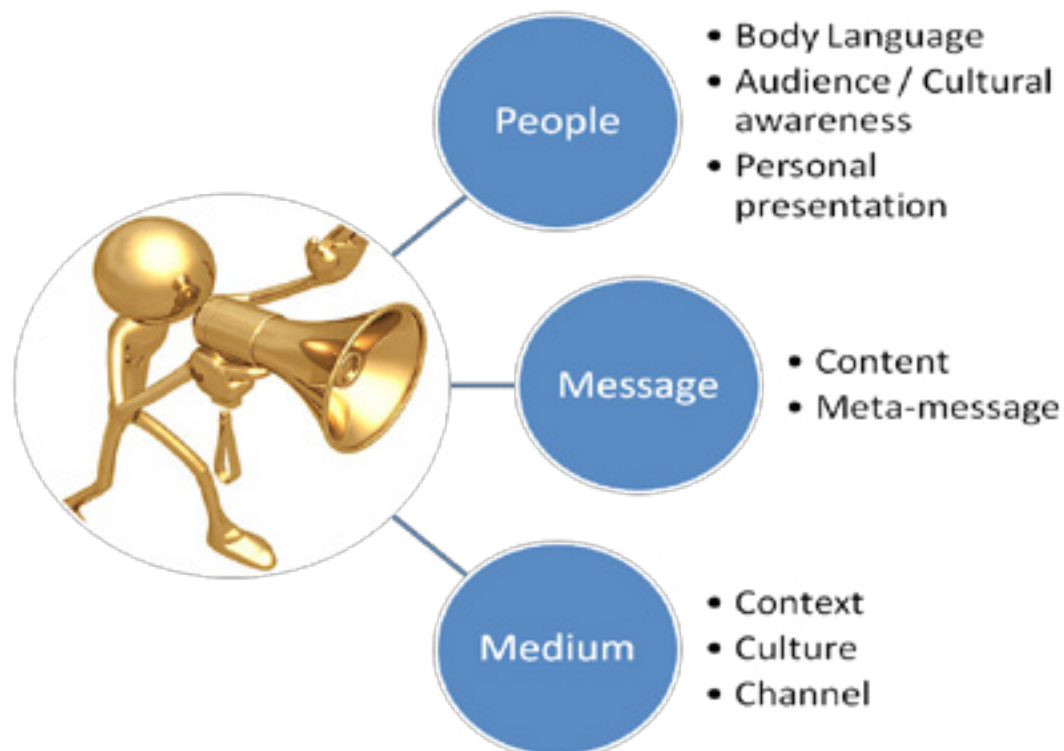
***Presentation skills:***

- to increase both skills and confidence levels
- to improve research, design and communication skills
- to develop team working and project management skills
- to strengthen learning and enthusiasm for further knowledge
- to promote critical and analytical thinking

***Academic debates:***

- Content and formats of academic debate
- Listening skills
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Reacting to grounded criticism

and ***effective writing and listening:***

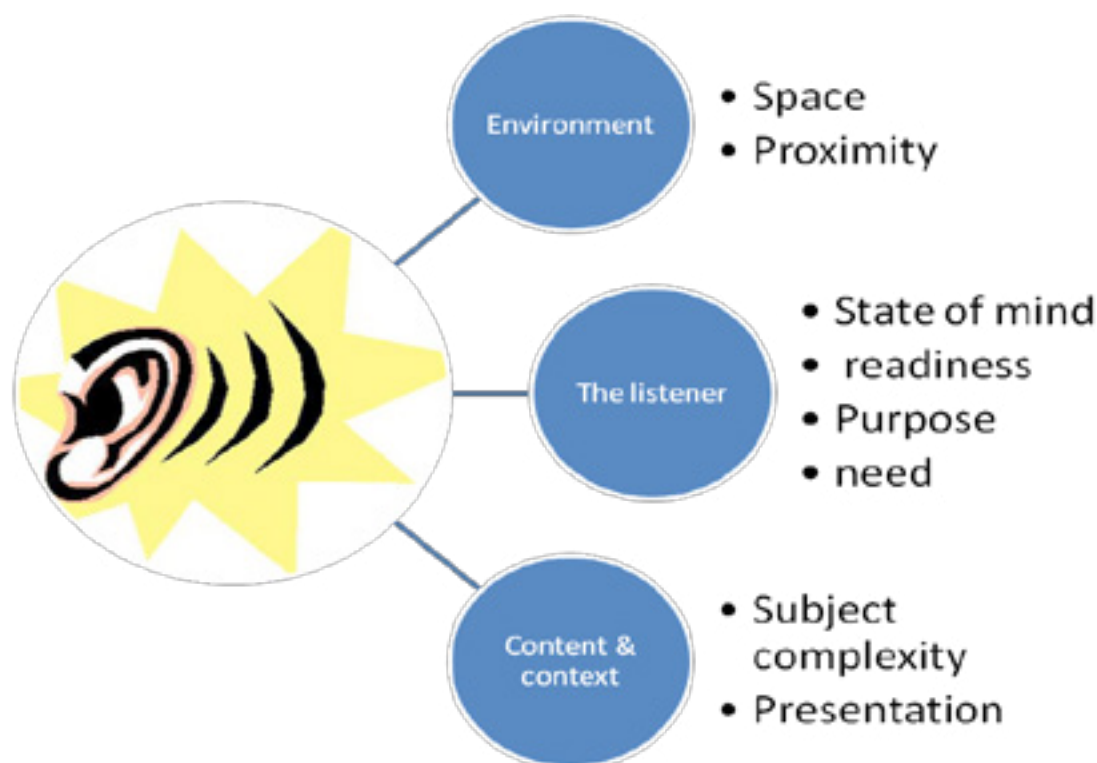


*Figure 8. Skillful Writing*

Skillful writing examples:

- Technical Writing
- Script writing / audience analysis / performance / reflection
- Observation (self and others)
- Press release;
- Same incident from multiple stakeholder perspectives
- Sign language qualifications (*Strachan, R., 2010*)

### *Listening to Others*



*Figure 9. Listening to Others*

The examples of effective listening include:

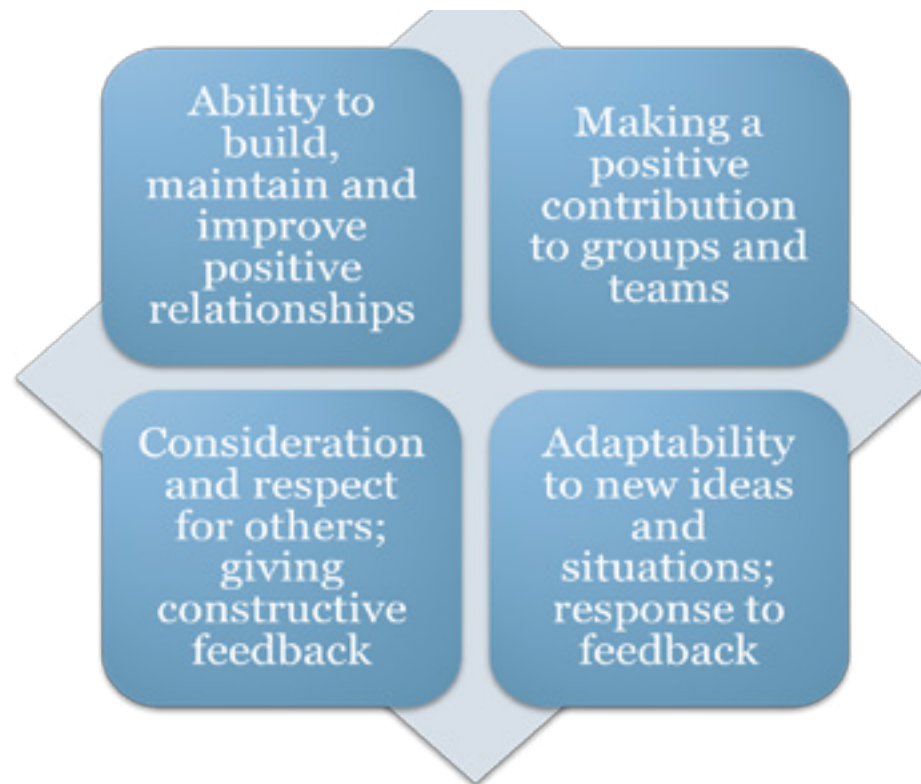
- Role play - Sender / receiver
- Same audience, same message, how many interpretations?
- Constructed conversations

**V. Group work** is one of the most useful ways of learning about cooperation, shared responsibility, project planning, and time management. Learning how to work successfully in a group has a close association with how we participate in the work place and includes:

- Social responsibility
- Using logical and rational arguments to persuade others



- Identifying the needs of others and building positive relationships
- Understanding group dynamics
- Understanding yourself in relation to others and how they might perceive you.
- Reflection on the image you portray



*Figure 10. Group Work Productive Skills*

## ***VI. Assertiveness***

***Assertiveness*** means “confident behaviour” and “self-confidence”. It is an individual ability to advance and come true own aims, needs, wishes, claims, interest and feelings. Phenomenon of assertiveness presupposes an existence of: **a)** subjective attitude toward Self (self-allowance to have the own claims); **b)** social readiness and ability to realize it in adequate manner (to have the own claims and achieve their realization); **c)** freedom from social fear and inhibition (ability to register and reveal own claims).



*Figure 11. Assertive Behavior*

Assertiveness training helps to:

- recognise the three main categories of behaviours, advantages and disadvantages and how to respond to them
- explore strategies for assertiveness and influence
- understand and use the 'Assertiveness Model' for greater effectiveness
- develop and enhance self confidence and self esteem
- create an action plan to move forward with assertiveness skills

In order to develop assertive behaviour we need to explore how to:

- Create boundaries and say 'No'
- Deal with disagreement, conflict and aggressive behaviour
- Negotiate win-win solutions
- Use assertiveness techniques and strategies in a variety of work settings

**VII. Peer-to-Peer** is an interaction and learning method (technology) when the source of knowledge is not a professor but a peer student (peer instructor). It promotes participation and interaction. Peer-to-Peer activity includes both trainers and trainees into campus life and promotes a sense of belonging that combats the anonymity and isolation many students experience at large universities during the first year of study.

Mentoring

- Developed their personal and professional skills such as leadership, team working, organising, time management, listening, interpersonal communication, facilitation and presentation skills
- Enabled them to gain confidence especially in situations when teamwork is required to attain a goal
- Provided valuable experience to enhance their CVs
- Enabled them to revise and practise their subject, and gain a deeper understanding of it (*Pickard, 2008*).
  - Not just doing the evaluating but also actively engaged
  - Mentoring at point of need
  - Evidence of strong success rate
  - Number of models:
    - Mentoring (PAL's)
    - Learning Leaders
    - Student ambassadors

## OUTCOMES OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

### *Oral communication skills*

Students are able to communicate confidently and effectively with a range of audiences, in a variety of modes or registers and settings, including persuasion, argument and exposition, and they are able to make use of different support tools, including visual, audio-visual and technological.

### *Interpersonal Skills*

Students have the skills to be able to work effectively with a range of people in a range of different contexts, including teams, where they can be effective members and, if required, leaders, including organizing team roles and activities. Students are open to the ideas of others. Students are capable of listening and understanding in a range of contexts.

### *Problem Solving Skills*

Students are able to identify and define problems and through the use of skills of analysis and critical evaluation plan an appropriate course of action and devise solutions. Students are able to make judgments concerning different possible solutions. They will be able to make use of creative and lateral thinking.

### *Organizational Skills*

Students are able to set priorities, and anticipate potential problems or needs. They are able to set and achieve targets in relation to both study and workplace tasks. Students are able to manage their time effectively.

With these soft skills you can excel as a leader. Problem solving, delegating, motivating, and team building are all much easier if you have good soft skills.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENTAL PLAN (PDP)

*Personal Development Plan* is a form of summative assessment.

*What is PDP?* It is ‘a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development’.

The primary *objective for PDP* is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan, and take responsibility for their own learning, helping students:

- become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners;
- understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context;
- improve their general skills for study and career management;

- articulate personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement;
- and encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life.

***PDP Structure:***

- What are my development objectives?
- Priority
- What activities do I need to undertake to achieve my objectives?
- What support/resources do I need to achieve my objectives?
- Target date for achieving my objectives
- Actual date for achieving my objectives

***Benefits of Personal Developmental Plan***

Benefits for Students	Benefits for Staff
A structured, systematic framework for recording, and reflecting on, <i>all</i> aspects of their HE experience	A framework for encouraging, and enabling, greater independent learning
Drawing together different aspects of their degree programme	A structure for tracking student progress, identifying and addressing areas of concern
Scope for including extra-curricular activities	Student retention
Identifying, and addressing, areas of strength and weakness	Student achievement
Improving performance on assessed work	More and better information for preparing student references
Job seeking	A systematic approach
Identifying and developing skills valued by employers	Drawing together, and making explicit, existing good practices
Evidence for use in job applications, interviews etc	Useful evidence for (e.g.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institutional audit</li> <li>• addressing HE agendas (progress files, ‘student success’, employability)</li> </ul>
Skills for continuing professional development (CPD)	
Feeling good about achievements	

*Table 2.*

***Motivating Staff:***

- Ensure that it ‘fits’ with existing practices & priorities
- E.g. personal/guidance tutor system – avoid duplication of work
- Use to support student retention & achievement
- A reflective approach is something that we already use and value
- PDP need not be something ‘different’ or ‘extra’
- ‘Lifelong learning’ approach

***Motivating Students:***

- Ensure that we communicate (explicitly) the potential benefits of PDP
- Lead by example! – if staff value PDP, so will students
- Recognize their efforts (accreditation?)
- Emphasize link with employability
- Employers value graduates who are reflective, and capable of managing their own learning, personal & professional development.

PDP skills set insight, perception, Self-evaluation, and awareness and lead to autonomy and high levels of self-efficacy.

## LONGITUDINAL EVIDENCE

A study on 1979 Harvard MBA students asked them: “Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?” Only 3% of the graduates had written goals and plans; 13% had non-written goals and 84% had no specific goals at all.

*TEN YEARS LATER* they were interviewed again.

- The 13% of the class who had goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84% who had no goals.
- The 3% who had clear, written goals were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97% put together.

You could say they were so focused that would have happened anyway but it’s impossible to separate the behavior from the output. One assumption of PDPs is that we can all ‘learn’ to be focused.

*What they don’t teach you in the Harvard Business School*

by Mark McCormack



## ACTIVITIES

### *Learning styles questionnaire (P. Honey, A. Mumford)*

This questionnaire is designed to find out your preferred learning style(s). Over the years you have probably developed learning ‘habits’ that help you benefit more from some experiences than from others. There is no time limit to this questionnaire. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with the statement, put a tick against the appropriate number on the score sheet. If you disagree more than you agree, put a cross against the appropriate number on the score sheet. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or cro

### LEARNING-STYLE PREFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

How well do you learn from these methods?

Whole Class Activities	Very well	Well	Okay	Not Well	Badly	Notes
Lecture/Teacher talk						
Question & Answer						
Demonstration						
Watching a video/film						
Notice board style displays						
Overhead projector						
White/blackboard						
Teacher led whole class discussion						
Free flowing whole class discussion						
Visits						
Dictation						
Individual Activities	Very well	Well	Okay	Not Well	Badly	Notes
Essay writing/formal reasoning						
Exam paper questions						
Worksheets or other individual work						
Self produced handouts						
Commercially produced handouts						
Homework/private study						
Individual assignments						
Student personal choice in an assignment						
Individually negotiated activities						



## LEARNING STYLES DESCRIPTIONS

Learning Style	Attributes	Learning Activities
<b>Activist</b>	Activists are those people who learn by doing. Activists need to get their hands dirty, to dive in with both feet first. Have an open-minded approach to learning, involving themselves fully and without bias in new experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• brainstorming</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• group discussion</li> <li>• puzzles</li> <li>• competitions</li> <li>• role-play</li> </ul>
<b>Theorist</b>	These learners like to understand the theory behind the actions. They need models, concepts and facts in order to engage in the learning process. Prefer to analyze and synthesize, drawing new information into a systematic and logical ‘theory’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• models</li> <li>• statistics</li> <li>• stories</li> <li>• quotes</li> <li>• background information</li> <li>• applying theories</li> </ul>
<b>Reflector</b>	These people learn by observing and thinking about what happened. They may avoid leaping in and prefer to watch from the sidelines. Prefer to stand back and view experiences from a number of different perspectives, collecting data and taking the time to work towards an appropriate conclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paired discussions</li> <li>• self analysis questionnaires</li> <li>• personality questionnaires</li> <li>• time out</li> <li>• observing activities</li> <li>• feedback from others</li> <li>• coaching</li> <li>• interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Pragmatist</b>	These people need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. Abstract concepts and games are of limited use unless they can see a way to put the ideas into action in their lives. Experimenters, trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time to think about how to apply learning in reality</li> <li>• case studies</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• discussion</li> </ul>

## FURTHER READING

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*Shenton, A. & Pickard, A. J. (2012) The evaluation challenge, Creative teaching and learning. Vol 3.2, pp 22-28*

*Useful reading:*

[www.nea.org/tools/35542.htm](http://www.nea.org/tools/35542.htm)

[www.peers.aristotlecircle.com/uploads/NTA\\_Peer\\_Tutoring\\_Factsheet\\_020107.pdf](http://www.peers.aristotlecircle.com/uploads/NTA_Peer_Tutoring_Factsheet_020107.pdf)

[www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/schoolresearch/2012\\_PolicyBriefs/Nguyen\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/schoolresearch/2012_PolicyBriefs/Nguyen_Policy_Brief.pdf)

[www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/middleyears/students/index.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/middleyears/students/index.htm)

[www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/success/sl37.htm](http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/success/sl37.htm)

[www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/publications/tipsheets/preschoolbehavior/peertutor.pdf](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/publications/tipsheets/preschoolbehavior/peertutor.pdf)

[www.reed.edu/nsfaire/nsfaire\\_sciencePsych4.html](http://www.reed.edu/nsfaire/nsfaire_sciencePsych4.html)

[www.wrt-intertext.syr.edu/viii/dabkowski.html](http://www.wrt-intertext.syr.edu/viii/dabkowski.html)



## CHAPTER 2

# SELF - MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Objectives

Part 1. Self-motivation

Part 2. Taking Responsibility

Part 3. Goal setting

Part 4. Time-management



# SELF - MANAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Self-management is a key skill that will help you throughout your life. This element involves you in effectively regulating, managing and monitoring your own emotional responses, and persisting in completing tasks and overcoming obstacles.

You are responsible for everything that happens in your life. Learn to accept total responsibility for yourself. If you do not manage yourself, then you are letting others have control of your life. Effective self-management will help you to avoid stress and provide you with more opportunities to get involved in fun campus activities.

## OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this chapter you should be able to:

- develop your motivation
- take responsibility for making things better
- set and achieve targets in relation to both study and workplace
- set priorities and anticipate problems or needs
- manage your time effectively

## PART 1: SELF-MOTIVATION

### Definitions

General theories about motivation and behavior, self-motivation instruments

Ability to work unsupervised: independence, self-reliance and initiative

Ability to concentrate and focus your attention

### Activities

Further reading

### DEFINITIONS

**Definition 1:** Self-motivation: ability to do what needs to be done, without influence from other people or situations. People with self motivation can find a reason and strength to complete a task, even when challenging, without giving up or needing another to encourage them. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/self-motivation.html>).

**Definition 2:** The ability to work independently is to be able to work without direct supervision all the time, plan and organise own work day and tasks, initiate change to work practices or policies or own personal working style, understand the operational environment and adapt accordingly, and act proactively and with integrity (<http://www.selection-criteria.com.au/workindependently.shtml>)

**Definition 3:** Attention - is the concentration of mental effort on sensory and mental events. Peoples' ability to concentrate on the significant information is named - selective attention (Solso, 2001).



## GENERAL THEORIES ABOUT MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR, SELF-MOTIVATION INSTRUMENTS

When we mostly need self-motivation:

- For successful learning at the University;
- For taking part in additional (optional) competitions and learning courses;
- When we design and realize the projects (scientific, learning, practical, social);
- When we in job search;
- For completion any complex, large and prolonged works;
- For maintaining healthy lifestyle etc.

That is why it is very important soft skill for students, workers, entrepreneurs and each person who want to achieve own goals.

It is need to clearly understand the motivation conception in general for good understanding how the self-motivation work.

In ‘motivation science’ (as it is now called the field of psychology devoted to motivation) to date it have been accumulated a lot of theories, some of them have now mostly historical meaning, and many others now actively develop and apply (Shah, Gardner, 2008).

We can recall motivational theories or some contributions to them of Sigmund Freud, William McDougall, Abraham Maslow, Henry Murray, William James, Floyd and Gordon Allport, Clark Hull and Edward Tolman, Kurt Lewin, Julian Rotter, Leon Festinger, Robert White, Harold Kelley, Fritz Heider, Solomon Asch, George Kelly, John Bowlby etc. They are mostly historically important.

Modern theories include wide spectrum of conceptions, for example:

- Self-determination theory (Deci, Ryan, 2000)
- Self-efficacy (concept of social-cognitive theory, SCT, Bandura, 1997)
- Self-regulation theory (SRT, Baumeister et al, 2007)
- Theory of goal setting (TGS; Locke, Latham, 2002)
- Theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991)
- Operant learning theory (OLT, Blackman, 1974)
- Theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein, Ajzen, 1975)
- Behavioral reasoning theory (BRT, Westaby, 2005)
- Theory of adaptive motivation (McCombs, Whisler, 1989 propose a, by which they suggest that having a sense of control helps us accomplish our life goals)
- Self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988; Sherman & Cohen, 2006)

- Achievement goal theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1984)
- Terror management theory (TMT, Otto Rank, Gregory Zillborg, Norman Brown, Ernest Becker, 1971, 1973) and many others.

*Three R's of motivation science: relativity, regulation, and reaction*

The general findings elicited from different motivation theories are named ‘three R’s of motivation science’: motivational relativity, motivational regulation, and motivational reactivity.

Reminiscent of Einstein, motivation science is focused on the *relativity of motivation* in both its temporal and structural sense. How do our various needs, for instance, compare and contrast with each other? Moving away from early motivational hierarchies (e.g., Maslow, 1955) that emphasized the “objective” or normative priority and organization of needs, many current motivational approaches assume a subjective relativism in both the priority and mental organization of needs and motives. What needs are most central, then, and how they relate to each other, are thought to be products not only of the inherent qualities of the needs themselves but also of the individuals’ distinct history of pursuing them, as well as the constraints and affordances they encounter in the moment and over their lifetime.

A consideration of temporal relativity allows researchers and theorists to begin to understand both the recursive and evolving nature of needs and motives.

*Regulation of motivation* is understood like dynamic and often complex process by which our general needs and desires are translated into concrete goals, plans, behaviors, and experiences, with obvious and significant implications for how we see ourselves and others and how we interact with the world around us.

Motivation regulation is recursive: It involves a dynamic process of feedback and adjustment as one progresses toward fulfilling a need through goal attainment. How individuals differ in seeking and reacting to feedback has long been a central theme in theories of achievement behavior and optimism and may play an important role in how goals are maintained over time and how effectively they are managed collectively.

There has also been considerable recent emphasis on the personal, situational, and social resources required for effective motivation regulation. Such an emphasis has led researchers to consider not only the nature and potential limits of these resources (as reflected, for instance, in our capacity for self-control, our experience and abilities, the helpfulness or hindrances of others, or the affordances in our environment) but also our ability to perceive and effectively regulate these motivational assets, especially when they are limited and potentially exhausted.

Also resolutions required for effective motivation regulation. Such resolutions are required not only between the often disparate needs we have for ourselves but also between the conflicts that may arise between our own needs and the needs of others. Moreover, even after resolving conflicts regarding what need or motive to address, individuals still must resolve potential conflicts in how best to address the need. To what degree, for instance, should needs be addressed optimally versus efficiently? To what degree should the experience be pleasant or painful? To what degree should we be persistent in pursuing a need versus being pragmatic in our pursuit?

There are personal and interpersonal *reactions to our needs and pursuits*. To what extent can motivational approaches help explain our varied and complex emotional experiences and our specific psychological vulnerabilities? How might these approaches lend insight into our complex social reactions, as seen, for instance, in the range of our emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to other groups, and their often prejudicial behavior? Motivational distinctions and motivational systems help explain the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and general social conflict.

*The most important theories which underlay self-motivation practices are the conceptions of self-enhancement and self-affirmation.*

Subjective phenomena of Self-enhancement and self-affirmation enable people to manage challenging events. In addressing this question, Taylor's research on cognitive adaptation (Taylor, 1983) and on positive illusions (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988) and the research on self-affirmation (e.g., Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988) make very similar points. Both assert that the process of enhancing and/or affirming personal attributes and values musters valuable resources for grappling with challenges.

When people develop spontaneous self-enhancing perceptions in response to a threatening event, these perceptions are often based on a modest degree of illusion. However, the fact that self-enhancement so reliably occurs in response to threatening events, with clear beneficial effects on adjustment, raises the intriguing possibility that self-enhancement has more general positive effects — not just those manifested in response to intensely stressful events.

Believing that one has many talents and positive qualities, and more talents and more positive qualities than one's peers, allows one to feel good about the self and to deal with the stressful circumstances of daily life with the resources conferred by a positive sense of self. These self-enhancing beliefs help people thrive in times of stress that might otherwise leave them dispirited and unable to pursue their goals. Self-affirmation theory (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988) begins with the premise that people are motivated to maintain the perceived worth and integrity of the self. When one experiences a threat to the self — be it a failure experience, information suggesting that one has acted wrongly, or information contradicting one's beliefs — one is motivated to respond to the threat in such a way as to restore self-worth.

There are three categories of responses that people can make to such threats to the self. First, people can respond directly to the threat by accepting the failure or threatening information. However, the need to maintain positive self-regard (Taylor & Brown, 1988) often makes this very difficult to do. Second, people can respond

directly to the threat by devaluing the threat in some way. We refer to this as a defensive bias (Sherman & Cohen, 2002), because the evaluation serves to minimize the threat at the expense of learning from important, though threatening, information. But self-affirmation theory proposes that there is greater flexibility in how people can respond to threats than these two alternatives suggest.

People can also respond to threats indirectly, by affirming alternative self-resources. Since the overall goal of the self is to maintain global self-worth and self-integrity, when people affirm the self, this goal is achieved. Consequently, self-affirmation serves a buffering function and helps people deal with the threat.

Recent work on self-affirmation has further shown that when people affirm important self-resources, they are less likely to be defensive and to devalue threatening information, and consequently are more open to potentially threatening information (Sherman & Cohen, 2002).

Can self-affirmation and self-enhancement not only restore balance following exposure to threatening events and make people more receptive to useful negative information, but also fuel the ability to set high goals and strive persistently to achieve them? In their original paper, Taylor and Brown (1988) reviewed evidence to suggest that a positive sense of self is associated with working longer and harder on tasks. In particular, such illusions as self-enhancement may help people try harder in situations with objectively somewhat poor probabilities of success; although some failure is inevitable, ultimately these illusions may pay off with more progress than would be the case with lack of persistence (see also Greenwald, 1980).

Taylor and colleagues (2000) found that positive illusions such as self-enhancement may keep physiological and neuroendocrine responses to stress at low levels, as evidenced in lesser autonomic activation and lower HPA axis (hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis) responses to stress.

As the self-motivators can be used:

- information resources (quotes, proverbs, books, films, pictures, music etc.)
- objects (souvenirs, things – prestigious, given by loved people, from childhood etc.)
- people (good friends or leaders, creative people, historical persons etc.)
- reflexive practices (essay about your own values, positive features etc.)

Examples of the self-motivation quotes ([www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/self-motivation](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/self-motivation)):

When you do what you fear most, then you can do anything.” - Stephen Richards, Cosmic Ordering: You can be successful

“You may be the only person left who believes in you, but it’s enough. It takes just one star to pierce a universe of darkness. Never give up.” - Richelle E. Goodrich, Smile Anyway: Quotes, Verse, & Grumblings for Every Day of the Year



“Edit your life frequently and ruthlessly. It’s your masterpiece after all.” - Nathan W. Morris

“Do not depend on good motivator! Find your words of self-motivation!” - Toba Beta

“We must be prepared, at any moment, to sacrifice who we are for who we are capable of becoming.” Charles Dubois

In motivation science it was accented the problem which is named like ‘intention-behavior gap’! (Reuter et al., 2010)

There are two stages of motivational process – stage of initiating intentions to act and volition stage (after generation intentions).

Researches showed that planning plays a major role in the volition phase and is facilitate goal pursuit by linking behavioral responses to specific situations.

Planning includes: 1) action planning (when, where, how to perform a behavior) and 2) coping planning (anticipation of barriers-distractions, temptations, conflicting habits) and generation of behavioral (or cognitive) responses to overcome them.

## ABILITY TO WORK UNSUPERVISED: INDEPENDENCE, SELF-RELIANCE AND INITIATIVE

Self motivation and the ability to work independently are the selection criteria that specifically ask for candidates on vacancies in most organization. It means that employers are looking for people who can show that they are able to work without direct supervision all the time. The hirers often need someone who can plan and organize their own work day and tasks, who can initiate change to work practices or policies or their own personal working style, someone who can understand the operational environment and adapt accordingly, and someone who can act proactively and with integrity.

When addressing you such selection criteria, some of the things you could look at and mention are:

- How you have achieved results in the past with limited supervision;
- That you can make independent decisions and solve problems on your own;
- That you can controls your actions and workflow during stressful or busy periods (e.g., you are able to maintain perspective, manage anger and frustration and ‘get on with the job’);



- Provide examples of where you have achieved results as an individual;
- Show that you can identify and use support systems to alleviate stress;
- Show that you can identify factors that contribute to stress;
- Give practical examples that show you can meet deadlines when unsupervised;
- Show that you can plan, organize and prioritize work by yourself.
- Demonstrate an awareness of any limitations that you have, but back them up with strategies for overcoming these limitations;
- Show a real solid confidence in your abilities;
- Explain how you work regularly and consistently without supervision ([Selection criteria for Government job applications www.selection-criteria.com.au](http://www.selection-criteria.com.au)).

Here are some questions you can ask yourself, or even answer when writing your statements addressing this kind of selection criteria:

- 1) When do you normally work as an individual?
- 2) How do you organise and prioritise your work to ensure you complete it without prompting?
- 3) How do you make sure that you can cope without a supervisor?
- 4) What are some of the things you have achieved when working alone?
- 5) What are some of the things that you do to ensure that your time is being used effectively?
- 6) When have you made a decision without guidance from others?

## ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE AND FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

More than a century ago, W. James defined attention as a ‘withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others’ (quoted by Driver, 2001, Dukette, 2009).

William James drew a distinction between active voluntary attention and passive involuntary attention which overlaps the current distinction between goal-directed (selected sustained, focused attention) and stimulus-driven attention (transient attention).

James (1890) further categorized attention into (a) objects of sense (sensorial attention) or to (b) ideal or represented objects (intellectual attention). Attention is either immediate and stimulus driven, or derived, as when interest in the item is associated with something else, as in a goal or motive.

Attentional control refers to an individual's capacity to choose what they pay attention to and what they ignore. It is also known as endogenous attention or executive attention. In lay terms, attentional control can be described as an individual's ability to concentrate (Lamy, 2012).

Studies of temperament from early childhood to adulthood have demonstrated inverse relationships between negative affectivity and effortful control. Effortful control is also positively related to the development of conscience and appears as a protective factor in the development of behavior disorders (Rothbart, 2003).

Little children and old people (more than 60 years) show declines in attentional control.

Attentional control theory focuses on anxiety and cognitive performance. The assumption of this theory is that the effects of anxiety on attentional control are key to understanding the relationship between anxiety and performance. In general, anxiety inhibits attentional control on a specific task by impairing processing efficiency. There are three functions associated with this theory. The inhibition function prevents stimuli unrelated to a task and responses from disrupting performance. The shifting function is used to allocate attention to the stimuli that are most relevant to the task. The updating function is used to update and monitor information in working memory (Moher at al., 2012).

There are three main hypotheses associated with attentional control theory. First, the efficiency of the central executive is impaired by anxiety. Second, anxiety impairs the inhibition function, and third, anxiety impairs the shifting function. Studies related to attentional control and performance take two differing approaches. Specifically, research on attentional capture has two modes: voluntary and reflexive. The voluntary mode is a top down approach where attention is shifted according to high-level cognitive processes. The reflexive mode is a bottom up approach where attention shifts involuntarily based on a stimuli's attention attracting properties. These modes are important to understanding how attentional control works (Lamy, 2012).

Even four days of mindfulness meditation training can significantly improve visuo-spatial processing, working memory and executive functioning. However, research has indicated that mindfulness does not affect attentional control directly. Participants did tasks of sustained attention, inhibition, switching, and object detection. These tasks were done before and after an 8 week Mindfulness based stress reduction course (MBSR), and were compared to a control group. There were no significant differences between the groups, meaning that the MBSR course did not affect attentional control. Mindfulness influences non-directed attention and other things like emotional well-being.

Modular approaches view cognitive development as a mosaic-like process, according to which cognitive faculties develop separately according to genetically predetermined maturational timetables. Prominent authors who take a modular approach to cognitive development include Jerry Fodor, Elizabeth Spelke and Steven Pinker. In contrast, other authors such as Annette Karmiloff-Smith, Mark Johnson and Linda Smith have instead advocated taking a more interactive or dynamical systems approaches to cognitive development.

According to these approaches, which are known as neuroconstructivist approaches, cognitive systems interact over developmental time as certain cognitive faculties are required for the subsequent acquisition of other faculties in other areas.

Amongst authors who take neuroconstructivist approaches to development, particular importance has been attached to attentional control, since it is thought to be a domain-general process that may influence the subsequent acquisition of other skills in other areas. The ability to regulate and direct attention releases the child from the constraints of only responding to environmental events, and means they are able actively to guide their attention towards the information-rich areas key for learning. For example, a number of authors have looked at the relationship between an infants' capacity to exercise attentional control and their subsequent performance during language acquisition. Working memory capacity has been studied to understand how memory functions. The ability to predict the effectiveness of someone's working memory capacity comes from attentional control mechanisms. These mechanisms help with the regulation of goals, behavior, and outside distractions, which are all important for effective learning.

Focusing is a psychotherapeutic process developed by psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin (Gendlin, 2003). It can be used in any kind of therapeutic situation, including peer-to-peer sessions. It involves holding a kind of open, non-judging attention to an internal knowing which is directly experienced but is not yet in words. Focusing can, among other things, be used to become clear on what one feels or wants, to obtain new insights about one's situation, and to stimulate change or healing of the situation. Focusing is set apart from other methods of inner awareness by three qualities: something called the "felt sense", a quality of engaged accepting attention, and a researched-based technique that facilitates change.

Attention span is the amount of concentrated time on a task without becoming distracted. Most educators and psychologists agree that the ability to focus attention on a task is crucial for the achievement of one's goals (Dukette, 2009).

These findings and some others underlie of practical techniques which are used for developing attention control.

# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

*Group work:* Recall the motivators, which you already use or used in your life. Tell about them and about how they impact on your goals achievement. Which of them were effective and which were not.

Imagine now that you have decided to achieve very ambitious goal – to crack a longevity record of Jeanne Calment (122 years) and live till 130 years!

Create and discuss in the group 15 original and effective motivators for pursuit this goal. For example, a programmed watches, which count the time from 130 years (in hours) and which add an hour of life when you do healthy behavior (e.g. eat fruit and vegetables, doing sport etc.) or take away an hour if you do unhealthy behavior (smoke, sunbathe etc.).

*Group discussion:* think about why sometimes your self-motivators do not work? For example, you have decided to do some physical exercises every day, wrote and set such paper-tip on your table but you were not do this exercises more than one day etc.

## ACTIVITY 2

*Do at home such practical exercise:* write essay ‘My experience of work without supervision’, where will be the answers to this 6 questions.

- 1) When do you normally work as an individual?
- 2) How do you organise and prioritise your work to ensure you complete it without prompting?
- 3) How do you make sure that you can cope without a supervisor?
- 4) What are some of the things you have achieved when working alone?
- 5) What are some of the things that you do to ensure that your time is being used effectively?
- 6) When have you made a decision without guidance from others?

Write them by remembering your relevant studying, working or life experience. This will be an element of your portfolio.

Example:

- I currently work for long periods unsupervised as my scientific leader several times has gone to the business trips. During these periods, I am required to use my own initiative to decide how to deal with service user needs and to prioritise my own workload. (Follow this up with one or two specific examples of issues you may have had to deal with in these circumstances).
- ...

## ACTIVITY 3

One of the main problems with maintaining attention is to control under distracters which almost unconsciously switch your attention on the simpler and more pleasant activity than you decided to do. Problem is, once we get distracted, it takes on average 25(!) minutes to return to our original task. Plus, shifting our attention back and return its strength. But you can learn to identify and control them.

Now do a practical exercise.

Your task is to count backwards in your mind from 300 to 0 by 13-th. Be very attentive during doing this work to your distractive thoughts, desires, impulses, reactions on the irrelevant stimulus which appear in your mind. Write these distracters as quickly as you have noted them and then continue to count. Look at this list of distracters – how many are them and are they your usual ways to distract from pursuit your goals (maintain intellectual attention)?

We can discuss the results in the group.

Now try to be more attentive to distracters in your whole life. At home it can be the desires to enter in your social net, to eat or drink the coffee/tea, to read irrelevant but more interesting information, to call or write sms to your friends, to dream, to mentally continue former conflict conversations, bad news, weather etc. So it can be the internal or external stimuli that might impair your ability to concentrate. In wider context it can be the different types of accustomed activity and procrastination, any social or physical events. When such things, which you now aware and classify as distracters, begin appear during you goal achievement process, try to stop you and forbid yourself to do anything which are not relevant to your direct movement to your goal.

There are a lot of rules designed on the above mentioned theories and researches that can help us to prolong our attention span and do not be distracted from important goals pursuit. May be some of them you know or you can conclude yourself. Let together formulate them (group discussion).

Students propose some rules and one student moderate discussion (select most effective, help to formulate them) and write them on the board.



Now we can compare your rules (theirs quantity and quality) with the list from the literature which will be demonstrate on the slide.

**Rules for concentrate and maintain attention (look after doing Activity 3)**

- Being totally in the here-and-now. You cannot know the future and you cannot re-do the past. You can correct for past weaknesses and mistakes, and reduce their likelihood in the future, but it has to be done in the now.
- Be more aware. Consciously attend to what you are doing, why, and how. Be aware of how you feel. Emotions affect the ability to focus. If how you feel interferes with concentration, change how you feel. It IS a choice.
- Organize and plan your activity. Divide your work on logical and convenient for perception parts, numerate them. Thus you can better understand the work volume and control your progress.
- Get out from your visual space all things which are not need for your continuous work. In the contrary they will be the distracters.
- You need the energy to maintain intellectual attention. That is why you need be in optimal functional state. Do the most difficult parts of work when you are after the good rest and you have enough lead time. Do the breaks when you see that all tries to maintain your attention are already unsuccessful. Do some physical exercises. If it does not help, put your head on your hands and lie down with eyes closed on the table, so you can sleep 10-15 minutes. Then return to your work.
- Monitor progress of your move to the goal. Highlight important parts of your working plan by colored markers, tabs etc. Cross out and mark by 'plus' the made points of your planned work to clearly see what elements are still need to fulfill. Write your ideas and thoughts which appear during the implementation of your task.
- Do not let you interrupt your work at any moment. Try to finish some logical part before you will take a rest.
- Don't multitask. This is the arch enemy of attentiveness and profoundly interferes with the ability to learn and especially to remember. Multitasking creates a superficial way of thinking that also imperils the ability to think deeply in intellectually demanding situations.
- Learn how to meditate. See how long you can sustain focus on your breathing and keep out all intruding thoughts. Notice all things associated with the breathing, but nothing else. Hear the sound of the moving air with each breath.

## FURTHER READING

[Your Concentration Training Program: 11 Exercises That Will Strengthen Your Attention](#)

[Ability to Concentrate Isn't What It Used to Be](#)

[The Power of Concentration by Konnikova M.](#)

Driver J. A selective review of selective attention research from the past century // British Journal of Psychology (2001), 92, 53–78.

Gendlin E. Focusing. How to Gain Direct Access to your Body's Knowledge, Random house, London, 2003.

Handbook of motivation science / edited by James Y. Shah, Wendi L. Gardner (2008), New York, The Guilford Press.

Lamy, D., Leber, A. B., & Egeth, H. E. (2012). Selective Attention. In A.F. Healy & R.W. Proctor (Eds.), Experimental Psychology. Volume 4 in I.B. Weiner (Editor-in-Chief), Handbook of Psychology, New York: Wiley.

Sasson R. How to Focus Your Mind PDF eBook 88 pages Published 2012 Latest Revised Edition: July 2014: <http://www.remezsasson.com/books/how-to-focus-your-mind.html>

## PART 2: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

[Five stages in the process of taking and realization of responsibility](#)

[Examination of related constructs](#)

- [Locus of control](#)
- [What is diffusion of responsibility?](#)
- [Responsibility and freedom](#)

[Ways of avoiding responsibility](#)

[Taking responsibility](#)

[Personal responsibility training](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further reading](#)

### DEFINITION

To date, the construct of personal responsibility does not have a clear definition in the literature. Nor do the few studies that have sought to examine personal responsibility have an established consistent operationalization of the term. In The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology P. Alex Linley and John Maltby define responsibility in a following way:

“Personal responsibility is concerned with people taking individual accountability for their decisions and actions, together with the outcomes they create and their impacts on others. It is about feeling that one is the author of one’s own life, accountable for the life that is created and the impacts caused through one’s decisions and actions, both on oneself and on others. Within philosophy, the concept has been referred to as moral responsibility, although with a narrower focus on causal accountability for actions either undertaken or not undertaken. Personal responsibility is differentiated from civic or social responsibility, which is concerned with our collective responsibilities to each other as human beings. The constructs are, however, related. Personal responsibility is understood at the level of the individual; civic or social responsibility is understood at the level of the collective. Responsibility is often also defined from the perspective of legal culpability but the concept of personal responsibility differs from this constrained definition, being focused more widely on a prospective, future-focused sense of the need to take actions that will deliver appropriate outcomes over time, rather than a retrospective, past-focused accountability and culpability for previous actions” (Linley P. Alex and Maltby John, 2009) .

## FIVE STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF TAKING AND REALIZATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Darley and Latané that once a person notices that something is happening, a series of important decisions must first be made noted (Darley, J. M., & Latané, B., 1968) .

- The first step involves actually noticing a problem.
- Next, the individual must decide if what they are witnessing is actually an emergency.
- Next is perhaps the most critical decision in this process - deciding to take personal responsibility to act.
- Then the individual has to decide what needs to be done.
- Finally, the individual must actually take action.

## EXAMINATION OF RELATED CONSTRUCTS

It is necessary to examine related constructs in the psychological field. An understanding of these constructs will enrich and clarify the component parts of personal responsibility.

### *Locus of control*

Lecturer explores previous research that has examined people's willingness to hold themselves or external factors responsible for individual outcomes; a sense of power and control to act on the world and achieve one's goals; a belief in oneself as an individual and one's abilities; the likelihood that one will reflect upon one's choices and strategies, and one's ability to regulate, understand, and control one's emotions. These components are ones that researchers may expect to find particularly relevant to an examination of personal responsibility. These aspects of human behavior are explored and explained in the constructs of locus of control, personal agency, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence (Mergler A., 2007).

We can describe this topic, using the notion "locus of control".

Rotter (1966) examined the impact reinforcement had on the level of internal or external control people ascribed to their behavior. This construct of internal versus external control of reinforcement has sometimes been called locus of control. Locus of control is defined as a tendency to either take responsibility for one's own actions or to see external control determining outcomes (Richards, Ellis, & Neill, 2002). When examining internal versus external control of reinforcement, Rotter (1966) was interested in whether or not an individual believed that their own behavior, skills, or internal dispositions would determine what reinforcement was received. An external locus of control is defined according to Rotter (1975) as a person's tendency to ascribe a reinforcement to luck, chance or fate. In contrast, a person with an internal locus of control will perceive the event to be contingent upon their own behavior or relatively permanent characteristics. Put another way, an adolescent who believes they passed the test because the test was easy would be demonstrating an external locus of control, while an adolescent who passed the test and attributed this success to studying hard would

be demonstrating an internal locus of control. Research has shown that adolescents who self-report an internal locus of control demonstrate higher academic achievement than those who self-report an external locus of control (Anderson, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2002). Another study reports a high sense of family cohesion and good communication with parents (Grossman et al., 1992). Further, an internal locus of control has been found to protect adolescents from risk factors (Garmezy, 1987; Grossman et al., 1992; Werner, 1986). This understanding of locus of control helps inform further understanding of personal responsibility. An adolescent who believes their behavior determines outcomes (internal locus of control) may be more willing to hold her/himself accountable for their behavior and the consequences. It would be expected that a personally responsible adolescent would believe that studying hard for a test would produce good grades, and hence take the responsibility to do so. In turn, they are likely to take responsibility for the outcome their behavior achieves. While the focus of the locus of control literature is on the outcome and the reinforcement, the current examination of personal responsibility aims to begin with the awareness of an individual's cognitive thoughts, feelings and choices. The locus of control literature does not examine these components.

That people with a strong internal locus of control are more highly motivated, productive, and successful; and an internal locus of control can be encouraged and developed through training, coaching, mentoring and successful life experience

Locus of control is the perceived source of control over our behavior. People with an internal locus of control tend to believe they control the outcomes in their life and that their own skill, ability and efforts determine the bulk of their life experiences. In contrast, people with external locus of control believe that their lives are determined mainly by sources outside themselves – fate, chance, luck or powerful others. Our personal and professional lives are profoundly influenced by whether we see control as predominantly internal or external. Locus of control influences the way we view our opportunities and ourselves.

### ***What Is Diffusion of Responsibility?***

Diffusion of Responsibility explains why we are less likely to take action or help someone in need when we are in a group compared to when we are alone (Cherry, K. A., 2011).. The more people around to observe an emergency, the less obligation each person feels to act because they think someone else will do it first. This principle of social psychology has been supported by numerous lab studies. In a classic experiment by Darley and Latanĭ (1968), participants saw someone having a (fake) seizure. When participants believed they were the only witness to the incident, 81% went to get help; when participants thought there were four other witnesses, only 31% went for help.

Diffusion of responsibility is a psychological phenomenon in which people are less likely to take action or feel a sense of responsibility in the presence of a large group of people. Essentially, in a large group of people, people may feel that individual responsibility to intervene is lessened because it is shared by all of the onlookers.



Diffusion of responsibility is often used to explain the bystander effect, a phenomenon in which the greater the number of people present, the less likely people are to help an individual in distress. For example, imagine that you are in a large city on a bustling street. You notice a young man fall to the ground and start convulsing as if having a seizure. Many people turn and look at the man, but no one moves to help or call for medical assistance. Why? Because there are so many people present, no one individual feels pressured to respond. Each person might think, “Oh, someone else has probably already called for help” or “No one else is doing anything, so it must not be that serious.”

### ***Kitty Genovese: A Classic Example of Diffusion of Responsibility***

The brutal murder of a woman named Kitty Genovese is often cited as a classic example of diffusion of responsibility. According to the original story related by *The New York Times*, 38 people watched her attack yet failed to call the authorities for help. Later research has shown that few of the neighbors in the area actually had a clear view of what was happening, yet it is clear that at least a few of the onlookers were aware that a woman was being attacked on the street. Those who did hear her screams dismissed it as a “lover’s quarrel” or suggested that they simply did not want to get involved (Manning, R., Levine, M., & Collins, A., 2007).

So why is it that people are so often able to come up with such excuses to not get involved? In an article for *Psychology Today*, Dr. Alex Lickerman suggests that this tendency to explain away what is happening represents a form of narrative rationalization. “Knowing that others heard the same scream, or received the same email request, or came upon a man down powerfully tempts us to assume someone else has taken responsibility for doing what needs to be done,” he explains.

While such failure to take action is often viewed as apathy or even plain cold-heartedness, researchers have been able to consistently demonstrate that such inaction is most often due to the presence of other people.

### ***Research on Diffusion of Responsibility***

In a series of classic experiments conducted in the late 1960s, researchers John Darley and Bibb Latané asked participants to fill out questionnaires in a room which suddenly began to fill with smoke. In some conditions the subjects were alone, in a second condition there were three naive subjects in the room, and in a third condition there was one subject and two confederates who intentionally ignored the smoke. In situations where the subject was alone, approximately 75 percent reported the smoke to the experimenters. In the condition where the two confederates ignored the smoke, on 10 percent of the naive subjects told the experimenters about the smoke.

In one fascinating series of experiments, researchers Garcia and his colleagues found that *simply imagining being part of a crowd* made people less likely to help. The researchers ask participants to imagine being part of a crowd and then placed the participants in a situation where they had the chance to help another person. What the researchers discovered that those who had simply imagined being part of a larger group were less likely to help than those who had imagined themselves being alone.

### ***Factors That Influence Diffusion of Responsibility***

Factors that can increase diffusion of responsibility include:

**Anonymity:** Bystanders who do not know the victim are less likely to help and more likely to expect someone else in the crowd to step up and offer assistance.

**Ambiguous situations:** If onlookers are not really sure what is happening, are unclear about who is in trouble, or are unsure if the person really needs assistance, then they are far less likely to take action.

Factors that can decrease diffusion of responsibility include:

- **Knowing the victim:** People are more likely to help if they feel some sort of connection or personal knowledge of the person in trouble.
- **Calling on a specific individual for help:** Decreasing the psychological distance between the victim and the onlooker. If the victim makes eye contact and asks a specific individual for help, that person will feel more compelled to take action.
- **Having the skills to help:** People often fail to assist because they feel unqualified to help. A person who has received specific training in life-saving and first aid will probably feel more capable of stepping up and offering assistance.

### ***Responsibility and Freedom***

Freedom, from an existential perspective, cannot be separated from responsibility. With freedom comes responsibility. Yet, it is common for many people to seek freedom while trying to avoid responsibility. While, at times, it appears that people may be able to succeed at this, there remains a psychological consequence. This consequence is often not very noticeable, but may find expression through guilt, anxiety, depression, or even anger.

Existential freedom is not the same things as freedom in the political sense we often think of it in America. In fact, political freedom could be view to be a rather shallow, though not unimportant, type of freedom. A person can be existentially free despite not being politically free, and a person can avoid embracing their existential freedom despite being offered great political freedoms.

Frankl (1984), in the story of his experience in the concentration camps, provides a powerful overview of this distinction. While all his political or social freedoms were taken away, he gives credit for his survival to his psychological freedom. This psychological freedom allowed him to find and embrace meaning in the midst of what appeared to be meaningless suffering.

## WAYS OF AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY

There are several common examples of how people avoid responsibility in American culture. Conformity is one good example. Americans pride themselves on being autonomous individuals to the point of idealizing individualism. However, upon closer analysis, Americans find extremely creative ways of giving up their freedom. Americans conform through blind allegiance to various organizations and institutions including political parties and religious institutions. This is not to say that being dedicated to either of these are bad. In fact, often they can lead to very positive outcomes. The problem comes with *blind* allegiance where a person gives up their responsibility to critically think through the beliefs, perspectives, and values of the organization. When this happens, the individual's values are no longer authentic.

When a person gives their allegiance to an external belief structure, they may go in one of several directions. First, they often will become very rigid in their allegiance to the organization or structure to which they have committed. This type of conformity can be seen through various forms of fundamentalism -- religious, political, psychological systems, etc.

Second, they may present as being very committed to a belief systems or organization, but they feel very comfortable bending the rules where it does fit their desires. It becomes easy to bend the rules because they are not really committed to the underlying values system. However, when a person is deeply committed to authentic moral or value principles, they are less willing to act in ways which contradict these principles. The principles are authentic.

Another way avoid responsibility can occur through the belief that one is powerless. There can be many factors which are seen to render a person powerless. A person can perceive themselves as a victim of their environment, of various supernatural or spiritual forces, their unconscious, or a victim of their biology/genes. While an existential approach will recognize that all of these factors may influence a person, none of them render a person powerless or completely control them.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

What Does it Mean: To Take Responsibility? Dr. Alan Zimmerman says: "If you're going to be an effective manager, you **MUST** hold your people accountable. Otherwise, your company may crash. After all, if an employee is paid \$200 a day to do a job but only gives back \$50 worth of effort, the economics simply do not work out (Zimmerman A.,2006).

The same goes for parenting. If you're going to be an effective parent, you **MUST** hold your kids accountable. When they violate the rules, mix with the wrong crowd, cheat on a test, stay out beyond their curfew, or do any other dumb things like drugs or alcohol, you **MUST** hold them accountable.

Of course, ineffective parents make excuses for not doing their job. They'll say, "By the time I get home from work I'm too tired to discipline the kids ... or ... I want them to have all the things I never had growing up." Your sincere but naive sentiment will simply turn spoiled children into spoiled adults ... who feel entitled to everything but responsible for nothing.

Holding people accountable may sound straight laced. Well, so is gravity. Practice prevention; build a fence at the top of the cliff, not a hospital at the bottom!

So I'm all for accountability. But there's another issue that may be even more important ... and that is ... people learning to take responsibility. It's one of the characteristics of EVERY truly effective, successful individual in any role or job.

Unfortunately, we're living in a time and a culture where many people don't know it means to take responsibility. After all, the "in" thing is to blame everybody else for what's not working.

To turn that around, we've got to start teaching people what "taking responsibility" is all about".

Here are a few of the things he teaches in his own programs...

- Responsible people take responsibility for making things better.
- Responsible people take action rather than wait to be told.
- Responsible people don't expect somebody else to do it.
- Responsible people keep their focus.
- Responsible people practice self-discipline.
- Responsible people take care of the small stuff.
- Responsible people start what they finish.
- Responsible people give back what was given to them.
- Responsible people accept ultimate responsibility.

## PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TRAINING

There are many ways to increase personal responsibility. Let us consider them using as an example propositions of Helen Jamieson ([www.jaluch.co.uk/personal-responsibility/](http://www.jaluch.co.uk/personal-responsibility/)):

"Increasingly we live in a society where blame is frequently laid at the wrong person's door, i.e. someone else's rather than our own.

Far better surely, to sue your company for tripping over the front door step than slap yourself on the wrists for not looking where you were going, far easier to sue the lawyer when you don't get the transaction at a price you had foolishly set your heart on, and far easier to blame the sales appointment maker when your sales meeting didn't go the way you wanted.

But if schools, parents and government don't focus often enough on the importance of taking personal responsibility, that doesn't mean that employers shouldn't.

If having staff take personal responsibility for everything they do and everything they say would benefit your business, then why not start including sessions on this in new employee inductions, lunch and learn sessions, coaching and all staff training?

You could even consider making personal responsibility the backbone of your culture. And what a difference that would make over the years to your bottom line!"

- Personal responsibility training
- Discussion about this training



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

Students form several groups and every group try to define the term “responsibility”. Then all students and lecturer discuss this notion.

## ACTIVITY 2

Lecturer proposes students to give their own examples of taking and realization responsibility.

## ACTIVITY 3

Students fulfill the test “Taking responsibility” and discuss its results.

### ***TEST***

Consider your last conflict with a friend, family member, loved one, colleague, boss, etc. then answer the questions below.

- Did you spend much of the time defending yourself, your actions, or your position?
- Did you do most of the talking?
- Do you see yourself as being unjustly attacked or injured?
- Did you avoid conflict by just saying what you had to say to get out of the situation?
- Did you make promises you didn't keep?
- Did you say yes when you really needed to say no?
- Did you discount, minimize, or deny your feelings or needs?
- Did the other person have to push and prod you to express your thoughts or take action?
- Did you share with others the details of your conflict and your feelings instead of talking with the person whom you had conflict?
- Did you hold a grudge or act angry, silent, and withdrawn after the conflict?

- Did you send messages through a third person to the one with whom you were upset?
- Did you expect others to read your mind?
- Did you stop trying to communicate after the first sign of resistance or misunderstanding?
- Did you walk out on the conversation, not return calls, refuse to communicate, use the silent treatment, put the conversation off for days or weeks?
- Did you abandon the relationship without any warning or at the first sign of difficulty?
- Did you express to friends what the other person did wrong while simultaneously struggling to see or admit what you did wrong or how you might have made the situation worse?
- Did you get defensive, angry, or withdrawn after others expressed how you might have handled the situation ineffectively?
- Did you express that you know something is wrong with you and that you need to change but since then you haven't sought help, taken action, or followed through with a plan for change that lasted for more than a few days or weeks?

As you read these questions are you analyzing how the other person was deficient in these ways rather than seeing a few of these behaviors in yourself?

***If you answer yes to four or more of the questions above than you're definitely NOT taking enough responsibility for your part in the problems of your relationship. This is also the case if you didn't answer yes to any of the questions above, which would be a sign of, not your perfection, but your denial and lack of personal insight.***

Everyone does some of these so you should naturally be seeing a few of these behaviors in yourself. Excusing and defending yourself or blaming others instead of taking responsibility will only keep you from seeing what you're contributing to the problem. Dominating the conversation and feeling like a victim shows your resistance to hearing the other person's perspective. Your lack of sharing your feelings and needs (and expecting others to read your mind or to draw your thoughts out of you) demonstrates insufficient personal responsibility and respect for yourself as well as the relationship. Withholding personal thoughts, feelings, and needs, refusing to be vulnerable, and not investing fully is often a manipulative and passive aggressive way of controlling a relationship. Additionally, talking with others about the conflict creates collusion and provides positive reinforcement that only keeps the problem going instead of really resolving it.

Giving up on a relationship or conversation before it's really been attempted can feed a victim mentality that makes you believe you are just unlucky in relationships rather than unhealthy in them. Abandoning the relationship at the first sign of conflict often makes the other person seem like the perpetrator of a great offense when in actuality your lack of investment and dedication to communication is more indicative of the true source of the problem. Without effective communication of your needs on multiple occasions and providing sufficient time for change you can't truly judge the character of another person or the potential of a relationship.

Doing things out of guilt, making promises you don't keep, saying yes when you need to say no, and holding resentments is often something people do when they see themselves as weak and incapable of confronting issues, but it's also a way of playing the victim. Talking about how you know you need to change but doing nothing about it makes you seem like you're trying while masking your passiveness — words are cheap, actions are not. The true sign of personal responsibility isn't saying, "Something needs to be done about this (which is passive and doesn't own the problem or solution)," its saying, "I'm going to do \_\_\_\_\_ about this" and then making yourself accountable to someone else over the weeks and months that follow.

Certainly there are those individuals who are toxic, act manipulative, and regularly inspire conflict. Taking more responsibility than is yours by blaming yourself, working harder in the relationship, or excusing their behaviors is not being responsible, but over-responsible. This encourages enabling and co-dependency for both of you. Learning to take personal responsibility requires that you say no when needed, have boundaries, confront inappropriate behavior, express your feelings, and let others own and fix their problems rather than stepping in and doing it for them.

## ACTIVITY 4

Personal responsibility training and discussion of its results.

***Students are proposed to finish some unfinished sentences by phrases of responsible person:***

- If you don't have the courage or confidence to speak up, know and accept that... your views simply can't and won't be taken into consideration (*example*).
- - If you lie and get found out, know and accept that ... (the consequences you suffer as a result are no one's fault but your own).
- If you bully someone and then they make a complaint against you, know and accept that... (you really had it coming).
- If you trip over a hazard that you have walked over ten times before, know and accept that... (you failed both yourself and others when you chose to just step over before).
- When an error is noticed in your work, know and accept that... (that is your responsibility to correct and that energy expended in finding others to blame for your errors is just a frustrating waste of everyone's time).
- When work you have delegated to someone else is not done, know and accept that... (that was your failure to properly support or manage them after delegating to them).
- When your career isn't progressing as you wanted, know and accept that... (whilst others may be there to support you, full responsibility for your career will always lie with you, you are not your manager's son or daughter so stop being precious and expecting him/her to nurture you).

- If your work ethic and attitude is lousy, know and accept that... (one day that will impact your earnings, your popularity and the opportunities that come your way. It might even get you the sack one day).
- If you're feeling under the weather at work on a Friday or Monday, know and accept that... (your social life excesses are now impacting your work and that they will, at some point, jeopardise your employment prospects, your family and possibly your health too).
- Know that in the workplace laziness, under assertiveness, aggression, low self esteem, selfishness, and dishonesty all bring consequences and when things go wrong, the first person you should look to is... (yourself ... what could I have done more if, what could I have done differently, what should I have recognized and dealt with earlier, and what if I had chosen a different attitude that day?)

## ACTIVITY 5

Group oral reflection on theme: "How would I use the new skills and knowledge about responsibility in my Personal Development Plan (PDP)".

One student from group is invited to moderate oral reflection.

## FURTHER READING

Developing and Assessing Personal and Social Responsibility in College: New Directions for Higher Education, Number 164 \ Robert D. Reason (Editor) ISBN: 978-1-118-82805-2 January 2014, Jossey-Bass - 104 pages.

Linley P. Alex and Maltby John Personal Responsibility \ in The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology (Edited by: Shane J. Lopez) eISBN, 2009.

Mergler A. Personal responsibility: the creation, implementation and evaluation of a school-based program. - Queensland University of Technology, 2007.

Positive Psychology in Business Ethics and Corporate Responsibility \ Robert A. Giacalone, Carole L. Jurkiewicz, Craig Dunn – Information Age Publishing Inc., 2005.

Zimmerman A. PIVOT: How One Turn In Attitude Can Lead To Success - Peak Performance Publishers, 2006. - 192 p.



## PART 3: GOAL SETTING

### Introduction (with definitions)

### Objectives

- Introduction to the process of Goal Setting
- Goal Setting Theory
- The process of Goal Setting

### Activities

### Further reading and watching

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the course Goal Setting [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUm-vAOmV1o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUm-vAOmV1o)

The course will encourage you to self-organization. This section is devoted to practical skills in the process of goal-setting, that will help you to develop the competence of “self-organization”, and will provide you with the knowledge and tools for self-forming and setting goals and their subsequent implementation.

Understanding the process of goal setting will help you in building a career, understanding of its activities and, we hope, will help you to find purpose in life. Thus, this section will introduce you to the different stages of the process of goal-setting, ways of setting and achieving goals. This course will help to develop competencies in the rest of the project, and will contribute to the development and consolidation of newly acquired knowledge and improve personal effectiveness.

## OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, you should be able to:

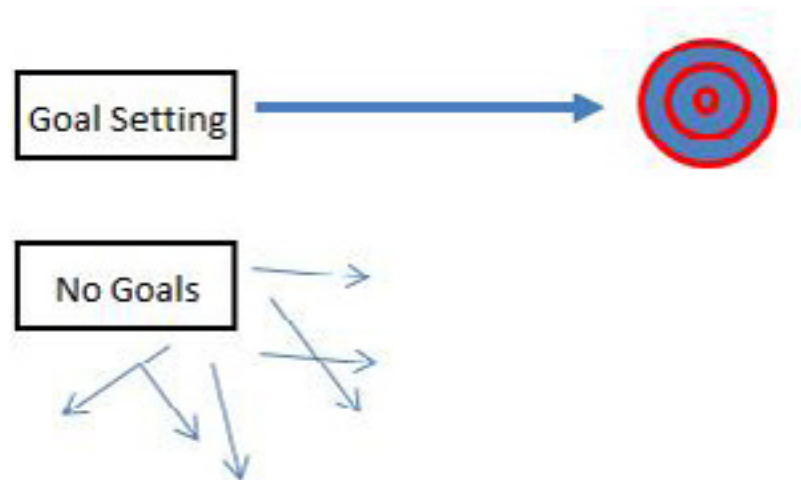
- Formulate precise goals and describe them;
- Segment big goal and set interim;
- Mapping of life goals;
- Monitor the implementation of goals and results.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS OF GOAL SETTING

***What Are Goals?***

You all have dreams, but how many of you have goals?

Goals, unlike dreams, identify the specific achievements we want to pursue in our lives.



*Figure 1. Goals and results*

***Why Set Goals?***

Goals are an important part of our lives. They keep us focused and allow for us to achieve things we never thought possible. Goals are also critical both for a person and for any organization. Top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields all set goals. Setting goals gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation. It focuses your acquisition of knowledge, and helps you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life. By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals, and you'll see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. You will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your own ability and competence in achieving the goals that you've set. The right setting goals allows you to achieve the desired result.

***What is Goal Setting?***

**Definition 1:** “Goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about your ideal future and for motivating yourself to turn your vision of this future into reality” (<http://www.mindtools.com/page6.html>).

**Definition 2:** “The [process](#) of deciding what you want to [achieve](#) or what you want someone else to [achieve](#) over a particular [period](#). It will only be [successful](#) if there is a [collaborative approach](#) between [employee](#) and [manager](#).” (The [Cambridge Business English Dictionary](#) © Cambridge University Press).

**Definition 3:** “The process of identifying something that you want to accomplish and establishing measurable goals and timeframes:

- a. When you decide on a financial change to save more money and then set a certain amount to save each month, this is an example of goal setting.
- b. When a team of people on a school board have a shared aim to improve education and set goals for budgets and test scores, this is an example of goal setting.”

**Definition 4:** “Goal setting is the two part process of deciding what you want to accomplish and devising a plan to achieve the result you desire. For effective goal setting, you need to do more than just decide what you want to do; you also have to work at accomplishing whatever goal you have set for yourself. For many people, it’s the second part of the goal setting definition that’s problematic. They know what they want to do but have trouble creating a plan to get there. Goals without action plans are just words.” ([sbinfocanada.about.com/od/goalsetting/g/goalsetting.htm](http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/goalsetting/g/goalsetting.htm)).

### *What is the purpose of Goal Setting?*

The purpose is to set our focus and increase our motivation levels whether in our personal lives or within organizations.

## GOAL SETTING THEORY

Goal setting is a powerful way of motivating people, and of motivating yourself. The value of goal setting is so well recognized that entire management systems, like **Management by Objectives**, have goal setting basics incorporated within them. The most famous concept of goal setting is the **SMART** goals.

### **SMART Goals Concept**

This concept of the SMART goal was introduced in the November 1981 issue of Management Review “There’s a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management’s Goals and Objectives” by George T. Doran, a consultant and former Director of Corporate Planning for Washington Water Power Company.

A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the SMART mnemonic. While there are plenty of variants (some of which we’ve included in parenthesis), SMART usually stands for:

- **S** – Specific (or Significant).
- **M** – Measurable (or Meaningful).
- **A** – Attainable (or Action-Oriented).
- **R** – Relevant (or Rewarding).
- **T** – Time-bound (or Trackable).

## Creating SMART Goals

SMART Goals Guide	
<b>Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What exactly needs to be accomplished?</li> <li>» Who else will be involved?</li> <li>» Where will this take place?</li> <li>» Why do I want to accomplish the goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» How will I know I've succeeded?</li> <li>» How much change needs to occur?</li> <li>» How many accomplishments or actions will it take?</li> </ul>
<b>Attainable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Do I have, or can I get, the resources needed to achieve the goal?</li> <li>» Is the goal a reasonable stretch for me? (neither out of reach nor too easy)</li> <li>» Are the actions I plan to take likely to bring success?</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Is this a worthwhile goal for me right now?</li> <li>» Is it meaningful to me—or just something others think I should do?</li> <li>» Would it delay or prevent me from achieving a more important goal?</li> <li>» Am I willing to commit to achieving this goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Time-bound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What is the deadline for reaching the goal?</li> <li>» When do I need to take action?</li> <li>» What can I do today?</li> </ul>

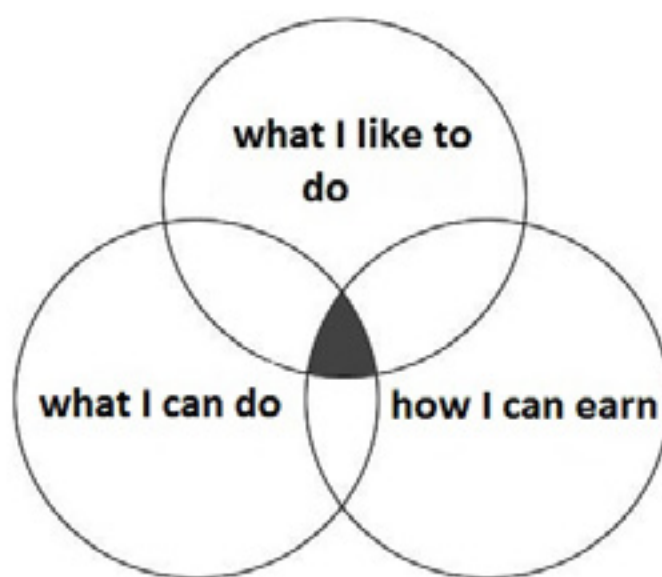
## How to define a goal?

**There are five basic principles of goal definition:**

**The First - a principle of congruence** (goals and values are in perfect harmony with each other). Your values are your deepest beliefs about right and wrong, good and bad, about the important and unimportant. High performance and a great self-esteem are only possible when your goals and values are in perfect harmony with each other. For example, if you set both the goal #1 “Building a career” and the goal #2 “Travel” - at this stage, these two goals are not congruent, since the process of building a career will take you a lot of time and effort and involves training and cyclical activity in an office environment. The goal of “Travel” will distract you from the goal number “Building a career”.



**The Second - an area which you are perfect/excellent in.** Everyone is able to achieve perfection in one thing, perhaps even in a few things. Just find your area of excellence and dedicate yourself to the development of your own talents in this field, and you can realize your full potential. Your job is to find this area, if you have not done it yet. Your area of excellence may be changed with the development of your career, only those who manage to find it can achieve a success. Your area of excellence will invariably be related to such activities, which do you like most and best of all possible. How to find the area which you are perfect in? Example: You need to describe what you like to do, analyze what you can do the best, and think how you can earn on it, and finally create your own business project. Using the following scheme as it mentioned below (Figure 2) you will search for an area of your perfection.

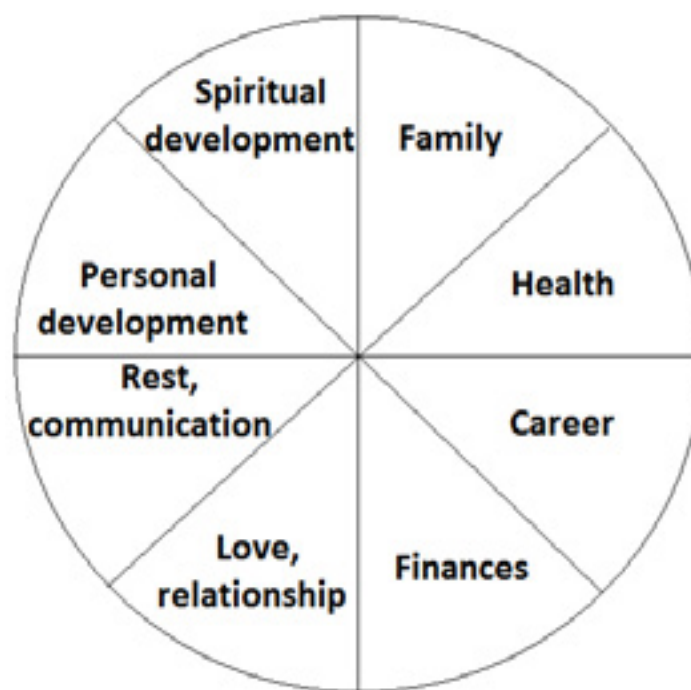


*Figure 2. An area of your perfection*

**The Third - a concept of diamond placers.** The Diamond Placer - is the name of a speech of the American preacher Russell Konvel, a founder of the Temple University in Philadelphia, announced in 19-th century. In brief: sometimes, opportunities that you're looking for are there in front of you. To find them you do not need to make extra efforts. But it does not look like the underlying feature at the surface. Sometimes people forget that a rough diamond does not look like a perfect shining diamond - to become it, it needs to be processed. So you have to improve your abilities, skills, to turn what you have into something more perfect.

**The Fourth – a principle of balance.** To be able to show the best results, you should have not one, but several goals - experts say that you need to find goals in each important life areas. Only then, as if wheels of a car, your goals will be balanced. As an example of the Wheel balance (Figure 3).





*Figure 3. The Wheel balance*

**The Fifth – a definition of your Main lifetime goal.** Your main goal - is you're the number one goal, a goal that is more important to you than any other single achievement of goals or a task for today. You can have a lot of goals, but there can be only one central main goal. The main reason for dissipation of effort, time loss and inability to develop yourself is the inability to define your primary, dominant, and the main goal. The way to determine the primary goal is the analysis of your goals, followed by the question: "What is the goal, if I've achieved it, that will help me to achieve other goals on the greatest degree?" Usually it is a financial or commercial goal, but sometimes it can be, on the contrary, a goal related with your health or relationships. Your main goal becomes the catalyst. When you are enthusiastic about achieving a clear primary goal, then you start to move forward quickly, despite all the obstacles and limitations.

## THE PROCESS OF GOAL SETTING

### Starting to Set Personal Goals

You set your goals on a number of levels:

- First you create your "big picture" or "Maps of Life-goals" of what you want to do with your life (or over, say, the next 10 years), and identify the large-scale goals that you want to achieve.
- Then, you break these down into the smaller and smaller targets that you must hit to reach your lifetime goals.
- Finally, once you have your plan, you start working on it to achieve these goals.



Figure 4: Maps of Life-goals

### *Step 1: Setting Lifetime Goals*

The first step in setting personal goals is to consider what you want to achieve in your lifetime (or at least, by a significant and distant age in the future). Setting lifetime goals gives you the overall perspective that shapes all other aspects of your decision making.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some of the following categories (or in other categories of your own, where these are important to you):

- **Career** – What level do you want to reach in your career, or what do you want to achieve?
- **Financial** – How much do you want to earn, by what stage? How is this related to your career goals?
- **Education** – Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to have in order to achieve other goals?
- **Family** – Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
- **Artistic** – Do you want to achieve any artistic goals?
- **Attitude** – Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? (If so, set a goal to improve your behavior or find a solution to the problem.)

- **Physical** – Are there any athletic goals that you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- **Pleasure** – How do you want to enjoy yourself? (You should ensure that some of your life is for you!)
- **Public Service** – Do you want to make the world a better place? If so, how?

Spend some time [brainstorming](#) these things, and then select one or more goals in each category that best reflect what you want to do. Then consider trimming again so that you have a small number of really significant goals that you can focus on.

As you do this, make sure that the goals that you have set are ones that you genuinely want to achieve, not ones that your parents, family, or employers might want. (If you have a partner, you probably want to consider what he or she wants – however, make sure that you also remain true to yourself!)

### *Step 2: Setting Smaller Goals*

Once you have set your lifetime goals, set a five-year plan of smaller goals that you need to complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then create a one-year plan, six-month plan, and a one-month plan of progressively smaller goals that you should reach to achieve your lifetime goals. Each of these should be based on the previous plan. Then create a daily [To-Do List](#) of things that you should do today to work towards your lifetime goals.

At an early stage, your smaller goals might be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your higher level goals. This will help you to improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

Finally review your plans, and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your life.

### *Staying on Course*

Once you've decided on your first set of goals, keep the process going by reviewing and updating your To-Do List on a daily basis. Periodically review the longer term plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities and experience. (A good way of doing this is to schedule regular, repeating reviews using a computer-based diary.)

### *Example Personal Goals*

For her New Year's Resolution, Susan has decided to think about what she really wants to do with her life. Her lifetime goals are as follows:

- **Career** – “To be managing editor of the magazine that I work for.”
- **Artistic** – “To keep working on my illustration skills. Ultimately I want to have my own show in our downtown gallery.”
- **Physical** – “To run a marathon.”

Now that Susan has listed her lifetime goals, she then breaks down each one into smaller, more manageable goals.

Let's take a closer look at how she might break down her lifetime career goal – becoming managing editor of her magazine:

- **Five-year goal:** “Become deputy editor.”
- **One-year goal:** “Volunteer for projects that the current Managing Editor is heading up.”
- **Six-month goal:** “Go back to school and finish my journalism degree.”
- **One-month goal:** “Talk to the current managing editor to determine what skills are needed to do the job.”
- **One-week goal:** “Book the meeting with the Managing Editor.”

As you can see from this example, breaking big goals down into smaller, more manageable goals makes it far easier to see how the goal will get accomplished.

# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

### ***SMART Goal Questionnaire***

*This activity will help you to work out the skill of goal setting. Select a goal you would like to implement and answer the questions below. At the end of the questionnaire, revise your goal: whether it satisfies the SMART rules for setting goals.*

Goal:\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Specific.** What will the goal accomplish? How and why will it be accomplished?
2. **Measurable.** How will you measure whether or not the goal has been reached (list at least two indicators)?
3. **Achievable.** Is it possible? Have others done it successfully? Do you have the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources to accomplish the goal? Will meeting the goal challenge you without defeating you?
4. **Results-focused.** What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal? What is the result (not activities leading up to the result) of the goal?
5. **Time-bound.** What is the established completion date and does that completion date create a practical sense of urgency?

Revised Goal:\_\_\_\_\_



## ACTIVITY 2

### *Searching for the area which you are perfect in*

This activity will help you to get closer to an understanding of what may become your mission or main goal in your life in the future. See Figure 2.

What is the mission? Mission is a purpose of your life, your most important project that you have to implement. How to define your purpose? How do you, an adult person, know your way? You need to ask yourself: what could I do for a long time, with interest, at the same time not thinking about what I get in return, and enjoying the process itself. Take a sheet of paper and divide it into 2 parts. On one side write down all the things you love to do receiving a real pleasure. On another side of the paper, write down what you're good at.

Where coincidence is there can be your true occupation in life. For example: You do like cooking, have fun on it, and you are good at it. Think, perhaps, in this area you would be perfect, and it becomes a matter of your life.

## ACTIVITY 3

### *Creating of the Wheel balance*

This activity will prepare you for goal setting activity. It helps identify the areas you want to work on and is a great way of visualizing your current and desired life. Once you are working on improving your life balance, it's also a useful tool for monitoring your life balance as it changes over time.

Use [www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE\\_93.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_93.htm)

## ACTIVITY 4

### *Segmentation of the main goal*

This activity shows how to “eat an elephant in parts” and helps you to define life roles, intermediate goals, projects and tasks using “Maps of life goals.”

Once you’ve identified your most important goal, or even more, found your mission, you need to define the roles you play in life. As a rule, people perform several roles. Each role has its own goals and projects, and for the effective implementation of these goals you need to set tasks to yourself, determine terms of their fulfilment and monitor the results.

Take one of your possible role and build a map of life goals for example “Career” (Figure 5)

Role	Goal/Project	Importance	Term	Necessary measures	Situational analysis		Tasks	Terms	Control
					Available	Not available			
Career	To get a job in the company N	High	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To obtain a high school diploma;</li> <li>• To work out quality CV;</li> <li>• To get additional trainings on self presentation;</li> <li>• To know English;</li> <li>• To publish articles;</li> <li>• To take part in Economics Olympiad</li> </ul>	• To know English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To obtain a high school diploma;</li> <li>• To work out quality CV;</li> <li>• To get additional trainings on self presentation ;</li> <li>• To publish articles;</li> <li>• To take part in Economics Olympiad</li> </ul>	• To get additional trainings on self presentation and self management	2015 - 2016	
							• To take part in Economics Olympiad	2016	
							• To publish articles	2016	
							• To work out quality CV	2017	
							• To pass the final exams for high scores	2017	

*Figure 5. Map of life goal*

## ACTIVITY 5.

### *Practical Training. Cinemalogia*

Watch and analyze the movie in terms of goal setting and achieving:

1) “The Legend of Bagger Vance” (2000), American sports drama directed by Robert Redford and starring Will Smith, Matt Damon and Charlize Theron.

2) “The Devil Wears Prada” (2006), comedy-drama (film based on Lauren Weisberger’s 2003 novel of the same name) directed by David Frankel and starring Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, Stanley Tucci, Simon Baker and Adrian Grenier.

In this part, you’ve become familiar with the rules and principles of goal setting. You have learned about the world famous concepts of working with goals. Activities that you’ve completed, we hope, have formed the necessary skills to work with goals and be very useful in your life. The proposed video material and Further Reading will consolidate your experience and advance you in further independent studies.

Look back at the objectives of this section and consider whether or not you have achieved them, before you move on.

## FURTHER READING AND WATCHING

[Equity Theory of Motivation in Management: Definition, Examples & Quiz](#)

[Locke’s Goal-Setting Theory: Using Goals to Advance Motivation](#)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_NeNpxG6c0g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NeNpxG6c0g)

## PART 4: TIME MANAGEMENT

### Introduction

### Objectives

- [Introduction to effective time management \(with definitions\)](#)
- [The methods of Time Management](#)

### Activities

### Further reading and watching

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the next part of the course “Time management” and Put IMPORTANT Things FIRST!

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_N\\_uvq41Pg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_N_uvq41Pg)

This section will further contribute to your self as well as familiarize with the rules of time management and planning. This part is dedicated to the practical skills to manage your time and make prioritization. Self-management is an integral part of the process of goal-setting, and will help you in achieving these goals.

Thus, this section will introduce the concept of “time sinks” and methods of planning to you, and as a result you will be able to control your life schedule. Tools that you are acquainted with, let alone allocate resources in order of importance, and will allow you to be more effective in today’s hectic lifestyle.

## OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Plan your day and life
- Set priorities for tasks
- Compile a mind map
- Control your time eaters.

## INTRODUCTION TO EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

So, what is Time Management?

All people are given the same amount of time: 24 hours a day and 60 minutes in an hour. Each individual is free to dispose of his time almost as well as earned money. But the value of money is far below the value of time, as “to earn” it is impossible. And although we are taught to manage money since childhood, and, as a rule, how to manage time, that is what is called “time-management technology” - not.

While handling of money you need to choose what to spend them for, and what – not for. In order to choose what to spend your time for, use Prioritising technology. Despite the terrible phrase, in fact, it’s pretty easy for the average person, but requires a lot of motivation and ability to self-contemplation (reflection).

*Why use time management skills?*

It’s important that you develop effective strategies for managing your time to balance the conflicting demands of time for study, leisure, earning money and jobhunting. Time management skills are valuable in jobhunting, but also in many other aspects of life: from revising for examinations to working in a vacation job.

*What skills are required for effective time management?*

- setting clear goals;
- breaking your goals down into discreet steps;
- reviewing your progress towards your goals;
- prioritising;
- organising your work schedule;
- list making to remind you of what you need to do when;
- persevering when things are not working out;
- avoiding procrastination.

*Organization of activities’ competence:*

- Planning. Clearly plans the activities, identifies the need for resources to achieve the goals.
- Feedback. Asks for feedback on the effectiveness of operations, perceives it as positive.
- Allocation of resources. Consumes resources economically during the execution of tasks.
- Prioritization. Independently prioritizes current activities with regard to importance and urgency of the problem and in accordance with the actual situation.
- Control. Independently controls the results and the quality of work. Does not require continuous monitoring by others.

**Defenition 1: Time management** - the analysis of how working hours are spent and



the prioritization of tasks in order to maximize personal efficiency in the workplace. (Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition©William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012)

**Definition 2: Time management** - Systematic, priority-based structuring of time allocation and distribution among competing demands. Since time cannot be stored, and its availability can neither be increased beyond nor decreased from the 24 hours, the term ‘time budgeting’ is said to be the more appropriate one

([www.businessdictionary.com/definition/time-management.html#ixzz3WNABQuqf](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/time-management.html#ixzz3WNABQuqf))

**Definition 3: Prioritising** - focusing on urgent and important tasks rather than those that are not important or don't move you towards your goals.

**Definition 4: Timing** - a detection method using time-consuming fixing operations and measurements performed. This method allows to reveal “sinks of time” and show the effectiveness of the activities.

**Definition 5: Planning** - one of the most important project management and time management techniques. Planning is preparing a sequence of action steps to achieve some specific goal. If you do it effectively, you can reduce much the necessary time and effort of achieving the goal.

## THE METHODS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

### *Planning*

A plan is like a map. When following a plan, you can always see how much you have progressed towards your project goal and how far you are from your destination. Knowing where you are is essential for making good decisions on where to go or what to do next.

Planning is also crucial for meeting your needs during each action step with your time, money, or other resources. With careful planning you often can see if at some point you are likely to face a problem. It is much easier to adjust your plan to avoid or smoothen a coming crisis, rather than to deal with the crisis when it comes unexpected.

### *Prioritising*

Efficiency and effectiveness are not the same. Someone who works hard and is well organised but spends all their time on unimportant tasks may be efficient but not effective. To be effective, you need to decide what tasks are urgent and important and to focus on these. This is called **prioritising**. It's important to list the tasks

you have and to sort these in order of priority, and then to devote most time to the most important tasks. This avoids the natural tendency to concentrate on the simple, easy tasks and to allow too many interruptions to your work.

### ***The ABC Method***

**by Brian Tracy, the world famous guru of management**

[www.briantracy.com/blog/leadership-success/practice-the-abc-method/](http://www.briantracy.com/blog/leadership-success/practice-the-abc-method/)

The ABC Method is a powerful priority setting technique that you can use every single day. This technique is so simple and effective that it can, all by itself, make you one of the most efficient and effective people in your field. The power of this technique lies in its simplicity. Here's how it works: You start with a list of everything you have to do for the coming day. Think on paper. You then place an A, B, or C before each item on your list before you begin the first task.

#### **1) Determine your top priorities**

An "A" item is defined as something that is very important. This is something that you must do. This is a task for which there can be serious consequences if you do it or fail to do it, like visiting a key customer or finishing a report for your boss that she needs for an upcoming board meeting. These are the frogs of your life.

If you have more than one "A" task, you prioritize these tasks by writing A-1, A-2, A-3, and so on in front of each item. Your A-1 task is your biggest, ugliest frog of all.

#### **2) Decide on your secondary task**

A "B" item is defined as a task that you should do. But it only has mild consequences. These are the tadpoles of your work life. This means that someone may be unhappy or inconvenienced if you don't do it, but it is nowhere as important as an "A" task. Returning an unimportant telephone message or reviewing your email would be a "B" task. The rule is that you should never do a "B" task when there is an "A" task left undone. You should never be distracted by a tadpole when there is a big frog sitting there waiting to be eaten.

#### **3) Analyze the consequences of doing it**

A "C" task is defined as something that would be nice to do, but for which there are no consequences at all, whether you do it or not. "C" tasks include phoning a friend, having coffee or lunch with a coworker or completing some personal business during work hours. This sort of activity has no affect at all on your work life.

After you have applied the ABC Method to your list, you will now be completely organized and ready to get more important things done faster.

#### **4) Start on your A-1 task**

The key to making this ABC Method work is for you to now discipline yourself to start immediately on your “A-1” task and then stay at it until it is complete. Use your willpower to get going and stay going on this one job, the most important single task you could possibly be doing. Eat the whole frog and don’t stop until its finished completely.

Your ability to think through, analyze your work list and determine your “A-1” task is the springboard to higher levels of accomplishment, and greater self-esteem, self-respect and personal pride.

When you develop the habit of concentrating on your “A-1,” most important activity, you will start getting more done than any two or three people around you.

#### ***Tips from Tracy***

Review you work list right now and put an A, B, or C next to each task or activity. Select your A-1 job or project and begin on it immediately. Discipline yourself to do nothing else until this one job is complete.

Practice this ABC Method every day and on every work or project list, before you begin work, for the next month. By that time, you will have developed the habit of setting and working on your highest priority tasks and your future will be assured!

#### ***The Eisenhower priorities’ matrix***

Rather than deal with really important thing we often spend time and energy on urgent but less/not so important tasks.

Ask yourself: Do I have a habit of throwing one urgent task to another? Do some important tasks stay out of this, unfinished?

The US General Dwight Eisenhower in the 20<sup>th</sup> century proposed a simple extra dimension for rapid decision-making. According to his principles, priorities are set according to the criteria of urgency and importance.

The Eisenhower’s matrix is somewhat similar to the ABC method but has some differences and advantages. The ABC method is more convenient for strategic and highly effective tactical planning, while the Eisenhower’s matrix irreplaceable when a lot of very different things leans on you, and you need to set priorities and preferences on what to spend your time, effort and energy.

All of the cases that we have to do can be divided into four categories/sectors:

	NOT URGENT	URGENT
IMPORTANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important - Not urgent</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Refreshment</li> <li>• Search for new opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urgent – Important</li> <li>• Critical situations</li> <li>• Urgent problems</li> <li>• Last minute projects</li> </ul>
NOT IMPORTANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not urgent – Not important</li> <li>• Trivia, time-consuming</li> <li>• Minor correspondence</li> <li>• Random calls</li> <li>• Dalliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urgent – Not important</li> <li>• Distractions</li> <li>• Calls</li> <li>• Some meetings</li> <li>• Upcoming urgent business</li> </ul>

*Figure 1: Priorities' matrix*

### 1. Sector “urgent - important” is the sector of crisis.

- Cases: Critical situation. Urgent problems. Cases with “hot” due date.
- Effects: Managing in a crisis. Stress. Constant “fire” and “eternal fight”. Depletion of resources.
- Tips: It is obvious that you need to do in the first place.

So, a contemporary student could write in the Sector 1: “to prepare for tomorrow’s test in economics”, “unscheduled trip to the dentist,” “enforced rest due to accumulated fatigue”.

You should also try to avoid “no time situation”, as the most urgent and important matters are due to laziness and sluggishness. Usually cases of the Sector 1 are there because their undone will bring you immediate negative results (health-related cases for example). Such cases there are the same if you use the paragraph “A” according to the list of ABC method.

### 2. Sector “not urgent - important” is the well-being sector.

- Cases: Development of resources (people, finance, technology). Planning. Creating relationships and new opportunities. Recuperation.
- Effects: A small number of crisis situations. Vision of perspective. Balance. Strong ties. Control.
- Discipline. Reducing the number of cases and the effects of the sector “important-urgent”.

- Tips: Due to the fact that it is not very urgent, these cases are often set aside until a certain time, because at this point you are busy with other tasks, more urgent, but perhaps less important. The danger is that the unexpected matter becomes very urgent. Since it is an important task, it needs to be done carefully and slowly, but time is running out already. This is an ideal task to delegate.

A student could write “preparing for the exam on the English language”, “hobby”, “sports”, “holiday” - all tasks that are written there should be planned and engaged primarily by them.

### **3. Sector “urgent - not important” is the sector of illusions.**

- Cases: Common activities. Upcoming urgent matters. Some correspondence. Some phone calls. Some messages. Distraction.
- Effects: Focus on short-term. Managing in a crisis. Reputation of “chameleon”. Feeling like a victim, not in the mind. Meaninglessness of goals and plans. Weak or broken relationships.
- Tips: The problem is that due to the fact these cases are urgent, we try to solve them as if they are very important, using all our energy and attention. If something is not so important, it should be carried out very quickly or may be delegated to someone.

Next priority is the cases from Sector 3, a student could mention there some meetings or visits that are not critical to his/her life and development activities. The main strategy of implementation of such cases - minimizing such problems.

### **4. Sector “not urgent - not important” is the sector of destruction.**

- Cases: Dalliance. Minor correspondence. Trivia, time-consuming. Minor calls. A waste of time.
- Effects: The fundamental questions’ dependence on other persons or organizations. Total irresponsibility. Dismissal.
- Tips: It is often that such cases take your table becoming overloaded by papers. Many of those people who complain about the lack of time, spend a lot of time working on just such matters. If you really need them to do, spend as little time as you can.

Usually, time eaters are in the Sector 4: computer games, applications of social networks and social networks themselves, instant messengers, entertainment portals, etc. Such things must also be minimized.



### *The Pareto's principle*

One more reason why you need planning is again the 80/20 Rule/Law/Principle. It is well established that for unstructured activities 80 percent of the effort give less than 20 percent of the valuable outcome. You either spend much time on deciding what to do next, or you are taking many unnecessary, unfocused, and inefficient steps.

The principle of prioritization 20:80 was opened on the basis of statistics by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923). Pareto has found that 20% of the population owned 80% of the national wealth. It was found that the ratio of 20:80 is true in many other areas.

For example:

- 20% of regular customers (goods) provide up to 80% of profit;
- 80% of all permits of working days make only 20% of employees;
- the most important messages in a newspaper occupy 20% of the space and generate 80% of the information;
- 20% of efforts provides 80% of the result, and the remaining 80% of the efforts - only 20% of the result.

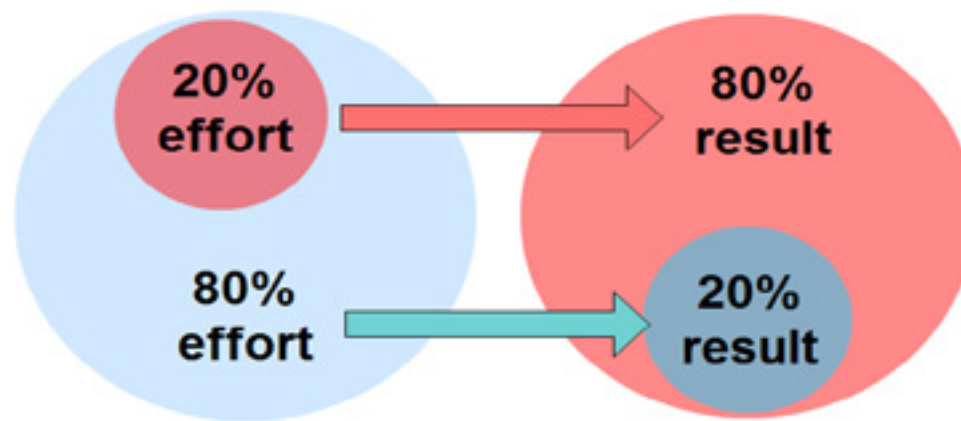
With regard to the distribution of time Pareto's principle states:

- 20% of the time spent to achieve this goal, achieve 80% of success.
- for the remaining 80% of the time, only 20% is achieved.

The Pareto's principle applies when it is necessary to prioritize the affairs/tasks of one subject or direction. In the connection you should initially first classify those 20% of cases which gives you the best result and start from it.

How to set priorities according to the Pareto principle?

- Write down all matters relating to the achievement of a specific goal.
- Select the level of importance on the contribution to the achievement of goals.
- Choose from these cases are those which together give 80% contribution to the achievement of the goal. This will be your primary business.
- The remaining business affairs and distribute on the urgency and importance.
- Important things perform yourself, unimportant and urgent ones delegate.



*Figure 2: Ratio of efforts and results*

### ***Tips***

1. You should try to analyze any business from the perspective of the Law and try to find the key points that make those 20% to get the desired result.
2. You should remember the Law of varying efficiency efforts when you assign the task to yourself, and especially taking responsibility on. It is better to give up on what you'll be doing poorly, and from those cases where you are required to "every percent" effort.
3. You should not strive all your jobs perfectly. It might be better to make three jobs not quite perfect than one but completely. All the complexity, of course, is to determine the correct behavior in the case.
4. On the other hand, you should not try to apply the Pareto's principle at every step. This law works well for not so important and complex cases.

### ***Chronometry method (Timing)***

In order to determine what tasks take you too much time and therefore, they are not effective, you need to use the method of "timing". Timing requires great strength of will and high motivation to manage your time, as it implies to measure the time for at least two weeks, otherwise you can not say for sure what really takes time. Such an honest and meticulous way to control time allows you to see what you do actually spend time for, and to identify 'sinks of time' and points to take measures to eliminate them.

### ***What is the strength of Timing activity?***

- 1) The only objective way to evaluate your own time organizing.
- 2) Visibility.
- 3) Training of self-discipline.
- 4) A reliable material for your study, analysis and optimization.
- 5) Awareness.
- 6) Ability to find time reserves.

***Tools of timekeeping:***

- Diaries, notebooks, paper forms;
- Gadgets - mobile phone, iPad, etc;
- Dictaphone (requires transfer to a paper or electronic media);
- PC (specialized software is used, both local and on-line solutions).

***Tips***

**It is important to use a diary for timekeeping especially for the second half of the day and weekends.**

**To-do list and advantages of using it**

You should have a reminder system to tell you of when you need to do what: don't try to remember everything in your head as this is a recipe for disaster! **Carry a pen and paper or organiser wherever you go.** At the simplest level your reminder system could simply be to use your diary to write down the things you need to do, including appointments and deadlines. Before interviews, it's fine to write down the questions you wish to ask on a small piece of card or notepad

***Advantages:***

- Focuses your mind on important objectives;
- You are less likely to forget to do tasks;
- Writing a list helps order your thoughts;
- It helps show the bigger picture;
- You don't need to hold everything in your head;
- It saves time;
- It helps you decide on priorities: the most important and the most urgent;
- You are less likely to become sidetracked;
- You get the reward of ticking off your achievements;
- You feel more in control;
- You have a record of what you've done;
- You always have something to work on.

***Tips:***

- A daily list of tasks that need to be done is an essential part of action planning.
- Refer to and update this regularly.
- Prioritise items on the list into important/not important and urgent/non-urgent.  
Differentiate also between urgent and important tasks: an urgent task may not necessarily be important!
- Update your list daily, crossing off completed tasks and adding new tasks that need to be done.
- Urgent or important tasks can be highlighted with an asterisk.

## MENTAL MAP

To work effectively with the goals, planning and time management at the end of the course we suggest you familiarize yourself with the tool of time management and goal setting - a mental map. Look at Life Planning and Goal Achievement [www.novamind.com/mindmapping-software/life-planning/](http://www.novamind.com/mindmapping-software/life-planning/).



Figure 3: Mental Map

### **Key Benefits of using the tool:**

- We see the whole picture.
- Realism of the plan.
- It is easy to set priorities.
- Ecology. When we make a plan in the form of mind maps and survey it at whole – we often realize that we forgot to include such important components of life in it, such as: health, sports, family, self-development ...
- It is easy to keep track of what is done and what is not.
- It is easy to adjust the plan. Some meeting took longer than we thought. The plan needs to be changed. What to throw out? If the plan is in the form of mind maps - we see immediately all the options and what cases can be transferred to tomorrow. the first subtype of your sociotype), and if you are a <lark> you have a more active type of temperament (choleric or sanguine, or variations thereof, and the second subtype of your sociotype). If your score is equal (you've got an equal number of positive affirmations

in both scale of the test) your type is <dove>. This is the result of a combination of passive and active temperaments.

***Resume on methods of Time Management***

- The ABC method strategically structures your priorities in life and gives you an opportunity to realize the really important cases and cases that should be abandoned or reduced by time - that is, you will now be able to set priorities in your life;
- Daily recording of your tasks/goals/results using the ABC method is the useful tactical thing necessary to make your time structured;
- The Eisenhower's matrix allows you to distribute your time in more detail according to the importance and urgency of cases;
- Knowledge of the Pareto's principle and Chronometry's technic will identify effective and ineffective activities, and will reveal the personal "time eaters".



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

### *Biorhythms Performance*

Perform a test to determine your biorhythm. Knowing your biorhythms, you can manage your time more effectively placing tasks according to your activity type.

### MEGEDA-OVCHAROVA TEST BIORHYTHMS PERFORMANCE

From the two opposite scales A and Z choose one of two opposite statements and count where there are more them. Record your answers on the form, after the digital code, a letter of dominant scale.

From the two opposite scales A and Z choose one of two opposite statements and count where there are more them. Record your answers on the form, after the digital code, a letter of dominant scale.

Scale A	Scale Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You are the most efficient in the morning.</li><li>• Usually, you are involved in a new business immediately, without any delay.</li><li>• It's easier to start new businesses than to finish a previous one.</li><li>• You can easily postpone one thing and do another.</li><li>• Think that slowness is worse than haste.</li><li>• You like to go to bed early to wake up in the morning in good spirits and immediately take up the case.</li><li>• Your work interest is high at the beginning and it is usually slightly reduced at the end.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your performance is better in the afternoon.</li><li>• You need a certain period of time to get involved in a new business.</li><li>• You are more likely to finish the first works than start new ones.</li><li>• You find it difficult to postpone the business you've begun, even if you are tired.</li><li>• Think that haste is worse than slowness.</li><li>• You do love to sit up late into the night and in the morning you are involved in the work reluctantly.</li><li>• Your interest for the work is increasing as you are approaching to the end of it.</li></ul>

The key to the test: A - larks; Z - owls. If you are an <owl> you have a relatively passive type of temperament (phlegmatic or melancholic, or variations thereof, and the first subtype of your sociotype), and if you are a <lark> you have a more active type of temperament (choleric or sanguine, or variations thereof, and the second subtype of your sociotype). If your score is equal (you've got an equal number of positive affirmations in both scale of the test) your type is <dove>. This is the result of a combination of passive and active temperaments.

## ACTIVITY 2

### *Priorities*

This activity aimed at building capacity to monitor and control their business during the day, prioritize, formulate goals in life. Think and write down what you did yesterday, for the entire 24 hours. Everything you write should reach 24 hours. Thinking time - 10 minutes.

After that prioritize on each item, denoting their «A», «B» or «C».

«A» - these are the main goals in life or the highest priority rights.

«B» - indicates that this issue should be resolved, but it does not apply to the vital goals.

«C» - indicates that this task can be postponed for a certain time, or may not need to perform first.

1. Calculate how much you have spent time on the «C» priorities?
2. How much spent the whole time on the «B» priorities?
3. How much time spent on the “A” priorities?
4. Consider and answer to the question: How important is each of this group?
5. Analyze how effectively you use your time.
6. Consider the possibility of daily work on “A” priorities and ways to get rid of «C» priorities.

## ACTIVITY 3

### *“Time eaters”*

This exercise reveals sinks of time to carry out a self-test and find the means to combat with them.

Think about and write down the most important your “time eaters”	Think and find the means to combat with them

## ACTIVITY 4

### *Chronometric. Are you using your time effectively?*

To determine whether you are using effective time, review your answers to the following questions:

- Is it difficult for you to list all the things that you do during the day?
- Is it difficult to you to meet deadlines?
- Are you doing something that does not necessarily?
- How often do you do the work instead of the other?
- Has it ever happened that the execution of some tasks you spend more time than necessary?
- Is it difficult to you to be on time for meetings?
- Do you often forget that you are going to do?

## ACTIVITY 5

### *Practical Training. Cinemalogia.*

Watch the movie at an angle of how valuable is our time that is impossible to stop, reverse and/or return. Think about how useless we spend it at times.

“In Time” (2011), USA Fiction directed by Andrew Niccol and starring Amanda Seyfried, Justin Timberlake, Alex Pettyfer and Cillian Murphy.

In this part, you’ve become familiar with the methods of time management. You have learned about the most common concepts of planning. Activities that you’ve completed, we hope, have formed the necessary skills of time management and they will be very useful in your life and study. The proposed video material and Further Reading will consolidate your experience and advance you in further skills development of your self management.

Look back at the objectives of this section and consider whether or not you have achieved them, before you move on.

## FURTHER READING AND WATCHING

How to write an action plan.

[www.time-management-guide.com/plan.html](http://www.time-management-guide.com/plan.html)

Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle

[www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE\\_91.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_91.htm)

ABC of Time Management

[www.health.arizona.edu/health\\_topics/mental\\_health/abctimemanane.htm](http://www.health.arizona.edu/health_topics/mental_health/abctimemanane.htm)

Time Management: Get the Most Out of Your Time - Training Program

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVa1fS5csHw&list=PLD56BCD9D57E0D730](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVa1fS5csHw&list=PLD56BCD9D57E0D730)

Harold Taylor Time Management Expert - Humorous video describing disorganization

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWYru64Feio](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWYru64Feio)

Top 10 Time Management Mistakes. Third Eye Group.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2PCDgpynAo&list=PLD56BCD9D57E0D730&index=11](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2PCDgpynAo&list=PLD56BCD9D57E0D730&index=11)

## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Objectives

Definitions

Testing of critical thinking skills (look at Activity 1)

- Comparison of the features the ordinary and critical thinking (M. Lipman)
- Recommendations for critical reading and evaluating information
- Recommendations for effective report writing

The main elements of critical thinking

Example analysis for critical thinking developing

Techniques of verbal and written persuasion

Logical Fallacies

Acquaintance with visual means of rational decision making

The correct interpretation of statistics

Does critical thinking is equal to general abilities?

Activities

Further reading



# CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Do you think that critical thinking is equal to general academic abilities? If so – you are wrong? It is different complex ability. Why thinking critically is so important? Because very often we tend to guessing instead of estimating, preferring instead of evaluating, grouping instead of classifying, supposing instead of hypothesizing, believing instead of assuming etc.

Schneider describes human minds as belief machines. W. James also said: “As a rule we believe as much as we can. We would believe everything if only we could” (quoted from Hogan, 2009). Yes, it can be useful to have some positive illusions for maintain optimism and self-esteem, but sometimes it lead to severe disappointments and our imperfect thinking can be used against us by others.

## OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this workbook you should be able to:

- 1) Give classical or your own definition of critical thinking, know it's main components;
- 2) Critical reading, evaluating information and effective report writing;
- 3) Recognize techniques of verbal and written persuasion;
- 4) Know and recognize the main logical fallacies;
- 5) Make rational decision making with graphic organizers and visual means;
- 6) Correct interpretation of statistics;
- 7) Discuss and reflect different aspects of critical thinking abilities.

## DEFINITIONS

**Definition 1:** By B. Black (Black, 2012) Critical Thinking is the analytical thinking which underlies all rational discourse and enquiry. It is characterized by meticulous and rigorous approach. As an academic discipline, it is unique in that it explicitly focuses on the processes involved in being rational. These processes include:

- analysing arguments,
- judging the relevance and significance of information,

- evaluating claims, inferences, arguments and explanations,
- constructing clear and coherent arguments,
- forming well-reasoned judgements and decisions.

Being rational also requires an open-minded yet critical approach to one's own thinking as well as that of others.

**Definition 2:** Accordingly to Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga M.L. et al. (Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga, 2012) the activity to think critically is a multidimensional capacity and basically encompasses cognitive, metacognitive and dispositional components. The cognitive components more often include such skills: to discover assumptions, to make inductive and deductive inferences, to evaluate information, to interpret causes, to predict effects, to formulate and test hypotheses, to make decisions and to define and solve problems. Critical thinking also includes creative skills to generate many varied and original ideas.

The metacognitive components include consciousness, knowledge and regulation.

The dispositional components include motivations, orientation to goals, attitudes.

By Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga M.L. et al. it has been stated that the cognitive components of critical thinking are so complex that, for its successful development, other cognitive processes must be involved and supported by large doses of motivational and emotional energy.

## TESTING OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS (LOOK ACTIVITY 1)

### COMPARISON OF THE FEATURES THE ORDINARY AND CRITICAL THINKING (M. LIPMAN)

<i>Ordinary Thinking</i>	<i>Critical Thinking / Reasoning</i>
Guessing	Estimating
Preferring	Evaluating
Grouping	Classifying
Believing	Assuming
Inferring	Inferring logically
Associating concepts	Grasping principles
Noting relationships	Noting relationships among other relationships
Supposing	Hypothesizing
Offering opinions without reasons	Offering opinions with reasons
Making judgments without criteria	Making judgments with criteria

*Table 1. Comparing Ordinary Thinking to Good Thinking*

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CRITICAL READING AND EVALUATING INFORMATION

Critical reading technics include the search and selection relevant information, evaluation information in the aspects of its reliability, quality (modernity, deep etc.) and quantity (it means you can define when you should stop to collect it in order not to take excessive information).

You may become information search for some topic from consultation with your tutor – she/he can recommend you the titles of key books and articles. Then you may read the references of these sources to find additional (connected) sources. Use the Library Catalogue and the Internet. In the Internet you should search resources by key words. From the repertoire of key words depends the result of your search. That is why think about how to select them optimally and try to use several variants. Watch over that you have collected the representative sample of the information on your topic. Look that you have not lost main authors who are cited in the majority of the sources.

Using the criteria: Who? Why? What? When? will help to determine the quality of the information. The checklist of the questions can help you to decide if the information is suitable for your needs (some of the information has been taken from Northumbria University Library, February, 2014).

Who? Look at the author's qualifications, background and experience. Are they an expert in their field? Have they published anything else? Are they being sponsored or funded by someone? Have they been cited by other experts in their field? Is the publisher a recognized and reputable organization? Do they provide contact details?

Why? Look at the purpose of the information. Is the information designed to inform, persuade or entertain? Is there appropriate evidence to back-up any claims? Has the research been sponsored? Is it objective or biased? Who is the intended audience? Does it use emotive language?

What? Look at the relevance of the information. Is the information at an appropriate level for your needs? Is it relevant in terms of geographic locations? Is it original or secondary material? What is its focus? How limited is the coverage?

When? Look at the currency of the information. Is the information up-to-date? Is there a publication date? When it was last updated? Are the links still active (website)?

Do the notes, marks or bookmarks in the text at once when you read some source. Else you will need to reread it entirely and you will have difficulties in search the information which has seems to you interesting and important when you had read this source at first.

When you read critically you should grasp main ideas, theories, key themes and arguments.

The critical / academic reading skills: (from Northumbria University Library, September, 2013)

- Academic reading is all about being selective; there is no need to read every text on a subject.
- Reading a text just once is not enough; you will need to read the important bits first, then re-read these sections more slowly.
- Don't read everything at the same speed. Choose a reading strategy to match the type of text and also to match the purpose of your reading.
- Focus on facts and concepts – does it answer your questions?

When you are reading pause every so often and think about what you have read. Do not just accept what the author has written – as you are reading have the following types of question in mind:

- What evidence is used and how credible is it?
- Can you see any bias in the author's work – what is their opinion?
- How has the conclusion been reached?
- Are there any points of view out there?

### ***When to stop***

It is also important to know when you have read enough, if the answer is ‘yes’ to follow questions then you should be ready to stop.

- Are you convinced by all the evidence?
- Have you got a balanced view?
- Have your questions been answered?
- Are the conceptions and ideas begun to repeat?

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE REPORT WRITING**

(these recommendations have been partially taken from ‘Northumbria University Library’, November 2013)

### ***Structure characteristics***

Well-structured report should begin from title page, then it can include contents page, then introduction (5-10% of the overall volume), where reasonably to distinguish the purpose, tasks or hypothesis of your report. Main (central) part of report should include key information – base conceptions, facts and arguments, which illustrate and prove your point of view, accenting and explaining revealed contradictions instead of suppression them. Use examples, statistics, tables and illustrations.

Report usually finish by conclusions or summary (5%) where it is generalize the results and discuss if the purpose and tasks were realized and why, if the hypotheses were confirmed. All supplementary information should be taking away to appendix to free the report from the overload by excessive details.

To write well-structured report it need to involve such writing abilities:

- Ability to draft an outline plan.
- Ability to formulate the head of report.
- Skills to write abstract if the report is long.
- Ability to set up the goal and the tasks of your report.
- Skills to structure materials and to design the plan of your report.
- Ability to formulate conclusions, to add necessary appendix.

### ***Content characteristics***

Orientation on reader’s/reviewer’s needs, awareness about qualification level and request of potential or actual reader/reviewer.



Referencing and citation all texts, thoughts, illustrative materials which were have not created by yourself. Responsible citation answers the questions: “who?”, “what?”, “when?” and “where?” Do not copy word for word when making notes. Try reading a paragraph at time and then summarize the main points using your own words. This alternative way of referring to an author’s ideas is called paraphrasing and is a way in which you can avoid plagiarism.

Be aware about you attitudes, expectations and beliefs in the matter which you describe in your essay, assignment, article or other text. Try to be honest with you and ask yourself – “if I really want to examine this matter or I simply seek the ways to confirm my preferences and views”. If something was not solved in your report do not afraid to acknowledge it in the summary and admit that it needs more researches to explain, find out or confirm.

Control natural desire to conduct bright impression to the reader. Be oriented on the goals of your report and think about is all the information relevant. Control also are the all points supported by evidence.

### ***Academic style of writing***

The following characteristics are typical of academic writing:

- Use of correct grammar and punctuation;
- Uses cautious language;
- Avoids subjective and emotive language;
- Uses linking words and phrases;
- Uses correct referencing;
- Clear and concise language;
- Formal writing style.

Do not use slang expressions and always write words out in full.

Define the main concepts and hold them up to finish, don’t change the key terms even to avoid tautology.

Because research and theories are being developed and updated all the time, writers tend to use cautious or tentative language. The language used in academic writing should reflect the amount of strength of evidence to support a topic or claim.

### ***Examples of language that is not cautious:***

*Jennings’ (2010) research shows that smoking tobacco causes lung cancer.*

*Smith’s (2011) evidence says that greenhouse gases have an effect on the climate.*

***Examples of the cautious language:***

Jennings' (2010) research **would appear to show that** smoking tobacco **may** cause lung cancer.

Smith's (2011) evidence **suggests** that greenhouse gases **may** have an effect on the climate.

A well-structured text is important because our working memory and attention volume can include only  $7 \pm 2$  units. That is why we badly perceive information, which is not divided on several similar pieces.

Points to remember for good structure:

- Try and group similar ideas and concepts together.
- Use paragraphs to divide different sections up and ensure that each paragraph has a point.
- Use the first sentence of each paragraph to introduce the theme of the paragraph.
- Ensure that your sections and paragraphs flow in a logical manner.
- By all means reread and edit your report after finishing.

The key characteristics of academic/critical writing is that it is objective and neutral. So avoid exaggerations and emotional epithets, like “beautiful”, “extremely important” etc.

Most academic writing uses the third person, in other words the writer does not use ‘I’. This helps to ensure the writing stays objective. Examples: ‘This essay will discuss the effect of...’, ‘It could be argued that...’, ‘The researcher found that the results seems to indicate...’, ‘The results appeared to show that...’.

It will be useful to build your own phrasebook of phrases for academic writing. Examples of phrases used to report or interpret results: ‘*It is likely that...*’, ‘*It is possible that...*’, ‘*...suggests that ...*’, ‘*...probably means that...*’, ‘*It appears that...*’, ‘*...would appear to show that...*’.

Examples of phrases used to compare and contrast: ‘*Equally...*’, ‘*However...*’, ‘*Likewise...*’, ‘*On the contrary...*’, ‘*It appears that...*’, ‘*Despite being...*’, ‘*Similarly*’, ‘*On the other hand...*’.

Examples of phrases used to show examples and draw conclusions: ‘*For example...*’, ‘*To summarise...*’, ‘*As can be seen...*’, ‘*In conclusion...*’, ‘*This demonstrates...*’, ‘*In other words...*’, ‘*For instance...*’, ‘*Finally...*’.

Examples of phrases used to present an author’s work: ‘*Russell (2011) argued that...*’, ‘*DeMille (1999) concluded that...*’, ‘*McGuirk (2009) estimated...*’, ‘*Evans (2006) believed that...*’, ‘*Roll (2009) stated that...*’, ‘*King (2007) suggested that...*’.

Use linking words such as: *yet; but; however; also; on the other hand; not only.*

## THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING

- Understanding and use of oratory,
- Prediction and prevention of problems,
- Knowledge of the basic “logical fallacies”,
- Critical reading and writing style,
- Correct goal setting,
- Recognition of manipulating statistics,
- Recognition of manipulating in advertising and propaganda,
- Countering techniques of dishonest dispute.

## EXAMPLE ANALYSIS FOR CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPING

The leader (teacher) is reading the example from D. Myers (Myers, 1998, p. 329) on developing critical thinking, give the questions for the essay and students write an essay with their opinion at home (look **Activity 3**) – what in this example is resource for critical thinking development. After this on the next 2 contact hours leader initiate group discussion with the results of student’s essays and read the D. Myers opinion (look **Appendix**). This essay will be the part of student’s portfolio.

Example. “Sleeping problem”.

Sleeping stage REM (rapid eye movement), followed by rapid eye movement, returns periodically, and someone sees vivid dreams. Theories about the causes of sleep vary widely, ranging from the theories of Freud, who believed the dream kind of spare valve to release psychic energy to assumptions that sleep plays an important role in information processing, and to representations that dream is simply the product of random neural activity of the brain. Although the causes of sleep are still not clear, sleeping is necessary without any doubts. After the periods when a person is deprived of REM sleep would follow longer REM-periods.

Imagine that your elderly aunt (client, patient, colleague – O. Lutsenko added) is concerned about his insomnia. She argues that she sleeps only 3-4 hours a night, in the morning feels restless, do not sees any dreams. Fearing that the loss of sleep and dreams create psychological problems, she tries to take a nap in the afternoon to “catch” it up, in the middle of the night she engages in aerobics to get tired and fall asleep faster, and even drinks a glass or two of alcohol. And although she claims that insomnia affects the health and mood, you do not notice any changes in it. Moreover, she is quite naturally and easily leads the conversation.

- Whether aunt's (client, patient, colleague) concern about her sleep is justified? Should she worry about her insomnia?
- Which actions should she take to improve her sleep?
- Is it possible that aunt (client, patient, colleague) completely ceased to see the dreams? How can she become sure in this?
- Suppose your aunt (client, patient, colleague) was right when she said that she had ceased to see the dreams. What could be the expected results of such a state in the light of Freud's theory? In the light of physiological psychology? Cognitive psychology?

## TECHNIQUES OF VERBAL AND WRITTEN PERSUASION

These techniques show the reader that the point of view of the author should act as their own point of view.

- Rhetorical question: means that the answer is so obvious that other answer is not required.  
Example: Can we expect that our teachers will maintain a high level of professionalism, if we do not pay them a fair wage?
- The Rule of 'Three': based on the theory that people remember things when they are listed in three. The same idea can be told in 3 different ways.  
Example: "Stop, look, and listen"; "Is your car old? rusting? ready to be replaced?"
- Emotional language: it is using adjectives, so that the reader could feel a certain emotion.  
Example: Management will not stop these cuts, and all of our children will go hungry. Then they close the plant and leave us without work and on the street.
- Hyperbole: The use of exaggeration for extravagant effect; often used humor.  
Examples: "A hundred years have not seen," "I've said it a thousand times."
- Sound model: designed to attract the reader's attention and remember the contents better:
  - Rhyme, - alliteration (repeated one the same sound at the beginning of words), the repetition of the same consonant sound, repetition of vowel sounds.Examples: sweet smell of success; dime a dozen; "Don't just book it—Thomas Cook it".

- Comparisons: show a relationship between two unlike items in one of three ways:  
metaphor (Examples of metaphor: “golden hair”, “sunny smile”); simile (uses “like” or “as”) (Examples of simile: the foreman is tough as nails); personification (uses an animal compared to a non-animal) (Examples of personification: she eats like a pig; he’s an ostrich—he won’t face his problems).
- Dishonest dispute techniques: 1) Ad Hominem (“against the person”); 2) Insult; 3) Extraneous circumstances; 4) Blame “And you yourself ...”; 5) Flattery; 6) Scare tactics; 7) Pity.  
Examples of dishonest dispute techniques: 1) How can you claim this if you are still so young and have not the diploma... 2) May be you are absolutely mad if... 3) He/she has given the negative evaluation of our work because... and by the way he/she is a conflict person, for example, yesterday... 4) And you yourself ... 5) So clever and intelligent man/woman understand that... 6) Tomorrow the prices will be much higher... 7) With all my problems...

## LOGICAL FALLACIES

- *Post Hoc* (after this, therefore because of this) – occurs when an assumption is made that, because one event precedes another. Example: I wanted to do well on the test, so I used my lucky pen. It worked again! I got an A.
- *False Dilemma*: presents in its major premise just two options (“either-or”) when in reality there are others. Example: “Stop wasting my time in this store! Either decide you can afford the stereo, or go without music in your room!”
- *Hasty generalization* (jumping to conclusion) – when premises do not contain enough evidence to draw a conclusion. Example: That new police drama is a really well done show. All police dramas are great shows.
- *Unfinished claim* – when it is declared that something is better, but not specified better... than? Example: “Our fruits and vegetables are better and fresher!”
- *Circular Reasoning* – when there is just one premise, and the conclusion simply restates it in a slightly different form. Example: “I told you to clean your room!” “Why?” “Because I said so!”



- «*Slippery Slope*». The argument might have two true premises, and a conclusion that takes them to an extreme. Example: “We have to stop the tuition increase! Today, it’s \$5,000; tomorrow, they will be charging \$40,000 a semester!”
- *Equivocation*: uses a word twice, each time implying a different meaning of that word, or uses one word that could mean at least two different things. Example: “Hot dogs are better than nothing. Nothing is better than steak. Therefore, hot dogs are better than steak.”
- “*Red herring*” – are simply any unrelated topic that is brought into an argument to divert attention from the subject at hand. Example: “Nuclear power is a necessity, even though it has the potential to be dangerous. You know what is really dangerous, though? Bathtubs. More people die in accidents in their bathtubs every year than you can imagine.”
- Composition fallacy – by focusing on parts of a whole and drawing a conclusion based only on those parts. Example: Every player on their team is excellent. So their team must be excellent, too.
- “*Chicken and egg*” fallacy: an error by confusing cause and effect. Example: Last night I had a fever. This morning, I have a cold and a fever. The fever caused the cold.

## ACQUAINTANCE WITH VISUAL MEANS OF RATIONAL DECISION MAKING

Venn diagrams, tables of causes-problems-effects-possible solutions-possible outcomes, tables with possible choices, main criteria and assessment in scores by 5-points scale, tables of assessment costs and benefits for different solutions.

Why graphic organizers of information are better than simple list?

- They are a meaningful display of complex information.
- They help you to see patterns and organization in your thinking.
- They help you gather and compress information.

- They keep you focused on your goal.
- They show what you know and what you still need to find out.
- They help you understand and interpret your thoughts and ideas.

### Concept Maps

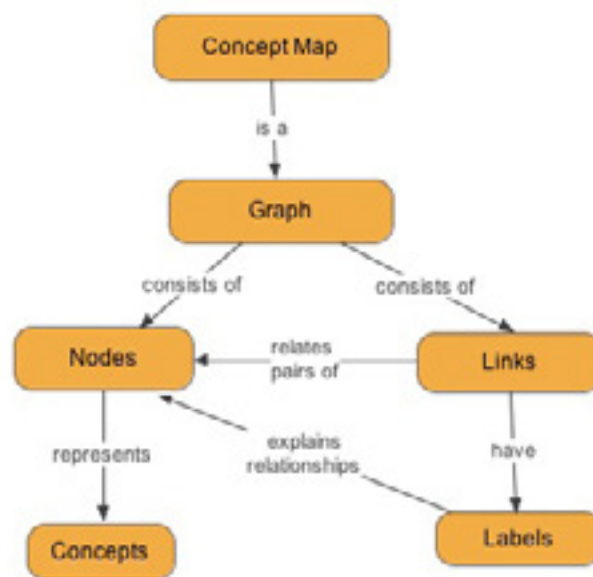
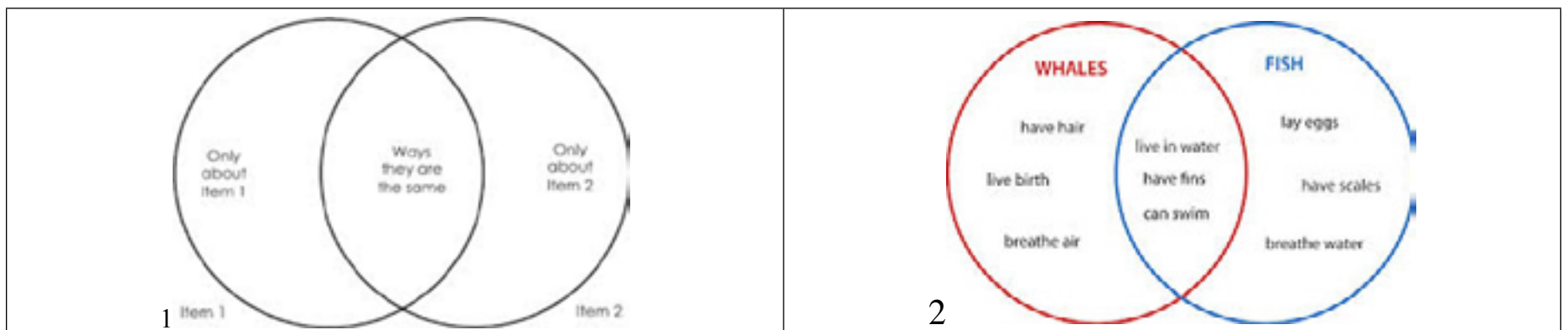


Figure 1. Model of the concept map ([www.milcord.com/milcord-blog/2009/11/25/concept-map-vs-powerpoint-for-briefings](http://www.milcord.com/milcord-blog/2009/11/25/concept-map-vs-powerpoint-for-briefings))

Concept maps, also called target maps, should be used when you are exploring a topic that is not complex. Concept map visually arranges a simple decision and the factors that may be used in making that decision (Starkey, 2004). You can use it to decide if you should change the region of your housing, get yourself a dog, by something cost etc.

### Venn Diagrams



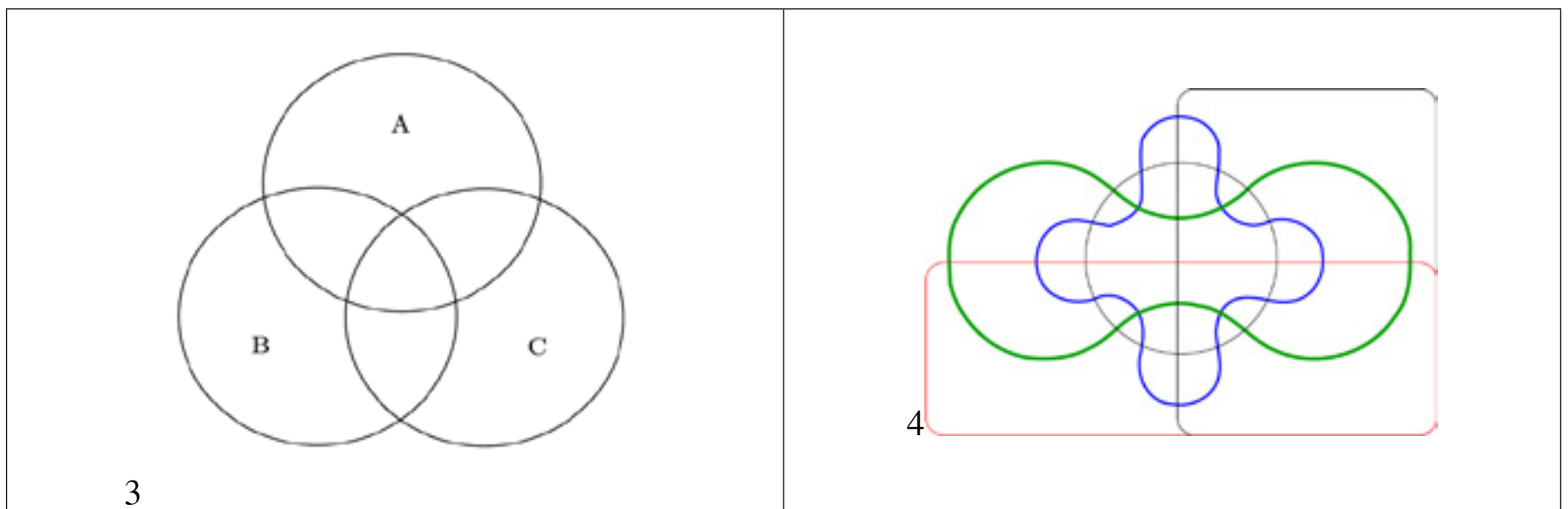


Figure 2. Examples of Venn Diagrams ([www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2646](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2646))

**Example:** You have \$ 2,000 in the inheritance from a distant relative. You always wanted to go on a trip to France (or Spain, or...), but also you want to renovate your dilapidated bathroom. Also your friends sell their cottage with 50% discount, and you dreamed of having your own piece of land with a garden. Try to determine with the help of Venn diagram (#3 on the Fig. 2) what to do with the money better, what are the advantages and disadvantages of each of the solutions.

**Results:** A - cottage, B - a journey, C - bathroom. AB – it may no longer to be the opportunity to buy a cottage with such discount; AC - bathroom will improve your daily life more than a cottage; BC - the money was unexpected and so they can be spend at a least practical purpose. ABC - the final decision - a journey.

### Chart

Consider brainstorming with a chart if you have two or more elements that you want to compare and contrast. Charts let you clearly see how each item is similar to the others, and how it differs. In order to make an effective chart, you need to define the elements you wish to compare, and then come up with two or more areas in which to compare them. Then, you may need to conduct some research to accurately fill out your chart. The chart will keep you focused on your purpose, and on relevant information as you conduct your research.

**Example.** You are trying to decide whether to take a job offer in another region or stay where you are. The considerations are salary, housing, schools, and standard of living. While you already have the salary information, you will need to go to the library or Internet to find out the other facts you need to make your comparison. To guide you in your search, you create a chart that looks like this:

Decision	Salary	Housing	Schools	Standard of Living	Total score
Move to east	5	3	4	5	17
Stay in west	1	5	5	2	13

You can add your assessment in scores by 5-points scale and calculate the best decision.

### ***Problem/Solution Outline***

Regular outlines (the kind that use Roman numerals, capital letters, Arabic numbers, and lower case letters) are highly structured graphic organizers that don't work well for brainstorming. It is too difficult to come up with ideas quickly when you are trying to fit them into a complex pattern, such as a traditional outline, at the same time. The problem/solution outline, however, is more simply structured. This type of graphic organizer is useful because the act of filling it out forces you to:

1. clearly delineate the problem at hand, including causes and effects
2. come up with solutions, and even possible outcomes of those solutions

### **Problem/Solution Outline Example** (Starkey, 2004)

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Problems (fill in as many as applicable)</b>	<b>Effects</b>
rent is going up; neighbors are noisy	<i>Who:</i> me and my family <i>What:</i> should we buy a house or continue to rent a condominium? <i>Where:</i> hometown <i>When:</i> lease is up in two months <i>Why:</i> possibly save money, build equity, improve quality of life <i>How:</i> not applicable for problem	If we buy: monthly payment would decrease, so have more money to save or invest; also would have more privacy and quiet. If we continue to rent: won't have moving expenses; will pay more in rent, so have less money to save or invest; will continue to have little privacy and noisy neighbors

### **Possible Solutions**

- establish budget for home purchase, get pre-approved for mortgage, and go house hunting to see if we can find something in next two weeks within budget
- remain in condo for another year while saving more money for a down payment

### **Possible Outcomes**

- find suitable house, secure mortgage, purchase house, move in
- live with noisy neighbors for one more year, have bigger down payment and more time to look for house

## THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF STATISTICS

Let us consider an example from L. Starkey (Starkey, 2004) for understand possible manipulations with statistics.

Which answer (s) can be a valid conclusion for the following statistical analysis?

The researchers wanted to know, does the use of night-light in the rooms or the light in children's bedrooms to myopia. They conducted a study which showed that while 10% of children who did not use the lamp, have myopia, 34% of children who used the nightlight and 55% of those who slept with top light, too, have myopia.

- (a) The myopia is arise because of the night-light and light in the room.
- (b) Children with myopia greater use the nightlights than children with normal visual acuity.
- (c) Nightlights will help you see better in the dark.
- (d) Children with one or both parents with myopia, greater use of nightlights than children whose parents have normal visual acuity.

There are two possible correct responses to this question.

Second option (b) – it's the best explication of presented statistics.

Nevertheless, the last response (d) is also acceptable, as there is evidence of the hereditary nature of myopia.

When you see the statistics in advertising, political speeches, newspaper articles or other sources, remember that this is not necessarily true. Ask yourself three questions: Is the statistics accurate? Is there any deliberate distortion of the data? Do you receive all the information you need to evaluate?

Now do some practical exercise to more understand which manipulations can be done with statistical data – look **Activity 6**.



## DOES CRITICAL THINKING IS EQUAL TO GENERAL ABILITIES?

Explaining that intelligence and critical thinking are separate constructs. Describing the main critical thinking biases, which are not related to cognitive ability.

Stanovich (2008) argued that critical thinking is what intelligence tests fail to adequately measure. This idea echoes the general consensus among researches that intelligence and critical thinking are separate constructs and was empirically tested in series of studies that explored the relationship. Stanovich and West (2008) used SAT-scores as an estimate of cognitive ability and numerous well-known thinking biases (e.g. denominator neglect, conjunction effect, framing effects, anchoring effects, base-rate neglect, “less is more” effects, affect bias, omission bias, myside bias, sunk-cost effects, and certainty effects) as an estimate of critical thinking ability. Whereas some critical thinking biases were moderately related to cognitive ability, most critical thinking biases were not related to cognitive ability. Thus, critical thinking and intelligence are separable constructs, but share at least one common attribute – they are difficult to adequately assess.

## ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY

***Fulfillment the Test of Critical Thinking of Lauren Starky. Checking the test results and analyze them.***

There are 30 multiple-choice questions in the pretest. Take as much time as you need to answer each one. If this is your book, you may simply circle the correct answer. If the book does not belong to you, use a separate sheet of paper to record your answers, numbering 1 through 30. In many cases, there will be no simple right or wrong choice, because critical thinking skills involve making the most reasonable selection, or the one that best answers the question.

**1.** You conducted a successful job search, and now have three offers from which to choose.

What things can you do to most thoroughly investigate your potential employers? (Fill in all that apply.)

- a.** check out their websites
- b.** watch the news to see if the companies are mentioned
- c.** research their financial situations
- d.** speak with people who work for them already

**2.** Every Monday, your teacher gives you a quizon the reading he assigned for the weekend. Since he typically assigns at least 50 pages of textbook reading, the quizzes are difficult and you have not gotten good grades on them so far. Which answer represents the best idea for troubleshooting this problem and improving your grades?

- a.** ask for the assignment earlier in the week
- b.** schedule in more time on Saturday and Sunday for reading and studying
- c.** get up an hour earlier on Monday morning to go over the reading
- d.** get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before the quiz

**3.** What is the best conclusion for the argument that begins, “The other eight people in my class . . .”?

- a.** like meatballs, so I should too.
- b.** live in apartments on the south side of town, so I should live there too.
- c.** who studied Jorge’s notes got D’s, so I will get a D too.
- d.** who met the new principal like him, so I should too.

**4.** Which one of the following is NOT an example of a persuasion technique?

- a.** Tigress jeans are available at your local Mega Mart store.
- b.** The very best mothers serve Longhorn Chili-in-a-can.
- c.** “Vote for me, and I promise our schools will improve. My opponent just wants to cut the school budget!”
- d.** Our tires not only look better, but they ride better, too.

**5.** Which is a sound argument?

- a.** I had a dream that I got a D on my biology test, and it came true. If I want to do better next time, I need to have a more positive dream.
- b.** Beth wanted to become a better driver, so she took a driving class and studied the Motor Vehicles manual. Her driving really improved.
- c.** After a strong wind storm last October, all of the leaves were off the trees. That is when I learned that wind is what makes the leaves fall.
- d.** When Max realized he was getting a cold, he started taking Cold-Go-Away. In four days, he felt much better, thanks to the Cold-Go-Away.

**6.** You are trying to decide what car to buy. You make a chart that compares a two-seater sports car, a two-door sedan, and a mini-SUV in three categories. What would not be a suitable choice for a category?

- a.** price
- b.** gas mileage
- c.** tire pressure
- d.** storage capacity

**7.** Which answer best represents a situation that has been decided by emotion alone?

- a.** You hate the winter, so even though you can't afford it, you take a vacation to the Bahamas.
- b.** The school shuts down after a bomb threat.
- c.** Your company's third-quarter earnings were much higher than predicted.
- d.** You need a new mixer, so you watch the ads in your newspaper, and buy one when it goes on sale.

**8.** In which case would it be better to do research in the library rather than on the Internet?

- a.** You are writing a report on recent U. S. Supreme Court decisions.
- b.** You want to know the historical performance of a stock you are considering purchasing.
- c.** You need to compare credit card interest rates.
- d.** You want to find out more about the old trails through the forest in your town.

**9.** You read a story in the newspaper about salary negotiations involving public transportation workers. The workers are threatening to go on strike tomorrow if their demands for higher wages and better benefits are not met. What represents an inference made from this scenario?

- a.** Health insurance premiums are very expensive.
- b.** The cost of gas will make ticket prices increase in the next few weeks.
- c.** People who ride the bus should look for possible alternative transportation.
- d.** Employers never like to meet salary demands.

**10.** What is wrong with this argument?

“You think we need a new regulation to control air pollution? I think we have already got too many regulations. Politicians just love to pass new ones, and control us even more than they already do. It is suffocating. We definitely do not need any new regulations.”

- a.** The person speaking doesn’t care about the environment.
- b.** The person speaking has changed the subject.
- c.** The person speaking is running for political office.
- d.** The person speaking does not understand pollution.

**11.** What should you NOT rely on when making a judgment call?

- a.** intuition
- b.** common sense
- c.** gossip
- d.** past experience

**12.** Which is NOT a valid argument?

- a.** There are six cans of tomatoes in the pantry, and another fourteen in the basement.  
There are no other cans of tomatoes in his house. Therefore, he has twenty cans of tomatoes in his house.
- b.** Everyone who was northbound on the Interstate yesterday was late to work. Faith was on the Interstate. Faith was late to work.
- c.** Huang lives in either Kansas City, Kansas, or Kansas City, Missouri. If he lives in Kansas, then he is an American.
- d.** No one who eats in the cafeteria likes the pizza. My boss eats in the cafeteria. Therefore, she does not like the pizza.



**13.** What statement represents a judgment instead of a fact?

- a.** My presentation was excellent. I am sure my boss will promote me now.
- b.** My presentation was excellent. The clients all told me they liked it.
- c.** My presentation was excellent. It won an award from management.
- d.** My presentation was excellent. It was cited as such on my peer evaluation.

**14.** Your dream is to spend a summer in Indonesia. After some research, you conclude that you will need \$6,000 for the trip. Which answer represents the best choice for goal setting to make your dream a reality?

- a.** Cut \$200 per month of discretionary spending, and save the money.
- b.** Ask family members and friends for donations.
- c.** Sell your car and use the money to fund the trip.
- d.** Look into a more reasonably priced destination for your summer trip.

**15.** What is wrong with the following argument? America—love it, or leave it!

- a.** There is nothing wrong with the argument.
- b.** It implies that if you leave the country on vacation, you do not love it.
- c.** It does not tell you how to love it.
- d.** It presents only two options, when in fact there are many more.

**16.** Which of these situations does NOT require problem solving?

- a.** After you get your new computer home, you find that there is no mouse in the box.
- b.** When you get your pictures back from being developed, you realize that they are someone else's.
- c.** Everyone on your team wants to celebrate at the Burger Palace, but you just ate there last night.
- d.** Your boss asks you to finish a report for tomorrow morning, but it is your son's birthday and you promised you would take him to the ball game tonight.

**17.** Which type of website most likely provides the most objective information about Abraham Lincoln?

- a.** [www.members.aol.com/LeeV/Lincolnlover.html](http://www.members.aol.com/LeeV/Lincolnlover.html): home page of a history professor who wrote a book on Lincoln's presidency
- b.** [www.southernpower.org/assassinations](http://www.southernpower.org/assassinations): a Confederate group's site on famous assassinations, most pages devoted to Lincoln
- c.** [www.lincolndata.edu](http://www.lincolndata.edu): site of a historical preservation group that archives Lincoln's correspondence
- d.** [www.alincoln-library.com](http://www.alincoln-library.com): from the presidential library in Springfield, Illinois, devoted to telling the life story of the sixteenth president.

**18.** What is the most likely cause of the following: "Our hockey team has been undefeated this season."

- a.** The other teams do not have new uniforms.
- b.** We have a new coach who works the team hard.
- c.** Some of our team members went to hockey camp over the summer.
- d.** I wore my lucky sweater to every home game.

**19.** What is wrong with the "logic" of the following statement? "How can you believe his testimony? He is a convicted felon!"

- a.** The fact that the person testifying was convicted of a crime does not mean he is lying.
- b.** A convicted felon cannot testify in a court of law.
- c.** The person speaking has a bias against criminals.
- d.** The person speaking obviously did not attend law school.

**20.** Evidence shows that the people who live in the Antarctic score higher on happiness surveys than those who live in Florida. Which is the best conclusion that can be drawn from this data?

- a.** Floridians would be happier if they moved to the Antarctic.
- b.** People in colder climates are happier than those in warmer climates.
- c.** There are only happy people in the Antarctic.
- d.** Those in the Antarctic who scored high on a happiness survey probably like snow.

**21.** Which of the following is a sound argument?

- a.** I got an A on the test. I was really tired last night, though, and I barely studied. To keep getting A's, I need to stop studying so hard.
- b.** Your car is not running well. You just tried that new mechanic when you needed an oil change. I bet he is the reason you are having car trouble.
- c.** I have not vacuumed in weeks. There is dust and dirt all over my floors, and my allergies are acting up. If I want a cleaner house, I need to vacuum more frequently.
- d.** The Boston Red Sox have not won a world series in almost one hundred years. They won the American League playoffs in 2003. The Red Sox will lose the series.

***Read the paragraph and answer the following two questions.***

I always knew I wanted to be a marine biologist. When I was six, my parents took me to an aquarium, and I was hooked. But it was in college, when I got to work on an ocean research cruise, that I decided to specialize in oceanography. The trip was sponsored by the Plankton Investigative Service, and our goal was to collect as many different types of the microscopic plants and animals as we could, in order to see what, if any, impact the increased number of fishermen had on the marine ecosystem. Our group was divided into two teams, each responsible for gathering a different type of plankton. Working with the phytoplankton, especially the bluegreen algae, was fascinating. We measured the chlorophyll in the water to determine where, and in what quantity the phytoplankton were. This worked well because the water was so clear, free of sediment and contaminants.

**22.** What is phytoplankton?

- a.** another name for chlorophyll
- b.** a microscopic plant
- c.** a microscopic animal
- d.** a type of fish

**23.** The author says her group was investigating whether more fishermen in the area of study had

- a.** a positive impact on the local economy.
- b.** depleted the supply of fish.
- c.** made more work for marine biologists.
- d.** a negative impact on the health of the surrounding waters.

**24.** You want to sell your three-year-old car and buy a new one. Which website would probably give you the best information on how to sell a used car?

- a.** [www.autotrader.com](http://www.autotrader.com): get the latest pricing and reviews for new and used cars; tips on detailing for a higher price
- b.** [www.betterbusinessbureau.org](http://www.betterbusinessbureau.org): provides free consumer and business education; consult us before you get started in your new business!
- c.** [www.newwheels.com](http://www.newwheels.com): research every make and model of Detroit's latest offerings
- d.** [www.carbuyingtips.com](http://www.carbuyingtips.com): everything you need to know before you shop for your new car

**25.** Which explanation is weakest?

- a.** Gas prices are so high that many people are not going on long trips anymore.
- b.** I can't wear my new shirt tomorrow because it is in the wash.
- c.** Jose's homework was late because it was not turned in on time.
- d.** We do not have new textbooks this year because the school budget was cut.

**26.** Which of these problems is most severe?

- a.** Your professor is sick and misses class on the morning you are supposed to take a big exam.
- b.** You lose track of your schedule and forget to study for a big exam.
- c.** You can't find one of the books you need to study for a big exam.
- d.** The big exam is harder than you thought it would be and includes a section you did not study.



**27.** What is the most important reason for evaluating information found on the Internet?

- a.** Authors who publish on the Internet are typically less skilled than those who publish in print.
- b.** Web writers are usually biased.
- c.** Anyone can publish on the Internet; there is no guarantee that what you are reading is truthful or objective.
- d.** Information found in print is almost always more accurate than that found on the Internet.

**28.** What is wrong with the following argument? “We should not change our grading system to numbers instead of letters. The next thing you know, they will take our names away and refer to us by numbers, too!”

- a.** The conclusion is too extreme.
- b.** There is nothing wrong with the argument.
- c.** Students should not have a say in the type of grading system for their schools.
- d.** It does not explain why they want to get rid of letter grades.

**29.** What is the real problem, as opposed to being the offshoots of that problem?

- a.** Your bank charges a \$40 fee for bounced checks.
- b.** You wrote a check at the grocery store, but did not have the money to cover it.
- c.** Every month, you spend more money than you earn.
- d.** Last month, you paid \$120 in bounced check charges to your bank.

**30.** Which phrase is an example of hyperbole?

- a.** In a perfect world, there would be no war.
- b.** That outfit would scare the skin off a cat.
- c.** You are not the world’s best cook.
- d.** He drives almost as fast as a Nascar driver.

<b>1.</b> a b c d	<b>11.</b> a b c d	<b>21.</b> a b c d
<b>2.</b> a b c d	<b>12.</b> a b c d	<b>22.</b> a b c d
<b>3.</b> a b c d	<b>13.</b> a b c d	<b>23.</b> a b c d
<b>4.</b> a b c d	<b>14.</b> a b c d	<b>24.</b> a b c d
<b>5.</b> a b c d	<b>15.</b> a b c d	<b>25.</b> a b c d
<b>6.</b> a b c d	<b>16.</b> a b c d	<b>26.</b> a b c d
<b>7.</b> a b c d	<b>17.</b> a b c d	<b>27.</b> a b c d
<b>8.</b> a b c d	<b>18.</b> a b c d	<b>28.</b> a b c d
<b>9.</b> a b c d	<b>19.</b> a b c d	<b>29.</b> a b c d
<b>10.</b> a b c d	<b>20.</b> a b c d	<b>30.</b> a b c d

*Table 4. Answer sheet*

<b>1. a, c, d</b> (Lesson 3)	<b>11. c.</b> (Lesson 17)	<b>21. c.</b> (Lesson 15)
<b>2. b.</b> (Lesson 6)	<b>12. c.</b> (Lesson 12)	<b>22. b.</b> (Lesson 19)
<b>3. c.</b> (Lesson 14)	<b>13. a.</b> (Lesson 18)	<b>23. d.</b> (Lesson 19)
<b>4. a.</b> (Lesson 9)	<b>14. a.</b> (Lesson 5)	<b>24. a.</b> (Lesson 7)
<b>5. b.</b> (Lesson 15)	<b>15. d.</b> (Lesson 13)	<b>25. c.</b> (Lesson 18)
<b>6. c.</b> (Lesson 4)	<b>16. c.</b> (Lesson 1)	<b>26. b.</b> (Lesson 1)
<b>7. a.</b> (Lesson 11)	<b>17. d.</b> (Lesson 8)	<b>27. c.</b> (Lesson 8)
<b>8. d.</b> (Lesson 7)	<b>18. b.</b> (Lesson 14)	<b>28. a.</b> (Lesson 13)
<b>9. c.</b> (Lesson 3)	<b>19. a.</b> (Lesson 16)	<b>29. c.</b> (Lesson 2)
<b>10. b.</b> (Lesson 16)	<b>20. d.</b> (Lesson 10)	<b>30. b.</b> (Lesson 9)

*Table 5. Key of correct answers (in table is it indicated the correct answers and numbers of the chapters/ lessons of L. Starkey book where is explained the critical thinking rules testing in every item)*

## ACTIVITY 2

### ***Group reflection: the results of poor critical thinking***

As was found by H. A. Butler et al. (Butler et al., 2012) that high developed critical thinking predicts less quantity of negative life outcomes and vice versa.

Group reflection – write on the board all possible practical consequences if people have weak critical thinking (the lectors prepared their own list and add their propositions in the time of pause of students' brain storm). The brain storming includes two phases – advance the propositions and theirs assessment

Examples from teachers: If some people have poor critical thinking...

- they often became the victims of financial machinations;
- they will often change their working place;
- they will often have divorce or live in the destructive marriage;
- they will be the marionettes of political manipulators;
- they can take part in the totalitarian religious sects etc.

## ACTIVITY 3

### ***Homework + Group Discussion***

During first two contact hours leader (teacher) is reading the example from D. Myers (Myers, 1998, p. 329) about “Sleep problem” on developing critical thinking, give the questions for the essay (look 6. Example analysis for critical thinking developing of the main content). Students write an essay with their opinion at home – what in this example is resource for critical thinking development. After this on the next 2 contact hours leader initiate group discussion with the results of student's essays and read the D. Myers opinion (look Annex 3). This essay will be the part of student's portfolio.

## ACTIVITY 4

### *Brainstorming with Venn Diagram*

#### Phase 1: criticism prohibited

1. The problem - you have decided to get married and the issue of housing aroused.
2. Propose the possible solutions (to live with the husband's parents, rent an apartment ...) and fill in basic circles Venn diagram. Draw them on the board.
3. Fill the diagram intersections with advantages and disadvantages of each solution.

#### Phase 2: criticism is allowed

4. Discuss what you might have missed, which is unrealistic.
5. Taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of each solution, select the optimal one.
6. What has happened as a result?

# ACTIVITY 5

## Making rational decision

Your company has been selling its hammers to its distributors for €3 a piece. It costs €2.30 to manufacture each hammer. Your boss asks you for ways to decrease manufacturing costs in order to increase profits. Create a problem/solution outline to represent this scenario.

Causes	Problems (fill in as many as applicable)	Effects
	<div>Who:</div> <div>What:</div> <div>Where:</div> <div>When:</div> <div>Why:</div> <div>How:</div>	

Possible Solutions

Possible Outcomes



## ACTIVITY 6

### *Recognition of statistics manipulation*

Students need to divide in two groups for the use of statistics with different purposes.

Situation: The researchers found that 98% of juvenile offenders, who have committed serious crimes, regularly watch TV with scenes of violence.

Situation: The researchers found that 98% of juvenile offenders who have committed serious crimes, regularly watch TV with scenes of violence.

Task for the 1<sup>st</sup> group:

If you are a supporter of reducing violence on TV, how would you use these statistics?

Task for the 2<sup>nd</sup> group:

What would you do if you were a supporter of freedom of speech on television?

All groups will be given 10 minutes for preparation and then representatives of each group should present their point of view and discuss them with opponents.

Possible answers for this task are placed in *Annex 3*.

## ACTIVITY 7

### *The distinction between facts and opinions*

To think critically is to be able see the difference between facts and opinions because the last often are given like facts. Let us do a practical exercise.

Mark each statement as (F) of fact or (O) opinion.

- \_\_\_ 1. World War II began on September 1, 1939
- \_\_\_ 2. Cream Brylle - the most delicious dessert.
- \_\_\_ 3. I went to rest in the Carpathians in the past year.
- \_\_\_ 4. To invest in the stock market – is a bad idea.

## ACTIVITY 8

### ***Recognize rhetorical techniques***

This exercise refer to 7. Techniques of verbal and written persuasion of the main content.

Read this texts and specify to what rhetorical techniques they relate.

1. “In conclusion, let me say that voting for this candidate - is a vote for a perfect world”.	Hyperbole _____
2. She is smart, intelligent and successful.	Rhetorical question _____
3. She knows how to get things done. Other candidates want to take us back to a time when jobs are scarce, people were scared and the government intervened in the lives of people. Let’s not let that happen.	“The Rule of Three” _____
4. Why turn the clock back, if we can move forward to a brighter future ?	Emotional language _____

## ACTIVITY 9

### ***Dishonest dispute techniques***

This exercise refer to 7. Techniques of verbal and written persuasion of the main content.

There are the most frequently used dishonest dispute techniques:

- Ad Hominem (“against the person”)
- Insult
- Extraneous circumstances
- Blame “And you yourself...”
- Flattery
- Scare tactics
- Pity

Group Work: Give examples of encounters with such techniques from your experience. Propose several ways for counteract them.

## ACTIVITY 10

### *Homework*

**Task 1.** After first 2 contact hours students at home record thoughts about today's session in their diary. After the lessons students should show it to the teachers for the formative assessment.

**Task 2.** After first 2 contact hours students at home read 3. Recommendations for critical reading and evaluating information and 4. Recommendations for effective report writing from main content, chose some scientific article (which will be interesting for you, each student – different article), find and copy out phrases for own phrasebook of academic / critical writing. This phrasebook will be the part of student's portfolio. After the lessons students should show it to the teachers for the formative assessment.

These assignments will be considering as a part of formative assessment.

**Task 3.** After second 2 contact hours students should write at home some elements of their PDP using their new knowledge about critical thinking. We offer students in theirs PDP to set clear, written goals for theirs future and made plans to accomplish them. They can use visual means and other skills that are the critical thinking competences to do this task effective.

These tasks will be considering like a formative and part of a summative assessment

## FURTHER READING

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Starkey L. Critical thinking skills success. - NY: LearningExpress, LLC, 2004. – 169 p.

Walbert D. (2006) Higher order thinking with Venn diagrams: [www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2646](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2646)



## CHAPTER 4

### REFLECTIVE THINKING AND WRITING

[Introduction](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Definitions](#)

[The Models of Reflective Thinking](#)

[Using Reflection: Managing the PDP Process](#)

[Ways of Reflecting](#)

[Reflective Writing: Some Initial Guidance](#)

[Using evidence \(including feedback\)](#)

[Tips to Remember](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further reading](#)



# REFLECTIVE THINKING AND WRITING

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the question: what is reflective thinking? What is it for and how to use it effectively? There are various definitions of reflective thinking, all of which suggest it to be a crucial skill for one's personal development. We set out what we mean by reflective practice, convey the importance of reflection to learning and show what are the main difficulties on the way of improving your reflective thinking skills. We also discuss different models of reflective thinking and ways of reflecting in order to help you identifying things that affect your own reflections and learning. You will also find different activities on reflection and learning styles that will make you better able to evaluate your own work, and it may also help you better understand the feedback on your work you receive from others.

## OBJECTIVES

After you have completed this module you will be able to:

- work out what you most want to achieve; reflect on and appraise your skills/experience in identifying and meeting your own needs/wants;
- identify opportunities for using and developing your skills in reflecting and learning, to achieve your aims in a range of situations;
- adapt what you do to achieve your aims, trying different ways of reflection and learning to meet new demands and address difficulties;
- critically reflect on your approaches and their effectiveness;
- plan your further development.

## DEFINITIONS

Reflective thinking lies somewhere involved with the notion of reflection and learning. We think reflectively in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting. So what is to reflect? Boyd and Fales defined reflection as "... the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self and which results in a changed conceptual perspective" (1983: 99).



Boud, Keogh and Walker offer a comprehensive account of the role of reflection in deep learning. They defined reflection as “... a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (1985: 3).

Steinaker and Bell (1979) suggest a reflective process believed to be of value in any situation in which change of behaviour is the objective.

## THE MODELS OF REFLECTIVE THINKING

There are many theories regarding reflective practice. A straightforward method is to have the *experience*, then *describe* it, *analyse* it and *revise* it (EDAR). This method should help you think about what has happened and then consider ways of changing and/ or improving it.

- *Experience* – a significant event or incident you would like to change or improve.
- *Describe* – aspects such as *who* was involved, *what* happened, *when* it happened and *where* it happened.
- *Analyse* – consider the experience more deeply and ask yourself *how* it happened and *why* it happened.
- *Revise* – think about *how* you would do things differently if the same event happened again and then try this out if you have the opportunity.

If you want to achieve your goals reflection should become a part of your everyday practice. Just apply EDAR when completing your plans. Reflection enables you to look at things in detail that perhaps you would not ordinarily consider. There may be events you would not want to change or improve as you felt they went really well. If this is the case, reflect on *why* they went well and use these strategies or methods in the future. Reflection should become a habit; if you are not able to write everything down, to maintain a reflective journal, just mentally run through the EDAR points when you have time (Gravells, 2010).

Kolb (1984) proposed a four-stage continuous learning process. His theory suggests that without reflection, people would continue to make mistakes.

This model suggests that the cycle can be started at any stage; that reflection is as important as the experience; and that, once the cycle is started, it should be followed through all the stages for learning to be effective.

We can reflect on something afterwards or while the action is actually happening. Reflecting on something afterwards (‘reflection **on** action’, Schon, 1987) helps us identify what we’ve learnt for similar situations in future. Practicing ‘reflection on action’ helps us develop the ability to think about and adapt something while it’s actually happening (‘reflection **in** action’, Schon, 1987). Highly skilled people do this (e.g. comedians think on their feet when dealing with an audience; surgeons adapt their approach if faced with a crisis). Both practices – ‘reflection on action’ and ‘reflection in action’ – help us to make for our goals.



So over recent years, a view of how people learn has developed that sees reflection as absolutely key to learning. *And reflection is the process of thinking about what you are learning/ doing, in order to make sense of it.* If we do something repeatedly without changing it, it may be because haven't thought about the effect it has and what we could do differently.

## USING REFLECTION: MANAGING THE PDP PROCESS

### *What for do we need reflection?*

- Personal/Professional Development Planning (PDP): reflecting on your needs, wants, experiences, learning and performance is the basis for the PDP process;
- action planning, identifying actions and recommendations: action planning is an essential aspect of the reflection process and of the PDP process;
- handling time and pressure: this covers planning to meet your development needs as part of PDP, and you won't know what they are without reflection;
- producing portfolios and journals (including diaries, blogs etc): most portfolios and journals rely on the process of reflection for you to identify what to include (Drew & Bingham, 2010).

As one can see, reflection isn't only considered as a key activity in higher education. It is also seen as a key building block for Personal/Professional Development Planning.

### *So what is PDP?*

Personal/professional development planning describes the deliberate process of thinking about and reflecting upon your own:

- personal learning
- performance
- achievements.

PDP focuses on how you can utilize and develop these aspects of your development further, in order to help you achieve your personal, educational and professional goals and aspirations.

A Personal Development Plan is not only used whilst you are on your academic course, as it is currently used by many employers as a way to assess ongoing training and development needs in relation to post-qualifying practice. You may be asked to present your reflections on how you continue your professional development, to manage the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) schemes where it's essential, so it is important to record your reflections. How can you record or present them? There are many ways to do it: you may keep a reflective blog or diary, portfolio of evidence with reflective notes or summaries or you may organise a reflective video/audio. These usually include appraisals and keeping a professional portfolio.

Where courses (or CPD schemes) require reflective activities (or evaluations, selfevaluations or self-assessments), they want something quite specific. They don't want a lot of unconnected thoughts about something but for you to be able to describe or explain:

- what you've learnt;
- what something that you did or thought or experienced 'means';
- what was effective and what evidence you have for this;
- what wasn't effective and what evidence you have for this;
- what you can build on or repeat;
- what you need to improve;
- how you plan to improve it and what specific actions you'll take (Stogdon & Kiteley, 2010).

One can see that managing the PDP means to provide evidence based information on developing your skills.

The PDP is most useful if used as a working document which can be referred to and revisited as you progress on your course. As with most plans, it will no doubt need to be reconsidered and revised according to your progress and in the light of other circumstances that may need to be considered.

You will usually be asked to draw up your PDP with your personal tutor during the early stages of your course and it will comprise of:

- a comprehensive list of your learning needs
- a list of tasks that will show how you plan to achieve the necessary progress in the areas that you have identified
- an indication of how you might monitor and review your progress.

***Example:***

Your PDP may look something like this:

- Strengths – good time keeping and the ability to meet deadlines.
- Weaknesses – easily distracted and this means that tasks take much longer than planned.
- Tasks – to develop a realistic timeframe for both the preparation and completion of work.

If you look at the detail of the tasks, it may be that you start to think about:

- how you organize your study time,
- why the distractions have interfered with your planned work,
- where you study,
- how often you are interrupted.

If you have taken over the dining room table in your home as the resting place for your academic books, do not be surprised when your train of thought is broken several times each day by hungry looks from the people who share that home (Stogdon & Kiteley, 2010).

To sum up one of the key building blocks for the whole range of your skill development is how well you are able to reflect on your learning. Consequently, this can become a very important part of your development in your journey towards becoming a qualified worker.

## WAYS OF REFLECTING

Generally reflection could be seen as a process of asking yourself questions (e.g. Why did I do that? What effect did I have?). This is similar to the process of being critical. There is, however, a difference. In higher education, ‘being critical’ is often related to situations and information outside yourself, whilst ‘reflection’ is often related to what you do. Evaluating what you’ve learnt, done or thought is part of reflection (Drew & Bingham, 2010).

Reflection is a crucial skill for any situation (e.g. higher education, at work, socially). All of you are already doing it: if you play football and think about the match afterwards, you’re reflecting on what you did and what you could have done; you may think about things you said to somebody; you may leave an exam thinking about the questions you did well (or not). We all do it.

So if we all do it, why do we need to learn how to do it? We may reflect on some things more than others. We may reflect unhelpfully (just going over what you did wrong isn’t much use if you don’t work out what to do instead). We may not do it in the form required when talking about some courses or PDP (Personal/ Professional Development Planning).



- Here are some possible ways of reflecting (Drew & Bingham, 2010):
- talk to somebody about it. Hearing yourself describe it can help you think it through. How the other person reacts might help too. Do their reactions annoy or please you? Why? Are they helpful? Why?
- Write about it. Put your writings aside for a day, then review it. What do you think now? This helps you see the situation as somebody else might.
- Keep a diary or journal, not only of what has happened but also of your feelings and reactions. You might see pattern or progress.
- Pretend you're somebody else talking to yourself. Sit opposite your jumper or jacket. Tell 'yourself' what happened or how you felt. This can be powerful (do it in private though!).
- Record it and play it back at a later stage, to see what you now think.
- Pay attention to your reactions. If somebody makes a suggestion and your reaction is uncomfortable, ask yourself why: it might be telling you what you really think. This can work well if you have a decision to make.
- Make diagrams or charts (e.g. to show connections).
- Draw your learning or your feelings or events and their impact.

## REFLECTIVE WRITING: SOME INITIAL GUIDANCE

One of the very common ways of reflecting is reflective writing. You might be asked to do it whilst managing your PDP (CPD). That's why of high importance is to understand what is reflective writing.

We will start from what reflective writing is not. It is NOT:

- conveyance of information, instruction or argument in a report, essay or
- 'recipe';
- straightforward description, though there may be descriptive elements;
- a straightforward decision, e.g., about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad, etc.;
- simple problem solving like recalling how to get to the nearest station (Moon, 2004).

In the context of your higher education programme, reflective writing will usually have a purpose (e.g., you will be writing reflectively about something that you have to do or have done). It will usually involve the sorting out of bits of knowledge, ideas, feelings, awareness of how you are behaving and so on. It could be seen as a melting pot into which you put a number of thoughts, feelings, other forms of awareness, and perhaps new information. In the process of sorting it out in your head, and representing the sortings out on paper, you may either recognize that you have learnt something new or that you need to reflect more with, perhaps, further input. Your reflections need to come to some sort of end point, even if that is a statement of what you need to consider next.



It is also worth recognizing that reflective writing may be a means of becoming clearer about something. For example, you might use reflective writing to consider the kind of career direction that you might take. Into the ‘melting pot’ you might then ‘put’ ideas, information, feelings, other people’s perspectives and advice. A metaphor for reflection or its expression in reflective writing in this context is ‘cognitive housekeeping’ to imply its nature as a sorting out, clarifying process.

From what has been said above, it will be obvious that reflection is not a straightforward and ‘tidy’ process itself. When you have to represent the process for someone else to read, you will inevitably tidy it up - but if a tutor is expecting reflective writing, she will not be looking for a dry ‘single-track’ account, or just a conclusion. It is also all right to use the first person - ‘I’ - in reflective writing.

Reflective writing may apply to anything that is relatively complex. You might reflect on:

- how to go about your dissertation topic;
- how well you wrote an assignment;
- experiences gained in your part-time work;
- what your essay title means and how to go about writing it;
- how to present some project work;
- how you want to behave differently in some context;
- the way in which your non-work activities relate to the programme that you are on;
- the quality of a relationship with someone (to do with your programme or home or family, etc.);
- how well you got on in your programme last semester;
- your process in solving a difficult problem (e.g., in academic work);
- what you need to do to improve your study processes.

You will often find there to be unexpected rewards in working in this manner. You will find out things that you had not considered, you even find that your academic writing becomes more fluent; you may find that you can solve problems more easily when you have reflected on your processing of similar problems.

Questions to facilitate reflective writing (Moon, 2004):

- What is the nature of the significance of this issue to you?
- How do you feel about it?
- How do your feelings relate to any action?
- Was it good/bad - and what are the implications?
- What do you need to do?
- What other information do you need (ideas, knowledge, opinion, etc.)?
- Are there previous instances of this event, issue arising that will help you to think more or differently about it?

- Are there others, or the views of others, who are relevant to this matter - and in what way?
- Is there another point of view that you could explore - are there alternative interpretations to consider?
- Are others seeing this issue from different points of view that may be helpful to you to explore?
- If you 'step back' from this issue, how does it look different?
- How do you judge your ability to reflect on this matter?
- Do you notice that your feelings about it have changed over time - or in the course of writing this - suggesting that your own frame of reference has changed?
- Are there ethical/moral/political wider social issues that you would want to explore?

It is worth thinking about the quality of reflective writing as being on a continuum from rather superficial writings that are largely descriptive, to much deeper writings in which the questioning is more profound. Neither is necessarily right or wrong - they are just different. Reflective writing will need be 'pitched' according to the purpose for which the task is done.

A comparison of reflective writing and report or essay writing (Moon, 2004):

Undergraduate report/essay writing	Reflective writing
The subject matter is likely to be clearly defined	The subject matter may be diffuse and ill-structured
The subject matter is not likely to be personal	The subject matter may be personal
The subject matter is likely to be given	The subject matter may be determined by the writer
The purpose of this kind of writing is set in advance, usually fairly precisely in a title/topic	There may be purpose, but it is more of the nature of a 'container' or direction, not a precise title that predicts the outcome
Most of the ideas drawn into an essay/a report will be predictable and will be determined by the subject matter	Ideas will be drawn into reflective writing from anywhere that the writer believes to be relevant. What is drawn in will be determined by the sense being forged by the writer
There will be a conclusion	There may be a conclusion in that something has been learnt, or there may be a recognition of further areas for reflection

Undergraduate report/essay writing	Reflective writing
Essays/reports are more likely to be ‘one off’ - finished and handed in	Reflective writing may be part of a process that takes place over a period of time
There is likely to be a clear structure of introduction, discussion and conclusion	There is not necessarily a clear structure other than some description at the beginning and some identification of progress made. Structures, such as questions to prompt reflective activity may be given
The writing style is likely to be relatively objective - probably without use of the first person	The writing style is likely to be relatively subjective, using the first person
An essay or report is usually intended to be a representation of learning	The intention underlying reflective writing is likely to be for the purpose of learning
An essay/a report is likely to be the product of a thinking process, tidily ordered	Reflective writing usually involves the process of thinking and learning, and it is therefore not necessarily ‘tidy’ in its ordering

## USING EVIDENCE (INCLUDING FEEDBACK)

An important way of reflecting is to look at evidence. One important form of evidence of what you’ve learnt, done, said or thought is feedback (Drew & Bingham, 2010).

We get feedback all the time. Here are some examples:

- people’s facial expressions or body language in reaction to what you say or do;
- people’s casual comments about you (‘that’s a nice jacket’) or your views (‘why on earth do you think that film was good?’);
- people who seek (or avoid) your company;
- tutors’ or other students’ responses to your comments in class;
- things that work (or not) when you create or repair them.

Feedback is anything that gives you information about the effectiveness of what you did, said or thought. It is suggested that students only see feedback from tutors as ‘legitimate’ if it is written, but in reality we all receive in different forms all the time (Drew & Bingham, 2010).

One issue is what we do with feedback. Some may be hurtful or blatantly incorrect. Some of us ‘hear’ all the negative things rather than the positives.

When you get feedback, think about the following, to help make judgements about its value:

- who gave it? What do they know? (e.g. are they experts/ experienced? How important are they to you? Might they have a vested interest or some sort of bias?).
- When did they give it? Immediate feedback is good. After time, memory may be faulty.
- Does it make clear what was effective (or not) about what you did, said or thought?
- What’s the evidence for their views? Why do they think what they think?
- What’s the weight of evidence? If one person says X and others say Y, who’s right (of course, the person saying X may know more)? Are they generalising from one incident that’s uncharacteristic of you?

If you’d like feedback, who might offer a valid or relevant view (e.g. a member of a group you’ve worked in; an expert in the topic)? It’s a good idea to:

- ask for feedback as soon after the event as possible;
- ask specific questions (‘How well did X work? What effect did it have when I did Y?’);
- ask for clarification (e.g. if people look puzzled, ask them why). If they make judgemental statements (e.g. ‘That was good’) ask what they mean;
- check if they meant what you think they meant (‘Do you mean my writing was illegible?’);
- thank them.

**Remember!** Your aim is to get feedback, not justify yourself. It’s not a good idea to argue or defend: they’ll be wary of giving you feedback again and if you asked for feedback, it’s ungracious to then grumble about it. Just because you thank them, doesn’t mean you agree with them.

The reverse is the case for giving feedback. You may need to do this for course activities or at work (e.g. peer assessment, appraisals):

- give the feedback as soon after the event as possible.
- Give specific information (‘X worked well’). Don’t make judgemental statements that people can’t do anything about (e.g. ‘It was rubbish’). Help them see what to do in future.
- Give evidence for what you think.
- Avoid uncomfortable discussions by being assertive (‘That’s my feedback, do feel free to use it or not’, Drew & Bingham, 2010).

## TIPS TO REMEMBER

The whole point of reflecting is to then plan to take action to build on strengths and improve or change where there are limitations.

**NB!** Don't blame yourself if things don't go quite to your plan; it's all right to take risks sometimes and make impromptu changes to your plan. You can then consider afterwards why you did this and whether it worked or not. You always need to take into account current circumstances: what might work in one situation may not work in another. Making changes comes with time, experience and knowledge.

Also try not to blame others for incidents that may happen within your plan maintenance. If you shift the blame onto others, you may feel there is no need to make any changes yourself. Don't necessarily blame yourself either, but do accept responsibility, learn from the incidents and try different methods to ensure they don't happen again.

You should also attend standardisation events which give you the opportunity to compare your performance with others. Even if you don't learn anything new, such events will confirm that you are doing things correctly.

Don't become complacent and dismiss the idea of further training as too time-consuming; be positive and treat it as a new challenge. To reach your goals, you need commitment, motivation enthusiasm and passion for what you try to improve.

Reflecting upon your own learning, taking account of feedback from colleagues, then evaluating your practice and maintaining your development, will enable you to become an effective learner that will lead you to a rewarding career for yourself.



## ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY

Recall from your experience some important situation where you had to perform a task or to perform your skills to others. Did it go well? Was there anything you would like to change? Here is the list of questions that may help you identify evidence for your judgements. Please fill in the table (see Resource 1, annexes to „Reflective Tinking and Writing”). You may use these questions every time you want to analyse an exact situation.

### ACTIVITY

In the following, in each column, tick ways of learning you use in the situation given. While doing this, think about the advantages and disadvantages of the way of learning for that situation and you (see Resource2, annexes to „Reflective Tinking and Writing”).

## FURTHER READING

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## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATIONS SKILLS

Introduction

Objectives

Definitions

Preparation

Structure

Timing

Delivery (full script versus notes)

Form of language

Environment (equipment, facilities)

Visual aids / material for distribution

Verbal (voice, intonation, appropriate language)

Non-verbal (eye-contact, body language, hand gestures)

Interacting with audience and managing questions

Handling nerves

Rehearsal

Feedback

Activities

Further readings

# PRESENTATIONS SKILLS

## INTRODUCTION

Well-developed presentation skills enable you to communicate clearly, precisely and effectively in a variety of modes or registers and settings. It should be pointed out that they are rated as one of the most important soft skills. The ability of communicating with the audience and giving presentations should be seen as a mandatory prerequisite for both the effective learning process and the successful working life.

Thus, it is imperative to gradually increase and enhance your presentation skills through a continuous training that will help you to become more competent, confident and competitive.

The purpose of this chapter which is based on the best Western practices is to help to develop your presentation skills. It first introduces the basic premises of giving a presentation by examining in details its preparation, structure, timing, form of delivery and language, equipment and facilities, visual aids and material for distribution. The subsequent sections cover more specific topics including verbal (voice, intonation, appropriate language) and non-verbal communication (eye-contact, body language, hand gestures) communication, interacting with audience and answering questions, handling your nerves during the presentation. The chapter concludes by focusing on rehearsal activities and different forms of feedback which will enhance your presentation skills.

## OBJECTIVES:

- to develop your skills to communicate clearly, effectively and confidently with a range of audiences in a range of different contexts;
- to improve your research and design skills, and strengthen your delivery techniques;
- to enhance your use of different support electronic and other visual tools;
- to reinforce your performance skills (verbal and non-verbal);
- to increase your confidence level in interacting with audience and control your nervousness;
- to promote critical and reflective thinking by dealing with feedback on your presentation skills.

## DEFINITIONS

*Three types of presentation might be identified:*

**1. Information-giving.** This is predominantly descriptive, giving or summarising information. You may be asked to do this as part of a mini-teaching session, sharing theoretical or factual information. Here the point is to see what you have understood and how you have extracted the main facts from your reading and to relay these to the group. You will need to make decisions about what information to include.

**2. Discursive.** Here you will need to debate the strengths and limitations of an approach or develop an argument, exploring and weighing up different perspectives, challenging your audience to accept a different viewpoint. For this, you will need to decide your ‘angle’ – are you for or against it, weight pro and cons? Pull your audience in, challenge and confidently debate.

**3. Demonstrative.** This type of presentation tends to be used in the context of training: for example, when demonstrating your ability to illustrate your understanding of a technique or teaching a practical skill to others. (Craig, C., 2009)

Presentations are key activities and might include:

- Group and individual presentations for a given topic as part of a module assessment.
- Seminar presentations giving a paper to an academic or your peers for the purpose of teaching or showing evidence of your understanding of the topic.
- Providing an overview of some research carried out by you or your group.
- Demonstrating the use of a piece of equipment or software such as PowerPoint to show that you have developed the essential skills to use it appropriately.
- Dissertation-related presentations and Vivas to demonstrate your ability to manage a research project.
- A job interview where you have been asked to present for several minutes on a given topic. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

## PREPARATION

Usually, the majority feel nervous when presenting something. It is mainly due to the fact that in a live presentation there is no second chance. Plus, you should be aware that the way in which information or ideas are delivered strongly affects how they are understood by the audience. Even tiny inaccuracies in presentation can make it hard to follow. Thus, for communication to take place effectively presented information has to be received as intended by the speaker – and not misinterpreted.



Though some of you might be better suited to giving a presentation than your colleagues, actually this is not a skill which you either have or do not have at birth and anyone can be good at presentations. You can master these skills like many others, but it requires rigorous preparation, constant rehearsal, deep reflective practice and constructive feedback.

The crucial elements of any presentation are the information that you have to deliver and the audience that have to receive it. The best presentations are focused with a precise aim and the supplied information is appropriate and addresses the clear-cut, unambiguous question. Poorly prepared presentations are those which include just a bit of everything.

Thus, before you start working on the presentation, answer the following questions:

- What is the main aim of the presentation and what message you want to deliver to the audience in the time limit set?
- What is the current knowledge level of the audience and what new knowledge or awareness do you want the audience to have gained from your presentation?
- What is the most effective way to communicate this knowledge?

You should remember that planning a presentation can be even more demanding than working on a written assignment. The main challenge is to try to fit all gathered information that you usually consider relevant into the time that is allocated.

Some people solve this issue by planning and writing a lengthy piece which can be later reduced to key points. The advantage of this approach is that you will be well prepared with very detailed information which you can freely use during the presentation particularly if questions are asked. Otherwise, some people compile a set of headings, and based on these headings prepare a short paragraph for each point of their presentation.

This is your personal decision which approach to use, but it would be more advantageous and safe to prepare a detailed paper and then reduce rather than creating a brief set of headings and trying later to add more information. At any rate it would be propitious to have a set of notes to use as a guide during the presentation.

It should be pointed out your presentation has to be brief, clear and precise, and provide backup for more complex ideas. You should remember that overloading the audience with a very detailed, scrupulous information will not automatically make your presentation better. A potentially good presentation might be weakened by packing it with excessive details and losing a sense of key ideas and conclusions you want to communicate to the audience.

Thus, it would be useful to write down the aims of your presentation. Focus particularly on what new knowledge or awareness you want the audience to have gained – what will the audience know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the session that they did not know, or understand or were not able to do before?

You might plan the body of the presentation;

- prepare the first draft of the presentation;
- prepare the first set of prompts;
- put the presentation aside for a while
- review, revise and edit first draft – decide on a ‘good enough’ draft of the presentation;
- decide on the audio-visual aids that will be useful;
- prepare the ‘good enough’ set of prompts

(Pritchard, A., 2008) (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004) (Barker, A., 2011)

## STRUCTURE

Whether the audience can understand what you are trying to communicate will be determined by how you structure your presentation. You should focus on the development of a clear structure that will help to map out and guide you in your preparations and in your final delivery.

Some authors are quite prescriptive in their approach and suggest that you should: ‘limit your thinking to the rule of three: a simple technique where you are never allowed to use more than three main points’ (Richard Hall 2007: 320). This can be helpful in focusing your ideas and ensuring that you are clear in what you are arguing. The best approach is to decide your ‘bottom line’ – the key message that you want your audience to take away – and then work backwards from this so that everything you include leads to this conclusion. (Craig, C., 2009)

As a very general principle, the rule of three is offered.

- 1. Tell them what you are going to tell them.*
- 2. Tell them.*
- 3. Tell them what you have told them.*

You need to think about how to build your presentation by dividing the material into sections, each one dealing with one important point. Structure your ideas so that you move seamlessly from one point to another. The structure of your presentation will depend on the topic that you are dealing with, but in general there should include:

- *An introduction, outlining the aim of your presentation and the areas your talk will focus on*
- *The main body, containing the substance of your talk and developing the ideas outlined in the introduction*
- *A conclusion, drawing together the main points and containing the ‘take home message’ for the audience* (Craig, C., 2009)

## INTRODUCTION

It is of key importance to get a good beginning. Apart from introducing yourself and subject of your presentation, you should plan carefully about what point of entry will stimulate your audience and at the same time, form a springboard into the main topics of your delivery. When thinking about your openings, keep your audience and their 'needs' very firmly in mind. A good beginning can make the presentation; a poor, inappropriate one can seriously undermine it. Many people tend to fail to have a proper introduction that contextualises the topic.

Once the ground rules have been established, you then need to outline the main points that you will be covering during your presentation. If you can say something that catches your audience's attention at the beginning and makes them want to hear what follows, then the presentation is likely to go well. You can be creative too. Instead of starting with a series of statements about what is coming next, you could consider stimulating more interest by posing a question, presenting a puzzle or a conundrum, showing a picture, or telling a story. Any of those devices are more likely to capture the imagination of your audience and help you create an engaged and interested atmosphere which can really set the scene for a strong and effective delivery. However, do be careful of starting with a joke; make sure that it will not cause offence and that it is not too well known. Consider any cultural considerations and sensitivities. (Barker, A., 2011), (Ellis, R., 2010)

## MAIN PRESENTATION

This will be influenced by the general context and aim of your presentation and the expected audience. You may need to decide between a big picture approach and one that selects a smaller area with more detail. As you develop your knowledge of the topic, you will feel more confident about what to include and what to exclude. Identify the key messages. Three or four main points are normally sufficient for a presentation of up to a half-hour. For a longer presentation, do not exceed seven main points in order to avoid overloading your audience. Remember, less is almost always more. You should also decide what is best covered through speech, text, images and what could be given in a handout rather than used as presentation content.

Support your key ideas by choosing clarifying examples. Because it is usually difficult to follow a spoken argument, you need to make sure that it is relevant, accurate and interesting to the audience, your audience will find it easier to maintain concentration and to stay with your argument. You should choose carefully examples to provide interest and improve understanding and think where to place them in the structure of the content. Use such things as examples, stories, statistics, quotes from expert sources, or research findings. (Cameron S., 2010)

## CONCLUSION

Because of the relief of having made it through, otherwise excellent presentations often suffer from an uninspiring, hurried ending. Do not let the pace and energy of your presentation drop at the end. This is the ‘tell them what you have said’ section. You need to summarise your points, again using visual aids to reinforce them if possible. Always leave your audience with something memorable, say a powerful visual or a convincing conclusion, with a key idea, a central theme to take away and want to reflect on later. It is also good practice to thank the audience for their patience and to invite questions or discussion. (Cameron S., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010).

## TIMING

In most presentations, it is usually better to deliver less content at a reasonable pace, than too much content at a faster pace that may leave the audience feeling overwhelmed and confused. You should fit the topic into the allotted time and plan time for breaks, asides, questions. This means you should think clearly about what to include and exclude from the final version of your presentation.

Inexperienced presenters will find difficult to fit into time allocated. On the one hand they have prepared too much material and then have to jump to their conclusion, rushing over key points and running the risk of leaving their audience confused. On the other hand they have under-prepared and have to face one of the most embarrassing of all public speaking experiences – running out after ten minutes with your audience expecting the full half hour.

Where the presentation timing is preset, it is important that the pace of the verbal and image presentation are in a correct sequence. In five minutes your message must be to the point with little by way of illustration. Twenty minutes, on the other hand, will enable you to make an impact both verbally and visually. Ensure that you are not trying to squeeze too much information into the allocated time. Enough is enough; no one wants to hear you rushing through the material in the hope of getting to the end. Rehearsal will help you to set realistic timing and adjust your pace of delivery to accommodate pauses and changes of voice tone for emphasis. You will then be able to edit the content, perhaps deciding what facts you need to discuss and what can be covered in the handouts or visual aids. (Malthouse, R., Roffey-Barentsen, J., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010). (Craig, C., 2009), (Van Emden J., Becker L., 2004)



## DELIVERY (FULL SCRIPT VERSUS NOTES)

Inexperienced presenters attempt to write down the whole speech, even including ‘Good morning ladies and gentlemen’. They prepare a closely drafted text, each line filled, with very little space left. Experienced presenters have their own style of notes, but never fill the page with text. You can organize your speech notes in many ways and it is very much a personal preference. When it comes to the actual presentation you need to decide whether you will read from what amounts to a script, or whether, based on your notes, you will speak without reading directly. Certainly when a presentation is delivered in one of these two ways there is a noticeable difference, and in most cases the reading of a script comes across definitely less well. It depends to a certain extent on the way that you have written the script. If it is written in a formal academic tone then it will sound overformal. If you are able to write it in a more conversational style, then you will have a better chance of making it sound natural.

Apart from very brief, well-chosen text, it is better not to read from a prepared text. A written text from which you need to read can stand like a literal barrier between you and your audience, but also typically when people read their voices go dead and they deliver the topic in an ill-paced monotone that has the average audience losing interest after about the second sentence. If you are marking for successful communication, then an audience must be listening to and following your presentation. You should work to become as comfortable as possible with your material in advance, so that you do not need to rely on a prepared text. Delivering your presentation using a natural conversational style is the best way to make the most of face-to-face presentations, and is much more likely to result in a performance that everyone will evaluate positively. Try do not pack too much into your notes – they are, and must always be, a distillation of your preparation, not a script of all that you have prepared. Your notes must support, not distract you.

There will be times when you may need a fuller script and these short notes will not be enough, especially if you have to give a paper. Again, do not clutter up your page. Remember to put in some markers when you can pause and paragraph breaks. Many presenters use a cue card system. For each point they are to make, they write a heading, a short phrase or two, or a set of key words, on a post card, or similar, and arrange the numbered cards in the correct order to follow through the presentation. These cards might also have other reminders: ‘Refer to diagram’; Write in bold and in the centre of the card so that you do not have to peer. These are particularly useful when you have to walk about while you are presenting. (Barker, A., 2011), (Moore S., Neville C., Murphy M., Connolly C, 2010), (Pritchard, A., 2008)

## FORM OF LANGUAGE

It is important to recognise and respond to the difference between formal written language and spoken language. When giving a presentation it is not obligatory to use complicated language constructions, to use long words, or to speak in nested and convoluted sentences. If you choose to speak in a way that does not necessarily come naturally to you, or is in some way made more complicated than it needs to be, you will in all probability not



communicate effectively. This does not mean that you should not use correct vocabulary, especially when dealing with technical terms, which clearly form an important element of the content. There is a case for giving an explanation, or simple definition, of technical terms as they arise for the first time, particularly if you are dealing with an area of your subject which is new to the audience. Use correct language and proofread (words used appropriately; correct spelling and punctuation). It is essential to check your work for errors. Also follow general principles: avoid gender stereotyping; avoid racist and racism stereotyping; avoid being aggressive, swearing or obscenities; use the language that can include everybody (Pritchard, A., 2008), (Drew, S., Bingham, R., (2010)

## ENVIRONMENT (EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES)

You should find out when your presentation will take place. The danger spots are immediately before or after lunch and last thing in the afternoon when your audience may be distracted by thoughts of dinner or the journey home. During these times, the more interactive your presentation can be, the greater the chance your audience will be attentive and engaged.

Another important aspect of planning concerns the location of your presentation. This can have significant implications for how you plan your content and organise yourself. Go to see the room in which you will be presenting in advance of arriving for the actual presentation.

If you have access to the venue, it might help to pay an early visit. If this is possible, listen to other presenters in the same room. The aspects you might want to check include: • type and size of room • seating arrangements – fixed or movable • lighting – artificial or natural? • acoustics • equipment available, e.g. whiteboard, projector, OHP, flip chart, tape recorder • location of power points • position of speaker (you) • facilities for special needs (The-learning-guide) (Craig, C., 2009) (Drew, S., Bingham, R., 2010)

## VISUAL AIDS / MATERIAL FOR DISTRIBUTION

If you use more pictures and diagrams than text, you will possibly help the audience to understand better what you are saying. This is because after three days an audience will have retained 7% of what they read (bullet points, or other notes on the screen), but 55% of what they saw pictorially (charts, pictures, diagrams).

You should be aware that visual aids are complementary to the presentation and you should not focus too narrowly on visual aids because you will lose the key point of presentation.

Visual aids can:

- Help audiences understand the presentation itself. For example, writing up the agenda of the talk on the board or as a handout will help an audience follow the structure of the presentation itself. (clarify the meaning)
- Emphasise different parts of the presentation. Here you might underscore a key word or point by capturing it on a PowerPoint slide, by giving a supporting quote or reference or by producing an illustrative image or object. (visual aids reinforce what you say)
- Take the pressure off the speaker. For a brief while all eyes are on something else for a moment. This is a good thing. (people tend to look at the visual aid rather at you, it helps when you are nervous)

(Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004) (Ellis, R., 2010)

When you think about what makes presentations effective, it will be convenient to consider how you can use images to communicate more effectively. It will be useful to remember these general principles:

- Use images to improve understanding. Sometimes, it is easier to use a picture instead of words to improve audience understanding. When you show a picture, you can ask them a question or suggest they think about the image in a certain way. You can then remain silent while they think about the image or the task you have set them. Images can also be used to direct audience attention away from you and onto the image on the screen. This may help to steady your nerves as it gives you a few seconds to perhaps take some deep breaths or check your notes.
- Use images to save time. If there is only a short amount of time you could include images as a quick way to cover some of the content. You have probably heard of the phrase, ‘a picture paints a thousand words’ and this is very relevant to a student presentation.
- Use images for interest. Images use the visual sense whereas sound and speech use the auditory sense. Providing content in a variety of formats means that the audience has to use of a range of senses. This keeps them active in the process of receiving the presentation. We all have preferences and using a variety of communication approaches ensures a wider appeal to different members of the audience.
- Use images for impact. Images are more relevant for some topics than others but even if only a few can be included, they can be useful to create pauses and breaks in the delivery, generate discussion themes or make a lasting impression. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

***Tips for PowerPoint presentations:***

1. Avoid clutter slides at all costs
2. Select a clear font such as Arial or Helvetica.
3. Use bold rather than underline and avoid italics;
4. A dark background (deep blue or black) and light coloured text (white or yellow) for contrast will make your words stand out (Use of colour that detracts from the main content of the slide, or that makes reading the text difficult.)
5. Use a font size of 20 or over: use a 36 point for titles and a 28 point for body text
6. Spelling and /or grammar mistakes
7. Use pictures and icons and beware of the special effects, e.g. spinning words or sound effects
8. Keep the presentation consistent, e.g. background and style. Do not suddenly switch fonts half way through. You may not notice but your audience will
9. Less than 30 words per slide, 5–6 words for headings a maximum of five bullet points per slide
10. Keep the number of slides down to one per minute or even one per 40 seconds

(Malthouse, R., Roffey-Barentsen, J., 2010), (Craig, C., 2009)

***Handout material***

Sometimes you will be expected to produce a handout of some kind. Handouts can be taken away as a reminder of what you said. Handouts can have details that might clutter up your presentations. Handouts distributed at the end can be a good way of concluding, but you need to tell people at the beginning that you are going to do this, otherwise they can feel annoyed if they have taken careful notes which the handout makes superfluous.

You need to consider the style and content of handout material, as well as the purpose. Some options are:

- Main points/headings.
- Notes generated by the presentation software that you have used. Possibly an edited version of a long presentation would be a good idea.
- Headings/main points, with space to write notes.
- Diagrams.
- Charts.
- Statistics.
- References.

Avoid giving handouts while you speak. The distribution of handouts while you are talking distracts people, and you will lose your audience. It does not matter how often you say of a handout ‘don’t read this now’ – the temptation to look at it immediately seems universally irresistible. (Cameron S., 2010) (Pritchard, A., 2008)

## VERBAL (VOICE, INTONATION, APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE)

However, it is not possible to use images for everything in your presentation. But be aware that up to 38% of what is taken in by those present is through the spoken word, which highlights the clear need for what you say to be audible and very much to the point.

You should remember that your voice is an incredible tool. On average 7% of what the audience understand comes from the words that are used within the verbal interactions, compared with 38% of information resulting in tone of voice and 55% being dependent on non-verbal cues. Use this to your advantage. Presentations are greatly enhanced by varying the tone of voice to emphasize aspects of the content. Make sure you project your voice to the back of the room. Try to vary the tone of your voice and the speed or pace of delivery to give emphasis to different parts of what you say. Use silence to your advantage. A short pause can give emphasis to a point you are making.

One of the ways in which inexperienced presenters betray their lack of skill is that they fade in volume. They may begin their talk with reasonable audibility but this decreases as they forget to project their voices in accordance with the size of the audience (the more bodies, the more the sound is absorbed) and the acoustics of the room. Good projection should not be a matter of straining but of being aware of where the voice is going, and making effective use of breathing to support the voice. Presenters who fail to project are usually too busy peering at their notes and being worried by what is coming next.

Another concern for those giving presentations is that of speaking too quickly. When speaking to an audience of any size it is advisable to speak more slowly than your normal speed, and to leave pauses occasionally. Speaking more slowly and pausing is even more important if you want the audience to pay attention to words, diagrams or pictures on a screen at the same time. Speaking slowly is not the same as speaking hesitantly, and although being nervous might lead to hesitance, it is a good idea to work towards eliminating this.

Be enthusiastic about what you have to say. If you fail to show any interest, there is little chance that your audience will be attentive and engaged. Nothing is as boring as a monotonous voice reciting a presentation that has obviously been memorised and delivered on many occasions or, even worse, reading from notes. To keep your presentation alive there needs to be an element of spontaneity. This can be achieved by varying the pitch and tone of your voice in relation to the subject matter. Speeding up your delivery is another technique that will keep the audience's attention. Sometimes this is followed by a moment of silence (just for effect) and then a calmer, more measured approach follows. Experiment with this during your rehearsal to ensure that you do not come over as being a little manic.

(Craig,C.,2009), (Malthouse, R., Roffey-Barentsen, J.,2010), (Pritchard,A.,2008) (Ellis, R., 2010) (Mehrabian, 1981).



## NON-VERBAL (EYE-CONTACT, BODY LANGUAGE, HAND GESTURES)

**Eye contact.** Eyes are one of your best tools for involving the audience in what you are saying. Good posture, movement and gestures will be of little use if you fail to support them with appropriate eye contact. Great presenters understand that eye contact is critical to building trust, credibility, and rapport. Far too many have a habit of looking at everything but the audience. One way of spotting inexperienced presenters is to see how they focus on a small group, usually in front of them and usually those giving off positive expressions of interest or encouragement. This focusing has the effect of rather embarrassing those people while, at the same time, losing contact with others in the audience. Those who started with rather negative feelings towards the speaker will be unlikely to have such feelings ameliorated if they are never looked at, seemingly never included in the occasion.

It is advisable to maintain eye contact with your audience at least 90% of the time. It is appropriate to glance at your notes or slides from time to time, but only as a reminder of where to go next. You are speaking for the benefit of your audience. Speak to them, not the slides.

If you are an inexperienced presenter, you might find it very difficult to look any member of the audience in the eye. A useful technique is to try to focus between and slightly above the eyes; the audience will feel that they are being looked at and involved, unless you are extremely close. The size of the audience will determine the appropriate level of eye contact but here are two important guidelines to follow, regardless of audience size.

- Never hold one person's gaze for more than five seconds maximum.
- Never appear to be 'watching tennis', swinging your eyes (and head) from one side of the audience to the other.

(Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007), (Ellis, R., 2010), (Drew, S., Bingham, R., 2010)

**Body language.** You will also need to think how you communicate using body language. Body language can distract people from what you are saying or even irritate. People can bite their nails, twiddle with things, sniff and so on. If you have distracting habits, find a way of controlling them. Hold your hands behind your back or hold a sheet of paper so you can't fiddle.

Body language can encourage people to listen to what you are saying. This things can engage other people: smiling (it is appropriate to smile but not like a Cheshire cat); leaning towards them; standing up to do a presentation (it gives your authorities and helps project your voice); moving in a natural way (standing totally still is distracting).



Hand gestures and facial expressions can be used to your advantage to emphasise particular points. However, treat these with caution because inappropriate gestures can also interfere with your presentation and detract from what you say. The way that you stand will have a huge impact on the way that you breathe. The way that you breathe will have a huge impact on how you sound. Think about whether you will be sitting or standing during the presentation and which will be most appropriate for the event. Avoid standing frozen like a statue, try not to pace about like a caged animal, but aim to move naturally and appropriately. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007) (Craig, C., 2009)

**Gestures.** Using your hands can help in the same way that whole body movements can: to relax, stimulate and illustrate. If you find it hard to use your hands naturally, then the best policy is to hold them by your sides. Try not to:

- clasp hands behind the back. This looks much too formal.
- fold them in front. This is usually interpreted as a very defensive posture.
- keep them stuck in your pockets throughout the presentation. This can look either casual or nervous.
- scratch, poke or stroke yourself. As you have probably observed, this is quite a common nervous reaction amongst stressed presenters.
- wring your hands together. This can look dishonest or slightly peculiar.
- fiddle with keys, pens, pencils, coins, lucky charms, worry beads, etc. You will just look nervous.

( Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

## INTERACTING WITH AUDIENCE AND MANAGING QUESTIONS

While developing presentation skills, you can tend to focus on yourself as the speaker and forget about the audience. This is a mistake. You should be interactive.

If you begin positively and catch the audience's attention by establishing a rapport, you are more likely to keep it. You should stand up straight and speak directly to your audience, making eye contact and smiling, though not inanely. If you can do this, you will let them know that you are confident and you have something to say that is worth listening to. Ask the audience questions and give them an activity (make a list; vote on something) Check if they understood and see if they need something to clarify. Make sure that you include everybody. Have an attention-grabbing opening and other statement. Check with them that you are on the right lines: 'Was that point clear?', 'Can you all see this slide?', 'Am I going too fast? Do not be afraid to admit that you had not thought of a particular angle if someone springs a surprise question on you, but rather use it as an opportunity to stimulate further discussion You may have heard advice about making a joke, and the use of humour in general, and this can work very much to a presenter's advantage in some situations. If you want to start discussion: ask people to discuss in 2s or 3s for a minute, then share with the group; make

discussion points or activities clear; have a prepared list of question to ask them. (Barker, A., 2011), (Drew, S., Bingham, R., 2010) (Pritchard, A., 2008)

### *Handling questions*

If you provide time at the end and stimulate a question-and-answer session sometime during your presentation it can really help you to ensure that you cover or clarify areas that you simply did not know required clarification. If it is a formal meeting, always check with the organizer before you start your presentation about the ground rules for questions, and any time limits you need to be aware of.

If members of your audience ask you questions, then it means that they have found something of interest, something to challenge or a point that requires further expansion. The interactive time during a presentation is often the most animated, intellectually stimulating and engaging part of the experience.

However, too many speakers make little or no effort to prepare themselves for questions. This is dangerous, because the inexperienced presenter can flounder here. As you prepare your material, take into consideration probable.

The longer and more complex the presentation the more your audience may appreciate the chance of asking you questions at certain intervals rather than having to wait until the end. However, until you are fairly experienced, and feel confident that you can handle questions during your talk, it is safer to take substantive questions at the end. Otherwise, you risk being completely sidetracked from your main argument or disconcerted by challenges to what you are saying before you have completed your presentation. Make it clear at the beginning that during your presentation you will deal only with requests for clarification and that there will be time for questions at the end. Be sure to announce that there will time for one/two more questions and stick to that limit.

When you do accept a question, your listening skills will be important. It is hard to listen carefully when you are nervous, particularly if someone is asking a complex multiple question. If this happens, write down the key parts of the question, otherwise it is easy to answer the first part and forget all the rest. If you are at all uncertain what the question means, clarify this with the questioner.

You should be aware that people ask questions for many reasons. There will be some who are trying to make an impression on the audience or they may simply like being the centre of attention. Where questions are clearly being asked in the questioner's personal interest, it is simplest to thank them for raising their point, agree with as much of the point as you can, perhaps suggest a discussion outside the meeting and move on to the next question.

If questions reveal a genuine weakness in your presentation, it is usually better to accept this and ask for suggestions from the questioner and the audience for ways around the difficulty. You may find that someone can suggest a way forward. If, however, the difficulty seems to you to be much less significant than the

questioner is suggesting, you will need to make sure that the audience does not end up devaluing the bulk of what you have said.

If you do receive a rude, hostile or discourteous question that appears to be an attack on you, then do try and stay calm. The audience will be very much on your side if you can stay calm and not be provoked. It is very tempting to retaliate and bite back. This will play directly into the hands of the questioner. Stay calm and respond on the lines of: 'I think it is best for us to discuss this later'. 'You're fully entitled to your opinion. Can I respond to the general point you've made' .... (Thus ignoring the personal attack)

(Ellis, R., 2010), (Barker, A., 2011), (Cameron S., 2010)

## HANDLING NERVES

Many people get nervous when they speak in front of others. Having nerves is good as this gets the adrenaline flowing and keeps you alert and on top of the subject. You may find that you are nervous at the beginning of the talk until you get into the swing of it and then you are fine. This is very common. There are several things that can help considerably: get as much practice as you can; concentrate on exposing yourself to similar situations; practise deliberate relaxation; and prepare for each specific presentation.

During your preparation it is worth considering how you will handle your own anxieties and nerves. For example, you can memorize the first paragraph. If you are aware of the symptoms of your anxiety you may be able to act to limit their effects. For example, if your hands shake, avoid holding notes in your hand; if your mouth dries up, have a bottle of water to hand; if having a roomful of people looking at you directly makes you feel uncomfortable, begin with an interesting visual aid which will attract the focus of the audience; if you fear that your mind may go 'blank' have your notes available and be sure that they are easy to navigate – in a large, easy to read font, or highlighted in a bright colour, for example. Finding what are often quite simple ways of controlling the symptoms of nervousness is likely to help you to feel less nervous.

If you are over-nervous, find the least threatening situations first – talking to a small group before addressing the audience, getting used to the room before giving a paper at a conference. But do it. Each time you will feel less nervous.

Be positive about yourself. Avoid apologizing for yourself. An overly apologetic presenter does not inspire confidence, and if those in the audience have no confidence in you, there is a tendency for them not to listen attentively. You need to remain confident, at least on the outside, and to present in an interesting and lively way. Remember that you do know what you are talking about because you are very well prepared. You probably know more about the topic of your presentation than the audience, even, in some cases, more than the tutor. Your best weapon against nerves is the knowledge that you have done everything possible to prepare for the event, that you have carefully researched your subject and audience, your talk (or poster) is well structured and your notes are well organised, your visual aids well-chosen and you have at your fingertips supporting evidence and examples. (Cameron S., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010), (Pritchard, A., 2008)

## REHEARSAL

The more you prepare you more you are likely to succeed. And knowing that you have prepared will reduce your nerves. It is suggested that for every minute you are on your feet when presenting you will need an hour's preparation. That may sound excessive but, if you think about it – the searching through sources; making notes; preparing your slides; rehearsing the talk; checking on the length; selecting your quotes; and double checking your facts and figures – you can see that the ratio is not so absurd.

Once you have prepared a presentation you must rehearse. Not to rehearse is not an option. It might seem tedious to have to practise, but it really pays to rehearse several times in advance. You will need at least one full-scale, real-time rehearsal to check timing, use of aids and flow of arguments – or responses to likely questions. Ideally, find colleagues or friends to act as an audience and ask them to give you feedback afterwards. If this is impossible, then, for a formal presentation, tape yourself and replay the tape after a decent interval, listening critically and noting points where you need to change something.

The need for rehearsing diminishes slightly as you gain experience, but it remains vital so that:

- You can confidently move away from your notes on stage and make eye contact with an audience rather than having to be glued to your text.
- You can keep to time – and the shorter the time for your presentation, the more you need to rehearse to ensure that every one of those precious ten minutes is used to best effect; please don't try to just read your paper very quickly and face the chair's axe halfway through. For such short speeches, learn the whole thing but keep your notes handy as back-up.

Remember when practising, though, that it is often difficult to replicate the conditions that you will be facing on the day of the presentation. (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004), (Barker, A., 2011)

### *Rehearsal checklist*

- Rehearse and learn the factual content and structure so that they are very familiar to you. Make sure that you understand the wider context of the topic so that you will be able to handle questions effectively.
- Rehearse speaking aloud so that you can hear the sound level, pitch and emphasis you need to use in your voice. This will help you to use pauses confidently and prevent you from rushing in to fill the silences that do occur naturally in presentations.



- Rehearse in front of a mirror or video camera so that you can see how members of the audience will see you. This may cause you to change the way that you use your hands or how you hold your notes or cards. Using a mirror or video is a technique used by many actors and professional communicators and can improve your performance considerably.
- Time the rehearsals so that you can edit your content to fit the time available. You may be penalized for taking longer than the time given or you may be told to stop when the allotted time is up, regardless of how little of the content you have covered. Rehearsal should help you to be realistic about what you can reasonably be expected to cover and what content could be given in a handout.
- Rehearse as part of the group to make sure that it sounds like one complete presentation rather than a set of individual parts with some duplication. Group rehearsal will also help to prevent the presentation overrunning for the reasons we have outlined above.
- Rehearse using the technology to improve your skills and confidence levels. This will also help you to be time efficient. Using the technology should not delay your progress but improve the overall quality. This rehearsal will also help you to be aware of how much movement is needed to operate the technology.
- Rehearse in the physical environment if this is possible. Practice in using tables, lecterns or chairs will be a real help for the actual event. Think about whether you will be sitting (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

## FEEDBACK

Presentation skills require much feedback and the preparation for next presentation should be based on feedback from the last.

You should remember that for communication to take place, information has to flow in two directions – that is, the ‘receiver’ picks up the message from the ‘sender’ and confirms receipt by giving some form of recognizable feedback – even if it is no more than a gesture (a grunt seldom qualifies as good feedback). Without real feedback you cannot be certain that communication has in fact taken place.

You may need to take into account several different kinds of evaluation for your feedback during and after your presentation. These can include:



*Formal evaluation* – Completed marking criteria sheets and any other written/verbal feedback from tutors, lecturers, and/or peers (other students). Request additional feedback or clarification if necessary (from tutors, lecturers, other students and audience members). Incorporate appropriate suggestions next time you present

*Informal evaluation* – People's body language; Comments made during or after the presentation; Interaction between yourself and audience members, and the kinds of questions that are asked.

*Self-evaluation* – Think about your presentation. What worked? What did not work?

One very important form of feedback is that of self-reflection, so try and do some reflection and analysis after you have given your presentation. Have a look at those notes you made for that presentation and, while the memories are fresh, write down a few thoughts as to what, if anything, might have been done differently, what extra visual aids might have been used, what examples could have been introduced. Make a note of also what went well and what can be reinforced if you were to give the presentation again. Think back to the questions that were asked, what did they indicate about the contents, the pitch, and the style? (Littleford D., Halstead J., Mulraine Ch. 2004) (Ellis, R., 2010) (Cameron S., 2010) (Oral Presentations: Presenting and Evaluating, Griffith University)

# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

Self-Assessment Of Presentation Skills (Craig, C., 2009)

Try this simple quiz to see whether you are a ‘premier’ presenter.

What would be the largest number of people you would feel confident about speaking in front of?

- (a) 20-200 people
- (b) 5-15 people
- (c) 2 people (at a push)

When your tutor asks you to feed back your group’s progress to the class, do you...

- (a) Jump at the chance and volunteer?
- (b) Say ‘I’ll do it if someone else will help me’?
- (c) Grab the pen, thrust it into someone else’s hand and push them to the front of the room saying ‘if you insist’?

Do you equate giving a presentation with...

- (a) Something pleasurable, like chocolate or beer?
- (b) Indifference: a bit like watching a poor reality TV show?
- (c) Pain and anxiety: akin to root canal work?

When you picture yourself giving a presentation, do you imagine...

- (a) Being centre of the stage: holding your audience in the palm of your hand?
- (b) Giving a solid performance: nothing too sparkling but OK?
- (c) Sobbing in the corner of the stage?

What is your biggest worry about giving a presentation?

- (a) Not wanting to leave the stage
- (b) Fluffing your lines
- (c) Completely drying up

If you answered mainly (a), you are someone who relishes the opportunity to share your ideas with a wider audience - a bit of a performance junkie. Your presentations probably exude confidence, and because you are confident your audience wants to listen to what you say. With so much charisma and power you need to check your facts and be careful not to get too carried away.

If you answered mainly (b), you have a good balance. In the main you are very confident at presenting your ideas, although this is not something you necessarily enjoy or seek out. This book will give you a few pointers to help you tweak your presentation style and to ensure that you have maximum impact.

If you answered mainly (c), presentations terrify you and, unless you master your fear, this could hold you back on placement. On the positive side, learning how to speak in front of others is a skill and this book will give you lots of ideas and pointers so that by the end of the process you will appear as confident as everyone else.

## ACTIVITY 2

### Self-Assessment Of Presentation Skills (Cameron S., 2010)

Use the following questionnaire to assess your presentation skills (score 5 if the statement is completely true; 4 if mostly true; 3 if it is neither true nor untrue; 2 if it is not very true; 1 if it is totally untrue)

I have lots of experience in giving presentations	
The presentations I give are usually very well received	
I always think carefully about what I need to communicate, and how best to do it to any particular audience	
I am good at thinking of how to use visual aids to reinforce my message	
I am confident in using PowerPoint to produce effective overheads	
I think it is really important to watch the audience, and modify a presentation if it does not seem to be working	

If your score is 25 or above you should not need this chapter - assuming your assessment of your skills is accurate. Below this, you might think about developing an action plan to improve aspects of your skills.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Practicing Presentations (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004)

#### **The three-minute presentation**

If you are preparing for your first ever academic presentation it would be helpful to practise by first giving a three-minute presentation on a topic of your own choice. You can either choose a topic in which you are very interested or a topic with which you are very familiar. With the former your interest can give a relevance and energy to the task — with the latter you can relax about the content and worry instead about your handling of this academic form.

## ACTIVITY 4

Improvement Of Presentation Skills (Pritchard, A., 2008)

### **Good and bad presentations:**

Think about presentations you have seen or heard in the past. What were the features of both the good and bad? Write a list under two headings (Good, and Not so good). Consider your lists and choose five features from each list as: (i) Important to foster and (ii) Important to avoid.

### **Learn from your own experience:**

Presentations are rarely perfect, even for those who give them on a regular basis. There are, therefore, always things that you can learn. One of the best ways to learn is from your own mistakes. If you know that you often have a crisis of self-confidence, it is not a good idea to go in for this reflective learning immediately following your presentation. If you have a friend whose judgement you trust, get them to listen critically to your presentation, so that they can give you useful feedback, say, twenty-four hours later.

To complete this activity effectively it would be very useful to have either a video, or perhaps more realistically, an audio recording of your presentation. With the smaller than pocket-sized digital recorders which are available it is quite easy to record what you say, and the response of the audience. If this is not possible it is still worth reviewing your presentation based on your memory of the event.

When you have time, but not too long after the event, re-live your presentation, and consider the following questions:

- Which aspects seemed to work well?
- Were there any times that you floundered or sounded less than confident?
- Were your audience attentive all the way through? If not, why not?
- Did you manage the time well?
- Were you speaking too fast or too quietly?
- Did you put enough expression into your voice?
- If you were to do the presentation again, what would you change?

Treat the experience as a rehearsal for the next one. One important aspect of the human condition is that we learn from experience. The development of the skills associated with giving effective presentations are not an exception to this.



## ACTIVITY 5

Evaluation Of Presentation Skills (Arias M., 2014)

EVALUATE YOURSELF OR EVALUATE THE PRESENTER

	4	3	3	1
<b>Body position and eye contact</b>	Seems self-confident. Eye contact during the presentation.	Good body position and eye contact nearly all the time	Average body position and eye contact sometimes.	Bad body position and no eye contact
<b>Voice level</b>	All the audience can hear what is said.	90% of the audience can hear what is said.	60% of the audience can hear what is said.	The audience complains about not being able to hear the speaker well.
<b>Diction</b>	Words can be clearly understood.	Words can be understood nearly all the time (90%).	Words can be understood many times (70%-80%).	Poor diction.
<b>Know-how</b>	Higher than required.	Required.	Lacking in certain fields	Important overall lack of knowledge
<b>Answering questions</b>	Adequate answers to nearly all questions.	Adequate answers to man questions.	Adequate answers to some questions.	Unsatisfactory answers.
<b>Time</b>	All topics explained in the time available	A certain rush at the end to keep to the allotted time or runs slightly over time	Runs moderately over time.	Poor time planning
<b>Catching the audience's attention</b>	Audience's attention held at all times.	Audience's attention is virtually not lost	Audience's attention is lost 20% of the time.	Audience is bored
<b>Organization</b>	Well organized and planned	Some sections are confusing	Many sections are confusing.	Badly organized.
<b>Graphs, tables and photos</b>	All are interesting and useful.	Many are relevant and interesting.	Some are not important and may be removed.	Most are not useful.
<b>Typos</b>	None.	One or two.	Three or four.	More than four.

## ACTIVITY 6

Assesment Of A Presenter (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004)

***Tick as appropriate:***

- Presenter introduced self and topic
- Presentation had a clear and relevant introduction — with a ‘hook’
- Presentation had a useful agenda
- Presentation had a clear structure
- Arguments were offered logically
- Each argument was supported by relevant evidence
- Evidence was sourced
- Evidence was discussed
- Appropriate AVA were used — sensitively
- A conclusion was offered
- Main arguments and points were restated
- The whole topic was covered/question answered

***Other***

- The presenter built a rapport with the audience
- Eye contact was developed and maintained
- Positive body language was utilised
- The presenter used prompts and did not speak from a script

Overall comments:

## FURTHER READINGS:

Bradbury, A., (2010) *Successful presentation skills* (4th ed.), Kogan Page.

Cottrell, S.. (2008) *The study skills handbook* (3rd ed.), Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Emden, J., Becker, L., (2010) *Presentation skills for students* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), Palgrave Macmillan.

## CHAPTER 6

### ACADEMIC DEBATE

[Introduction](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Definitions](#)

[Introduction to Academic Debate](#)

- [Essentials of Academic Debate](#)
- [Principal Debate Formats](#)

[Listening and Feedback \(reacting to grounded criticism\)](#)

- [Focusing on Listening Skills](#)
- [Strategic Listening](#)
- [The Six Skills of Effective Listening](#)
- [General Guidelines for Note Taking](#)
- [Reacting to Grounded Criticism](#)
- [Giving Negative Feedback Guidelines](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further reading](#)

# ACADEMIC DEBATE

## INTRODUCTION

The academic debate was determined as a middle point assessment in this course. It will offer you a “real life” experience of engaging in a constructive debate whilst being observed by your colleagues and you will be assessed based on the rigor of your argument, sufficient in-depth subject knowledge of the topic and your ability to engage in the debate. In the previous chapters, we covered the important topics that will help you to participate effectively in the academic debate. The first part of this chapter outlines the basics of the academic debate and its formats based on the best Western publications. The second part examines listening and feedback - the crucial skills for being good in debate.

These are such essential academic skills that they are often taken for granted and given little emphasis in works on debate. Also, the subject of note taking in debate (or “flowing” as it is sometimes called) is often given only a small amount of attention or relegated to an appendix. This treatment, however, fails to recognize the importance of the nonspeaking roles in the debate. After all, as a debater, it you will in all likelihood spend far more time listening and writing than you will spend speaking.

So, in the second part of the chapter we discuss different habits of bad listeners and ways to become a good listener. We identify the main difficulties on the way to improve your listening and note taking skills. Also, while listening, of high importance is to listen to people in both careful and active ways and to be confident that they have heard the information that has been given to them. So in the end of this chapter we address the question of giving and receiving feedback, and how to react correctly to grounded criticism.

## OBJECTIVES

- to train in argumentation
- to empower personal expression
- to hone communication skills
- to become a truly effective communicator by becoming an effective listener
- to improve your note taking skills that might be helpful in debate, as well as on the job and informal situations
- to understand the role and value of feedback
- to appreciate the vital learning that can arise from feedback
- to develop an understanding of how you can deal with criticism in a productive way



## DEFINITIONS

*Debate* is the process of inquiry and advocacy, a way of arriving at a reasoned judgment on a proposition. Debate provides reasoned arguments for and against a proposition. It requires at least two competitive sides engaging in a clash of support for and against that proposition. Because it requires that listeners and opposing advocates comparatively evaluate competing choices, debate demands critical thinking. (Freeley, A., Steinberg, D., 2008)

Debate can be classified into two broad categories: applied and academic.

*Applied debate* is conducted on propositions, questions, and topics in which the advocates have a special interest, and the debate is presented before a judge or an audience with the power to render a binding decision on the proposition or respond to the question or topic in a real way.

*Academic debate* is conducted on propositions in which the advocates have an academic interest, and the debate typically is presented before a teacher, judge or audience without direct power to render a decision on the proposition. The audience in an academic debate does form opinions about the subject matter of the debate, and that personal transformation may ultimately lead to meaningful action. However, the direct impact of the audience decision in an academic debate is personal, and the decision made by the judge is limited to identification of the winner of the debate. In fact, in academic debate the judge may be advised to disregard the merits of the proposition and to render her win/loss decision only on the merits of the support as presented in the debate itself. (Freeley, A., Steinberg, D., 2008)

The first lesson to learn about listening is that listening is not the same as hearing. *Hearing* is recognition of sounds, including words, around you. When you walk into a busy office you hear a lot of words from nearby conversations. You catch a phrase or word here and there. But you're not listening

It's not until you focus in on words in a particular conversation and mentally engage with them that you're listening. So, for a working definition, ***listening*** is the mental process of interpreting, evaluating, and contextualizing the things we hear (McIntosh, P., Luecke, R., Davis, J.H., 2008).

In addition to actually listening, effective communicators let the speaker know that they are carefully following what is said, through body language, paraphrasing, questions, and other means. In other words, effective communicators *give feedback*. So what is feedback? In Ramaprasad's (1983) definition ***feedback*** is an information about the gap between actual performance level and the reference or standard level, which is subsequently used to alter that gap. Based on this definition, feedback needs to be meaningful, understood and correctly acted upon.

# INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC DEBATE

## ESSENTIALS OF ACADEMIC DEBATE

One of the requirements of any academic debate: teams agree to disagree about a specific topic. You should remember that the debate is just a contest in which the teams could have been assigned the other side of the issue. It would be appropriate that the participants shake hands at the end in order to indicate that the debate was just a middle point assessment of your progress, not a demonstration of personal convictions.

In debates there are the affirmative team, which supports (affirms) the proposition and the negative team, which rejects (negates) the proposition. Both sides must have an equal number of participants. The affirmative team usually begins the debate because it may be arguing for a change. Because this is more difficult to do than defending present policy, the affirmative team gets the advantage of speaking first. Also, the affirmative must go first so that the negative knows what to speak against. Most debate formats also allow the affirmative to have the last speech in the debate since it has the responsibility of proposing a change. (Rybold, G., 2006)

Successful debate should take account of the following prerequisites:

- *The effective format should promote the orderly development of arguments.*

**Position Construction.** At the beginning, the position of each team should be outlined. Controversial terms should be clarified, principal statements should be expressed, and positions should be explained based on quoted evidence.

**Refutation.** Once your opponent's arguments are heard, you have a responsibility to provide a reaction. Refutation—the act of evaluating the reasoning, the support, or the implications of an adversary's argument should occur as early in the debate as possible.

**Rebuttal.** The act of defending the argument after it has been refuted is called "rebuttal." Normally, this defense of the arguments against attacks happens in the closing phases. Often, in order to encourage final speeches to focus just on rebuttal (and to avoid the continuing articulation of more and more arguments), the team is forbidden to introduce new arguments in the closing speeches.

**Questioning (cross-examination).** This is the best way for you to clarify information, to expose flaws and to lay the groundwork for the argument than to ask a question directly of the other team. By either allowing a specific time for questioning (often referred to as "cross-examination") or by allowing questions that interrupt an opponent's speech time (often referred to as "points of information" or simply "points"), you can add the excitement of direct interaction to your debate.

- *The effective format should include equal and alternating speaking time.* A core principle of debate is that each team should have an equal opportunity to make its case and this suggests that the speaking time should be strictly equal.
- *The effective format should provide the first opportunity to the team supporting the proposition.* Generally, the proposition being debated will place the greater burden of proof on the team supporting the proposition
- *The effective format should include variety.* In order to retain interest, the debate should include a mix of types of activities—speeches, questions, and sometimes audience comments—without any one activity dominating for an extended period of time. (Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004)

**Proposition.** The teams in a debate must have a specific topic to argue. This topic is worded in the form of a *proposition*— a statement to be proved. The proposition (also called the topic, resolution, or motion) should be very clear so that both sides know what they are to argue. Propositions allow debaters to research and think about their arguments in order to have well-informed debates.

**Debate propositions can be roughly grouped into three general types:**

A proposition of fact is a statement that can be proved using some kind of a measurement. When we can prove something using a statement based on an observable event or measurable facts, we say that the statement is an objective statement. When we make a statement and then use some agreed measurement to prove the truth of that statement, we are using objective verification. If the statement and the measurement match, then the proposition of fact is valid. If we make a statement and the measurement proves us wrong, then the proposition of fact is invalid.

A proposition of value requires the affirmative to persuade the judges to accept an opinion or value. You debate values all the time. When you argue a proposition of value, you are trying to provide evidence that your subjective opinion is better than the other team's. Arguing a proposition of value involves more steps than just making a statement and backing it up with a measurement.

A proposition of policy recommends taking a certain action. If you can justify a value and that value is based on facts, you are recommending that value as well as ways to promote the value. (Rybold, G., 2006)

***The Burdens***

A burden is a responsibility that each debater is given. Audiences and judges evaluate debaters based on how well they fulfill their burdens. Failure to meet the expectations of the burdens can result in losing the debate. Debaters share three types of burdens:

**The burden of proof.** The saying debaters use for this burden is, “Those who assert must prove.” Whoever wants to make a point (an assertion) must provide reasons and proof that their point is right. Points, or assertions, are significant, outstanding, or effective ideas, arguments, or suggestions that make up the case. Since most debaters are not experts about the topic they are discussing, they must use sources of evidence that

provide valid reasons to prove the position they are asserting. When a debater asserts a point without providing evidence, the other side may state the opposite (known as a counterpoint) without evidence, and both sides will tie on that particular point. If neither side gives evidence, the point is not proved and is considered moot, or still up for debate.

**The burden of refutation.** Refutation is the process of attacking and defending arguments. For this type of burden, you could say, “Silence is admission.” This means that if you present an argument in a debate and the other team does not address it, you win that point automatically, since by its silence the other side has admitted that you are right. The other team is not doing its job, which is to debate your arguments. You win the argument because the other team failed its burden of refutation. When you choose to answer each point or argument the other team presents, you are using line-by-line refutation, because you are following your opponent’s organization line by line in your notes and explaining to the judge why each point is wrong (each line in your notes would be another argument). You may also answer several of the other team’s arguments with only one or a few responses. This type of refutation is called grouping, because you take several lines of argument in your notes and group them together for your answers.

**The burden of rebuttal.** The saying for this burden is, “Answer the answer.” A good debate is like a good table tennis match: when one team hits the ball, the other team returns it. The other team refutes what you say. To refute means to prove something the other side said is wrong. You then have the burden of refuting. You have to prove that the other team’s argument or response is weak and your argument is stronger. (Rybold, G., 2006)

## PRINCIPAL DEBATE FORMATS

### *Policy Debate (Cross-Examination)*

Policy Debate is the most widely used format. It calls for two teams: the affirmative and the negative. Every speaker gets exactly the same amount of speaking and questioning time (cross-examination). The first four speeches are each nine minutes long, and each is called a constructive speech. During these speeches, debaters may propose or advance new arguments. After each constructive speech, the other team is allowed to cross-examine for no longer than three minutes. The affirmative gives the first constructive speech, followed by a cross-examination from the negative team. The negative gives the second constructive speech, followed by a cross-examination from the affirmative team. The affirmative is allowed to speak again for the third constructive speech, after which it is again cross-examined by the negative. Finally, the negative gives the fourth and final constructive speech, after which the affirmative cross-examines the negative. The teams use all four of their constructive speeches to propose their arguments and inform the audience about their evidence and reasoning to support their arguments.

The last four speeches of the debate are called rebuttals. During a rebuttal speech, the debaters are not allowed to present new arguments, since these speeches are meant to challenge the arguments the other team introduced in its constructive speeches. Debaters also use rebuttal speeches to defend their team’s arguments from



challenges by the other team. Each rebuttal is six minutes long. The negative gives the first rebuttal speech. The affirmative gives the second. The negative is allowed to speak again for the third, and the affirmative gives the fourth and final rebuttal speeches. (Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004) (Rybold, G., 2006)

9 min.	First Affirmative Constructive
3 min.	Cross-examination of first affirmative speaker (by second negative speaker)
9 min.	First Negative Constructive
3 min.	Cross-examination first negative speaker (by first affirmative speaker)
9 min.	Second Affirmative Constructive
3 min.	Cross-examination of second affirmative speaker (by first negative speaker)
9 min.	Second Negative Constructive
3 min.	Cross-examination of second negative speaker (by second affirmative speaker)
6 min.	First Negative Rebuttal
6 min.	First Affirmative Rebuttal
6 min.	Second Affirmative Rebuttal
6 min.	Second Negative Rebuttal

### ***Parliamentary Format***

The parliamentary format is probably one of the most recognized formats the world over. The format has the advantage of a relatively short duration and nearly constant interaction. The format includes the honorific titles: the team usually referred to as “Affirmative” is called “Government” and includes a Prime Minister and a Member of Government; and the team usually referred to as “Negative” is called “Opposition” and includes a Leader of Opposition and a Member of Opposition. These terms may or may not be used.

This format lacks specifically set-aside times for questioning, but includes the possibility for questions offered throughout the first phase of the debate. Once a constructive speech has completed its first minute but before it has entered its last minute, an opposing speaker may rise at any point and request a “point of information” — that is, the speaker requests permission to ask a question. At that point, the speaker holding the floor can either accept the question and answer it, before moving back into his speech, or he can say, “No, thank you,” and continue on with his speech. The strength of this feature is that it offers a chance to address a point just after it has been made. A weakness is that, if overused, it can be distracting to the speaker and the audience.

Another advantage of this format is that it allows for audience participation in the form of “floor speeches” — audience members may make challenges or ask questions of the debaters. (This format requires a firm-handed moderator to keep the floor speeches and responses within appropriate limits.)



A variation on the parliamentary format (World style or British/European Parliament) involves four teams at a time, two government teams and two opposition teams. While such a format permits the involvement of a much larger number of debaters, it also takes substantially more skill in order to maintain clear argument development and refutation. (Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004)

- 7 min. Government: Prime Minister's Constructive  
"Points" allowed after first minute and before last minute.
- 8 min. Opposition: Leader's Constructive  
"Points" allowed after first minute and before last minute.
- 8 min. Government: Member's Constructive  
"Points" allowed after first minute and before last minute.
- 8 min. Opposition: Member's Constructive  
"Points" allowed after first minute and before last minute.
- 15 min. Floor Speeches (2 minutes each)
- 4 min. Opposition: Leader's Rebuttal
- 5 min. Government: Prime Minister's Rebuttal

### ***Lincoln–Douglas Format***

This format receives its name from a series of debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas for the Illinois seat of the U.S. Senate in 1858. Focusing largely on the question of slavery, the debates continue to convey the ideal of one person's ability to influence public attitudes and events. It is promoted as a format that emphasizes advanced preparation, a basic understanding of philosophical and value conflicts, a moderate use of evidence, and a conversational approach toward delivery. Today, Lincoln-Douglas debate is the only major format to feature, instead of teams, one speaker against another speaker.

This format uses two people: one for the affirmative and the other for the negative. The main differences between Lincoln-Douglas and other team debates is that there are fewer speeches and you will not be able to depend on a partner to help you. It has the advantage of promoting a simpler, shorter, and more personal contest.

The Lincoln-Douglas format offers a one-on-one debate including constructive speeches, rebuttals and questioning time in less than 35 minutes. Though the total speaking times are equal, the affirmative speaks three times (beginning and ending the debate) while the negative speaks twice. Each begins with a constructive speech to lay out his principal argument, with the negative debater's speech being a bit longer so as to include both case development and refutation. The affirmative debater has two short rebuttals in which to refute the negative's case, defend his own, and conclude the debate.

(Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004) (Rybold, G., 2006)

6 min.	Affirmative Constructive
3 min.	Questioning by negative
7 min.	Negative Constructive
3 min.	Questioning by affirmative
4 min.	First Affirmative Rebuttal
6 min.	Negative Rebuttal
3 min.	Second Affirmative Rebuttal

### ***Karl Popper format***

A relative newcomer to the debate world, the Karl Popper format is named after a Viennese philosopher who opposed the idea of absolute truth, embraced the notion of multiple perspectives, and developed the ideal of an “open society,” based on a respect for different points of view, protection of minority rights, and a defense of free media. The format usually focuses on propositions of general value, but has recently included propositions of policy as well. The style encourages advance preparation, but also encourages creativity and the reliance on common knowledge and reasoning. The heavy reliance on quoted materials that is characteristic of American policy debate is not a feature of Karl Popper debate, but research is encouraged, and competitors frequently receive packets of published articles related to the proposition prior to the tournament.

The Karl Popper debate format calls for two teams: affirmative and negative. This format accommodates three speakers per team and provides just one speaking opportunity for each speaker (although four of the six speakers also conduct questioning). Its strength is that it includes a greater number of speakers and provides a gentle introduction to debate for less-experienced speakers. (the responsibilities are somewhat uneven: the first speakers on each team have a total of 12 minutes on stage; the second and third speakers on each team have 8 minutes apiece.)

One challenge of this format is to maintain continuity between the speeches. The third speaker needs to defend the same arguments that were extended by the second speaker and introduced by the first speaker. This need for continuity is present in other formats as well, but when speakers make only one speech each, there is a correspondingly greater need to communicate among the partners. The first speech from the affirmative side has the goal of laying out the team’s main arguments. The first negative speaker follows, developing not only that team’s case but also their refutation of the affirmative’s arguments. The two speeches that follow are designed for extending the arguments and the refutation of each side, but not for introducing new arguments. A final speech from each side provides an opportunity to compare and summarize.

(Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004)

6 min.	First Affirmative (Constructive)
3 min.	Questioning of first affirmative (by third negative)
6 min.	First Negative (Constructive)
3 min.	Questioning of first negative (by third affirmative)
5 min.	Second Affirmative (Rebuttal)
3 min.	Questioning of second affirmative (by the first negative)
5 min.	Second Negative (Rebuttal)
3 min.	Questioning of second negative (by the first affirmative)
5 min.	Third Affirmative (Rebuttal)
5 min.	Third Negative (Rebuttal)

### ***Public Forum***

Public Forum (also called Ted Turner Debate *or* Controversy) is one of the newest events. Public Forum attempts to get more students involved by making the event an audience-oriented contest, usually without expert debate judges involved.

Debaters use evidence but usually will not read it verbatim during the debate. The two-person teams in Public Forum are pro (affirmative) and con (negative). The proposition can either be a policy or a value topic.

Instead of cross-examination speeches, Public Forum has crossfire. During this time, the debaters who just finished speaking can ask and answer questions of each other.

The summary speeches allow the debaters to recap the best arguments for their side. This is a chance for more refutation but not new arguments. In the last shot, each team will reprise the one argument that they believe will win the debate for them. (Rybold, G., 2006)

4 min.	Team A Speaker 1
4 min.	Team B Speaker 1
3 min.	Crossfire (between Team A Speaker 1 & Team B Speaker 1)
4 min.	Team A Speaker 2
4 min.	Team B Speaker 2
3 min.	Crossfire (between Team A Speaker 2 & Team B Speaker 2)
Summary 2 min.	Team A Speaker 1
Summary 2 min.	Team B Speaker 1
3 min.	Grand Crossfire (all speakers)

***The “Town Hall” Format***

This is a format for two teams that includes a focused period for audience interaction. Based on a form of debate used at the National Communication Association’s “Town Hall Debates” held at the association’s annual conventions, this 50–60 minute format has proven to be useful and popular for public on-campus debates as well.

Through the first four speeches, the first half hour of the debate roughly, the audience hears from each of the speakers, and hears each speaker ask questions and answer questions. The goal of the four constructive speeches is to lay out all of the arguments for one’s side and to introduce all of the planned refutations against the other side. Up to this point, the debate follows the pattern of the policy debate format described above. After all four debaters have been heard, there is a 15-minute questioning period, during which audience members can make their own arguments or can directly question the speakers. A moderator can handle this audience participation period by providing individual speaking times to audience members who would like to give speeches from the floor (2 minutes, for example) or by simply letting audience members speak for a reasonable amount of time.

The moderator should attempt to balance the questions and statements for the two sides as much as possible—for example, by allowing the other side time to answer or react to a question that was asked of their opponents.

Finally, the debate ends with two summaries presented by each side. This summary, presented by one member of each team (it doesn’t matter which one) reviews the main issues of the debate and provides reasons why the speaker’s side should be chosen the winner. (Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004)

5 min.	First Affirmative Constructive
2 min.	Questioning of first affirmative (by second negative)
5 min.	First Negative Constructive
2 min.	Questioning of first negative (by first affirmative)
4 min.	Second Affirmative Constructive
2 min.	Questioning of second affirmative (by first negative)
4 min.	Second Negative Constructive
2 min.	Questioning of second negative (by second affirmative)
15 min.	Audience Speech/Question Period
3 min.	Final Negative Summary
3 min.	Final Affirmative Summary

### *A “Quick Debate” Format*

Debates sometimes must be accomplished in very short amounts of time. Debaters with experience in tournament debate, as well as public policy advocates, may feel that any issue worth debating needs at least an hour of debating time—but it is possible to offer the core of a debate, the fundamental give and take on the central controversy, in far less time. The following format requires only 10 minutes, and provides two speaking opportunities and a questioning opportunity to two sides.

This format requires speakers to have both discipline (selecting only one or two arguments) and a great deal of word economy. While the abbreviated format may not permit very complete argument development or extension, it does allow the basic points of view to be communicated and contrasted.

As such, it might be ideal for a program that includes debate along with other activities—for example, a talk show or a radio call-in show. Starting such a program with a quick debate may be an excellent way to gain attention and briefly communicate the gist of the controversy. (Broda-Bahm, K., Kempf, D., 2004)

2 min.	Affirmative Constructive
1 min.	Questioning of affirmative
2 min.	Negative Constructive
1 min.	Questioning of negative
2 min.	Affirmative Summary
2 min.	Negative Summary

## LISTENING AND FEEDBACK (REACTING TO GROUNDED CRITICISM)

### FOCUSING ON LISTENING SKILLS

What one should realize, listening is not simply the act of retaining what is heard. This activity is not ‘neutral.’ The listener is engaged in purpose-driven activity. The purpose that one has for listening have a large impact on what will be emphasized, what will be selected, and what will be retained (Broda-Bahm & Kempf, 2004).

As a college student, you will spend a great deal of time listening to others. From orientation sessions to classroom lectures, not to mention one-on-one conversations with professors, administrators or other college staff, you will find yourself at the receiving end of orally presented information. Not only is the ability to



listen effectively a key factor in your success, but also listening is a skill that anyone can improve (Rowh & Ed, 2010).

What we should clear up first about listening is that it is not only for meaning and understanding (which is fairly easy for most people), but also listening to let the other person know that he has been listened to (which is the real challenge). We also need to be aware of our nonverbal behaviors because how we react and present ourselves influences how others listen to us. Think of some of the bad listeners you know. They probably have these habits:

- They make comments or ask questions that having nothing to do with what you have just said.
- They never look at you.
- They multitask (e.g., work on their computer or talk on their phone while they are listening to you).
- They look bored, uninterested.
- They have one expression on their face throughout the conversation.
- They fidget (e.g., play with their pencil or objects on their desk).
- They walk away as you are talking and say, “Keep going, I am listening.”
- They fake attention and pretend to listen.
- They never ask questions, clarify, or paraphrase.
- They finish your sentences for you or interrupt when you are talking (Topchik, 2003).

### ***But Why Is Listening So Difficult?***

Listening is one of the most difficult skills. Very few people have ever had training in how to listen. It is estimated that most of us only listen at about 30 percent of our capacity. That means we are missing 70 percent of the message, or 70 percent of all the messages sent to us. Listening is such a difficult skill to acquire mainly because of three factors (Topchik, 2003):

**Committee of People.** Concentrating on the information being given to one, s/he is thinking about many other things as well. S/he may be thinking about what they’ll have for lunch or dinner, how their afternoon meeting will go, who’s picking up the kids today, or one is thinking about whether he or she will call later, sex, or one’s recent or upcoming vacation. This is normal behavior, and according to the psychologists, it is very healthy as well. What is happening is that there’s a committee of people (not real people, of course) traveling with us wherever we go that’s always trying to take us away from the situation. Our committee of people is particularly with us when we are bored or uninterested in the situation or conversation at hand. But the committee is also with us at the most opportune or important listening times in our lives.

**Human Brain Physiology.** The human brain is too developed or sophisticated for the listening process. It can do so many other things at the same time. This is another reason why listening is so difficult. Unless we have

been trained, or have practiced a lot, it is difficult for most of us to focus on one person or one conversation at a time.

**Noise Factors.** Noise factors are barriers to listening. They are the specific things that prevent us from listening to others. Noise factors can be either internally (our own personal barriers) or externally (from the other person or the environment) generated. There are literally hundreds, maybe thousands, of these noise factors. Here's just a partial listing of these noise factors:

### *Internal Noise Factors*

- Your emotional state (e.g., angry, anxious, depressed, stressed)
- Your physiological state (e.g., hard of hearing, poor eyesight)
- Illness or wellbeing
- (e.g., backache, the flu, overly tired)
- Personal biases, prejudices, perceptions, assumptions
- Thinking about what you will say instead of listening to the speaker
- Preoccupation with your own issues or situation, having your own agenda
- Mind reading what the other person is thinking or feeling
- Searching for the right kind of advice or recommendations to give
- Going to any lengths to avoid being wrong
- Placating because you want people to like you
- Personal values and beliefs

### *External Noise Factors*

- Language differences
- Difficulty understanding accents or word pronunciations
- Speaker's use of slang or jargon or acronyms that you are not familiar with
- A boring subject or topic, or a topic you have heard a hundred times before
- Monotonous or monotone voice of the speaker
- The workplace environment (e.g., room temperature too hot or too cold)
- Background noise (e.g., machines running, pagers going off, phones ringing, alarms, or sirens that impede your ability to hear)
- The personality, grooming, appearance, or attire of the speaker
- The speaker's title or position within the organization

### *The Benefits of Listening Well*

You can't be a truly effective communicator if you are not a good listener. Like radio stations that send out a stream of information without responding to any incoming signals, people who talk without listening are not truly communicating. They are "broadcasting." Becoming known in your workplace as an effective listener brings a number of benefits that will pay big dividends to your organization—and to you.

**You'll Get More Things Done Right the First Time.** What percentage of your work must be redone because you missed key steps when the procedure was being explained? Listening well helps you get the instructions, and therefore the work, right the first time.

**You'll Learn More.** Effective listeners are able to get the "big picture" faster because they've taken the time to access the resources around them: coworkers and managers or supervisors. Employees increase their value to the organization by listening.

to others. They understand more about their products and services, as well as know where to go for answers when they get into a jam.

**Other People Will Listen to You.** Another benefit of being a good listener is that when you do speak, your words are valued. In the eyes of coworkers, good listeners have earned the right to be listened to. And, since good listeners talk less, their words are a rarer commodity, and worth more for it. We quickly tire of people who are always talking. Their words are diminished through overexposure.

**Your Work Environment Will Be More Harmonious.** An effective listener is usually better in conflict situations, is more likely to see each viewpoint in a problem-solving session, and generally earns greater respect in the workplace than a poor listener. Without becoming the office "counselor," a good listener knows that some coworkers simply need to be heard. By offering a few minutes, a good listener is able to relieve tension and assist coworkers in getting back to a productive level of work. An effective listener contributes to office harmony to the same degree that a poor listener takes away from it!

(McIntosh, P., Luecke, R., Davis, J.H., 2008).

## STRATEGIC LISTENING

If this heading sounds odd, then it is only because we have conventionally (and, we believe, inaccurately) thought of listening as a passive process—we open our ears, we relax, we receive the information. Decades of research on the listening process and its successes and failures, however, have demonstrated that this model is anything but accurate. Hearing (the physiological process of converting sound waves into auditory stimuli) differs from listening (the mental process of selecting, attending to, meaningfully organizing and retaining heard information) in essential respects. While we can't listen without hearing, we can hear without listening. Imagine debaters whispering to their teammates with questions like these: “*What was their second argument? Did they ever respond to our example? How does this fact support their side of the debate?*” Uncertainties like these may be symptoms of poor listening behaviors. If you aim to be an effective listener in the context of a debate, you should maximize the experience by following a few important steps (Broda-Bahm & Kempf, 2004):

- *Focus your attention.* A debate situation is replete with potential distractions: worrying about your own speech, communicating with your partners, thinking about the audience. All of these elements deserve your attention as well, but when another advocate is speaking, your ability to contribute meaningfully to the debate depends on your ability to prioritize your attention on that advocate's speech.
- *Construct as you listen.* Don't just pay attention to the words as they go by. Instead, actively try to identify the speaker's main ideas, support and strategy. “What is the most important element here?” is a good question to ask while you are mentally processing the information that you hear.
- *React as you listen.* Think about your own assessment. Can you critique the information? Supplement it? Extend it? Think of alternate or additional examples or support?

## THE SIX SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING

To reach this highest level of listening proficiency, you need to develop six separate skills that may be combined into the easy-to-remember acronym CARESS (Alessandra, 2006):

1. **Concentrate.** Focus your attention on the speaker and only on the speaker.
2. **Acknowledge.** When you acknowledge the other person, you show your interest and attention.
3. **Research and respond.** Gather information about the other person, including his or her interests and objectives.
4. **Exercise emotional control.** Deal with highly charged messages in a thoughtful manner, and wait until the entire message is received before reacting.



- 5. Sense the nonverbal message.** Be aware of what the speaker is saying with his or her body language and gestures.
- 6. Structure and organize the information as you receive it.** This is what you do with the time gap between speaking and hearing speeds.

Let's look at each of these skills in more detail.

**1. Concentrate Completely on the Speaker.** You must eliminate noise and distractions. These barriers may be in the environment, like noises in the room, other people talking, poor acoustics, bad odors, extreme temperatures, an uncomfortable chair, or visual distractions. Or they could be physical disruptions such as telephone calls or visitors. Another kind of barrier is something distracting about the speaker. Maybe he or she dresses oddly, shows poor grooming, has disturbing mannerisms, confusing facial expressions, or odd body language. Or perhaps he or she has a thick accent or an unappealing presentation style. Yet another barrier has to do with you, the listener, and can be either physical or psychological. Maybe it's close to lunch or quitting time, and you're preoccupied with how you feel. You're hungry or tired, or angry, or maybe have a cold or a toothache. If so, you're not going to be listening fully.

Another physical barrier could be your proximity to the speaker. If he or she's either too close or too far away from you, you may feel uncomfortable and have a hard time concentrating. A second sort of internal barrier is psychological. Perhaps you're closed-minded to new ideas or resistant to information that runs contrary to your beliefs and values. Or maybe you're bored, daydreaming, or jumping to conclusions.

So there are lots of potential distractions, both internal and external. If you can't avoid them, minimize them. You do that by focusing totally on the speaker and paying attention. Here are four specific techniques that will help you concentrate while listening:

- Take a deep breath.
- Consciously decide to listen.
- Mentally paraphrase what the speaker is saying.
- Maintain eye contact.

**2. Acknowledging the Speaker.** This is the second technique of the CARESS model. Think about how you like to be listened to. What are the important responses you look for in other people when they are listening to you? Here are four things most people mention:



**First**, eye contact. As we just discussed, this is a sign of attention. When you don't have eye contact with your listener, you may feel like you're talking to a brick wall.

**Second**, verbal responses and vocal participation such as, "Hmm," "Yeah," "Wow!", and "No kidding?" These show interest in what's being said.

**Third**, other acknowledging gestures such as smiling, nodding one's head, leaning forward with interest, directly facing the speaker, and appropriate facial expressions or body language. All of these gestures say, in effect, "I'm really interested in what you have to say." Speakers like to see that.

And, the **fourth** kind of acknowledgment is making clarifying remarks that restate the speaker's points, such as "If I understand you correctly, you're saying that ..." or "In other words, the biggest hurdles are ..." Use these techniques, and you'll show courtesy to the speaker. Equally important, you'll enrich yourself by joining in a give-and-take that increases your understanding.

**3. Researching.** "Researching" is what makes a conversation a two-way street. And it's this two-way flow that creates a meeting of the minds between the speaker and the listener. Researching, as the term is used here, involves asking questions and giving feedback, and it serves many purposes. For example, it allows you to clarify a message, enlarge upon a subject, or go into a particular topic in more depth. It allows you to get the speaker to change the direction of the conversation. Or it can prompt the speaker to vent feelings of anger, excitement, enthusiasm, and so on. And it also allows you to support and reinforce particular parts of a speaker's message.

A listener who doesn't ask questions, give feedback, or make comments at the appropriate time isn't really participating. This creates an information imbalance that can, at best, make the speaker uncomfortable and, at worst, make for major misunderstandings.

Asking the right questions at the right time and responding appropriately to the speaker is an essential part of active listening. Skillful questioning simplifies the listener's job because it gets the speaker to "open up" and to reveal hidden feelings, motives, needs, goals, and desires.

**4. Exercise Emotional Control.** What causes an emotional overreaction? It's generally prompted by the speaker himself or by something he or she says. For instance, going to an elegant party dressed like a bum might influence the hosts negatively. On the other hand, wearing a high-powered, Wall Street-like suit might put a rural businessperson on the defensive against a supposedly not-to-be-trusted city slicker.

Severe emotional overreaction can also be caused by loaded topics, such as ethnic, racial, religious, or political references. Differences in values, beliefs, attitudes, education, speed of delivery, image, and a host of other factors can cause a disruption in communication.

So, as listeners, we tend to tune out when we see or hear something we don't like. As a result, we often miss the true substance of what's being said. When your emotional reaction begins, you'll have an almost irresistible tendency to interrupt, to butt in, and to argue. You may feel your pulse speed up, your breathing become more rapid, or your face become flushed. You may lose your train of thought. Once you recognize this negative emotional reaction, you can redirect it with the following techniques:

**First**, pause to delay your response or reaction. It's the tried-and-true approach of counting to ten, or taking in some long, deep breaths. These can really work to calm you down.

A **second** calming technique: Think about what you have in common with the speaker, rather than focusing on your differences. Maybe you don't disagree with the person's motivations—such as raising more money for the school. You just don't agree with her solutions.

And **third**, imagine yourself calm and relaxed. Think of a time in your past when you were laid-back, on top of the world, and feeling incredibly great. Visualize that experience as vividly as you can. When you exercise emotional control, you'll find that active listening is no longer a struggle.

**5. Sense the Nonverbal Message.** It's critical that you read the nonverbal messages in the speaker's communications. If you don't, you're missing a major aspect of his or her message.

Professor Albert Mehrabian has pioneered the understanding of communications since the 1960s. He established this classic statistic for the effectiveness of spoken communications:

- 7% of meaning is in the words that are spoken.
- 38% of meaning is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% of meaning is in facial expression.

So 93% of meaning is derived from nonverbal communication. Thus being able to listen nonverbally to others is essential for success.

**6. Structure.** Structuring the information is probably the most sophisticated of the listening techniques. As I said earlier, you can use the time gap created by differences in listening and speaking speeds to structure the message you're listening to.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR NOTE TAKING

As mentioned above structuring other people's talks on paper (or taking notes) is very important for being a good listener. Like listening note taking is not 'neutral' and note taker is engaged in purpose-driven activity. Unless you are one of the world's fastest writers (or listening to one of the world's slowest speakers) you are bound to write much less than what is being said, perhaps one word for every twenty or more words that are spoken. For that reason, your selection of what you notice, prioritize, organize and write down has a large influence on how the event is going to be captured.

In addition, it goes without saying that note taking is a personal act. Your notes are just that—*your* notes. What you would select and what you would find useful to record for your own or for an opponent's speech is not likely to be the same or necessarily similar to what another person would record and select. While there are certainly better and worse ways of taking notes, more and less useful techniques of recording, there is no unambiguously right way to take notes from a given speech. For this reason, debaters generally rely on their own notes rather than the notes of their partners. For one thing, it is often difficult to read someone else's handwriting—especially handwriting produced under the stressful conditions of a debate. More important, when you rely on your own notes, you are recognizing the fact that by taking notes you are mentally organizing what you are hearing. Many who have had the experience of being a student know that you take notes in class not simply because you want to re-read the notes again at a later time, but because the acts of recording and structuring are ways of processing the information; they aid your understanding during that moment even if you never look at the notes again. Sometimes, instructors are very good at letting students know exactly when they have moved on to a new main point; more commonly, however, someone listening casually to an instructor will not realize that during the last twenty minutes the instructor has made three distinct points, supporting each one with two illustrations (Broda-Bahm & Kempf, 2004).

So here are some general guidelines for taking notes (Broda-Bahm & Kempf, 2004).

**1. Keep It Simple.** Remembering that only a fraction of what is said will end up being recorded, it is important to record an advocate's *key ideas* and not the words that an advocate happens to be saying at any given moment. To discern the key idea, you must simplify and select. For example, the following might represent what is spoken and what is written:

Spoken: "A hallmark of our nation's purpose and strength, free speech is not a mere luxury. Indeed, it is a necessity of a free people to use the power to speak without hindrance on any subject, to criticize as well as to compliment, that is one of the very building blocks of the form of government that we have come to call democracy."

Written: "Free Speech promotes democracy."

**2. Use Meaningful Abbreviations.** An alternate way of representing the argument above might be:

Written: “F.S. --> Dem.”

Removed from its context, that abbreviation may not mean anything, but for someone who has been studying and preparing a debate and dealing continuously with the ideas of free speech and democracy, and who recognizes the arrow symbol as “leads to,” or “promotes,” the phrase would have sufficient meaning and could be jotted down in less than a second.

More specific word abbreviations would depend, of course, not only on the language that you are working in, but also upon the subject area and your familiarity with it. It is no savings in time to use an abbreviation that will tax your own recollection. If you have reached a point of familiarity on the free speech topic, for example, that “F.S.” will have meaning to you, and it saves time to use it; otherwise, the use of “free speech” or “free sp.” or “free spch” will suffice. It is a good idea to begin using some common abbreviations in your own note taking as you gather material and information for your debate and then to continue to use those abbreviations in your own speaking notes and in your own flow sheet.

**3. Impose organization.** In many instances the act of taking notes will be an act of “creating order out of chaos.” The structure of an argument may not be obvious to the individual who is casually listening; indeed, the structure may not even be obvious to the person making it. A trait often found in very inexperienced (or overly confident) speakers is to simply speak off the “top of the head,” expressing thoughts as they enter the mind. Facing such a speaker, a note taker could say with exasperation, “It is impossible to take any notes because the speech has no structure.” But that is not an acceptable excuse. Good note takers will find a structure even if they have to impose it themselves. Ideally, the note taker will be able to say, “Well, he spoke for four minutes without explicitly identifying any key ideas, but there were three essential claims that he kept coming back to and those are . . .”

**4. Record Your Own Reactions as You Write.** If you can think of a response as you are listening, then you may save time by writing the response rather than the argument that led to your response. For example, if the other side presents a quotation from 1963 on a matter of global economics, then instead of writing the source and its date, you might write in the space available for your own speech, “’63 is too old—too much has changed.”

All of these general note taking strategies are not skills that can be quickly learned, but at the same time they are skills that can apply, not only to taking notes in public debates, but to taking notes in any situation. Individuals who are used to recording minutes in meetings or in a classroom will find that the ability to simplify, the ability to abbreviate, and the ability to create organization are all essential skills for creating a useful record of an oral event.



## REACTING TO GROUNDED CRITICISM

Even in today's age of communication, there are still many messages we do not want to receive. For example, truthfully, most people would prefer not to receive feedback on their performance. It is not the positive aspects of performance evaluation that we dread, but rather the negative. Receiving this kind of feedback threatens our self-image, ego, and perhaps even our motivation.

When we look at the title of this paragraph „Reacting to Grounded Criticism” most of us focus on the last word - „criticism”, whilst the main word is the last by one - „grounded”.

### *So what is the difference between criticism and feedback?*

1. Very often, feedback is defined as *criticism which is constructive* and offers some guidance for future learning.
2. Criticism is more often felt to be destructive, lacking in support and generally seen in a negative context (Stogdon & Kiteley, 2010).

While dealing with criticism we should consider next things:

- Criticism can be painful.
- It can make you feel angry, upset or frustrated.
- It can make you feel powerless (Stogdon & Kiteley, 2010).

So how do we deal with the above? To separate the feelings from the content is something that is fundamental if the criticism is to be used in a productive way and reflects some of the very basic tenets of social work theory and practice. The way that one is able to recognize how emotions can influence his/her response to criticism will be an important part of their professional development.

One can see that receiving negative feedback about one's performance is definitely a perspective-changing experience. It is intended to be. Presented properly, negative feedback can serve to help the person correct performance problems that could ultimately impact their future job security. When there are issues that need to be addressed, negative feedback needs to be part of the overall communications that people receive about themselves. Not addressing these problems would be an injustice to the individual by allowing him/her to continue to perform below standards with no indication that their work is unacceptable.

These are the scenes when an unsuspecting “victim” is called into their boss's office one morning only to be told that after 27 years of loyal service to the company, they are being let go due to their performance. KA-BOOM! As the shocked employee's entire career flashes before his eyes, he is being handed a severance check and escorted to the front door into an awaiting taxi. He hears something about not being considered a top performer over the years and that as part of the company's recent downsizing program, only the very best performers are being retained.



“Funny,” he thinks to himself, “nobody ever mentioned that they weren’t pleased with my work for the past 27 years,” as the taxi speeds away.

This is what really might happen when people receive little or no feedback about their deficiencies on their performance until it is too late for them to do anything about it.

Why does this happen? The most obvious answer is that it is simply easier. Supervisors generally don’t enjoy giving people negative feedback about their performance any more than people like to receive it. Instead, we tolerate poor performance rather than address and try to correct it (Garber, 2004).

## GIVING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

When appropriate and presented correctly, negative feedback can be some of the most potentially valuable information about yourself that you might ever receive. Often, it is the feedback that is the most difficult to hear that allows us the most growth opportunity. With negative feedback, you need to keep an open mind and be willing to accept what you hear. The following are ways in which one can use negative feedback in the most positive ways possible:

1. Be knowledgeable about the individual’s performance. Know exactly what performance you are addressing. As with any feedback, be prepared to give examples of the individual’s poor performance.
2. Give the person a chance to defend him- or herself. Don’t rush too quickly to judgment before you have heard their side of the story. Listen to their reasons and rationale for their behavior and performance. Be willing to accept the fact that there might be factors beyond the person’s control for these problems. Plan for ways to correct or address these factors to help the person improve his or her performance.
3. Don’t give the person a “mixed message.” A mixed message is one where you hear two seemingly contradictory things at the same time. If you have a negative message to deliver to someone, then just do it! Don’t try to sugarcoat it by wrapping it up in complimentary feedback and sandwiching it in between. This doesn’t really “soften” the blow or make negative feedback any easier to accept. It will only serve to confuse the person more. Make it clear what performance needs to be improved and why. Don’t have the person leave not knowing if he or she was told that they were doing a good job or a bad one.

*An example of a mixed negative feedback message might sound something like this:*

“I want to talk to you about your work on the new project. You have been doing a good job keeping everything on schedule so far. However, the accuracy of the numbers you have been providing seems to be way off. Accuracy is critical to the success of the entire project. Mistakes made now can cause us millions of dollars to correct later on. You need to ensure the accuracy of your numbers from now on. By the way, I really enjoyed the update presentation you gave on the project the other day. I know everyone was very impressed with the job you are doing so far.”

What message would this person leave this meeting hearing? Would it be that he or she is doing a good job or bad? One might argue that this person would feel that overall he or she was doing well, but had to concentrate on improving in one area—accuracy. However, the communications would be much clearer if these two types of feedback were given on separate occasions. They could be given on the same day, but not at the same time. This way, the importance of the accuracy of the data would not be diluted by the other information, and there would be a greater chance of the person understanding how his or her performance needs to improve. The positive feedback is equally important and should not be forfeited in order to deliver the negative to avoid a mixed message.

- Be constructive. Negative feedback should be constructive in its intent. If the reason for delivering negative feedback is anything other than to constructively help the individual, then it should not be delivered. The person should be told the following concerning his or her unacceptable performance: Why the performance is not meeting requirements. What the person must do to improve this performance. How this performance will be measured and how improvements will be communicated to the person in the future. When the person’s progress made toward the desired performance goals will be reviewed and how frequently.
- Consequences need to be understood. People seem to fear the worst when they hear negative feedback about their performance. Negative feedback needs to include at least some discussion about its ultimate consequences. If it is a “do or die” situation, then this needs to be told to the person. Similarly, if there are little or no consequences associated with this negative feedback, then this should be explained as well

Finally, dramatizing the significance of negative feedback will not ultimately serve the supervisor very well. One can only cry “wolf” so many times before everyone becomes conditioned not to listen anymore. Of course, just as in the story, one day a real wolf might happen by and no one will respond to the cries for help (Garber, 2004).

## ACTIVITIES

### *Your experience of criticism*

Think about your experiences of being criticized in the past and consider how your present responses may well have been influenced by these earlier messages. To help you to do this, note down your responses to the following questions:

- Do you feel that *you* rather than your *actions* are the subject of criticism?
- Is it possible to separate the action from the person and to see the criticism in a more objective way?

It may be helpful to look at the factors which influence your responses to criticism:

- Criticism, whether constructive or not, can be a very uncomfortable feeling and there is a real risk that a defensive response is the knee-jerk reaction.
- The temptation to ‘shoot the messenger’ and try to discredit the credibility of the person giving the criticism is a sure way of learning very little from criticism, other than to convince yourself that the way to deal with criticism is to criticize.

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# CHAPTER 7

## GROUP WORK

[Introduction](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Definitions](#)

[What are the benefits of group work?](#)

[What are the challenges of group work and how can I address them?](#)

[How to Form Groups](#)

[Group Size and Duration. Roles](#)

[Techniques & Strategies](#)

[Fostering Group Interaction: successful team](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further reading](#)



# GROUP WORK

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to work as part of a team is one of the most important skills in today's job market. Employers are looking for workers who can contribute their own ideas, but also want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans. The activities in this chapter seek to teach you about the importance of teamwork to workplace success and the specific role each individual on a team may play. You will learn about positive teamwork behavior and discover how your own conduct can impact others on a team. The chapter also discusses possible obstacles to teams working successfully and offers the opportunity to build constructive strategies for overcoming these challenges.

## OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this chapter you should be able to team working, that involves building relationships and working with other people using a number of important skills and habits:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Communication (both giving and receiving)
- Sense of responsibility
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences
- Ability to participate in group decision-making

## DEFINITIONS

**Definition 1:** Group Work is a technique within the field of social work wherein various groups (as educational and recreational) are guided by an agency leader to more effective personal adjustment and community participation (According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

**Definition 2:** Group Work is a method, used by professional social workers, of aiding a group or members of a group toward individual adjustment and increased participation in community activity by exploiting the mechanisms of group life (According to Random House Unabridged Dictionary).

**Definition 3:** Group Work is a form of cooperative learning. It aims to cater for individual differences, develop students' knowledge, generic skills (e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills) and attitudes (According to Wikipedia).

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GROUP WORK?

“More hands make for lighter work.” “Two heads are better than one.” “The more the merrier.” These adages speak to the potential groups have to be more productive, creative, and motivated than individuals on their own.

The personal benefits of group work are important: you will improve your communication and negotiating skills, practise time management and planning, and build rapport and friendships.

But in addition to the personal aspects, group work is important because of the way it provides solutions beyond the scope of individual effort. Working in a group can be very successful when all the participants find a role and contribute their best.

When individual contributions form a whole solution, you may find, as Aristotle said, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”!

Group work has special attributes:

- It is focused

Working in a group focuses your attention on problems and solutions differently than working by yourself. Your ideas won't be the only ideas – there may be as many attitudes and answers in your group as there are members. All the decisions won't be made by you. Solutions are reached by consensus, and may not be a matter of right or wrong.

- It encourages interaction

In a group, you are working in an interactive way.

Undoubtedly, you will have skills and expertise in some areas and not in others, but that will be true of other members of the group too. Interaction among all members is crucial, and the group will need to find ways to communicate, share information, reach decisions, and put ideas into practice.

By pooling resources, your group will be able to achieve more – there are more brains working!

- It is inclusive

It emphasises and encourages participation and is very successful when all participants find a role and perform to the best of their ability.

- It helps motivate

The camaraderie implicit in group work can be very encouraging.

Being “in it together” creates shared responsibility, with all members having a stake in the group’s success or failure.

- It broadens attitudes

Working toward a common goal with colleagues – who also may be strangers – highlights different perspectives and interpretations (Northumbria University Library, September 2013).

You may learn about cultural priorities and discover that attitudes toward group working vary according to experience and background. In discussion and debate you will find the best solutions through compromise.

Properly structured, group projects can reinforce skills that are relevant to both group and individual work, including the ability to:

- Break complex tasks into parts and steps
- Plan and manage time
- Refine understanding through discussion and explanation
- Give and receive feedback on performance
- Challenge assumptions
- Develop stronger communication skills.

Group projects can also help you develop skills specific to collaborative efforts, allowing you to...

- Tackle more complex problems than you could on your own.
- Delegate roles and responsibilities.
- Share diverse perspectives.
- Pool knowledge and skills.
- Hold one another (and be held) accountable.
- Receive social support and encouragement to take risks.
- Develop new approaches to resolving differences.

- Establish a shared identity with other group members.
- Find effective peers to emulate.
- Develop your own voice and perspectives in relation to peers.

(Caruso & Woolley, 2008)

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF GROUP WORK AND HOW CAN I ADDRESS THEM?

Unfortunately, groups can easily end up being less, rather than more, than the sum of their parts. Why is this?

Your group may challenge:

### *Misunderstanding the assignment*

Understanding what you want to do and how you want to do it, early in the process, will save your group from disagreement later on. Discuss your assignment and make sure every member participates. Make sure you all agree to the same outcomes and record and share your agreed points in notes, or in your blog or other online tools. Once you decide on an action plan, you can consider details such as presentation software options or report styles.

### *Disagreement on how to proceed*

Write your action plan as an outline so that tasks are listed logically and you can see if there are gaps. Be sure to incorporate a timeline. Stick to your plan if possible, but if you adjust it, make sure everyone agrees. Meet regularly, and take turns leading and making good notes. Share your notes so that everyone has access to what has been agreed. Divide work evenly, since uneven division of labour can lead to resentment and lack of motivation.

### *Differing personalities*

Member too dominant? Try setting an agenda with a time slot for each person to speak. Work around the table and have each person contribute for a set amount of time.

Member too quiet? Arrange seating so everyone can be seen and heard. Make it easy for people to participate. Listen carefully when quiet members speak so that they feel included.

Discussion degrading into grumpy criticism? Suggest that each person's comments start with a positive observation. Ask members to offer a possible solution for each point of criticism.

Somebody always the joker? Allow some time for people to socialise, then use a set agenda to make meetings flow smoothly.

Are there cultural or language barriers? Attending a large institution in a different culture may be a new experience for some students. A personality ‘problem’ may not be a problem at all, just trepidation. Try talking about it—you all may learn some new perspectives.

### ***Bad behaviour and conflict***

Disruptive behaviour should be dealt with promptly. Don’t let little disagreements grow into big arguments! If you don’t have a chance to speak in meetings, practise your assertiveness. Raise your hand and repeat your point if you think you have not been heard. Ask that group members take turns speaking.

Are someone’s personal problems getting in the way? Try to stay on task, but if a member is obviously distressed, he or she may wish to discuss what has happened. Be aware of student support services—don’t be reluctant to ask for help, even on someone else’s behalf. If you experience sexism or racism, tell the person quietly and firmly that you don’t approve, but don’t argue. Offensive beliefs can be very ingrained, and you will need to speak to your tutor promptly.

Is someone not doing his or her work? Or is he or she always late or forgetful? Ask for an explanation—you never know what’s happening in someone’s life. Review the action plan and timeline, and refer to meeting notes to remind the person of their responsibilities. If there is no satisfactory response, discuss the problem with your tutor.

**Common challenges** of group work include:

### ***Coordination costs:***

represent time and energy that group work consumes that individual work does not, including the time it takes to coordinate schedules, arrange meetings, meet, correspond, make decisions collectively, integrate the contributions of group members, etc. The time spent on each of these tasks may not be great, but together they are significant.

Coordination costs can’t be eliminated, nor should they be: after all, coordinating the efforts of multiple team members is an important skill. However, if coordination costs are excessive or are not factored into the structure of group assignments, groups tend to miss deadlines, their work is poorly integrated, motivation suffers, and creativity declines.

You should note that coordination costs increase with:

- *Group size:* The more people in the group, the more schedules to accommodate, parts to delegate, opinions to consider, pieces to integrate, etc. Smaller groups have lower coordination costs.



- *Task interdependence*: Tasks in which group members are highly reliant on one another at all stages tend to have higher coordination costs than tasks that allow group members to “divide and conquer”, though group members may not satisfy the same collaborative goals.
- *Heterogeneity*: Heterogeneity of group members tends to raise coordination costs, especially if there are language issues to contend with, cultural differences to bridge, and disparate skills to integrate. However, since diversity of perspectives is one of the principle advantages of groups, this should not necessarily be avoided.

**Strategies:** To help reduce or mitigate coordination costs:

1. Keep groups small.
2. Designate some class time for group meetings.
3. Use group resumes or skills inventories to help teams delegate subtasks.
4. Assign roles (e.g., group leader, scheduler) or encourage group members to do so.
5. Point group members to digital tools that facilitate remote and/or asynchronous meetings.
6. Warn group members about time-consuming stages and tasks.
7. Actively build communication and conflict resolution skills.
8. Designate time in the project schedule for the group to integrate parts.

### ***Motivation costs***

refer to the adverse effect on your motivation of working in groups, which often involves one or more of these phenomena:

- **Free riding** occurs when one or more group members leave most or all of the work to a few, more diligent, members. Free riding – if not addressed proactively – tends to erode the long-term motivation of hard-working students.
- **Social loafing** describes the tendency of group members to exert less effort than they can or should because of the reduced sense of accountability (think of how many people don’t bother to vote, figuring that someone else will do it.) Social loafing lowers group productivity.
- **Conflict** within groups can erode morale and cause members to withdraw. It can be subtle or pronounced, and can (but isn’t always) the cause and result of free riding. Conflict – if not effectively addressed – can leave group members with a deeply jaundiced view of teams.

**Strategies:** To address both preexisting and potential motivation problems:

1. Explain why working in groups is worth the frustration.
2. Establish clear expectations for group members, by setting ground rules and/or using team contracts.
3. Increase individual accountability by combining group assessments with individual assessments.

4. Learn conflict-resolution skills and reinforce group members by role-playing responses to hypothetical team conflict scenarios.
5. Assess group processes via periodic process reports, self-evaluations, and peer evaluations.

### *Intellectual costs*

refer to characteristics of group behavior that can reduce creativity and productivity. These include:

- **Groupthink:** the tendency of groups to conform to a perceived majority view.
- **Escalation of commitment:** the tendency of groups to become more committed to their plans and strategies – even ineffective ones – over time.
- **Transparency illusion:** the tendency of group members to believe their thoughts, attitudes and reasons are more obvious to others than is actually the case.
- **Common information effect:** the tendency of groups to focus on information all members share and ignore unique information, however relevant.

**Strategies:** To reduce intellectual costs and increase the creativity and productivity of groups:

1. Precede group brainstorming with a period of individual brainstorming (sometimes called “nominal group technique”). This forestalls groupthink and helps the group generate and consider more different ideas.
2. Encourage group members to reflect on and highlight their contributions in periodic self-evaluations.
3. Assign roles to group members that reduce conformity and push the group intellectually (devil’s advocate, doubter, the Fool).

(Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation, [www.cmu.edu/teaching/index.html](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/index.html))

## HOW TO FORM GROUPS

Small groups or learning teams can be formed in four ways: randomly, instructor-selected, by seat proximity, or one-selected.

Random and instructor-selected group assignments avoid cliques. You may also want to consider using your group members’ attitudes toward group work as a mechanism to help you create groups. Take a one-question survey, or add this question to the initial survey you use at the beginning of team building:

*Which of the following best describes your experience of group work?*

- A. I like group work because my group helps me learn.
- B. I question the value of group work because in the past I've ended up doing all the work.
- C. I have little or no experience working in groups.
- D. I have different experience of group work than the choices above. (Please explain.)

Those who check “B” can be put into a group of their own. They might find this to be the first time they are really challenged and satisfied by group work (adapted from Byrnes and Byrnes, 2009).

(McCurdie, 2014; Barkley, E., et al., 2005)

## GROUP SIZE AND DURATION. ROLES.

Group size can vary, as can the length of time that you work together. *Pairing* is great for thirty-second or one-minute problem solving. Groups that work together for ten to 45 minutes might be *four or five people*. (If there are more than four or five, some members will stop participating).

Groups can be formal or informal. *Informal groups* may be ad-hoc dyads (where each member turns to a neighbor) or ten-minute “buzz groups” (in which three to four members discuss their reactions to a reading assignment).

In large groups it is useful to assign roles within each group (examples: recorder, reporter to the class, timekeeper, monitor, or facilitator). If members are not used to working in groups, establishing some discussion guidelines with the group about respectful interaction before the first activity can foster positive and constructive communication.

It is useful to arrange the members in groups before giving them instructions for the group activity, since the physical movement in group formation tends to be distracting.

(McCurdie, 2014; Barkley, E., et al., 2005)

### *The Structure of Group Work*

Successful group work activities require a highly structured task. Make this task clear to group members by writing specific instructions on the board or on a worksheet. Include in your instructions:

- **The learning objective.** Why are the members doing this? What will they gain from it?
- **The specific task:** “Decide,” “List,” “Prioritize,” “Solve,” “Choose.” (“Discuss” is too vague.)

- **Structure the task** to promote interdependence for creating a group product.
- **The expected product.**
- **The time allotment.** Set a time limit. Err on the side of too little rather than too much. You can decide to give more time if necessary.
- **The method of reporting out;** that is, of sharing group results. Reporting out is useful for accomplishing closure.
- **Closure.** Summary remarks from you can weave in the comments, products to close a group-work activity.

(McCurdie, 2014; Barkley, E., et al., 2005)

**The roles** you or your group members assign will depend on the goals of the assignment, the size of the team, etc. They can be fixed or rotating. Here are some possible group roles, but the list is not exhaustive. Think creatively and come up with your own!

- **Facilitator:** Moderates team discussion, keeps the group on task, and distributes work.
- **Recorder:** Takes notes summarizing team discussions and decisions, and keeps all necessary records.
- **Reporter** serves as group spokesperson, summarizing the group's activities and/or conclusions.
- **Timekeeper:** Keeps the group aware of time constraints and deadlines and makes sure meetings start on time.
- **Devil's Advocate:** Raises counter-arguments and (constructive) objections, introduces alternative explanations and solutions.
- **Harmonizer:** Strives to create a harmonious and positive team atmosphere and reach consensus (while allowing a full expression of ideas.)
- **Prioritizer:** Makes sure group focuses on most important issues and does not get caught up in details.
- **Explorer:** Seeks to uncover new potential in situations and people (fellow team members but also clients) and explore new areas of inquiry.
- **Innovator:** Encourages imagination and contributes new and alternative perspectives and ideas.
- **Checker:** Checks to make sure all group members understand the concepts and the group's conclusions.
- **Wildcard:** Assumes the role of any missing member and fills in wherever needed.

(Barkley, E., et al., 2005;)



### ***Roles That Contribute to the Work:***

- ***Initiating*** - taking the initiative, at any time; for example, convening the group, suggesting procedures, changing direction, providing new energy and ideas. (*How about if we.... What would happen if... ?*)
- ***Seeking information or opinions*** - requesting facts, preferences, suggestions and ideas. (*Could you say a little more about...Would you say this is a more workable idea than that?*)
- ***Giving information or opinions*** - providing facts, data, and information from research or experience. (*In my experience I have seen...May I tell you what I found out about...?* )
- ***Questioning*** - stepping back from what is happening and challenging the group or asking other specific questions about the task. (*Are we assuming that... ? Would the consequence of this be... ?*)
- ***Clarifying*** - interpreting ideas or suggestions, clearing up confusions, defining terms or asking others to clarify. This role can relate different contributions from different people, and link up ideas that seem unconnected. (*It seems that you are saying...Doesn't this relate to what [name] was saying earlier?*)
- ***Summarizing*** - putting contributions into a pattern, while adding no new information. This role is important if a group gets stuck. Some groups officially appoint a summarizer for this potentially powerful and influential role. (*If we take all these pieces and put them together...Here's what I think we have agreed upon so far... Here are our areas of disagreement...*)

### ***Roles That Contribute to the Atmosphere:***

- ***Supporting*** - remembering others' remarks, being encouraging and responsive to others. Creating a warm, encouraging atmosphere and making people feel they belong helps the group handle stresses and strains. People can gesture, smile, and make eye-contact without saying a word. Some silence can be supportive for people who are not native speakers of English by allowing them a chance to get into discussion. (*I understand what you are getting at...As [name] was just saying...*)
- ***Observing*** - noticing the dynamics of the group and commenting. Asking if others agree or if they see things differently can be an effective way to identify problems as they arise. (*We seem to be stuck... Maybe we are done for now, we are all worn out...As I see it, what happened just a minute ago...Do you agree?*)



- **Mediating** - recognizing disagreements and figuring out what is behind the differences. When people focus on real differences that may lead to striking a balance or devising ways to accommodate different values, views, and approaches. (*I think the two of you are coming at this from completely different points of view...Wait a minute. This is how [name] sees the problem. Can you see why she/he may see it differently?*)
- **Reconciling** - reconciling disagreements. Emphasizing shared views among members can reduce tension. (*The goal of these two strategies is the same, only the means are different... Is there anything that these positions have in common?*)
- **Compromising** - yielding a position or modifying opinions. This can help move the group forward. (*Everyone else seems to agree on this, so I'll go along with... I think if I give in on this, we could reach a decision.*)
- **Making a personal comment** - occasional personal comments, especially as they relate to the work. Statements about one's life are often discouraged in professional settings; this may be a mistake since personal comments can strengthen a group by making people feel human with a lot in common.
- **Humor** - funny remarks or good-natured comments. Humor, if it is genuinely good-natured and not cutting, can be very effective in relieving tension or dealing with participants who dominate or put down others. Humor can be used constructively to make the work more acceptable by providing a welcome break from concentration. It may also bring people closer together, and make the work more fun.

(Parts adapted and quoted from the following training materials:

Heller Hunt and Cunningham. "Advanced Facilitator" Brookline, MA 1992

J.Sketchley, A. Mejia, I. Aitken et al. Work Improvement in Health Services,  
Geneva World Health Organization, 1986)

(Working in Groups: A Quick Guide for Students, 2003)

## TECHNIQUES & STRATEGIES

### *Getting Started*

- Groups work best if people **know each others' names** and a bit of their background and experience, especially those parts that are related to the task at hand. Take time to introduce yourselves.
- Be sure to **include everyone** when considering ideas about how to proceed as a group. Some may never have participated in a small group in an academic setting. Others may have ideas about what works well. Allow time for people to express their inexperience and hesitations as well as their experience with group projects.
- Most groups **select a leader** early on, especially if the work is a long-term project. Other options for leadership in long-term projects include taking turns for different works or different phases of the work.
- Everyone needs to **discuss and clarify the goals** of the group's work. Go around the group and hear everyone's ideas (before discussing them) or encourage divergent thinking by brainstorming. If you miss this step, trouble may develop part way through the project. Even though time is scarce and you may have a big project ahead of you, groups may take some time to settle in to work. If you anticipate this, you may not be too impatient with the time it takes to get started.

### *Organizing the Work*

- Break up big jobs into smaller pieces. **Allocate responsibility** for different parts of the group project to different individuals or teams. Do not forget to account for assembling pieces into final form.
- **Develop a time-line**, including who will do what, in what format, by when. Include time at the end for assembling pieces into final form. (This may take longer than you anticipate.) At the end of each meeting, individuals should review what work they expect to complete by the following session.

### *Understanding and Managing Group Processes*

- Groups work best if everyone has a chance to make strong contributions to the discussion at meetings and to the work of the group project.

- At the beginning of each meeting, decide what you expect to have accomplished by the end of the meeting.
- Someone (probably not the leader) should write all ideas, as they are suggested, on the board or on large sheets of paper. Designate a recorder of the group's decisions. Allocate responsibility for group process (especially if you do not have a fixed leader) such as a time manager for meetings and someone who periodically says that it is time to see how things are going (see below).
- Save some time toward the end of the first meeting (and periodically as the group continues) to check in with each other on how the process is working.

### *Including Everyone and Their Ideas*

Groups work best if everyone is included and everyone has a chance to contribute ideas. The group's task may seem overwhelming to some people, and they may have no idea how to go about accomplishing it. To others, the direction the project should take may seem obvious. **The job of the group is to break down the work into chunks, and to allow everyone to contribute.** The direction that seems obvious to some may turn out not to be so obvious after all. In any event, it will surely be improved as a result of some creative modification.

### *Encouraging Ideas*

The goal is to produce as many ideas as possible in a short time without evaluating them. All ideas are carefully listened to but not commented on and are usually written on the board or large sheets of paper so everyone can see them, and so they don't get forgotten or lost. **Take turns by going around the group** - hear from everyone, one by one.

One specific method is to **generate ideas through brainstorming**. People mention ideas in any order (without others' commenting, disagreeing or asking too many questions). The advantage of brainstorming is that ideas do not become closely associated with the individuals who suggested them. This process encourages creative thinking, if it is not rushed and if all ideas are written down (and therefore, for the time-being, accepted). A disadvantage: when ideas are suggested quickly, it is more difficult for shy participants or for those who are not speaking their native language. One approach is to begin by brainstorming and then go around the group in a more structured way asking each person to add to the list.

Examples of what to say:

- Why don't we take a minute or two for each of us to present our views?
- Let's get all our ideas out before evaluating them. We'll clarify them before we organize or evaluate them.
- We'll discuss all these ideas after we hear what everyone thinks.

- You don't have to agree with her, but let her finish.
- Let's spend a few more minutes to see if there are any possibilities we haven't thought of, no matter how unlikely they seem.

### *Group Leadership*

- The leader is responsible for seeing that the **work is organized** so that it will get done. The leader is also responsible for understanding and managing group interactions so that the atmosphere is positive.
- The leader must **encourage everyone's contributions** with an eye to accomplishing the work. To do this, the leader must observe how the group's process is working. (Is the group moving too quickly, leaving some people behind? Is it time to shift the focus to another aspect of the task?)
- The leader must encourage group interactions and **maintain a positive atmosphere**. To do this the leader must observe the way people are participating as well as be aware of feelings communicated non-verbally. (Are individuals' contributions listened to and appreciated by others? Are people arguing with other people, rather than disagreeing with their ideas? Are some people withdrawn or annoyed?)
- The leader must **anticipate** what information, materials or other resources the group needs as it works.
- The leader is responsible for **beginning and ending on time**. The leader must also organize practical support, such as the room, chalk, markers, food, breaks.

(Note: In addition to all this, the leader must take part in the discussion and participate otherwise as a group member. At these times, the leader must be careful to step aside from the role of leader and signal participation as an equal, not a dominant voice.)

### *Focusing on a Direction*

After a large number of ideas have been generated and listed (e.g. on the board), the group can categorize and examine them. Then the group should agree on a process for choosing from among the ideas. Advantages and disadvantages of different plans can be listed and then voted on. Some possibilities can be eliminated through a straw vote (each group member could have 2 or 3 votes). Or all group members could vote for their first, second, and third choices. Alternatively, criteria for a successful plan can be listed, and different alternatives can be voted on based on the criteria, one by one.

### *Categorizing and evaluating ideas*

Examples of what to say:

- We have about 20 ideas here. Can we sort them into a few general categories?
- When we evaluate each others' ideas, can we mention some positive aspects before expressing concerns?
- Could you give us an example of what you mean?
- Who has dealt with this kind of problem before?
- What are the pluses of that approach? The minuses?
- We have two basic choices. Let's brainstorm. First let's look at the advantages of the first choice, then the disadvantages.
- Let's try ranking these ideas in priority order. The group should try to come to an agreement that makes sense to everyone.

### *Making a decision*

After everyone's views are heard and all points of agreement and disagreement are identified, the group should try to arrive at an agreement that makes sense to everyone.

Examples of what to say:

- There seems to be some agreement here. Is there anyone who couldn't live with solution #2?
- Are there any objections to going that way?
- You still seem to have worries about this solution. Is there anything that could be added or taken away to make it more acceptable? We're doing fine. We've agreed on a great deal. Let's stay with this and see if we can work this last issue through.
- It looks as if there are still some major points of disagreement. Can we go back and define what those issues are and work on them rather than forcing a decision now.

(Working in Groups: A Quick Guide for Students, 2003)



*Commonly used group work techniques:*

## BUZZ GROUPS

- *Size:* any
- *Time frame:* 3-10 minutes
- *Setting:* no limitations
- *Purpose:* generate ideas/answers, re-stimulate student interest, gauge student understanding

## THINK-PAIR-SHARE

- *Class size:* any
- *Time frame:* 5-10 minutes
- *Setting:* no limitations
- *Purpose:* generate ideas, increase students' confidence in their answers, encourage broad participation in plenary session

## CIRCLE OF VOICES

- *Class size:* any
- *Time frame:* 10-20 minutes
- *Setting:* moveable chairs preferable
- *Purpose:* generate ideas, develop listening skills, have all students participate, equalize learning environment

## ROTATING TRIOS

- *Class size:* 15-30
- *Time frame:* 10 or more minutes
- *Setting:* a fair bit of space, moveable seating helpful (they could stand) *Purpose:* introduce students to many of their peers, generate ideas

## SNOWBALL GROUPS/PYRAMIDS

- *Class size:* 12-50
- *Time frame:* 15-20 minutes, depending on how many times the groups “snowball”
- *Setting:* moveable seating required
- *Purpose:* generate well-vetted ideas, narrow a topic, develop decision-making skills

## JIGSAW

- *Class size:* 10-50
- *Time frame:* 20 or more minutes
- *Setting:* moveable seating required, a lot of space preferable
- *Purpose:* learn concepts in-depth, develop teamwork, have students teaching students

## FISHBOWL

- *Class size:* 10-50
- *Time frame:* 15 or more minutes
- *Setting:* moveable seating and a lot of space preferable; if necessary, have inner group stand/sit at front of lecture hall and the outer group sit in regular lecture hall seats
- *Purpose:* observe group interaction, provide real illustrations for concepts, provide opportunity for analysis

## LEARNING TEAMS

- *Class size:* any
- *Time frame:* any
- *Setting:* no limitations
- *Purpose:* foster relationships among students, increase confidence in participating
- (Jaques, 2000; Race, 2000).

## FOSTERING GROUP INTERACTION: SUCCESSFUL TEAM

### *Characteristics of a Group that is Performing Effectively*

- All members have a chance to express themselves and to influence the group's decisions. All contributions are listened to carefully, and strong points acknowledged. Everyone realizes that the job could not be done without the cooperation and contribution of everyone else.
- Differences are dealt with directly with the person or people involved. The group identifies all disagreements, hears everyone's views and tries to come to an agreement that makes sense to everyone. Even when a group decision is not liked by someone, that person will follow through on it with the group.
- The group encourages everyone to take responsibility, and hard work is recognized. When things are not going well, everyone makes an effort to help each other. There is a shared sense of pride and accomplishment.

(Parts adapted and quoted from the following training materials:

Heller Hunt and Cunningham. "Advanced Facilitator" Brookline, MA 1992

J. Sketchley, A. Mejia, I. Aitken et al. Work Improvement in Health Services,  
Geneva World Health Organization, 1986)

(Working in Groups: A Quick Guide for Students, 2003)

### *Some Common Problems (and Some Solutions)*

**Floundering** - While people are still figuring out the work and their role in the group, the group may experience false starts and circular discussions, and decisions may be postponed.

Examples of what to say:

- Here's my understanding of what we are trying to accomplish... Do we all agree?
- What would help us move forward: data? Resources?
- Let's take a few minutes to hear everyone's suggestions about how this process might work better and what we should do next.

**Dominating or reluctant participants** - Some people might take more than their share of the discussion by talking too often, asserting superiority, telling lengthy stories, or not letting others finish. Sometimes humor can be used to discourage people from dominating. Others may rarely speak because they have difficulty getting in the conversation. Sometimes looking at people who don't speak can be a non-verbal way to include them. Asking quiet participants for their thoughts outside the group may lead to their participation within the group.

Examples of what to say:

- How would we state the general problem? Could we leave out the details for a moment? Could we structure this part of the discussion by taking turns and hearing what everyone has to say?
- Let's check in with each other about how the process is working: Is everyone contributing to discussions? Can discussions be managed differently so we can all participate? Are we all listening to each other?

**Digressions and tangents** - Too many interesting side stories can be obstacles to group progress. It may be time to take another look at the agenda and assign time estimates to items. Try to summarize where the discussion was before the digression. Or, consider whether there is something making the topic easy to avoid.

Examples of what to say:

- Can we go back to where we were a few minutes ago and see what we were trying to do?
- Is there something about the topic itself that makes it difficult to stick to?

**Getting Stuck** - Too little progress can get a group down. It may be time for a short break or a change in focus. However, occasionally when a group feels that it is not making progress, a solution emerges if people simply stay with the issue.

Examples of what to say:

- What are the things that are helping us solve this problem? What's preventing us from solving this problem?
- Let's take a few minutes to hear everyone's suggestions about how this process might work better and what we should do next.
- I understand that some of you doubt whether anything new will happen if we work on this problem. Are we willing to give it a try for the next fifteen minutes?

**Rush to work** - Usually one person in the group is less patient and more action-oriented than the others. This person may reach a decision more quickly than the others and then pressure the group to move on before others are ready.

Examples of what to say:

- Are we all ready-to make a decision on this?
- What needs to be done before we can move ahead?
- Let's go around and see where everyone stands on this.

**Feuds** - Occasionally a conflict (having nothing to do with the subject of the group) carries over into the group and impedes its work. It may be that feuding parties will not be able to focus until the viewpoint of each is heard. Then they must be encouraged to lay the issue aside.

Examples of what to say:

- So, what you are saying is... And what you are saying is... How is that related to the work here?
- If we continue too long on this, we won't be able to get our work done. Can we agree on a time limit and then go on?

**Ignoring or ridiculing others** - When someone consistently ignores or ridicules what others say, criticizing their experience or knowledge, good-natured humor or a private conversation outside the group can be effective. (Working in Groups: A Quick Guide for Students, 2003)



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

**There is No “I” in Team** (Skills to Pay the Bills. [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/))

*The purpose of this activity is to enrich your understanding of what it means to be part of a team and why being a good team player is important for your career success.*

**Time:** 15-20 minutes.

**Materials:** Chart paper or sentence strips with markers and/or Activity #1 printed out for each participant.

**Directions:** Choose and display five “teamwork” quotes:

*“Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”* - Vince Lombardi (football coach)

*“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”* - Henry Ford (pioneer of the assembly-line production method)

*“There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.”* - George Shinn (former owner of Charlotte, now New Orleans, Hornets basketball team)

*“It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.”* - Robert Yates (politician in the 1700s)

*“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.”* - Author Unknown

*“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”* - Mia Hamm (retired American soccer player)

*“Respect your fellow human being, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it.”* - Bill Bradley (American hall of fame basketball player, Rhodes scholar and former three-term Democratic U.S. Senator from New Jersey)

***“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.”*** - Michael Jordan (former American basketball player, businessman and majority owner of the Charlotte Bobcats)

***“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”*** - Helen Keller (American author, political activist, lecturer, and the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.)

***“The strength of the team is each individual member...the strength of each member is the team.”*** - Phil Jackson (widely considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of the NBA)

***“Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.”*** - Mattie Stepanek (advocate on behalf of peace, people with disabilities, and children with life-threatening conditions who died one month before his 14th birthday)

***“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”*** - Oprah Winfrey (American television host, actress, producer, and philanthropist)

***“Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.”*** - Casey Stengel (baseball hall of famer)

This can be done on chart paper, using the accompanying worksheet, writing quotes on sentence strips, or reading each quote aloud. What is important here is the quote – and not necessarily who said the quote.

Ask participants to choose the quote they like best. Divide the larger group into smaller groups according to the chosen quote (i.e., all participants who liked quote #1, etc.). Participants should spend approximately two minutes discussing the quote and coming to consensus on the reason they liked it the best. One member of each team should be prepared to offer the group’s feedback and reflection.

For another, more hands-on version of this activity, write each of the quotes on sentence strips. Cut the sentence strips into individual words or manageable chunks/phrases. Have groups work together to arrange the words/phrases into the correct order.

**Extension Activity:** Have participants create their own personal quotes about teamwork...why it is important... what can be accomplished...etc. The quote should be one that encourages peers to gain a better understanding and perspective on the importance of teamwork AND why it is often a core value shared by many different cultures, populations, and groups.

Offer the opportunity for participants to research and share proverbs related to teamwork from their own cultures (Annex 7C, 7D).

**Conclusion:** employers rate the ability to be a “team player” as one of the most important qualities and characteristics of their current (and future) employees (i.e., the job candidate). Why this is might be so? Elicit responses and an interactive discussion.

## ACTIVITY 2

**I’ll Give You Some of Mine if You Give Me Some of Yours** (Skills to Pay the Bills. [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/))

*Part of becoming a functional member of a team is learning to understand what you bring to the group and what you might need from others. This exercise is designed to help participants begin to identify their individual strengths and needs regarding teamwork.*

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Pens or pencils; hands-out (Annex 7A), Chart paper and markers.

**Directions:** Introduce this activity by reflecting on some of the quotes discussed in Activity #1 (if you have not completed Activity #1, choose some of the quotes to discuss with the group – and offer a brief discussion on their meaning).

Ask participants for a list of some of the characteristics they think make up a good team player. This might be phrased as follows: “What does it take from each person on a team to make a team really work?”

Students will be completing an individual inventory of the skills they possess related to teamwork. This inventory is for personal reflection and need not be shared.

**Extension Activity:** Have participants ask someone they know and trust to rate them using a blank copy of Annex 7A. Were the scores/checks similar or different? What does this tell them? Does this change any of the notes made related to skills to improve?

Have participants redesign the activity with words and/or actions that better describe the elements of teamwork from their perspective. Another option is for participants to schedule a meeting with an employer and get additional input as to how an employer might identify or describe the characteristics listed (Annex 7E).

**Conclusion:** As part of the concluding activity, ask participants to share one of their identified areas of strengths – and one area they would like to improve. This discussion allows each to hear from others their areas of strength and need. This process may help those in need of assistance identify who might be able to offer it.

## ACTIVITY 3

**How Many Shapes Does it Take?** (Skills to Pay the Bills. [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/))

*It takes all types of team members to create a balanced, cohesive team. This activity will give you the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the roles different people play on a team and the importance of each role.*

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** five large pieces of paper, each with one of the following shapes drawn: square, rectangle, circle, triangle, and squiggle

**Directions:** Before beginning this activity, place each of the five shapes in a different location in of the room. Ensure there is enough room for participants to move around for this activity. Discuss the fact that teams are all made up of people who perform different roles. Think about a sports team (football, basketball, soccer, hockey, etc.). What might happen if one basketball player hogged the ball all of the time? What might happen if the quarterback tried to run the ball all of the time instead of passing? So, it takes all different types of players to make an efficient and winning team, right?

Now, switch gears. Tell participants that not only does it take all different types of players to make a team effective; it takes all kinds of shapes, too.

Say something to the effect of: “I want you all to look around the room. Five different shapes are hanging up. The shapes are a square, a rectangle, a circle, a triangle, and a squiggle. What if I told you that knowing whether you, your co-workers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles could help you build better teams and better careers?”

Ask participants to stand up and take a few moments to think about the shape they like best or find most appealing. Then ask participants to walk over to that shape.

Once everyone has chosen their personal shape, use the information in Annex 7B to tell them a little bit about each shape’s “personality.” In fact, when you are finished with this activity, many participants will want to have a copy of what the shapes mean.

**Extension Activity:** Spend some time with participants to explore different types of personality assessments for the purpose of team building. Have students take different assessments and determine the validity of each. Research further and find out which occupations are best suited for which types of personalities.

Another option is to have participants think about and describe their favorite sport and compare players on those teams with the different roles found in the workplace. Examples might include: boss – coach; customer – fan; player – co-worker; etc. See how many different types of comparisons can be made and how important it is for all of these roles to work together in order to create harmony on a team.

**Conclusion:** Discuss the following questions with the group:

- Do you think people have the characteristics of more than one shape?
- Why do you think it is important to have all different shapes working on the same team? Offer some of the information below, if appropriate:

The Square, Rectangle, and Triangle are all convergent. This mean they are working TOWARDS something specific and finite, and they do it in a logical and systematic way. But they might be lacking in personal creativity.

The Circle and Squiggle are divergent. This mean they are creative, extroverted, and intuitive. They will reach out around them into new areas and to other people. But they aren't particularly systematic or dependable.



## ACTIVITY 4

**Concentration** (Gharba, 2012)

*If your team is feeling drained and stressed, this fun exercise is a great way to refresh and energize them.*

**Time:** It doesn't require much time.

**Group:** The recommended group size is 10-20 people.

**Directions:**

- Participants will need to form two equal lines facing each other.
- The game starts when one line turns around, giving the second line 40 seconds to change 10 things about themselves. This can include anything from jewelry or clothing being swapped with other people, untied shoelaces, a different hair do, or a switched watch or ring to the other hand. All changes must be something the other group can see.
- After 40 seconds, the first group turns around and tries to find all the changes the other group made.
- Once the changes have been recognized, the groups switch, giving each team a chance to make changes.

**Conclusion:** This game will stimulate the participants' minds and challenge their memory. Incorporate this activity when a lack of energy is apparent.

## ACTIVITY 5

### **The snowball: Mapping for Change conference** (Mccall, Ashley, Rambaldi, 2006)

*Snowballing (or pyramiding) involves participants working first alone, then in pairs, then in groups of four, and then in groups of eight.*

*The participants work on an issue by responding to particular questions, e.g. lists of keywords, or answers to a valued question, or they are asked to agree or disagree with a given phrase. The participants are also asked to give the reasons for their responses. The facilitator then asks a representative from each group to present the outcomes of their debate to the other groups, by placing their findings (one each on separate pieces of paper or card – meta-cards) on large sheets of paper, put up on the walls.*

**Directions:** At the conference sessions, two people facilitated each session and a note-taker was chosen to write up the findings at the end, to present at the closing plenary session each day.

The facilitator opens the session by introducing a specific question or questions for discussion. For example, on Day 1, each working group was asked to consider the following question:

*In your experience and knowledge, what internal and external factors and conditions influence your work practice?*

These are already written on large sheets of paper pinned to the wall or projected onto a screen. The question should be as clear and unambiguous as possible.

1. Participants begin individually, by writing down her or his individual responses (to discuss it later with a partner). You can write on metacards, or you can use a notebook.

**Time:** keep it brief – 3-5 minutes depending on the length and complexity of the question, and on the age and experience of the participants.

2. Participants join together in pairs and discuss their responses with their partner. They may reach a consensus agreement on the responses. If not, they should be clear about what are their differences, and why. Using A5 meta-cards, the pairs write down their thoughts – for example, funding, training, etc. Not more than two to five words per card if possible.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes.

3. Pairs join together into groups of four. All meta-cards are put on the floor in the middle of a circle. Cards are grouped and re-written if necessary to capture similar content.

Repeat the same process as for step 2. This new group shares its thoughts and reflections and any new ideas each pair has brought to the group.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes.

4. Groups of four may join together into group of eight, and repeat the process, or until the session has reached 'critical mass' – i.e. there are only a few main groups left. But eight people is a big group and may not be suitable for easy discussions, although at the conference groups were as big as 16 people.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes.

5. Next, the groups sort out the cards on the floor, showing the issues they have identified. As before, the cards can be easily mixed and sorted and re-organised etc. into sets or groups of types of response. Use new cards to make main headings for each group of answers. Participants do this themselves, with help from the facilitator. This stage is not easy – sorting the cards into logical but distinct groups or sets with appropriate headings (names) requires organizational, conceptual and verbal skills.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes.

6. When everyone is agreed on the responses and the grouping of the responses, the facilitator asks a representative from each group to stick the cards on to the wall (with masking tape, pins, etc.), so that everyone can see them. The representative explains the group's reasons for the responses.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes per group.

7. At this stage, and if there is time or it is felt appropriate, the groups can collectively re-organise the cards on the wall into headings/types of response, as done in step 6.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes.

8. The note-taker then writes up the session findings, ready to present at the closing plenary session. An easy way to record the results is to take a digital photo of the cards on the wall.

**Conclusion:** This tool allows for easy comparison between the findings of each group. If used in subsequent parallel working group sessions, the participants are already familiar with the tool. Full involvement – everyone is involved in the first three rounds of single, pairs, and probably the foursomes. It is more inclusive and participatory than e.g. a plenary meeting, a general discussion, or a question and answer session. Shy participants feel more confident about giving their views in pairs or in small group because they must begin with writing down their own response. There is limited eye contact, as cards are grouped on the floor and the focus of discussion is centred on them. It is focused on an issue and questions of interest (at least to the organisers and facilitator). The original questions come from outside, i.e. the organisers – but the questions could have been developed in a participatory way.

## ACTIVITY 6

**Mental-circle: getting to know** ([www.qualitylogoproducts.com/blog/3-fun-team-building-exercises-employees/](http://www.qualitylogoproducts.com/blog/3-fun-team-building-exercises-employees/))

*As your business grows, it's inevitable that you will have new team members. You also might possibly have to form new teams as people move to different positions and job responsibilities change. This game is perfect for promoting communication, listening skills, and motivation. It's a great game if you're attempting to work towards a theme or problem you would like to address as a company.*

**Time:** 10-30 minutes

**Materials:** a whistle; a stopwatch; pens or pencils & paper.

**Group:** you can use as little as 10 people to play this game and can go up to as many as you would like

**Directions:** Begin Circle of Questions by splitting the group into two equal teams (if there is an odd number, then either find another participant or let someone sit out until the next game). Ask one team to stand in a circle facing outwards, then ask the second team to create a slightly larger circle around the first one facing inwards.

First have both teams greet each other. Then the people in the inner circle will ask a question (of a manager's choice) of the person opposite them in the outer circle. That employee will have 30 seconds to give an answer before the whistle blows. **Pro tip:** make these open-ended questions to get interesting answers.

After the allotted 30 seconds is up, the person in the outer circle will ask the person in the inner circle the same question. After both people have asked each other a question, then the inner circle will move clockwise one place and the outer circle will move counter clockwise one space to find a new partner.

Expect some confusion at first, but after several tries you will get the hang of it. Repeat this exercise by asking more questions, each time alternating which circle gets to ask the question first. Stop the exercise when everyone has asked and answered a question, or whenever you get to an appropriate stopping point, or if you run out of pre-approved questions.

**Example questions:** Where would you like to be in 5 years? What does success look like to you? What's your greatest strength? What kind of management style do you like? (Try to ask questions that gradually work toward a theme you would like to address).

## FURTHER READING

Brandler, S., Roman, C. (2012) Group Work: Skills and Strategies for Effective Interventions, Routledge. [Online](#)

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## CHAPTER 8

### PEER - TO - PEER INTERACTION

[Introduction](#)

[Learning Objectives](#)

[Definitions](#)

[What is peer learning and why it is important](#)

[Peer-to-peer learning and interaction method](#)

[Scientific background of peer learning](#)

[Successful peer learning](#)

[Training peer assistant learning \(PAL\) leaders](#)

[Peer advisory group within university](#)

[Activities](#)

[Further Reading](#)

# PEER - TO - PEER INTERACTION

## INTRODUCTION

Peer teaching is not a new concept. It can be traced back to Aristotle's use of *archons*, or student leaders, and to the letters of Seneca the Younger. It was first organized as a theory by Scotsman Andrew Bell in 1795, and later implemented into French and English schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Over the past 30-40 years, peer teaching has become increasingly popular in conjunction with mixed ability grouping in K-12 public schools and an interest in more financially efficient methods of teaching.

Not to be confused with peer instruction—a relatively new concept designed by Harvard professor Eric Mazur in the early 1990s—peer teaching is a method by which one student instructs another student in material on which the first is an expert and the second is a novice.

Academic peer tutoring at the university level takes many different forms. Surrogate teaching, common at larger universities, involves giving older students, often graduates or advanced undergraduates, some or all of the teaching responsibility for undergraduate courses. Proctoring programs involve one-on-one tutoring by students who are slightly ahead of other students, or who have successfully demonstrated proficiency with the material in the recent past. Cooperative learning divides classmates into small groups, with each person in the group responsible for teaching others, and each contributing a unique piece to the group performance on a task. Reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT), a more specific version of cooperative learning, groups classmates into pairs to tutor each other.

The main benefits of peer teaching include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Students receive more time for individualized learning.
- Direct interaction between students promotes active learning.
- Peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others.
- Students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer.
- Peers and students share a similar discourse, allowing for greater understanding.

Research also indicates that peer learning activities typically yield the following results for both tutor and tutee: team-building spirit and more supportive relationships; greater psychological well-being, social competence, communication skills and self-esteem; and higher achievement and greater productivity in terms of enhanced learning outcomes.

## THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To help first-year students to integrate into the process of study and adapt to the university life; develop hard and soft skills in active interaction; facilitate self-organization and self-understanding of both the junior students and peer instructors.

## DEFINITIONS

People are embedded in a variety of social networks. A peer group consists of those who are of roughly equal status. **Peers** are a collection of individuals with whom the individual identifies and affiliates and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval. Two elements are particularly salient in this definition: ***connection and acceptance***.

*First*, peers are a group of people with whom an individual spends time and feels a sense of connection. Peers and peer groups are “situated through shared participation in particular types of behaviors and activities” (Gibson, 2004, p. 4). Not all students necessarily feel a sense of connection with other students in their university. Only when students are united by a shared identity or by participation in common activities do they form a peer group.

*Second*, a peer group is one from whom an individual seeks acceptance or approval. According to Abraham Maslow’s (2005) hierarchy of needs, seeking acceptance from others is among the most important needs for survival and happiness. Maslow hypothesized that individuals seek to fulfill increasingly complex sets of needs. Once an individual has fulfilled the basic physiological needs (such as shelter and food) and obtained personal safety, the next task is to secure love or acceptance. This often takes the form of seeking acceptance from peers. Identifying with and seeking acceptance from a peer group often go hand in hand. “Affiliation and acceptance are exclusively interrelated – each generates the other” (Tierney, 2005, p. 51). Being a member of a peer group necessitates that a student feel a sense of identification with his or her peers.

We define a **peer group** as any set of same-age peers linked by a common interest or identity with whom individuals engage in sustained interaction. Sustained interaction suggests that individuals interact with the same set of peers on a regular basis over a significant amount of time. To ensure this sustained interaction, individuals must be invested in their peer groups and feel a sense of accountability to other members. Peer groups can refer to a student’s set of close friends, a student’s classmates, or a student’s teammates. Students can be part of or influenced by multiple peer groups at the same time. Their success is also shaped by their position within peer groups and various social networks.

## WHAT IS PEER LEARNING AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

The term '*peer learning*' suggests a two-way, reciprocal learning activity. Peer learning should be mutually beneficial and involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants. It can be described as a way of moving beyond independent to interdependent or mutual learning.

Peer learning is not a single, undifferentiated educational strategy. It encompasses a broad sweep of activities. They ranged from the traditional proctor model, in which senior students tutor junior students, to the more innovative learning cells, in which students in the same year form partnerships to assist each other with both course content and personal concerns. Other models involved discussion seminars, private study groups, a buddy system or counseling, peer-assessment schemes, collaborative project or laboratory work, projects in different sized (cascading) groups, workplace mentoring and community activities.

Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers. They develop skills in organizing and planning learning activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning. Peer learning is becoming an increasingly important part of many courses, and it is being used in a variety of contexts and disciplines in many countries.

In peer learning, students will construct their own meaning and understanding of what they need to learn. Essentially, students will be involved in searching for, collecting, analyzing, evaluating, integrating and applying information to complete an assignment or solve a problem. Thus, students will engage themselves intellectually, emotionally and socially in “constructive conversation” and learn by talking and questioning each other’s views and reaching consensus or dissent (*Boud, 2001*).

Formalized peer learning can help students learn effectively. At a time when university resources are stretched and demands upon staff are increasing, it offers students the opportunity to learn from each other. It gives them considerably more practice than traditional teaching and learning methods in taking responsibility for their own learning and, more generally, learning how to learn. It is not a substitute for teaching and activities designed and conducted by staff members, but an important addition to the repertoire of teaching and learning activities that can enhance the quality of education.

The “peer” in peer learning is a person who belongs to the same social group as the other people. Social group could be based on similarity of age, sex, social-economic background, learning or professional activity, health status etc. Peer instructor at the university is a student. Generally, peers are other people in a similar situation to each other who do not have a role in that situation as teacher or expert practitioner. They may have considerable experience and expertise or they may have relatively little. They share the status as fellow learners and they are accepted as such. Most importantly, they do not have power over each other by virtue of their position or responsibilities.

Peer teaching, or peer tutoring, is a far more instrumental strategy in which advanced students, or those in later years, take on a limited instructional role. It often requires some form of credit or payment for the person acting as the teacher. Peer teaching is a well-established practice in many universities, whereas reciprocal peer learning is often considered to be incidental – a component of other more familiar strategies, such as the discussion group.

Reciprocal peer learning typically involves students within a given class or cohort. This makes peer learning relatively easy to organize because there are fewer timetabling problems. There is also no need to pay or reward with credit the more experienced students responsible for peer teaching. Students in reciprocal peer learning are by definition peers, and so there is less confusion about roles compared with situations in which one of the “peers” is a senior student, or is in an advanced class, or has special expertise. Reciprocal peer learning emphasizes students simultaneously learning and contributing to other students’ learning. Such communication is based on mutual experience and so they are better able to make equal contributions.

Peer learning in its broadest sense means students learning from and with each other in both formal and informal ways (*Boud, 2001*). The emphasis is on the learning process, including the emotional support that learners offer each other, as much as the learning task itself. In peer teaching the roles of teacher and learner are fixed, whereas in peer learning they are either undefined or may shift during the course of the learning experience. Staff may be actively involved as group facilitators or they may simply initiate student-directed activities such as workshops or learning partnerships.

Peer learning is also optimized when incorporated as an integral component of a curriculum, paying special attention to:

- ***Creating conducive learning environment.*** Students must build mutual respect for and trust and confidence in one another, so that they feel free to express opinions, test ideas, and ask for, or offer help when it is needed. Peer learning can be further enhanced if the “environment of mutual help...continues over time and beyond the classroom” (*Boud, 2001*). Thus, students are individually and collectively accountable for optimizing their own learning and achievements.
- ***Learning in small collaborative groups.*** Many of the key elements for effective peer learning are often incorporated in the design of small collaborative learning groups, and research shows that students who engage in collaborative learning and group study perform better academically, persist longer, feel better about the educational experience, and have enhanced self-esteem.



Furthermore, the peer support is powerful psychological ballast to critical thinking efforts. Peer learning, especially in small collaborative groups, nurtures and fosters the development of:

- self-directed learning skills, and thus lays the foundation for life-long continuing self-education;
- critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- communication, interpersonal and teamwork skills;
- learning through self, peer assessment and critical reflection.

Peer learning also strongly motivates learning often attributed to the fun and joy of learning in small groups. The outcomes of peer learning ultimately depend on the design strategy, outcome objectives of the course, facilitating skills of the teacher, and the commitment of students and teachers. Peer learning is learner-centered education that transcends content knowledge acquisition. It optimizes student learning outcomes and provides a more holistic, value-added and quality-enhancing education, that will better prepare students for the needs of the workforce.

But it is necessary to understand that peer assisted learning is **NOT**:

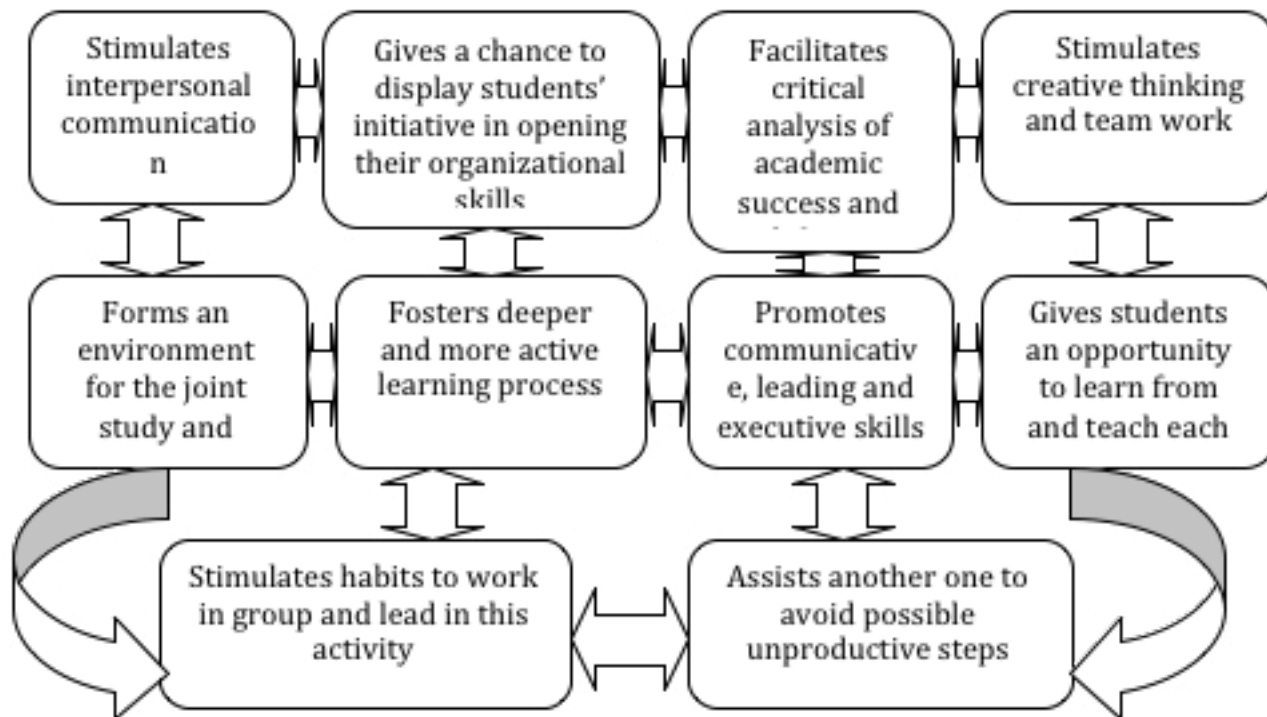
- teaching by students
- targeted at weak or problem students – all participants should benefit
- a mean of reducing existing lecturer – student contact
- an environment for social chatting.

## PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING AND INTERACTION METHOD

Peer-to-peer learning method is defined as:

- Interaction and learning method (technology) when the source of knowledge is not a professor but a peer student (a peer instructor).
- An educational practice and interactional framework fostering learning in many forms of life.
- One of pedagogical strategies that promote participation and interaction.
- Peer-to-Peer activity includes both trainers and trainees into campus life and promotes a sense of belonging that combats the anonymity and isolation many students experience at large universities during the first year of study.

*The PROS of the Peer-to-Peer Interaction Method*



*Figure 1. The PROS of the Peer-to-Peer Interaction Method*

The forms of peer-to-peer learning could be:

- Individual / Group Meetings
- Formal / Informal
- Regular / Situational

This method of interaction benefits both trainer and trainee because it removes barriers between an instructor and a student, facilitates better understanding of needs and motives of both an instructor and students, gives possibility to ask “indiscreet” questions and clears up subtle shades, allows to share personal experience which is not formalized in the study course and proves that motivation of an instructor could be passed on to peer students.

There are enough evidences that teaching others as a participatory teaching method is one of the most effective methods of learning – 90% of efficiency.

## The Learning Pyramid

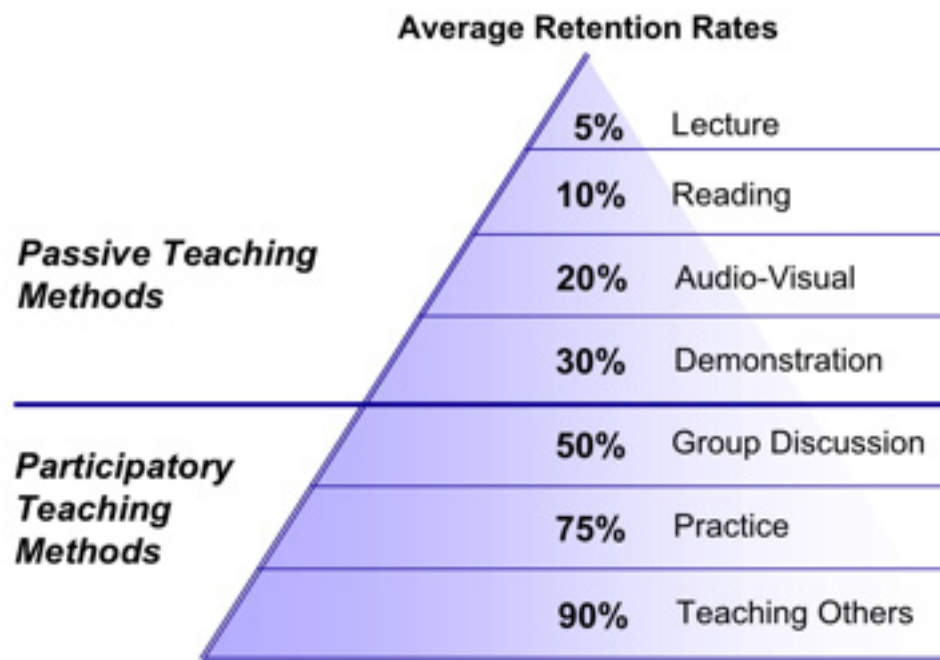


Figure 2. Interaction Methods in Teaching Activity

## SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND OF PEER LEARNING

Peer learning promotes the development of learning outcomes, teamwork, critical enquiry and reflection, communication skills, and learning meaningfully (Boud, 2001). Peer learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills through active help and support among stated equals or matched companions (Topping, 2005). Peer learning as a technique is widely used to promote attainment in students (Thurston, 2007). Students are motivated to review, learn, and comprehend the material when they are put into a teaching role (Cavallaro, 2006). This situation regulates students in the working process, supporting each other, and thus ensuring that their learning goals are fulfilled (Liaw, 2008). Peer learning within group values cooperation above competition and encourages greater respect (Boud, 2001). Social constructivism argues that students can, with help from experts, grasp concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own. Through the process of sharing experiences and discussion to build knowledge, students would learn more. Peer learning allows students to actively convey ideas from their peer influence (Sinclair, 2005).

One Vygotskian social constructivist notion, which has significant implications for peer learning, is that of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is defined as the “distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978,

p. 86). The ZPD emphasizes the idea that effective learning requires support and guidance from others. This zone fosters a meeting place for learners to improve the ability of problem solving through collaboration with a peer (*Hartwig, 2008*). Co-construction of new cognitive structures can be obtained by peer tutors acting to provide support and scaffolding besides managing the learning and activities to keep them in ZPD (*Thurston, 2007*). A learner's knowledge can be extended beyond the limitations of physical settings through a process of negotiation and scaffolding (*Daniels, 2001*).

Behaviorism provides one way to explain the association between motivation to learn and peer interactions. In basic behaviorist theories, relationships between people affect learning only as much as people reinforce each other (or not) in the academic arena. For example, if the peer group encourages education and learning, then the individual student within that group will value learning, because the individual is reinforced, or rewarded, for behavior that indicates that learning is valued. Students in peer groups that do not value education lack the stimulation and reinforcement needed to encourage personal learning. These peer groups presumably stimulate and reinforce other values.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory speaks precisely to the human interactions involved in learning. Observational learning is based upon learning by watching then "modeling" or acting similarly to others. If the student views and works with people who appreciate learning by engaging in learning activities, then the student too will engage in learning and might work harder at learning. Peers with positive attitudes and behaviors toward education will allow and teach each other to set goals that include opportunities to learn and achieve. If peer models do not convey positive attitudes toward learning, then the students observing these models will not prioritize learning in their own lives. They will learn to prioritize other goals.

Gordon's theory of social interaction skills focuses on three basic issues: ***listening skills, I-messages and how to avoid road blocks***. They cover the core components of social and emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. ***Active listening*** is a central skill in the Gordon's theory. It is a method in which the listener reflects back to the speaker his or her understanding of what the speaker has said. This is meant to confirm that the listener has understood the message and to give the speaker a chance to correct the listener if necessary. ***I-Messages*** are the statements that describe the teacher's personal feelings and experiences. Positive and confrontation I-Messages consist of three parts: a description of the student's behavior, the teacher's feeling about this and the tangible effect of the student's behavior as experienced by the teacher (*Gordon, 2003*). Messages that are experienced as damaging fruitful interaction, for example, judging, praising or mockery are called ***Road blocks***. They can be either ineffective confrontation messages where it is the teacher that has a problem or ineffective counseling messages where it is the student that has a problem (*Gordon, 2003*). They tend to label an individual by generalizing their occasional behavior as part of their personality.



## SUCCESSFUL PEER LEARNING

Study achievements might be resulted from learning in collaboration rather than learning individually, as follows:

- higher achievement and greater productivity;
- more caring, supportive, and committed relationships;
- greater psychological health, social competence and self-esteem (*Laal et al, 2012*).

But peer-to-peer learning is not just learning or working together. Five essential elements should be met to call a learning program a collaborative one. They are:

- Positive interdependence
- Considerable interaction
- Individual accountability and personal responsibility
- Social skills
- Group self-evaluating.

For peer learning to be effective, the teacher must ensure that the entire group experiences “positive interdependence”, face-to-face interaction, group processing and individual and group accountability. “Positive interdependence” emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of each group member’s efforts while important cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics are quietly at work. As students communicate with one another, they inevitably assume leadership roles, acquire conflict-managing skills, discuss and clarify concepts, and unravel the complexities of human relationships within a given context; this process enhances their learning outcomes. Thus, students’ learning extends far beyond the written word and even the given task.

Other exciting and effective teaching strategies that stir students’ enthusiasm and encourage peer learning are critique sessions, role-play, debates, case studies and integrated projects.

Research indicates that peer learning activities typically result in: (a) team-building spirit and more supportive relationships; (b) greater psychological well-being, social competence, communication skills and self-esteem; and (c) higher achievement and greater productivity in terms of enhanced learning outcomes. Although peer-learning strategies are valuable tools for educators to utilize, it is obvious that simply placing students in groups and telling them to “work together” is not going to automatically yield results. The teacher must consciously orchestrate the learning exercise and choose the appropriate vehicle for it. Only then will students in fact engage in peer learning and reap the benefits discussed above.



## TRAINING PEER ASSISTANT LEARNING (PAL) LEADERS

Peer assistant learning encourages students to support each other and to learn collaboratively under the guidance of trained students, called PAL Leaders, from the year above.

PAL is intended to help students to:

- adjust quickly to university life;
- acquire a clear view of course direction and expectations;
- develop their independent learning and study skills to meet the requirements of higher education;
- enhance their understanding of the subject matter of their course through collaborative group discussion;
- prepare better for assessed work and examinations.

Peers play the most significant role in the undergraduates' growth and development during study. University undergraduate peers have such an important impact on each other; they are the single most potent source of influence on undergraduate student affective and cognitive growth and development during university. Furthermore, the frequency and quality of students' interactions with peers extends to a positive association with student persistence. Peers serve in a variety of leadership and mentoring capacities (e.g., health peer educators, resident assistants) and present numerous programs to enhance the development of college and university students. Peer education programs gained popularity on college campuses because peer educators can communicate with other students in ways that faculty and administrators cannot. Peer education programs continue to grow exponentially because college-age students often feel more comfortable talking with peers when it comes to sensitive issues. In addition to how peers assist other students, peer educational programs are economical and provide leadership opportunities for students. Consequently, peer educators quickly become valued and respected student leaders on many university campuses.

Code of Ethics for peer-to-peer instructors:

- Respect, promote and protect human rights
- Respect diversity of beliefs
- Facilitate gender equality and justice
- Ensure and keep confidentiality
- Not impose on the values
- Escape unpleasant personal situations but share personal information
- Provide accurate, competent and unbiased information
- Be unaware of the own disadvantages and understand that the own behavior influences the peers
- Avoid an abuse of the peer instructor status in peer-to-peer interaction.

Of as much importance are the additional benefits of PAL, such as increased cohesion of the student group, reassurance about study concerns and increased confidence. PAL offers benefits to students and staff at all levels – to the university, the course, PAL Leaders, as well as first year students.

The operation of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme is based upon the following 20 principles and practices:

1. It supports student learning.
2. It fosters cross-year support for students.
3. It is facilitated by more experienced students, usually from the year above, who provide a point of contact for new or less experienced students.
4. It enhances students' experience of university life.
5. It is participative: students work in small groups, engaging in discussions and a variety of interactive learning activities.
6. It is timetabled.
7. It encourages collaborative learning rather than competitive learning.
8. It works on both what students learn and how they learn.
9. It creates a safe environment where students are encouraged to ask questions and receive guidance from other students about the course and its content.
10. It uses the language and terms specific to the subject discipline.
11. It helps students gain insight into the requirements of their course and their lecturers' expectations.
12. It involves active rather than passive learning.
13. It does not create dependency.
14. It encourages independent learning.
15. It helps students to develop a more positive attitude towards learning, keeping up with their studies and completing their course.
16. It gives students opportunities to improve their academic performance.
17. What is discussed is confidential and remains within the PAL Group.
18. It benefits all students regardless of their current academic ability.
19. It gives students a place and a time to practise the subject, learn from mistakes and build up confidence.
20. It gives PAL Leaders opportunities to revisit their prior learning.

After receiving training the PAL Leaders, facilitate weekly or, fortnightly timetabled study support sessions. Usually this involves second year undergraduate students supporting first year students from the same course. These groups are the same as the students normal seminar group, comprising between 16-25 students, depending on the course. For the larger groups, PAL Leaders often work in pairs – planning sessions together, sharing the workload, and supporting each other.

PAL is supplemental to teaching. Content for PAL sessions is decided upon by the group rather than the Leader and content for discussion is based on existing course materials – handouts, workbooks, lecture notes, text books and set reading. PAL sessions are intended to be structured, organized and purposeful while also being informal and friendly. In PAL, the emphasis is on everyone in the group working co-operatively and interdependently to develop their understanding. PAL is therefore about exploratory discussion led by the PAL Leaders. The more everyone in the group joins in these discussions, the better the sessions work and develop a sense of student empowerment and ownership of each session. This interdependent learning between the students who form the PAL group, and between the group and their PAL Leader, are essential if PAL is to work effectively and are likely to have longer term benefits as well.

In order to run effectively PAL requires a partnership with the course teaching team and administrative staff. Academic content is guided by Course Contacts – academic staff who meet regularly with the PAL Leaders to guide them, provide them with course timetables and assignment briefs, and obtain feedback from them. This input is essential in order to fine-tune the general principles upon which PAL is based to the more specific requirements of the course.

## PEER ADVISORY GROUP WITHIN UNIVERSITY

The most wide-spread technique of peer assistant learning (PAL) leaders training is *Peer Learning Circles*.

### *Two types of Circles:*

- Peer-training Circles
- Peer-coaching Circles

In both types of Circles the process is based on the principle that adults learn best when they *act* on new knowledge and insight in the real world, *reflect* on their actions and learning, and *exchange* ongoing feedback in a safe setting with peers.

### *Benefits of Peer Learning Circles*

1. Easy to start, low cost, little overhead
2. Free-standing or integrated with other programs
3. Peers share focused feedback, materials and support
4. Ideal for adult learning, networking and collaboration
5. Can use facilitator or be self-facilitated
6. Flexible scheduling to accommodate participants (*Romanko, 2011*)

## *Peer Tutoring Program*

### **1. Be sure your tutors are trained**

Existing research identifies adequate tutor training as an essential component of peer tutoring programs. The tutoring program offers tutoring in a variety of subjects to students with the help of high-achieving graders. “Peer Learning Circles” is selective in its recruitment of tutors. Qualified graders demonstrating high citizenship must complete an application process and obtain approval from their teachers before being paired with struggling students. The program advisor then matches tutors to students based on who seems to be a good match academically and socially. Tutors receive quality training in effective ways to work with their tutees. This program led to a significant improvement in core subject letter grades for all participants. In an evaluation of the program, participants also demonstrated increased responsibility, completion of homework assignments, and significantly improved work habits.

### **2. Use a reward system**

What sets this peer tutoring program apart from common peer tutoring practices is the inclusion of a reward system for students to encourage participation and on-task behavior. During the sessions, the teacher supervised all activities and passed out raffle tickets to students exhibiting good tutoring or on-task behavior. Students wrote their names on earned tickets and placed them in a collection throughout each week. At the end of each week, the teacher would draw several names of students who could each choose a small prize from a box of inexpensive toys. Evaluation of the class-wide peer tutoring model with rewards for good behavior showed substantial letter grade improvements for the students. The lottery system for reinforcing participation and on-task behavior was shown to overcome challenges to student motivation.

### **3. Emphasize confidentiality, positive reinforcement and adequate response time**

The tutors are taught to demonstrate three important things during any given tutoring session: confidentiality, positive reinforcement, and adequate response time when asking questions. The training process also instructed tutors on explaining directions, designing work for extra practice, watching for and correcting mistakes, and providing positive feedback and encouragement.

### **4. Choose the learning exercise and the appropriate vehicle for it**

Simply placing students in groups or pairs and telling them to “work together” is not going to automatically



yield results. You must consciously orchestrate the learning exercise and choose the appropriate vehicle for it. Only then will students in fact engage in peer learning and reap the benefits of peer teaching.

### **5. Use group strategies**

To facilitate successful peer learning, teachers may choose from an array of strategies:

- *Buzz Groups*: A large group of students is subdivided into smaller groups of 4–5 students to consider the issues surrounding a problem. After about 20 minutes of discussion, one member of each sub-group presents the findings of the sub-group to the whole group.
- *Affinity Groups*: Groups of 4–5 students are each assigned particular tasks to work on outside of formal contact time. At the next formal meeting with the teacher, the sub-group, or a group representative, presents the sub-group’s findings to the whole tutorial group.
- *Solution and Critic Groups*: One sub-group is assigned a discussion topic for a tutorial and the other groups constitute “critics” who observe, offer comments and evaluate the sub-group’s presentation.
- *“Teach-Write-Discuss”*: At the end of a unit of instruction, students have to answer short questions and justify their answers. After working on the questions individually, students compare their answers with each other’s. A whole-class discussion subsequently examines the array of answers that still seem justifiable and the reasons for their validity.

### **6. Use role playing and modeling**

During the first week of the program, project staff explained the tutoring procedures and the lottery, modeled each component of the program, and used role-playing to demonstrate effectively the ways to praise and correct their peers.

### **7. Emphasize the importance of active learning**

Many institutions of learning now promote instructional methods involving “active” learning that present opportunities for students to formulate their own questions, discuss issues, explain their viewpoints, and engage in cooperative learning by working in teams on problems and projects. Critique sessions, role-play, debates, case studies and integrated projects are other exciting and effective teaching strategies that stir students’ enthusiasm and encourage peer learning.



### **8. Teach instructional scaffolding**

To reap the benefits of peer teaching, tutees must reach a point when they are practicing a new task on their own. Tutors can help prepare students for independent demonstration by providing instructional scaffolding, a method by which the tutor gradually reduces her influence on a tutee's comprehension. See our guide on instructional scaffolding here for further explanation.

### **9. Explain directive versus nondirective tutoring**

A tutor who engages in directive tutoring becomes a surrogate teacher, taking the role of an authority and imparting knowledge. The tutor who takes the non-directive approach is more of a facilitator, helping the student draw out the knowledge he already possesses. Under the directive approach, the tutor imparts knowledge on the tutee and explains or tells the tutee what he should think about a given topic. Under the non-directive approach, the tutor draws knowledge out of the tutee, asking open-ended questions to help the student come to his own conclusions about the topic. Both are valid methods, but different levels of each should be used with different students and in different scenarios.

### **10. Explain how to provide feedback**

Positive verbal feedback: Teach your tutors the importance of positive verbal feedback. Prompt students to come up with a list of standard statements which they feel may be positively reinforcing. They also need to be taught how much positive feedback to give. Giving feedback after each and every response can take too much time and diminish its effect. Teach tutors to give genuine praise after every third or fourth correct response and after particularly difficult problems. Make sure to have them practice.

#### **Outcomes for Participants in Circles:**

1. Higher results in study
2. Increased effectiveness
3. Increased productivity
4. Increased learning
5. Useful network of peers

Learning outcomes for the peer instructors

- Articulate and evaluate personal objectives and motivation of peer assistance
- Manage their own time and construct personal strategies for peer-to-peer learning
- Assume responsibility for learning outcomes of their trainees
- Develop skills in arguing, critical thinking, team building and leadership and effective communication
- Reflective psychological readiness to share an academic experience with the beginners and desire to teach the others
- Work in team or lead the team during implementation of learning tasks
- Demonstrate keen motivation for personal development, life-long learning and shape their professional and day-to-day activities in accordance to highest professional and ethical standards.

## ACTIVITIES

### Exercises for the Peer Instructors

## ACTIVITY 1: THE PEANUT ACTIVITY

**Participants:** Members of peer support program planning team.

**Purpose:** To develop an awareness of similarities and differences among individuals and the importance of looking closely at each person's unique characteristics and talents.

**Materials:** A bag of peanuts with shells, enough so that each person can have one. One cup or bowl per table (to hold peanuts), paper and pencil for each participant. Venn diagram for each pair, Venn diagram transparency (for demonstration) and transparency marker.

*Ask everyone to:*

**Step 1:** Form small groups (about six each) around a table.

**Step 2:** Choose a peanut from the cup.

**Step 3:** Examine your peanut, noting its characteristics. Write a detailed description of your peanut.

**Step 4:** Put all the peanuts in the center of the table and mix them up.

**Step 5:** Now, find your own unique peanut in the pile.

**Step 6:** Turn to your neighbor and describe how you identified your peanut.

**Step 7:** Locate your Venn diagram.

**Step 8:** With a partner from your table, fill in the Venn diagram, choosing who will be peanuts A and B. The Venn diagram is a simple way to visualize similarities and differences. The overlapping parts of the

circles should contain characteristics that the peanuts have in common. The parts that don't overlap are for the unique features of your peanut.

**Step 9:** With your partner, use the second Venn diagram to fill in the circles according to your differences and similarities as people.

***Discussion questions:***

- Did you find your peanut? How did you recognize it?
- In what ways was your peanut the same as all the others? In what ways was it different?
- Did these differences change the value of your peanut?
- Would these differences affect what your peanut is like inside?
- Did you think your peanut would taste as good as the others?
- What does this activity show us about observations of people?

*Adapted from:* Katz, L., Sax, C., & Fisher, D. (2000). *Activities for a diverse classroom: Connecting students*. Colorado Springs, CO: PEAK Publications.

## ACTIVITY 2: LIFE IS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES

**Participants:** Members of the peer support program planning team.

**Purpose:** To show the dangers of judging something or someone on appearance only. To encourage people to get to know someone before forming judgments and to promote respect for diversity.

**Materials:** Boxes of soft-centered, assorted chocolate candy with enough so that each participant can have one piece. Blank transparency and transparency marker for recording group results.

*Ask everyone to:*

**Step 1:** Get into groups of four to six, around a table.

**Step 2:** Take a piece of candy, a piece of paper, and a pencil.

**Step 3:** Examine your piece of candy and guess what filling is inside it. No pinching, piercing, or biting!

**Step 4:** Record your guess on the paper.

**Step 5:** Bite into your candy.

**Step 6:** Tally the correct guesses in your group.

*Note: Approximately 80% do not guess the correct filling!*

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How easy was it to guess correctly? Why?
- Have you ever been judged unfairly due to your appearance, age, gender or race?
- How did it make you feel?
- Do you have any talents or abilities that people may not notice just by looking at you?
- How often do you think things about a person due to their race, looks or disability?
- Have you ever changed your opinion about a person after you have gotten to know him or her?
- What can we learn from this activity?
- How may this lesson be applied to the classroom?

*Source:* Katz, L., Sax, C., & Fisher, D. (2000). *Activities for a diverse classroom: Connecting students*. Colorado Springs, CO: PEAK Publications.



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## SUMMARY

If you have reached this page, it means that you have read and worked for the entire Soft Skills course and you will be able to:

- find for yourself different sources for self-motivation, for example, information resources (quotes, proverbs, books, films, pictures, music etc.), objects (souvenirs, things – prestigious, given by loved people, from childhood etc.), people (good friends or leaders, creative people, historical persons) etc.;
- know how to bridge the “intention-behavior gap”;
- prove for potential hirer that you have the abilities to work unsupervised;
- maintain your attention to control under distracters which almost unconsciously switch your attention on the simpler and more pleasant activity then you decided to do;
- understand the consequences of the responsibility diffusion and what factors can increase or decrease it;
- know what are the best practices for designing group projects;
- know what are the main academic debate formats providing the opportunity for intellectual clash in the testing of ideas;
- recognize techniques of verbal and written persuasion, main logical fallacies;
- identification and enhancement your presentation skills;
- know internal noise factors which do the listening so difficult;
- know possible ways of reflective thinking and writing;
- understand the 80/20 Rule/Law/Principle of planning;
- learning in collaboration and effective peer-to-peer interaction

and have many other useful skills and knowledge.

Also now you have your portfolio for show it to potential employer and your Personal Development Plan for life-long learning and goals pursuit.

But if not – may be you have missed something during your learning and it is a signal to open this book again to search some interesting and exciting tips and again and again...

With best wishes,

***Authors***



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[References for Chapter 2](#)

[References for Chapter 3](#)

[References for Chapter 4](#)

[References for Chapter 5](#)

[References for Chapter 6](#)

[References for Chapter 7](#)

[Indicative Reading List](#)



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## **ANNEXES AND RESOURCES**

[Annex 3 - Responses from D. Myers on “Sleeping problem”](#)

[Annex 4](#)

[Resource 1 - Jump Start Your Reflective Thinking](#)

[Resource 2 - Identifying Your Ways Of Learning](#)

[Resource 3 - Helpful Questions To Make Your Reflective Thinking Easier](#)

[Resource 4 - Samples of Reflective Writing](#)

[Resource 5 - The Park: an exercise in reflective writing](#)

[Resource 6 - The Presentation: an exercise in reflective writing](#)

[Resource 7 - The Dance Lesson: an exercise in reflective writing](#)

[Resource 8 - Footprints](#)

[Annex 6](#)

[Resource 1 - Exercise on Self-Assessment](#)

[Resource 2 - Quick Quiz: Your Listening Skills](#)

[Resource 3 - Try Out Your Listening Skills](#)

[Resource 4 - Block Head](#)

[Resource 5 - Listen Up!](#)

[Resource 6 - Active Listening Debate](#)

[Resource 7 - Skill-Building Questions on Giving Negative Feedback](#)

[Annex 7A - Elements of Teamwork – An Inventory of Skills](#)

[Annex 7B - Which Shape are You?](#)

[Annex 7C - Sample Qualitative Peer/Self Evaluation](#)

[Annex 7D - Sample Qualitative Peer/Self Evaluation](#)

[Annex 7E- Sample Self-Evaluation Form for Group Work](#)

[Annex 8 - Leadership Skills Inventory](#)

## ANNEXES AND RESOURCES

### ANNEX 3 - RESPONSES FROM D. MYERS ON “SLEEPING PROBLEM”

(for 6. Example analysis for critical thinking developing of the main content and for **Activity 3**)

Proposed critical opinion on D. Myers, p. 814

1. As people suffering from insomnia tend to overestimate sleep deprivation, you have every reason to doubt the seriousness of the ailments of your aunt (client, patient, colleague). Furthermore, the fact that apparently she does not seem irritated, absent-minded or suffering from other consequences of sleep deprivation, can testify that she just exaggerates his insomnia. You can help your aunt (client, patient, colleague) to dispel anxiety, informing her that according to laboratory studies, people who complain of insomnia, approximately 50% exaggerate the lack of sleep. It is possible that your aunt (client, patient, colleague) think she sleeps little, because she remembers only waking hours.

It should be recalled to her that the periodic awakening at night in the average age is more natural than in the youth, and that the change in circadian mode is also quite natural. Elderly people, such as your aunt (client, patient, colleague), best feeling in the morning, and their energy and efficiency fall by the end of the day.

2. Persuading aunt (client, patient, colleague) that she should not worry about her insomnia, you should tell her/him that beauty sleep, exercise and evening shot of an alcoholic beverage on the night could further exacerbate the so-called insomnia. To sleep well at night, she should not do it by day, she should do exercises regularly, but not at night, and avoid alcoholic drinks (which suppress REM sleep), as well as go to subside and get up at the same time.

3. As for aunt's (client's, patient's, colleague's) beliefs that she ceased to see dreams, you can reassure her, saying: if the person complaining about the lack of dreams, wake up she/he, when eye movements and relaxation of the body indicates that she/he is at the stage of REM sleep, she/he almost always says that she/he had a dream. But even if your aunt see dreams more seldom, tell her that she has no reason to worry, and that the rare dreams can not cause to psychological problems.

To prove that your aunt (client, patient, colleague) has not lost her ability to dream, advise her to have her alarm clock so that she woke up 15 minutes earlier than usual. Since periods of REM sleep lengthen to the point where a person usually wakes up, the earlier signal may wake her during the dream, and she will be better able to remember what she dreamed.

4. Freud believed that whereas dreams are means of implementing our unconscious desires, they wreak negative emotions. According to this theory, a person deprived of opportunities to dream, will not have a “reserve valve” to exit negative energy. Unresolved internal conflicts, by his opinion, are sure to emerge the most inappropriate way and manifest in human behavior and thinking.

Psychophysiology probably would emphasize the role of REM sleep in providing periodic brain stimulation. The absence of such stimulation could lead to malfunction of neural pathways of the brain, resulting in having memory lapses, poor attention and other mental difficulties.

Specialists in the field of cognitive psychology, probably would have the role of REM sleep in the process of information processing and memory. Without REM people would have had great difficulties in the assimilation of new information, preservation of knowledge and its reproduction, as well as in resistance to stressful situations.

**Possible answers for the task with statistics manipulations (for *10. The correct interpretation of statistics* of the main content and for *Activity 6*).**

If you were a supporter of reducing violence on television, you probably would have said, “watching violence on television makes our young people into criminals.”

If you were a supporter of freedom of speech on television, you could find out the actual number of young people in 2%. For example, it is 3 million. You can argue that “millions of children watching violent scenes regularly, and they do not end up as criminals.”

Another way to manipulate the statistics – it’s to miss key information. For example, the company claims that it pushed its rival due to higher sales. They are right in that they have increased sales by 50%, compared with an increase by only 25% from its competitors. Is there a statement valid? You cannot know if you do not have more information. Perhaps competitor sold two thousand bikes last year, and 2400 this year; another company sold 40 bikes last year and 60 this year. Whether pushed competitors? Unlikely.

ANNEX 4

RESOURCE 1 - JUMP-STARTING YOUR REFLECTIVE THINKING

Questions	Your notes, including evidence you have for your views
What did you do (or say or think) well?	
What effect did this have?	
What did you not do (or say or think) well?	
What effect did this have?	
Did anything have an influence of what you do/say/think? What? How?	
What would you do/say/think in future that's the same?	
What would you not do/say/think in the future?	
What skills, techniques or knowledge do you need for the future, in relation to this?	
Do you need to amend your attitude at all?	
What support/information do you need to help you for the future?	

*Helpful questions about the experience:*

- what does it suggest about what interests you?
- What does it suggest about what you value or what's important for you?
- What sort of attitudes does it suggest you have?
- What does it suggest about skills, abilities or knowledge you have: your strengths?
- What does it suggest about skills, abilities or knowledge you don't have: your weaknesses?
- What connections does it have with other situations? Is what you did here different or similar?
- What would somebody who doesn't know you conclude from what happened/ what you did or said or thought?



RESOURCE 2 - IDENTIFYING YOUR WAYS OF LEARNING

You’ll probably use different methods to learn different things in different situations. If you always do the same thing you may have a problem; what works in one situation may not work in another. As a general rule, the more ways of learning in your disposal, the more you’ll be able to learn in range of situations.

You may have heard of ‘learning styles’. There are misunderstandings here. Theory (Kolb, 1984) doesn’t say we should accept that an individual has one learning style they prefer to use, but rather that in order to learn effectively s/he must develop all the styles, not just the preferred one.

Thinking explicitly about how you learn helps you identify what’s useful, what isn’t and what else you could try.

*Example of thoughts you might have*

Way of learning	When using information	When working with other people	When doing practical things
Trial and error.	I don’t use trial and error. I work out in advance what I need and plan to find it.	I plunge in and sometimes it works and sometimes I offend people.	I try different ways. This works well for me but can take quite a long time.
Planning what to do in advance.			
Thinking about it while I’m doing it.			
Thinking about it afterwards.			
Talking about it.			
Getting advice from others.			
Watching what others do/ say.			

Way of learning	When using information	When working with other people	When doing practical things
Learning it by heart.			
Questioning it.			
Keeping records of what happened.			
Surfing the web.			
Watching films, programmes, DVDs about it.			
Seeing how it relates to theory.			

*So, what works for you and when?*

What’s working well for you in how you learn, and in what situations?	What’s not working very well for you in how you learn, in what situations?	What else can you try?

## RESOURCE 3 - HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO MAKE YOUR REFLECTIVE THINKING EASIER

When you face a new situation...	Our example: when you're having a meeting (with your tutor or colleagues)	Your notes about what you do (it may help to think of a particular situation or type of situation)
do you start by identifying its key features (however briefly/quickly)?	e.g. the meeting: what's it for; where will it be; how long will it take; who'll be there; what will they want?	
do you start by identifying what you want to get out of it?	e.g. the meeting: to find more out about the topic.	
do you put those two analyses together to work out what you need to do (however briefly/quickly)?	e.g. the meeting: focus on listening/asking key questions of experts; take time to consider your own opinions.	
have you got the skills needed?	e.g. the meeting: listening skills; questioning skills.	
have you got the knowledge needed?	e.g. the meeting: to ask focused questions, do some research on the topic in advance.	
do you reflect 'in action' while it's happening?	e.g. the meeting: X seems to know most; I don't really understand the replies; I'm not sure what they want.	
do you amend what you do on the spot?	e.g. the meeting: address your questions to X; ask for clarification about replies; ask what they want.	
do you reflect 'on action' after the event?	e.g. the meeting: I still need more information; some of my questions worked/some didn't; other people seemed impatient with me.	
do you action plan for the future?	e.g. the meeting: I need to do more research on the topic in advance, so I'm better prepared next time.	

## RESOURCE 4 - SAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE WRITING

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

**An experience in a work experience placement on a Business and Management programme (Level HE1): reasonably reflective writing**

The placement is in the Black Bull in Grentown. The student, Barry, has been at the placement for only a few days. He has been asked to wait on the tables at lunchtime.

Today the pub was full and many people wanted lunch. I think that Mr Freddings (the manager) was a bit caught out because it had been very quiet the last few days and he had told two of the regular lunchtime staff not to bother to come in until later. I helped out in the kitchen this morning - washing up and doing some cleaning up. Jan, the cook, said that I would be needed to wait at the tables. I was a bit shocked because I had not done this before. I was embarrassed when she took me out and told me what to do in front of some of the customers, but I suppose I did need to know. I was left in a situation in which some customers knew that I am new to this, and others did not. On the whole, I decided to pretend that I had been doing it all my life. Jan told me how to write down what people order very quickly, and told me her type of shorthand which I have been trying to use. On the whole it seems to work - I did make one or two mistakes when I had to go back to the customers and ask again what they wanted. One customer was really nice when this happened because she had seen me being taught what to do. Another, a bit later, was quite abrupt. I guess that I had become a little over-confident by then. I backed off and realized that I have a lot to learn even in this simple matter of taking orders and bringing out the food.

A bit later there was a difficult incident that I got involved in. There was a party of three women - I think that they work at the big company that makes furniture up the road. They had booked but were a bit late and, because it was quite busy by then, we had to tell them that they would have to wait for their meal for a bit. They grumbled and then ordered. Then it got really busy and cook could really hardly cope so it made it even longer that they had to wait. She asked me to go and tell them they would have to wait even longer. She told me what to say - to be polite but firm and not to get drawn into stuff about how they had booked - because, as she said, it was their fault because they were late. Anyway, the women treated me as if it was my fault. I fell apart a bit, not sure what to say apart from sorry lots of times. I got away and went back to the kitchen. By then Mr Freddings had come in and he and Jan had decided to offer the women some food that could be served up straight away. I wished they could have thought of it earlier. Again, I had to take out the message. The women were cross and made a huge fuss about not wanting the food on offer, and said how the pub had gone downhill and it used not to be like that. I just had to stand and listen and wished I had not pretended to have been there all my life. It all made me feel upset especially when, at last, grudgingly they said they would have the food.

I brought out their meals and now they were all smiles because they thought they had got a bargain because what they had been given was more expensive. They were nice to me then and left quite a tip. I think I learnt quite a bit about waiting all in a short time.

### **Reflection on study habits over the last semester: reasonably reflective writing**

The student, Kerry, is in Level HE2 on a Biology programme. She has been asked to reflect on her progress in study in the previous semester by her tutor and to bring the piece she has written to the tutorial. This is part of the personal professional planning initiative in the university.

In the summer at the end of my first year of uni, I travelled all around Europe. I had always wanted to do that and felt that I had to come back before I was ready. I got back to uni two days late and I felt unsettled for a while after because it seemed that everyone had got into ruts of studying before I could. I missed a few lectures in the first two weeks - none of it seemed to have any meaning. I thought about leaving but my parents were wild when I said that so I thought I had better try to settle down.

We had lots of work to do at that stage for the first genetics module. You can't afford to get behind in that and I was behind. I had to go to Dr Spolan and tell him I couldn't do it. He was really helpful which made me feel a lot better. He said he knew several of us would have difficulty and set up a surgery with some of the postgraduate students. Mostly they were good, though sometimes they did not have much idea of just how hard I found it. Somehow they could not always explain. Anyway, I seem to have caught up now and passed the exam.

I think I have difficulty writing essays. I can't seem to organize my ideas in the way that tutors want. I think I have done it correctly and then get comments about there not being proper discussions and conclusions to what I write. I am not sure that anyone has ever told me how to write an essay - you just have to guess. I did buy a study skills book for science students and that helped me because it had examples, even from biology. It also helped me with referencing. I have always been confused about how much you can put down of someone else's work without it being plagiarism. I know we had some rules about plagiarism in the course handbook, but when you are in the middle of an essay, with a really relevant book in front of you, it seems difficult to see how to apply the rules. Can you, for example, put down quite a big chunk of someone else's work if it says exactly what you want to say yourself? It would have a reference put after it, of course. I think I need some help on this.



We have multiple choice questions for the first biology methods module. I was not sure how to revise for an exam like that. We ended up making up questions and testing each other on the answers. I did find that I did not seem to need to understand the ideas that were put over in the questions - I thought I could just guess at the kinds of questions and make sure that I had the answers. I did not do all that well in the exam so maybe I need to prepare differently - but I really don't know how to do it. I will need to ask.

Anyway, I think that deciding to stay on at uni was a good idea and as the term goes on, I feel more settled.

### **Reflection on a skills module: not very reflective writing**

Jackie is on a Level HE1 Skills module. She has just given a presentation as part of that module and has been asked to assess how she got on in a reflective manner as part of the assessment of the module.

I have just done a presentation to our group. We were asked to choose any subject this time but next time we will be giving a presentation on a topic associated with our subject. I chose to talk about my adventure sailing holiday in Scotland. I was third to go. I was nervous because the last time I gave a presentation was at school and then I knew everyone well. This is a new module so I do not yet know people. There were fifteen of us, and the tutor. I talked about the journey up to Scotland - and how we missed the train and then could not find the boat we were going on. People seemed to be listening. I talked about the first day of sailing. It was windy and I told them how I was a bit scared - then there were two days when we did not go anywhere because it was so rough. We then did get some sailing and went to several islands. There were adders on the islands so we had to wear boots if we walked on the heather. It made me very nervous about going onto the land.

I talked for the six minutes that was required. I fitted in most of what I had to say. I then had to ask if anyone had any questions. There were three questions. Sam asked how old the boat was and I told him that it was built in 1910. Beckie asked where we sailed from and Dr Smythe asked if we had to be the crew and pull ropes. I told him that we were the crew and that over the week I began to learn which ropes did what to the boat.

Then it was over. I think I did the presentation well and people listened. I do not think that I would do anything differently next time.

## RESOURCE 5 - THE PARK: AN EXERCISE IN REFLECTIVE WRITING

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

### Introduction

This is an account of an incident in a park. It is recounted by ,Annie' who was involved in the incident herself. It is written in different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing. At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays. You may not be given the notes until you have discussed your responses to the material.

### The Park (I)

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David's Head in Wales - when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot - so much nicer than the day before, which was rainy. I went over to the children's playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one, in particular, I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half-sitting and half-lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don't know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked me to make for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door - in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was taken to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed ,Why do they ,Walk on by'?' I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry - it is just a headline.

## **The Park (2)**

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children - I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very over-dressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like - his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 - not unlike Charlie was at that age - maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him - sort of maternal but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking, in the circumstances!

In retrospect, I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me - but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again. I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half-sat and half-lay. Still I did nothing more than look - what was going on with me?

Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, I wondered why the other children had not been more responsible. The article went on to say that several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The incident has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or whom to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

## **The Park (3)**

The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill - very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to the shops to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party - what do I mean that I had to cook it? Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time - to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party really was not that important, was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill - but just over-dressed and a bit tired? To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time - rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children - and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage - but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life now.

It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots - more than I would have expected. It made me feel really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact, I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminds me of some things in the past, as when my uncle died - but then again I don't really think that that is relevant - he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill while we went on that anniversary weekend away. As I think more about Charlie being ill, I recognize that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy . . .

### **The Park (4)**

It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill - very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such a situation.

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back into my mind and over the next few days I began to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop - regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself - to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonizing as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others. Could I have believed that the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook - made it not my fault that I did not act at the time.



I talked with Tom about my reflections on the event - on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a ,good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help' was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admit- ting that I had not acted as ,a good person'. With this hindsight, I notice that I can probably find it easier to admit that I am not always ,a good person' and that I made a mistake in retrospect rather than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations.

As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts - or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough, we were talking about this boy - I now remember - at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the agonizing about the children's friends at the time. The fleeting thought/feeling was possibly something like this - if this boy is like one I did not feel comfortable with - then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was a brother of the original child. I remember social psy- chology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then, it might not have been anything to do with Charlie's friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realize that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death - and it might have been because of an attitude that was formed years ago in relation to a different situation.

This has all made me think about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now - even these few days later. Writing an account at the time would have been different to the account, or several accounts, that I would write now. I cannot know what ,story' is ,true'. The bullying story may be one that I have con- structed retrospectively - fabricated. Interestingly, I can believe that story completely.



**The Park: comments on the quality of reflection in the accounts*****The Park (1)***

This piece tells the story. Sometimes it mentions past experiences, sometimes anticipates the future but all in the context of the account of the story:

- There might be references to emotional state, but the role of the emotions on action is not explored.
- Ideas of others are mentioned but not elaborated or used to investigate the meaning of the events.
- The account is written only from one point of view - that of Annie.
- Generally ideas are presented in a sequence and are only linked by the story. They are not all relevant or focused.

In fact, you could hardly deem this to be reflective at all. It is very descriptive. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that could serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though it hardly signals any material for reflection - other than the last few words.

***The Park (2)***

In this account there is a description of the same events. There is very little addition of ideas from outside the event - reference to attitudes of others, or comments.

The account is more than a story though. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question to be asked and answered. In the questioning there is recognition of the worth of exploring the motives for behaviour but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.

Annie is critical of her actions and, in her questions, signals this. The questioning of action does mean that Annie is standing back from the event to a small extent. There is a sense that she recognizes that this is a significant incident, with learning to be gained but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

***The Park (3)***

The description is succinct - just sufficient to raise the issues. Extraneous information is not added. It is not a story. The focus is on the attempt to reflect on the event and to learn from it. There is more of a sense of Annie standing back from the event in order to reflect better on her actions and in order to be more effectively critical.

There is more analysis of the situation and an evident understanding that it was not a simple situation - that there might be alternative explanations or actions that could be justified equally effectively.

The description could be said to be slightly narrow (see *The Park* (4)) as Annie is not acknowledging that there might be other ways of perceiving the situation - other points of view. She does not seem to recognize that her reflection is affected by her frame of reference at the time or now. It is possible, for example, that her experience with Charlie (last paragraph) - or her question about knowing the boy have influenced the manner in which she reacted. It might not just be a matter of linking up other events, but of going beyond and checking out the possibility that her frame of reference might have been affected by the prior experiences.

### ***The Park (4)***

The account is succinct and to the point. There is some deep reflection here that is self-critical and questions the basis of the beliefs and values on which the behaviour was based.

- There is evidence of standing back from the event, of Annie treating her- self as an object acting within the context.
- There is also an internal dialogue - a conversation with herself in which she proposes and further reflects on alternative explanations.
- She shows evidence of looking at the views of others (Tom) and of considering the alternative point of view, and learning from it.
- She recognizes the significance of the effect of passage of time on her reflection, e.g., that her personal frame of reference at the time may have influenced her actions and that a different frame of reference might have led to different results.
- She notices that the proximity of other, possibly unrelated events (the dinner-time conversation) has an effect either on her actual behaviour and her subsequent reflection or possibly on her reflective processes only. She notices that she can be said to be reconstructing the event in retrospect - creating a story around it that may not be ,true’.
- She recognizes that there may be no conclusion to this situation but that there are still things to be learnt from it.
- She has also been able to reflect on her own process of reflecting (acting metacognitively), recognizing that her process influenced the outcome.

## RESOURCE 6 - THE PRESENTATION: AN EXERCISE IN REFLECTIVE WRITING

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

### Introduction

This is an account of the experience of giving a presentation. It is written by Marianne who is in her first job after graduating. It is written in three different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing. At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays.

### The Presentation (I)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on (creating a new database for the management information system). I had done a presentation before and then I relied on my acting skills. Despite the acting, I spent quite a bit of time preparing it in the way that I have seen others make similar presentations.

The presentation at the last team meeting, given by my colleague, went well - she used PowerPoint and I decided to use it too. I decided that a good presentation comes from good planning and having all the figures that anyone might request so I spent a long time in the preparation and I went in feeling confident.

However, I became nervous when I realized they were all waiting for me to speak and my nerves made my voice wobble. I did not know how to stop it. Early on, I noticed that people seemed not to understand what I was saying despite the PowerPoint. Using PowerPoint meant that people received my presentation both through what I was saying and what I had prepared on the slides. In a way that meant they got it twice but I noticed that Mrs Shaw (my boss) repeated bits of what I had said several times and once or twice answered questions for me. This made me feel uncomfortable. I felt it was quite patronising and I was upset. Later my colleagues said that she always does that. I was disappointed that my presentation did not seem to have gone well.

I thought about the presentation for several days and then talked with Mrs Shaw about the presentation (there was no-one else). She gave me a list of points for improvement next time. They included:

- putting less on PowerPoint;
- talking more slowly;
- calming myself down in some way.

I also have to write down the figures in a different way so that they can be understood better. She suggested that I should do a presentation to several of the team sometime next week so that I can improve my performance.

## The Presentation (2)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on. I am creating a new database for the management information system. I had given a presentation before and that time I relied on my acting skills. I did realize that there were considerable differences between then and now, particularly in the situation (it was only fellow students and my tutor before). I was confident but I did spend quite a bit of time preparing. Because everyone else here uses PowerPoint, I felt I had better use it - though I realized that it was not for the best reasons. I also prepared lots of figures so that I could answer questions. I thought, at that stage, that any questions would involve requests for data. When I think back on the preparation that I did, I realize that I was desperately trying to prove that I could make a presentation as well as my colleague, who did the last one. I wanted to impress everyone. I had not realized there was so much to learn about presenting, and how much I needed to know about PowerPoint to use it properly.

When I set up the presentation in the meeting I tried to be calm but it did not work out. Early on PowerPoint went wrong and I began to panic. Trying to pretend that I was cool and confident made the situation worse because I did not admit my difficulties and ask for help. The more I spoke, the more my voice went wobbly. I realized, from the kinds of questions that the others asked, that they did not understand what I was saying. They were asking for clarification - not the figures. I felt worse when Mrs Shaw, my boss, started to answer questions for me. I felt flustered and even less able to cope.

As a result of this poor presentation, my self-esteem is low at work now. I had thought I was doing all right in the company. After a few days, I went to see Mrs Shaw and we talked it over. I still feel that her interventions did not help me. Interestingly, several of my colleagues commented that she always does that. It was probably her behaviour, more than anything else, that damaged my poise. Partly through talking over the presentation and the things that went wrong (but not, of course, her interventions), I can see several areas that I could improve. I need to know more about using PowerPoint - and to practise with it. I recognize, also, that my old acting skills might have given me initial confidence, but I needed more than a clear voice, especially when I lost my way with PowerPoint. Relying on a mass of figures was not right either. It was not figures they wanted. In retrospect, I could have put the figures on a handout. I am hoping to have a chance to try with a presentation, practising with some of the team.



### The Presentation (3)

I am writing this back in my office. It all happened two days ago.

Three weeks after I started at PIGG PLC I had to take an agenda item to the team meeting. I was required to report on my progress on the project on which I am working. I am developing a new database for the management information system of the company. I was immediately worried. I was scared about not saying the right things and not being able to answer questions properly. I did a presentation in my course at university and felt the same about it initially. I was thinking then, like this time, I could use my acting skills. Both times that was helpful in maintaining my confidence at first, at least. Though the fact that I was all right last time throughout the whole presentation may not have helped me this time!

I decided to use PowerPoint. I was not very happy about its use because I have seen it go wrong so often. However, I have not seen anyone else give a presentation here without using it - and learning to use PowerPoint would be valuable. I was not sure, when it came to the session, whether I really knew enough about running PowerPoint. (How do you know when you know enough about something? - dummy runs, I suppose, but I couldn't get the laptop when I wanted it.)

When it came to the presentation, I really wanted to do it well - as well as the presentations had been done the week before. Maybe I wanted too much to do well. Previous presentations have been interesting, informative and clear and I thought the handouts from them were good (I noticed that the best gave enough but not too much information).

In the event, the session was a disaster and has left me feeling uncomfortable in my work and I even worry about it at home. I need to think about why a simple presentation could have such an effect on me. The PowerPoint went wrong (I think I clicked on the wrong thing). My efforts to be calm and 'cool' failed and my voice went wobbly - that was, anyway, how it felt to me. My colleague actually said afterwards that I looked quite calm despite what I was feeling (I am not sure whether she meant it or was just trying to help me). When I think back to that moment, if I had thought that I still looked calm (despite what I felt), I could have regained the situation. As it was, it went from bad to worse and I know that my state became obvious because Mrs Shaw, my boss, began to answer the questions that people were asking for me.

I am thinking about the awful presentation again - it was this time last week. I am reading what I wrote earlier about it. Now I return to it, I do have a slightly different perspective. I think that it was not as bad as it felt at the time. Several of my colleagues told me afterwards that Mrs Shaw always steps in to answer questions like that and they commented that I handled her intrusion well. That is interesting. I need to do some thinking about how to act next time to prevent this interruption from happening or to deal with the situation when she starts\*. I might look in the library for that book on assertiveness.



I have talked to Mrs Shaw now too. I notice that my confidence in her is not all that great while I am still feeling a bit cross. However, I am feeling more positive generally and I can begin to analyse what I could do better in the presentation. It is interesting to see the change in my attitude after a week. I need to think from the beginning about the process of giving a good presentation. I am not sure how helpful was my reliance on my acting skills\*. Acting helped my voice to be stronger and better paced, but I was not just trying to put over someone else's lines but my own and I needed to be able to discuss matters in greater depth rather than just give the line\*.

I probably will use PowerPoint again. I have had a look at the manual and it suggests that you treat it as a tool - not let it dominate and not use it as a means of presenting myself. That is what I think I was doing. I need to not only know how to use it, but I need to feel sufficiently confident in its use so I can retrieve the situation when things go wrong. That means understanding more than just the sequence of actions\*.

As I write this, I am noticing how useful it is to go back over things I have written about before. I seem to be able to see the situation differently. The first time I wrote this, I felt that the presentation was dreadful and that I could not have done it differently. Then later I realized that there were things I did not know at the time (e.g., about Mrs Shaw and her habit of interrupting). I also recognize some of the areas in which I went wrong. At the time I could not see that. It was as if my low self-esteem got in the way. Knowing where I went wrong, and admitting the errors to myself give me a chance to improve next time - and perhaps to help Mrs Shaw to improve in her behaviour towards us!

\*I have asterisked the points that I need to address in order to improve.

## **The Presentation: comments on the quality of reflection in the accounts**

### ***The Presentation (1)***

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection:

- The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future but all in the context of an account of the event.
- There are some references to Marianne's emotional reactions, but she has not explored how the reactions relate to her behaviour.
- Ideas are taken up without questioning them or considering them in depth.
- The account is written only from Marianne's point of view.
- External information is mentioned but its impact on behaviour is not subject to consideration.
- Generally one point is made at a time and ideas are not linked.

### ***The Presentation (2)***

An account showing evidence of some reflection:

- There is description of the event, but where there are external ideas or information, the material is subjected to consideration and deliberation.
- The account shows some analysis.
- There is recognition of the worth of exploring motives for behaviour.
- There is willingness to be critical of action.
- Relevant and helpful detail is explored where it has value.
- There is recognition of the overall effect of the event on self - in other words, there is some 'standing back' from the event.

The account is written at one point in time. It does not, therefore, demonstrate the recognition that views can change with time and more reflection. In other words the account does not indicate a recognition that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time.

### ***The Presentation (3)***

This account shows quite deep reflection, and it does incorporate a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change:

- Self-questioning is evident (an 'internal dialogue' is set up at times) deliberating between different views of her own behaviour (different views of her own and others).
- Marianne takes into account the views and motives of others and considers these against her own.

- She recognizes how prior experience, thoughts (her own and other's) can interact with the production of her own behaviour.
- There is clear evidence of standing back from the event.
- She helps herself to learn from the experience by splitting off the reflective processes from the points she wants to learn (by an asterisk system).
- There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.

## RESOURCE 7 - THE DANCE LESSON: AN EXERCISE IN REFLECTIVE WRITING

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

### Introduction

These reflective accounts concern a lesson in dance. The teacher, Hanna, is working with Year 8 pupils in the first lesson of the day. The lesson is the fourth in a five-lesson unit of work based on street dance style. She has found that the children have been quite slow to learn. There are two statemented children in the class, Ben and Jade. She has written other notes about her concerns about working with mixed ability groups and enabling the learning of all the children in the class. Jade and Ben have given rise to some difficulties in her teaching in previous classes, and the situation bothers her.

### A dance lesson (I)

When I took the register today, I saw that there were several absences. This would cause difficulties since the pupils had been creating their dance in pairs. This would mean that those on their own would need to pair up and create a new duet, rapidly learning to co-operate with each other. Generally they were not a group of quick learners, and some had shown that they had particular difficulties in working together. I realized then that I could be in for some difficulties myself and wished I had planned better.

The two statemented pupils - Ben and Jade - worried me a bit as I could see that they were both distracted and lively this morning. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant (LSA) came in. She acknowledged me briefly and then turned her attention to Jade.

I had decided to do simple fun activities for the warm-up - based on walking and travelling at different speeds. It meant that the pupils had to concentrate in order to vary the direction and speed of travel in response to my instructions. It all went well with everyone involved.

I developed the warm-up, repeating exercises and phrases that we had performed in previous lessons. Most pupils joined in and seemed to enjoy the simple repetitive patterns of movement but I noticed that Ben and Jade

were already having problems, though a few moments later, to my relief, I noticed that Jade was beginning to settle down and had started to fall in with the patterns of the movements quite nicely. Ben, however, could not copy the movements and his concentration began to wander. Then he started to distract others. I focused my attention on him and praised him when he did things well. The LSA moved across to Ben, leaving Jade. She talked to him and gave him some encouragement but I could see that he was not able to listen to her.

By now, the rest of the class had picked up the repetitive movements. The lesson was, on the whole, going quite well at this stage. I introduced a more challenging phase by adding two new actions to the sequence and they danced in time to the music. By now Ben had really lost concentration and was running around in the space among the dancers. It was only 10 minutes into the lesson and his very public display of off-task behaviour could potentially throw everything off course again. Eventually, after just catching my eye, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I was not completely easy with this, but I do not know what else I might have done. I learnt afterwards from another colleague that he had been given sanctions which included a letter home to inform his parents of his poor behaviour. I felt guilty but it was a very difficult situation. I have been trying to think how it could have been different.

### **A dance lesson (2)**

I want to consider a situation that arose in a potentially unsettled mixed ability class where I was teaching dance. The focus of the situation was Ben, one of two statemented pupils. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

I began the lesson with slightly uneasy feelings. I noticed that there were several absences. The pupils had been creating their dance in pairs and with some of the partners absent, they would have to co-operate in new pairings. Co-operation was a problem for some. The children are mixed in their abilities and I had already been thinking that I need to develop strategies both to help individuals when they work outside their friendship groups and also where they need to create new material quickly. I began the lesson with these concerns and thoughts in mind.

I had started the warm-up when the learning support assistant came in to work with Jade, the other statemented pupil. It might have been helpful if she had come in just a few minutes before. Generally, however, things went well in the warm-up. I felt that I had got that right with simple and fun activities and because the skill level was low, everyone could join in and enjoy it. It really engaged them and this good start probably helped later when things got distracting.

The next stage also went well for most of the class. It was a development of the warm-up using exercises and phrases that had been mastered in previous lessons. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, fortunately I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. It was Jade and Ben who were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle. Ben was not. He found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed briefly to get frustrated, and then began to distract

others, eventually running around in the spaces between the other pupils. The LSA left Jade and went to help him, while I tried as well as I could to carry on the class, moving into more challenging work.

Ben's behaviour did not improve and the LSA removed him from the room. Later I was informed that he had been given sanctions, including a letter to his parents about his poor behaviour.

I felt I had failed with this situation. I wanted to manage the behaviour of all of the children. There are several things that might have contributed to the situation. I started the class with a sense that I was not on top of the situation because of the new pairings - though in the end, I felt that things might have actually gone better because of that (I could look at this matter another time). I certainly did not need to worry about it. Also, the LSA came in late. She probably would not have seen that as a problem but for me it was. There is something about the three-way relationship - Ben, the LSA and me - and, in this situation, the LSA's work with Jade. Perhaps the LSA should have worked more with Ben from the start. Who made the decisions there and who should make them?

There is also something about the situation of dance being public - it is so obvious when pupils are off-task. Then there is Ben and his behaviour. I wonder how he felt about it all? Did he want to distract others? Was he really behaving 'poorly' - was his action deliberate, warranting sanctions or maybe just an overflow of energy?

I know a bit about Ben and his inability to hold concentration for more than a few minutes, but dance could be of help to him as a means of using his energy in a productive manner - that is if he could be enabled to stay engaged with the activity. What could I have done better?

I want to involve all of the pupils.

### **A dance lesson (3)**

I want to reflect on the dance lesson with Year 8, and in particular on the situation that arose with Ben, though I think that there are wider issues to be considered than just Ben. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

The class were doing some work in pairs. I felt uneasy that day because a number of children were absent and some would have to learn to co-operate with new partners who were not necessarily their choice. It is a mixed ability class, not always quick to learn or necessarily to be able to co-operate. I had already recognized the need to develop strategies:

- to help individuals to work outside their friendship groups;
- to create new material quickly.



Jade and Ben are statemented. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant came in, specifically to help Jade.

The warm-up of simple fun activities seemed to engage all of the class and I was pleased with that. Then I added some of the repetitive exercises that we had done in previous classes. This stage also went well for most of the class. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, I kept on top of the feelings. I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. Managing to get most of the class engaged and listening to the music is really important for this group and I must not lose this point in relation to what then happened. At this stage, Jade and Ben were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle.

Ben found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed to get frustrated, and then began to distract others. By the time we were 10 minutes into the class, he was running around in the spaces between the other pupils - totally off-task. The LSA left Jade and went to help Ben. I moved into more challenging work in order to keep the other children engaged and active.

Eventually, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I later learned that his parents were sent a note about his poor behaviour and there were other sanctions.

I see myself as having failed to prevent this situation and I suspect that none of us gained from it. I notice that my feelings were made worse by the fact that I felt I had failed in front of the LSA. She may have felt that she had failed in front of me. (These feelings would be better discussed.) The children in the class had had their learning disrupted.

I think about being in Ben's shoes. How would he have seen it? Dance - a chance to have some space and be creative - it started with a bit of fun - so he might have felt that he could enjoy the fun. Ben would find it hard to move from what he would construe as pure 'fun' to a more serious activity. It is possible that the 'fun' works well for children who can change their focus of attention easily but not for some like Ben who cannot quickly shift, especially in the direction of more serious work. Also the other children often laugh at him when he clowns and since he does not have many friends, such attention from the others is rewarding. They did not actually laugh this time, I think because the music and repetitive movement took up their attention but he may have thought that they would have done. I suppose that he might have been all right if he had been guided by the LSA from the start but it was Jade who got the attention this time and he has to learn to manage without one-to-one attention sometimes.

Should I see Ben as a problem on his own or as an issue in the class as a whole including the LSA? I realize that we are only an element in an even larger situation when I consider what happened to Ben when he was removed from the class. His behaviour was construed as poor behaviour and sanctions were levied. I don't imagine that his parents were helped by receiving another letter about his poor behaviour - they know about it only too well. The sanctions will probably mean that I will have even more difficulties with Ben next time.

At least I should have been involved in discussions about his behaviour in my class. I must mention this to the LSA and raise it as a more general issue when we discuss the role of LSAs next time. It is something about getting everyone pulling in the same direction.

I did feel particularly uneasy that day. I wonder if it was because I was tired from the late night. Things like this certainly are more of a burden when I feel tired. It is worth remembering that things might have looked different if I had felt fresh.

Anyway, it is worth trying to learn something from this situation and having a strategy better developed for when it happens next time. If I go further with the theme of 'getting everyone pulling in the same direction' . . . how could this be achieved?

- It would have been helpful if I had shared my concerns about the group with the LSA to start with.
- It would have been helpful to me if she had come in at the beginning of the class, and we could have both been forearmed with some tactics to work with Ben and Jade.
- I need to include in my planning strategies to deal with partner work when one person is away.
- Praise motivates those who are working well, I must remember to use that as a teaching strategy.
- There is something about the need for me to be involved in the discussion about the repercussions of Ben's behaviour. They have consequences for my later dealings with Ben.
- I have concerns about the actual kinds of sanctions levied. I need to follow this up.

## RESOURCE 8 - FOOTPRINTS

This exercise is devised by Jenny Moon, modified from an original idea in Progoff (1975).

### **Rationale**

This exercise is modified from the 'Stepping stones' exercise of Progoff (1975). The principal aim of the exercise is to 'jog' or as Progoff says 'loosen' memory about a particular topic. Any topic at all can be the subject matter, for example, it can enable the exploration by individuals and groups of experiences such as 'being a learner' or the development of capacities such as 'skills', and so on.

### ***The exercise is particularly valuable for:***

- exploring experiences or experiences of something (such as 'learning', feeling 'cared for' or 'teaching'). The topic might be the subject of current or future work for example, in learning journals;
- expanding personal perspectives on some topic or issue;
- finding subject matter for story writing - for creative writing or for professional development or other academic purposes;
- the generation of subject matter for personal skills exercises such as the giving of presentations;
- enabling the sharing of ideas in a group about a specific topic;
- group development. For shy or uninvolved participants in a group it provides a situation in which everyone will have a turn to make an oral contribution from written notes about familiar material in a light and usually creative atmosphere.

It is an enjoyable and usually enlightening exercise that tends to generate good feeling and energy. It can serve to energise a group after lunch, for example. It can be run many times even on the same topic because beyond the obvious first few memories that a person retrieves on a topic, different memories will emerge on different occasions. This is an interesting aspect of the exploration involved.

The equipment needed is a paper and pen each. To do this exercise properly takes around 40 minutes and it can be done with large numbers with space enough to form small (self-managed) groups and to be able to hear each other speak within those groups.

**The exercise**

After the introduction of the topic to be explored, the first part of the exercise is the individual writing of a number of lists, each of about seven items. Participants are asked to list around seven memories of the chosen topic in chronological order - so they are asked to start with the earliest memory and then to move forward towards their present age in sequence. They are asked to write a phrase, or a few words on the paper that will enable them to recall the memory later (e.g., 'The time when I learnt to ride a bike'). They should be reassured that they will not be asked to reveal to anyone anything that they do not want to say.

While the lists are being written, it is likely that memories will occur that are previous in sequence to where participants have reached in their current list and they are told to hold onto that memory for the next list. In this way, over a period of 10 to 15 minutes, participants write a series of lists.

Sometimes people will begin to talk about their memories before or as they write them. They should be dissuaded from talking. A calm and meditative atmosphere works best. It is very rewarding at this stage of the exercise. The lively part of the exercise is for the second part of sharing memories.

The list-writing is stopped after what seems to be a reasonable period as judged from watching the behaviour of the participants. Nearly all should have written at least two lists. Participants are then asked to form into groups of around six. Within the group and in turn each participant briefly shares the details of one of her memories from the lists written. There is no need to be chronological - the memory can be drawn from any time. Depending on circumstances, it is wise to ask participants to limit their sharing to a set time such as 4 minutes each to start with. This guards against 'long-windedness'. Once each member of the group has shared one memory, there might be a second round - and more.

This stage of the exercise tends to involve good listening, and often merriment as diverse memories are shared. The rationale for this element of the exercise is that as the memories of others are unearthed, they will stimulate new memories in each individual, in this way, generating many more memories than would have been achieved in the first stage of the exercise. The new memories may be quite unexpected (and sometimes a quick private note may be made of them).

After a period of sharing memories, the group is asked to disperse again and individuals are asked to return to their lists and again put the new memories that have emerged as a result of the sharing, into lists, as before. Getting groups to break up at this stage can be difficult.

The outcome of this exercise for each individual will be a series of recollections about the topic chosen. Some may be memories that have not been considered for a long time. Depending on the purpose of the exercise, one of the memories may be developed into a story, presentation or an issue for further reflection in a learning journal (for example). Alternatively, the whole list may be taken as an expression of personal experience to be explored further in the same or other contexts.

Instructions to give at the beginning:

- The topic is given by the facilitator.
- The task is to write lists of around seven memories of the topic, in chronological order.
- When memories arise that do not fit into the current sequence, they are used to seed another list where they are put into the correct chronological order.
- No-one else will see the lists, and no-one will be asked to share anything that she does not wish to share.
- After a period of time, the list writing will stop and participants will be asked to share memories, in turn, in a group. The idea of this is that other people's memories will generate new memories for the individual.
- For vulnerable groups and/or some topics that might be explored, it may be useful to say that the exercise could give rise to uncomfortable memories, and in this case a member of staff is available afterwards for consultation. However, because the material shared is totally under the control of individuals, this is not a likely event.



## ANNEX 6

### RESOURCE 1 - EXERCISE ON SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take a moment to assess your listening skills. Circle a “Yes” or “No” in response to the following questions:

1. Does your mind wander when listening to a coworker, to your manager, or in a meeting?  
Yes      No
2. Do you often talk more than half the time in workplace conversations and meetings?  
Yes      No
3. Do you frequently interrupt when another person is speaking?  
Yes      No
4. Do you generally attempt to listen to several conversations at the same time in a busy office or meeting?  
Yes      No
5. Do you often finish the sentences of a coworker as she speaks?  
Yes      No
6. Do you formulate a response to a coworker’s presentation while he is still speaking?  
Yes      No
7. Do you often experience difficulty recalling workplace conversations later?  
Yes      No
8. Do you allow external things such as machinery noise and other conversations to keep you from listening well?  
Yes      No

How did you do? Did you circle mostly “No” answers? If so, your listening skills are in pretty good shape. If you circled mostly “Yes” answers, you will see an immediate boost in your listening skills after you have finished this chapter and begin to use what you learn.

## RESOURCE 2 - QUICK QUIZ: YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

For each pair of statements below, distribute three points between the two alternatives (A and B), depending on how characteristic of you the statement is. Although some pairs of statements may seem equally true for you, assign more points to the alternative that is more representative of your behavior most of the time.

### *Examples:*

- If A is very characteristic of you and B is very uncharacteristic, write “3” next to A and “0” next to B.
- If A is more characteristic of you than B, write “2” next to A and “1” next to B.
- If B is very characteristic of you and A is very uncharacteristic, write “3” next to B and “0” next to A.

...and so on.

1A\_\_\_ I almost always remember what people have recently said to me and thus am able to impress them by later calling up such small details in conversation with them.

1B\_\_\_ I frequently forget details of what people have said and find myself asking them to repeat.

2A\_\_\_ I’m pretty good at concentrating on speakers’ words and meaning.

2B\_\_\_ I tend to argue with speakers mentally, or plan my reply, or jump ahead and try to figure out where they’re going with their remarks before they actually get there.

3A\_\_\_ I can usually listen dispassionately to what people are saying.

3B\_\_\_ I often feel myself emotionally reacting to what people are saying before they’ve finished.

4A\_\_\_ Though tempted, I almost never interrupt someone who’s talking.

4B\_\_\_ I do sometimes interrupt because I believe a fruitful dialogue requires that I make some points as they occur to me and at the point where they’ll do the most good.

5A\_\_\_ I often take notes, physically or mentally, on what someone says so that I can respond fully when he or she is done.

5B\_\_\_ I easily get the gist of what someone is saying without taking notes, which might interfere with my concentration.

6A\_\_\_I make a determined effort not to judge people until I've heard all of what they have to say.

6B\_\_\_I'm a good judge of character and I can often get a good "read" on people before the conversation is over.

7A\_\_\_I acknowledge people's remarks with nods of the head, smiles or frowns, exclamations, or whatever other response shows them that I'm alert and understanding them.

7B\_\_\_I concentrate on what the other person is saying rather than trying to send all sorts of signals before they're done.

8A\_\_\_When someone is having a conversation with me, I usually turn off the radio or TV, hold my calls, wait to return E-mail, and otherwise minimize disruptions.

8B\_\_\_I'm capable of doing several things at once while still listening attentively to others.

9A\_\_\_In conversations, I maintain steady eye contact with the person speaking.

9B\_\_\_I frequently avert my glance so as not to be intimidating to the speaker.

10A\_\_\_I avoid fidgeting, cracking knuckles, stretching, jingling keys, or other mannerisms while someone is talking.

10B\_\_\_I make the talker as comfortable as possible by trying to act naturally, which means adhering to my normal mannerisms.

### ***Scoring:***

Please add point totals under "A" and enter here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add point totals under "B" and enter here: \_\_\_\_\_

Now let's take a look at how you scored on this segment. If your "A" score is significantly greater than your "B" score (and if you were truly honest!), you are fairly strong in this aspect of charisma. The more lopsided your "A" score, the better listener you are. If your "A" score exceeds your "B" by, say, a 2-to-1 margin, your listening "glass" is far fuller than most.

Conversely, if your "B" score approximates your "A" score, you may have identified an improvement opportunity. And if the "B" score is higher than your "A," that's an indication that you need lots of work in this area.

## RESOURCE 3 - TRY OUT YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

### Exercise 1

Ask a colleague or a friend to help you with this listening exercise.

Your friend or colleague should talk to you for a few minutes and tell you what he/she did last night.

After a few minutes your friend or colleague will stop talking.

Repeat back what he/she told you and ask if this is correct.

Was it correct? Yes/No

Ask how he/she knew you were listening and write it down here:

### Exercise 2

#### *How to Communicate at the Right Level*

If you are both sitting down, make sure the height of the chairs is the same. If one chair is higher than the other, this will make the person on the lower chair feel intimidated and anxious and he may not feel comfortable communicating.

If you are having a conversation with a service user who is in a wheelchair or in bed, then come down to his height.

Ask a colleague or a friend to help you with this exercise.

Sit yourself on a chair and ask the colleague or friend to stand by you and have a conversation between yourselves. How did you feel?

## RESOURCE 4 - BLOCK HEAD

An activity intended to encourage good listening skills and following directions.

### Materials

two identical sets of geometric children's blocks, or two identical sets of cardboard geometric shapes

Block Head Evaluation Sheet

### Procedure

1. Choose two students to sit back to back at desks at the front of the room.
2. Divide the blocks/shapes equally between the two students.
3. Allow the students to decide who will give the directions (the director) and who will receive them (the receiver).
4. The director builds his/her structure first from the pile of blocks.
5. Then proceed with one of the following options:
  - a) The director tells the receiver how to build the structure without any interaction; or
  - b) Allow the receiver to question the director as they progress (or as you watch their frustration levels rise).

### Teacher Tips

- Set time limits for the initial demonstration.
- Instruct the rest of the class *not* to respond verbally or nonverbally (“sigh!”) to the successes or failures

### Block Head Evaluation Sheet

Please respond candidly and specifically to the following questions:

- What was the most frustrating portion of the exercise?
- What was the most successful portion of the exercise?
- What changes did you notice in the approach and/or language from the first group to the last group? (e.g., the difference between “a slanted block” and “a block with a 45° angle”)
- What conclusions can you draw about the nature of clear directions?
- What conclusion can you draw about the nature of good listening regarding the following of directions?



## RESOURCE 5 - LISTEN UP!

An exercise in using active listening and specific language.

### Procedure

The Communication Model is composed of the speaker, the message, the receiver, and the feedback.

- Ask two student volunteers to sit back to back at desks at the front of the room.
- Hand one student (the artist) a piece of paper and pencil and the other (the director) a sheet of paper with an odd arrangement of shapes and lines of different sizes and line thickness.
- Tell the director that he/she will be describing the picture under three different circumstances. Warn the director not to share the drawing with the artist or others who may be asked to observe. Tell the artist he is to draw whatever the director describes.

**First time:** The artist may not speak at all.

**Second time:** The students remain back to back, but the artist may ask questions.

**Third time:** The students sit face to face but do not share the picture yet. The director may use gestures and eye contact or question the artist—anything to get the job done. The artist can use any means available as well, short of actually looking at the drawing.

### Evaluation

When the exercise is completed, ask the following questions of both the participants and observers:

- What did you learn about the communication process?
- What effect does eye contact have on communication?
- What effect does voice have on communication?
- What effect do gestures have on communication?
- What effect do questioning and clarification have on communication?

## RESOURCE 6 - ACTIVE LISTENING DEBATE

A paraphrase activity that strengthens active listening skills.

### Materials

- flip chart
- sticky dots

### Procedure

- Have the students brainstorm a list of topics suitable for debate. Do this on a flip chart or other permanent surface so it can be referred to as needed. These topics could be ones that they can discuss using only personal opinion, or you can have them do research.
- Have the students vote on the top three topics. To do this, give each student two sticky dots. Ask the students to place a dot next to their top two issues or topics. They will debate the three topics that receive the most dots in order of student preference.
- Ask the students to prepare a 2–3 minute presentation on the topic that was ranked first.
- Discuss the criteria for evaluation on the Active Listening Debate Evaluation Form.
- Set the rules for debate:
  - \* You need to actively listen to each student's speech. You may not take written notes.
  - \* You may not present your own arguments until you have repeated/summarized the arguments of the person who spoke directly before you.
  - \* The first person who speaks has the task of repeating the last speaker's arguments. This way he/she gets an opportunity to actively listen also.
  - \* If the speaker cannot summarize the person's arguments he/she may not speak.

### Teacher Tips

You may pre-select who is going to speak in what order. That way, students know the person they have to listen to so that they can summarize the arguments.

You may allow the previous speaker to okay the summary given by the person who speaks. You also can ask the previous speaker to repeat any arguments missed so the speaker after him/her can summarize before speaking.

RESOURCE 7 - SKILL-BUILDING QUESTIONS ON GIVING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Think about a past experience when you needed to give someone negative feedback. How do you feel about giving this type of feedback? Note down your thoughts.

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What problems did you have delivering this type of feedback?

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How could you have done this more effectively using the information just presented?

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If you had presented this information the way you just described, do you believe the results would have been different? Why?

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## ANNEX 7A - ELEMENTS OF TEAMWORK – AN INVENTORY OF SKILLS

Part of being a good team member is learning how to understand your personal strengths (what you have to offer) AND where you might need to draw assistance from others. Listed on this sheet are 10 of the characteristics that make a productive team member. Rate your level of confidence in each skill (HONESTLY) – and then devise a plan for how you can improve some of the areas you think might need a “jump start.”

### SKILL #1: RELIABLE

This means: You can be counted on to get the job done.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

This means: You express your thoughts and ideas clearly and directly, with respect for others.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #3: ACTIVE LISTENER

This means: You listen to and respect different points of view. Others can offer you constructive feedback and you don't get upset or defensive.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

#### SKILL #4: PARTICIPATES

This means: You are prepared – and get involved in team activities. You are regular contributor.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

#### SKILL #5: SHARES OPENLY AND WILLINGLY

This means: You are willing to share information, experience, and knowledge with the group.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

#### SKILL #6: COOPERATIVE

This means: You work with other members of the team to accomplish the job - no matter what.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident

#### SKILL #7: FLEXIBLE

This means: You adapt easily when the team changes direction or you're asked to try something new.

Rating:

- \_\_\_ Not so confident
- \_\_\_ Sort of Confident
- \_\_\_ Really confident



### SKILL #8: COMMITTED

This means: You are responsible and dedicated. You always give your best effort!

Rating:

\_\_\_\_ Not so confident

\_\_\_\_ Sort of Confident

\_\_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #9: PROBLEM SOLVER

This means: You focus on solutions. You are good about not going out of your way to find fault in others.

Rating:

\_\_\_\_ Not so confident

\_\_\_\_ Sort of Confident

\_\_\_\_ Really confident

### SKILL #10: RESPECTFUL

This means: You treat other team members with courtesy and consideration - all of the time.

Rating:

\_\_\_\_ Not so confident

\_\_\_\_ Sort of Confident

\_\_\_\_ Really confident

### **Consider your answers:**

*Did you have mostly “not so confident” checked off?*

If so, you are still developing your confidence as a team player. These skills often take some time to develop – so don’t worry. It might be helpful to reach out to someone you know and trust to help you focus on developing a plan for working on some of the skills in which you would like to be more confident. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help when you need it is another great skill of a productive team player.

*Did you have mostly “sort of confident” checked off?*

If so, you are pretty confident in your teamwork skills – but could probably use a little extra support or development in a few areas. Invite someone close to you (someone you know and trust), to work with you on the areas you would like to improve. Most people would be really happy to help you! Learning the strategies to become a good team member takes time, energy, and dedication.

*Did you have mostly “really confident” checked off?*

If so, you are truly confident in your ability to be a good team player. That’s great! Figure out an area or two where you would like to continue to see improvement (since we should always be striving to be the best we can be) and develop a plan for how to further grow those skills. Also try to offer support to someone you know who might be struggling with building his or her own level of teamwork confidence

NOW CONSIDER YOUR TEAMWORKS SKILLS CONFIDENCE LEVELS:

- I am most proud of my ability to:
- I want to improve my ability to:
- I will reach out to some of these people for guidance:

## ANNEX 7B - WHICH SHAPE ARE YOU?

There are some people who believe there are five basic personality types, and each type tends to prefer a different shape. Knowing whether you, your co-workers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles just might help you build better careers, teams, and friendships. Here is what each shape might say about you – and how you can recognize other people for their shapes.

**If you are a SQUARE:** You are an organized, logical, and hardworking person who likes structure and rules. But sometimes you have trouble making decisions because you always want more information. You feel most comfortable in a stable environment with clear directions on what to do. You tend to like things that are regular and orderly. You will work on a task until it is finished, no matter what.

***How to spot a square:** They appear to move “straight,” use precise or specific gestures, love routine, and are very concerned with detail. They are also very neat in their appearance and their personal workspace. They do a lot of planning and are always prompt.*

**If you are a RECTANGLE:** You are a courageous (brave), exciting, and inquisitive explorer who always searches for ways to grow and change. You enjoy trying things you’ve never done before and love asking questions that have never been asked. You like structure, and will often be the person to be sure things are done the proper way, taking all rules and regulations into consideration. When you are given a task you will start organizing it to be sure it can be done in the most systematic way.

***How to spot a rectangle:** These people often have “fleeing eyes and flushed faces.” They also tend to giggle and they like variety. For example, they’ll come into work early or late — but not on time. And those who have offices tend to be disorganized with a mishmash of furniture.*

**If you are a TRIANGLE:** You are a born leader who’s competitive, confident, and can make decisions. You also like recognition. You are goal oriented and enjoy planning something out and then doing it (you are motivated by the accomplishment). You will tend to look at big long-term issues, but might forget the details. When given a task you set a goal and work on a plan for it. American business has traditionally been run by triangles and, although usually men, more women are taking those roles today.

***How to spot a triangle:*** *They have powerful voices, love to tell jokes, and they play as hard as they work. They also tend to be stylish dressers.*

**If you are a CIRCLE:** You are social and communicative. There are no hard edges about you. You handle things by talking about them and smoothing things out with everybody. Communication is your first priority. When given a task, you will want to talk about it. You are a “people person,” with lots of sympathy and consideration for others. You listen and communicate well and are very perceptive about other people’s feelings. You like harmony and hate making unpopular decisions.

***How to spot a circle:*** *They are friendly, nurturing, persuasive, and generous. They tend to be relaxed and smile a lot. They’re talkative, but have a mellow voice. They also have a full laugh and like to touch others on the shoulder and arm.*

**If you are a SQUIGGLE:** You are “off-the-wall” and creative. You like doing new and different things most of the time and get bored with regularity. When given a task, you will come up with bright ideas about to do it. But you don’t think in a deliberate pattern from A to B to C. Instead, you tend to jump around in your mind, going from A to M to X.

***How to spot a squiggle:*** *They can be “flashy,” dramatic, and extremely creative – and they don’t like highly structured environments. Both men and women squiggles tend to be funny and very expressive. They also have great intuition. Most performers and writers are squiggles*

# ANNEX 7C - SAMPLE QUALITATIVE PEER/SELF EVALUATION

In the table below, identify a major strength of each of your group members in relation to the group’s goals and processes. Provide one concrete example to substantiate your answer. *Include yourself!*

Group member’s name and role in group	Strength	Example

In the table below, identify a weakness of each of your group member’s in relation to the group’s process. Provide concrete examples to substantiate your answers. *Include yourself.*

Group member’s name and role in group	Weakness	Example



In the space below, identify approaches your group tried that worked well, and explain why they were effective.

In the space below, identify approaches your group tried that did not work well, and explain why they were ineffective.

What can you do to improve your own contributions to the group's goals and processes in the second half of the semester?

# ANNEX 7D - PEER EVALUATION FORM FOR GROUP WORK

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Write the name of each of your group members in a separate column. For each person, indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement on the left, using a scale of 1-4 (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree). Total the numbers in each column.

Evaluation Criteria	Group member:	Group member:	Group member:	Group member:
Attends group meetings regularly and arrives on time.				
Contributes meaningfully to group discussions.				
Completes group assignments on time.				
Prepares work in a quality manner.				
Demonstrates a cooperative and supportive attitude.				
Contributes significantly to the success of the project.				
TOTALS				

Feedback on team dynamics:

1. How effectively did your group work?
2. Were the behaviors of any of your team members particularly valuable or detrimental to the team? Explain.
3. What did you learn about working in a group from this project that you will carry into your next group experience?

Adapted from a peer evaluation form developed at Johns Hopkins University (October, 2006)

# ANNEX 7E - SAMPLE SELF-EVALUATION FORM FOR GROUP WORK

Your name

---

	Seldom	Sometimes	Often
Contributed good ideas			
Listened to and respected the ideas of others			
Compromised and cooperated			
Took initiative where needed			
Came to meetings prepared			
Communicated effectively with teammates			
Did my share of the work			

My greatest strengths as a team member are:

The group work skills I plan to work to improve are:

## ANNEX 8 - LEADERSHIP SKILLS INVENTORY

*Instructions:* Read each item carefully and decide whether the item describes you as a person. Indicate your response to each item by circling one of the five numbers to the right of each item.

**Key: 1 = Not true    2 = Seldom true    3 = Occasionally true    4 = Somewhat true    5 = Very true**

1. I enjoy getting into the details of how things work. 1 2 3 4 5
2. As a rule, adapting ideas to people's needs is easy for me. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I enjoy working with abstract ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Technical things fascinate me. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Being able to understand others is the most important part of my work. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Seeing the big picture comes easy for me. 1 2 3 4 5
7. One of my skills is being good at making things work. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I am intrigued by complex organizational problems. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Following directions and filling out forms comes easily for me. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I would enjoy working out strategies for my organization's growth. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am good at completing the things I've been assigned to do. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Getting all parties to work together is a challenge I enjoy. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Creating a mission statement is rewarding work. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I understand how to do the basic things required of me. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others. 1 2 3 4 5
18. Thinking about organizational values and philosophy appeals to me. 1 2 3 4 5

### ***Scoring***

The skills inventory is designed to measure three broad types of leadership skills: technical, human, and conceptual.



Score the questionnaire by doing the following.

First, sum the responses on items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16. This is your technical skill score.

Second, sum the responses on items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17. This is your human skill score.

Third, sum the responses on items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18. This is your conceptual skill score.

**Total scores:** *Technical skill* \_\_\_\_ *Human skill* \_\_\_\_ *Conceptual skill* \_\_\_\_

### ***Scoring Interpretation***

The scores you received on the skills inventory provide information about your leadership skills in three areas. By comparing the differences between your scores, you can determine where you have leadership strengths and where you have leadership weaknesses. Your scores also point toward the level of management for which you might be most suited.

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS INVENTORY

### **Purpose**

This Interpersonal Communication Skills Inventory is designed to provide individuals with some insights into their communication strengths and potential areas for development. By answering each question candidly, an individual will receive a profile that displays their level of competence in four key communication areas. This inventory is intended to be viewed only by the individual who completes it.

### **How to Complete the Inventory**

To complete this inventory, read each statement carefully and honestly assess how often the particular statement applies to you. For instance, in Section I - question number 1, if you sometimes find it difficult to talk to other people, you would place a check mark in the “Sometimes” column for question number 1. And for question 2, if others often tend to finish sentences for you when you are trying to explain something; you would check the “Usually” column and so on until you have completed all questions in all four sections of the inventory.

SECTION I

	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
1. Is it difficult for you to talk to other people?			
2. When you are trying to explain something, do others tend to put words in your mouth, or finish your sentences for you?			
3. In conversation, do your words usually come out the way you would like?			
4. Do you find it difficult to express your ideas when they differ from the ideas of people around you?			
5. Do you assume that the other person knows what you are trying to say, and leave it to him/her to ask you questions?			
6. Do others seem interested and attentive when you are talking to them?			
7. When speaking, is it easy for you to recognize how others are reacting to what you are saying?			
8. Do you ask the other person to tell you how she/he feels about the point you are trying to make?			
9. Are you aware of how your tone of voice may affect others?			
10. In conversation, do you look to talk about things of interest to both you and the other person?			

SCORE: SECTION I TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION II

	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
11. In conversation, do you tend to do more talking than the other person does?			
12. In conversation, do you ask the other person questions when you don't understand what they've said?			
13. In conversation, do you often try to figure out what the other person is going to say before they've finished talking?			
14. Do you find yourself not paying attention while in conversation with others?			
15. In conversation, can you easily tell the difference between what the person is saying and how he/she may be feeling?			
16. After the other person is done speaking, do you clarify what you heard them say before you offer a response?			
17. In conversation, do you tend to finish sentences or supply words for the other person?			
18. In conversation, do you find yourself paying most attention to facts and details, and frequently missing the emotional tone of the speakers' voice?			
19. In conversation, do you let the other person finish talking before reacting to what she/he says?			
20. Is it difficult for you to see things from the other person's point of view?			

SCORE: SECTION II TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION III

	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
21. Is it difficult to hear or accept constructive criticism from the other person?			
22. Do you refrain from saying something that you think will upset someone or make matters worse?			
23. When someone hurts your feelings, do you discuss this with him/her?			
24. In conversation, do you try to put yourself in the other person's shoes?			
25. Do you become uneasy when someone pays you a compliment?			
26. Do you find it difficult to disagree with others because you are afraid they will get angry?			
27. Do you find it difficult to compliment or praise others?			
28. Do others remark that you always seem to think you are right?			
29. Do you find that others seem to get defensive when you disagree with their point of view?			
30. Do you help others to understand you by saying how you feel?			

SCORE: SECTION III TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION IV

	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
31. Do you have a tendency to change the subject when the other person’s feelings enter into the discussion?			
32. Does it upset you a great deal when someone disagrees with you?			
33. Do you find it difficult to think clearly when you are angry with someone?			
34. When a problem arises between you and another person, can you discuss it without getting angry?			
35. Are you satisfied with the way you handle differences with others?			
36. Do you sulk for a long time when someone upsets you?			
37. Do you apologize to someone whose feelings you may have hurt?			
38. Do you admit that you’re wrong when you know that you are/were wrong about something?			
39. Do you avoid or change the topic if someone is expressing his or her feelings in a conversation?			
40. When someone becomes upset, do you find it difficult to continue the conversation?			

SCORE: SECTION IV TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_



**Instructions:** Go back and look over your responses to each question. In front of each question, write the appropriate score using the table below.

For example, if you answered “Seldom” to Question 1, you would get 3 points. Write the number 3 in front of Question 1 on the inventory. Proceed to score all other questions.

Each section contains 10 questions. After scoring all questions, go back to Section 1. Total the score of Section 1 and put that number on the line “Score Section 1 Total.” Proceed to total all scores for all other sections.  
Enter your score here: \_\_\_\_\_

SCORING KEY

Question	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Question	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
1	0	1	3	21	0	1	3
2	0	1	3	22	3	1	0
3	3	1	0	23	3	1	0
4	0	1	3	24	3	1	0
5	0	1	3	25	0	1	3
6	3	1	0	26	0	1	3
7	3	1	0	27	0	1	3
8	3	1	0	28	0	1	3
9	3	1	0	29	0	1	3
10	3	1	0	30	3	1	0
11	0	1	3	31	0	1	3
12	3	1	0	32	0	1	3
13	0	1	3	33	0	1	3
14	0	1	3	34	3	1	0
15	3	1	0	35	3	1	0
16	3	1	0	36	0	1	3
17	0	1	3	37	3	1	0
18	0	1	3	38	3	1	0
19	3	1	0	39	0	1	3
20	0	1	3	40	0	1	3

Interpersonal Communication Profile

***Interpretation:** Look at your score for each section as one indication of the degree to which you effectively communicate. Plot your scores on the table below using an “X” for each section score. Draw a line to connect them column to column. This will create a profile of your strengths and opportunities for improvement.*

- **Scores in the 1 > 15 range** indicate areas of your communication skills that need improvement.
- **Scores in the 16 > 21 range** indicate areas of communication skills that need more consistent attention.
- **Scores in the 22 > 30 range** indicate areas of strength or potential strength.

Area (s) of Strength: \_\_\_\_\_

Area (s) of Improvement: \_\_\_\_\_

Score Section I Total Sending Clear Messages	Score Section II Total Listening	Score Section III Total Giving and Getting Feedback	Score Section IV Total Handling Emotional Interactions
30	30	30	30
29	29	29	29
28	28	28	28
27	27	27	27
26	26	26	26
25	25	25	25
24	24	24	24
23	23	23	23
22	22	22	22
21	21	21	21
20	20	20	20
19	19	19	19
18	18	18	18
17	17	17	17
16	16	16	16
15	15	15	15
14	14	14	14
13	13	13	13
12	12	12	12
11	11	11	11
10	10	10	10
9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2
1	1	1	1

