

SECRET Skills for Personal Learning and Thinking

A structure for Personal Learning and Thinking Skills

The SECRET approach is based on a series of “skills ladders” that provide a structure for identifying, targeting and managing skills development. A skills ladder contains nine objectives, which are discrete and progressive. The ladder begins with achievable targets for young children at level 1 and progress in difficulty to level 9, by which time the skill level is that expected of a professional adult.

In the case of the personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS), each of the six skill areas has been divided into four sub-groups based on cognitive and strategic forms of learning as well as incorporating identified social and emotional aspects of learning.

From their outset, the ladders were designed primarily for peer and self-assessment rather than as a set of labels for assessors to allocate to learners, hence the language used at each level is consistent with the ability of the learners and simplified language is used where possible, hence you can see from the summary below I have replaced cognitive with ‘think’, strategic with ‘work it out’, emotional with ‘feel it’ and social with ‘share it’.

Over ten years we tested the definitions and names of the skills with learners of all ages to ensure they were accessible, for example, words such as Resilience were replaced with ‘Go for it. Finish it’.

The result is a set of 24 ladders organised as follows:

PLTS skill area	Skills ladder			
	Think	Work it out	Feel it	Share it
Self Managers	Manage Risk	Be Organised	Go for it, Finish it!	Manage Emotions
Effective Participators	Persuade Others	Find Solutions	Identify Issues	Get Involved
Creative Thinkers	Imagine	Make Links	Take Creative Risks	Question Assumptions
Reflective Learners	Set Yourself Challenges	Plan-Do-Review	Invite Feedback	Share Learning
Enquirers	Explore a Question	Evaluate Evidence	Stay Objective	Reach Conclusions
Team Workers	Take Responsibility	Manage the team	Build team strengths	Evaluate the team

On the following pages you will find the 24 SECRET ladders, including a descriptive summary and the nine ladder statements. Each ladder fits onto one page, a poster showing all of the ladders in one place is also available. There is also a website in which this work is summarised at the following address: www.learningbyladders.com

Self managers

ES1 - Manage risk

Manage risks. Any progress you make as a person means you need to regularly try new things and develop new skills. This means you need to take risks and put yourself in new situations that might make you nervous or apprehensive. If you are good at this skill you can make measured decisions about what level of risk is worth the gains you make. It helps you seek out challenges or new responsibilities and show flexibility when priorities change. Link to the website [here](#).

If I think my friend could get hurt I make sure I tell them.

I can make an area safer before doing an activity. For example I can move things that I might bump into.

If I am not sure or I am nervous I ask someone who is responsible to help me. If they tell me, it is safe then I carry on but I always keep checking just in case they are wrong. For example if I have been bullied by someone I would ask what to do and would follow the advice.

I have volunteered to try a new activity and seen it through although I was nervous or apprehensive. I thought of the risks and the advice and I decided I would try it.

In an activity I have planned, I have completed a 'risk assessment'. I have asked an expert to give me advice on this and I am now confident that I have made the activity as safe as it can be and is within the law. For most accidents that could happen I now know what to do.

I decide to do an activity that contains risk of failure and maybe even risk of injury. I produce a risk assessment. For each thing that could go wrong I walk through it in my imagination thinking what I would do. I think about the benefits and the risks and make a decision to either do the activity or make it safer first. I share my plan with someone who could support me if things went wrong.

I am familiar with and comfortable with taking risks in my work because I know it can lead to a better end result. I can demonstrate a piece of work/project where I took risks at the beginning and the specific steps I took to manage those risks so that they helped me improve. My risk taking is considered and structured not random.

I have decided to do something which nobody around me has done before. Failure would result in significant financial loss or injury or a lowering of my status or position. Success will lead to a significant gain in status or finances. My risk management plan is detailed and covers most of the known risks so that I have ways to protect myself. The outcome turns out to be positive.

I create a working environment in which others can take risks safely. This makes our approach to work more innovative. I absorb risk by giving very clear guidance about boundaries within which people can operate. These boundaries manage rather than remove risk.

Self managers

ES2 - Be organised

Use systems for organising and prioritising. You can organise your time and resources, prioritising actions. This means you become more systematic about using organisers and planners and more structured in setting achievable deadlines so others can rely upon you. Link to the website [here](#).

If I have two things to do I can choose which one should be done first.

I am always on time and I am prepared. If I don't finish my work I ask to do it later.

I keep a diary or a timetable of things that happen at the same time every week. If I can't remember what I'm doing tomorrow I can look it up.

I use a personal organiser or diary to make sure that I always remember what I need to bring with me. I don't need someone else to remind me when to bring my PE kit to school for example. For evidence I could show my planner on a video maybe with someone agreeing I use it well. I cope just as well with things that don't happen every week.

I use a planner/diary/PDA to record deadlines. I make my own deadlines up as well to make sure I don't fall behind. Because I am planning ahead I can avoid getting too many deadlines and urgent tasks in one week. If there is too much to do then I work out the most important tasks and do them first.

I can plan work at least six weeks in advance and make my own deadlines to keep me on track. I make sure that 'treats' and social events are included. An example might be sticking to a revision timetable or getting my desk cleared before going on holiday. Evidence could be a video diary kept over the six weeks but with less than thirty seconds of filming per week.

I anticipate the demands on my time for the weeks and months ahead and have a long-term plan of how I will organise and divide my time and resources. This is alongside my short-term weekly plans of how to use my time. I am able to detail the deadlines I will need to meet in the next six months and do not rely on others to tell me.

I have juggled several projects/commitments over an extended period of time. (More than three months) without missing deadlines and giving equal priority to all over the period of time but prioritising different ones at different times. My evidence could be a recent CV which shows I have achieved a great deal but maintained outside interests and friendships.

I have given guidance to others to help them organise their own time and resources after being asked by a group or institution. Others have reported they have successfully improved their skills in this area by following my guidance and advice. My evidence maybe in the form of feedback evaluations, letters etc. I understand the benefits that being organised has brought me. I am calmer with more time on my hands and seem to achieve more than the people around me.

Self managers

ES3 - Be Resilience - Go for it, finish it

Demonstrate resilience and determination. Work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance. This skill area looks at how well you stick with problems until you solve them. This skill is very important for your everyday life as well as your work. Having lots of unfinished projects and work you are avoiding would lead you to become stressed and unreliable. This skill area is very valuable. Link to the website [here](#).

I can try again when something doesn't work first time. E.g. building a tower from dominoes.

I have evidence of something that took me lots of attempts and lots of time and I am really proud that I finished it.

I can describe something I have achieved that was difficult. Other people I was working with gave up and I wanted to give up as well but I carried on because I knew I would feel good in the end.

I have stuck with a hard problem or project till it was solved which took at least two hours. At least once, I wasn't enjoying it and so I had to steel myself up. I used methods like stopping for breaks, giving myself rewards and trying to think about how it would feel to finish.

I cope with set-backs. I can explain how I coped and how I kept myself going even though I failed first or even second time I tried. I might be learning a new skill I was not good at by going to weekly classes or trying for a long period. An example could be learning to climb. Even though every muscle hurt and I had fallen off twice, I had to change the way I approached the problem and then start again.

I am mentally strong and determined. Sometimes, solving tough problems is like a battle with yourself. Your concentration may wander, you may feel tired and you might even try to convince yourself you should give up. You can describe how you overcame these feelings. How do you push yourself mentally on and how did you feel when you were successful and beat the problem? You could evidence this using a video diary over a few weeks.

I took up a challenge that required determination, drive and commitment over a year and for which I had to train or study regularly without someone coaching me. I motivated myself by being positive and knowing myself. You may train and run in a marathon or be the motivator in a team preparing for an important game. You may do a perseverance challenge like 'Ten Tors.'

I have a clear ambition for where I would like to be in three years' time. The challenge I have set myself is not easy and many people around me feel I cannot achieve it. I may doubt I can do it as well but I am able to fight these feelings and do something every day that will bring my ambition closer. Evidence will need to be over quite an extended time.

I have persisted with an interest or goal over a long period of time, when others involved at the beginning have moved on/dropped out. This perseverance has resulted in a breakthrough or new development in my specialist field, which is now recognised/used by others.

Self managers

ES4 - Manage emotions

Manage your own emotions. This skill area allows you to keep your cool when all around you are losing theirs. It values self-confidence and the ability to know yourself well enough to be able to control yet openly share your emotions. This helps you deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands. Link to the website [here](#).

I can say goodbye in the morning and am happy to be at school.

I can talk about my emotions to my friends and listen to when they talk about theirs.

I always stay in control. I can think of examples when someone was being unkind or angry and I managed to stay calm, polite and confident.

I congratulate myself when I have done something well. When something goes wrong I admit it to myself. I can think of times when I was down and I found ways to make myself positive again. I didn't ignore the feelings that were making me feel down but found ways to make them less important.

I can prioritise my friendships. I can find space to listen to my friends and get involved in their lives even if I have lots of pressure and emotions of my own to deal with. I can think of times when I have played down my own emotions because others were in more need than me.

After an argument I can think over my feelings and see what I did that made things worse. I can think of aspects of my character I would like to change and aspects that I am happy with. I understand how our emotions in the argument may have caused problems. For evidence you might use video.

I have had demands on my time from more than one commitment at the same time and have successfully managed the need and demands of both. These commitments are likely not to be known to each other. E.g. Two pieces of coursework, two different drama productions, family events and school events. No-one has intervened on my behalf.

I am confident that my future is in my hands and I have the ability to improve myself and any parts of my character that may be making life more difficult. I can discuss my feelings and those of others openly and sensitively. I have a strong sense of identity and make time for the people who are most important to me. Evidence could be a video CV or an example of me being confident without being arrogant.

I may be a counsellor or psychologist or just relied upon by all my friends as someone who can help them understand the emotions they are feeling by giving examples from my own life and my own feelings. Your evidence is likely to be confidential so you must find ways of maintaining the trust of your friends or clients as you evidence this.

Effective participators

QE1 Persuade others (See both sides)

Make a persuasive yet open minded case. When you have developed this skill you will be able to work out all the arguments for and against a particular idea. You will make sure you consider all these carefully and listen to all sides. When you have decided what you think should happen you can build arguments capable of persuading others whilst remaining honest and fair. Link to the website [here](#).

I can give a reason for something I do.

I can explain why it is better to do one thing than another. (The reason you give has to make sense)

I can listen to other people's reasons for making a choice and then explain their choices to someone else.

I can give examples of when a decision has been hard to make and I have thought about each choice and worked out which one would be best. For example if I couldn't decide to go on a school trip I could write out the reasons FOR going and the reasons for NOT going to help me decide.

I can persuade using reasoning. I present three clear reasons in support of an argument. I have backed up each of these reasons with evidence and some research. I have thought about the three reasons I would use if I was arguing against.

I can make a complex decision. This is one where each decision changes every other decision. I can group sets of decisions into separate options to make it clearer for other people to make decisions. An example would be which phone to buy from looking at all the features and packages available.

I have some methods I use to help me reduce problems so they are easier to solve. For example if I was dealing with a conflict I would always question both sides separately, find common ground, summarise this back to both of them and provide reasoned arguments for each to help them see the other's point of view.

I can build a case rather like a lawyer or someone in PR / Marketing. I know the conclusion I would like others to reach and I predict the other side of the case so I can develop reasons that will persuade others. My evidence might be a successful bid for funding or my role in a People's Court or sales I have achieved.

I have listened openly to all the evidence and used reasoning to decide difficult questions. I am able to simplify the process for others to decide because I had already thought through most of the arguments. I don't 'sell' an idea if I don't believe in it myself but my reasoning is so well formed that people often change their view after talking with me.

Effective participators

QE2 - Find solutions

Can break a problem up into manageable chunks. When you have developed this skill you will be able to break a problem up into smaller chunks so that a larger problem becomes manageable. You will be able to find practical ways in which people can get involved to move things forward. You would know that there is no such thing as an unsolvable problem just one you can make less of a problem. This skill is also helpful in getting tasks done quickly as it allows you to break up tasks into different jobs and organise the order in which jobs need to be done. Link to the website [here](#).

I can answer questions with good ideas

I can solve some problems from start to finish without any help.

I can solve a problem with someone else by breaking it into different tasks and then we get it done much faster.

I have solved a problem that needed lots of different resources and people. For example, if we were creating a poster display quickly we would need someone to agree the space, someone to find paper and materials, someone to decide content etc. This needs a quick plan and everyone needs clear jobs.

If I am given a large problem to solve I can break it up into a set of smaller problems so that lots of people can work together.

I have managed an extended piece of work with a team of more than four people (for at least 3 weeks) which involved a variety of tasks and activities. I achieved this by completing a survey of the skills and interests of everyone in the team and used it to help allocate each task effectively and on time so that we built up the extended piece of work in the time allowed.

I have taken on a task or problem that others had been unable to find a solution to. I identified the separate jobs which make up the larger task and made sure they were completed one by one, either by me or by others. I then reported the solution I had achieved by myself or with my team to others.

I can consider possible solutions by imagining how they would work in my head. By running them through and looking for problems that might emerge, I can choose a solution that I think will work best. I can evidence this by imagining myself when the project is finished and describing what I see.

I have a portfolio of pieces of work I have completed which have created practical guidance to solve problems. The guidance has been used by more than one individual, group or institution successfully.

Effective participators

QE3 - Get involved

Get involved. When you develop this skill you will understand you live in a community and everyone needs to help each other. There is a famous poem which says, "They came for the Jews and I didn't help because I was not a Jew...., then they came for me and there was nobody left to help". People with this skill can protest for a good cause and help people even if they don't have the same values or beliefs simply because they know we are all in a community together. You are part of the glue that holds communities together because you do the hard work behind the scenes that makes sure change happens. Link to the website [here](#).

I enjoy helping other people. I volunteer to help.

I get involved in extra clubs and activities.

If I am in a group or a class I make sure I know the name of everyone and have tried to talk to them in a positive way. For evidence I could tell someone a nice fact about ten people and get them to sign that I knew them.

Some people complain and are slow to get involved. I am positive and show other people by example. For example, I may do karaoke even though I can't sing. If people become negative I can help them be more positive without criticising them.

I know everyone in a community needs trust if they are to relax, get involved and be themselves. I say it is wrong if I hear people speaking behind other's backs. I can give examples where I actively helped to build up my community and make it stronger. This could be by bringing people together when they were beginning to say bad things about each other or by doing a project to help people understand each other better.

I have lots of different communities that I am involved with. I may be in online communities, clubs, local groups and postal groups. I play an active role in each of these and for evidence I can use pictures of me getting involved and doing activities in some of these. I could use audio or video or even reports from other people as evidence.

I have taken on the organisation of an event in which I had to organise lots of people by deadlines. If I had not done it then the event would not have happened. For example, I may have organised a meal, collected payment from people, booked courses and arranged pick up times etc. Even though I did all the work I am positive and never moan or complain. If people think of backing out I bring them back in by motivating them rather than making them feel guilty.

I identified an issue that lots of people support but nobody had actually done anything about yet. I involve people who are better than me at persuading others and finding solutions and I support them by doing all the hard work behind the scenes to make a campaign into a reality. I make something happen that makes my community a better or more enjoyable place to be.

I make a considerable difference to a local or national charity. I work long term on projects to promote this for over a year. I raise money or awareness and generate events that move the whole issue forward. I work consistently over the time. As evidence I can show the key interventions I made over the year and how I kept campaigns alive by raw energy and determination.

Effective participators

QE4 - Identify issues

See injustice or practice which could improve. When you have this skill you can identify improvements that would benefit others as well as yourself. You work out which things should change in your area, place of work or the world. People who are less skilled in this area may need people like you to be an advocate for them and to help them identify problems that could be solved to improve the community as a whole. You ask the questions that others may duck away from. Link to the website [here](#).

I know right from wrong. I can say why I think this.

I have opinions and my own ideas. I show emotions sometimes when I hear stories.

If the way someone is treated is unfair I ask them about it and help them feel better. It makes me feel sad or angry too but I can control this. If they want my help I make sure someone in charge listens to what happened.

I can ask the people around me about issues like global warming or cruelty to animals and find out what is the issue most people have feelings about. I can describe which issues matter most to the people around me and give examples.

I collect views from at least twenty people to find out how they think our community could be improved. I ask people I don't normally talk to so that everyone is included. If I can't include everyone then I make sure I ask a balanced group (e.g. if half the people in our community are men, then half of the number I ask should also be men). I don't give my own views until the end so people know it is fair.

Sometimes people's views are not heard because they are not good at explaining them or they may be the minority. I find examples of this in my community. I talk to someone in this position or do research so that next time I am giving an opinion I can think more widely. The people I talk to may hold different views and opinions to me which means I may have to try harder to be open minded.

I find ways in which my current workplace is unfair for some people in it. It may be in the food on offer, access to different languages, how welcoming it makes people feel etc. I ask a cross section of the community if they agree or are aware of the issues. If I feel the issue needs attention, I will find out who holds a budget that could bring about an improvement and I pass my findings on to them.

I run a consultation in which I discover the views of at least one hundred people in my community in an area that concerns many of them. I understand that different parts of the community may have different beliefs, different prejudices and a range of reasons for holding their opinions. I try to include all of these diverse sections of the community. The work is used to try and raise money or awareness for a project to improve the community.

I may be a politician or investigative journalist. I gain support from local people by representing their views and uncovering issues that affect their daily lives. I may not have the solutions but I know that people really need their views supported their voice heard to feel fully included in the community. I make sure as many people as possible are made aware of issues that are important to my community even if they are not important issues for me personally.

Creative thinkers

QC1 - Imagine

Imagine new ideas. This skill area is around using your imagination to generate new ideas and new ways of looking at things. This helps you to be able to explore new possibilities. Creativity is often about seeing the world through fresh eyes and not just restricting yourself to ideas that seem good first time round. Seeing things in new ways often helps people understand each other better. How many times have people explained something to you one way and you just have not understood but then they try another alternative and it suddenly makes sense? This is the skill of coming up with these new ideas and possibilities. Link to the website [here](#).

I enjoy role-play, songs and making music. I can use them to show how I'm feeling.

I use role-play art, dance or music to tell stories or show feelings. I like hearing other people's work too.

I can come up with an idea to explain how something works using imaginary creatures or things that have not been invented yet.

I can use someone else's ideas and add to them. For example I can read a book and write a new ending that I thought up or imagine a TV character in a different story.

I can join ideas together that should not fit and create ideas that may be impossible in the real world. For example I could design a motorbike for a fish.

When solving a problem, I can come up with four ideas and then work out which one is the best. I can do this by using my imagination to predict how each solution will work. For example, when designing a doll's house I can imagine children using it and think what they would enjoy most.

I can put myself in a different time in history, different cultures or look from a different perspective (e.g. through a horse's eyes). My work could be in any media or use drama, art, music etc. My work will contain ideas that I thought up myself using genuine facts about the context, and that others would describe as original.

I can think 'outside of the box'. There are lots of things that people have always done in one particular way but I can imagine completely new (and possible) ways. For example, Dyson had to imagine a Hoover without a dust bag when everyone assumed you needed a dust bag. Games designers imagine 3D worlds. Scientists might imagine how fundamental particles move in space.

I have imagined ideas that are so well described that people can genuinely follow me into my imagination. JK Rowling's world of Harry Potter is one example but it could be through mesmerising dance, screenplay, paintings or writing that take the audience to a believable new world or gets them to feel emotions or involvement.

Creative thinkers

QC2 - Make links

Make connections and links. This area of skill is about making connections and links between ideas. Learning things as separate facts is much less powerful than learning how they all link together. For example, someone good at this skill was thinking about what happens when you go round a corner in the car and linked this with vacuum cleaners to end up inventing the Dyson. Nobody had thought of putting these ideas together before because it seems like there should be no link. Link to the website [here](#).

I can put things into groups that have something in common.

I can group things together and then find new ways of grouping them. This could be objects, people, and colours anything.

I can play spot the odd one out. People can give me four objects and I can find ways of linking them together with words. For example a spoon and a cupboard may both be made of wood and could both be found in the kitchen.

I can use metaphor. For example I could say my town is a HIVE of activity. It isn't really a bee hive but it helps you imagine the town with lots of busy people moving around like bees in a hive. For evidence I could try writing / telling a story with metaphors in. The metaphors would help to make the story easier to imagine.

I can show how ideas are linked together. I might use a spidergram where I put one idea in the middle and then others around it with links. I can write on each link to show the connection. I might use a mind map or might just write the first idea then a link to a second one then to a third like a chain of ideas.

I can use a spidergram or mind map to produce a summary of a topic. It may be a topic I am revising for an exam or it may be something I am researching that is quite complex and involves lots of different ideas, facts and points of view. I can clearly explain the links between the ideas. I might include metaphors and analogies in the map.

I can make links between things I have learnt in different contexts. I could create a dance about an historical event or a painting about how I feel listening to music or create a poem where people assume they are one character until the end lines when it is obviously about something else.

When teaching someone a new idea I can find links to what they know already and use an analogy which I peel back slowly as they begin to understand. Alternatively, I could make a film or poem that uses analogy to make a strong point such as Green Day's song 'Holiday' to consider how the Iraq war had been presented in the press.

I can take concepts that are difficult to grasp and explain them by creating a mix of analogies. Something like quantum physics, selfish genes, tactical voting, the stock market, gender bias, anti competitive global trading etc. I may be asked to lecture on a topic, win a teaching award or make media on an obscure topic that attracts more general readers.

Creative thinkers

QC3 - Question assumptions

Question assumptions - open minded. When you develop these skills you will have the ability to look at things that the rest of us take for granted and ask "why do we do that?" Quite often there are lots of ideas you just accepted as a child and have never thought about since. Most of us accept things which are very wrong simply because we trust the person who told us even though they may be genuinely mistaken as well. People with this skill don't just accept ideas without thinking about them first. They question their own and others' assumptions. Link to the website [here](#).

I can ask 'why' questions.

I know my family does some things the same as other families but not everything.

I can ask 'why' questions about choices that people have made. How could they have done it differently now and in the past.

I ask myself why I think something even if others think the same. As evidence of this I could tape or video a conversation where I ask lots of questions to make someone consider a new way of looking at something.

I understand, with guidance the difference between facts, beliefs and opinions. I can produce something which shows what happens when these are confused. It could be a play or artwork or dance, writing or anything I can think of.

I know that what is presented as fact is often partly opinion and can explain an example of this from a current day newspaper/magazine or online source.

I can question individuals, websites etc. to reveal if they have thought deeply enough about their views and beliefs. Without making people feel untrusted or foolish I can seek out assumptions and find them even if they are hidden in text or films. If these are not belief based I can provide evidence that assumptions require more questioning. If they are belief based I can look for consequences, contradictions or contrasts with other beliefs.

I can review my own beliefs and opinions in the light of new information or when they are challenged or questioned by others. I have changed my view and can explain how and why. I expect my views to change over time and have evidence that they have.

I have created a genuinely new way of thinking about something or an idea that seems to be opposite to what most people currently think. I have ideas that cause people to think 'why didn't anyone come up with that before?' Your evidence would be having your work published as a new idea in a scientific journal or a respected magazine.

Creative thinkers

QC4 - Take creative risks

Take creative risks - Positive. There is never just one way of doing things. When you exercise this skill look for new ways of doing things and new ideas but then don't stop there. If creativity is about new ideas and innovation then you have to be able to use failure and mistakes in a positive way. If you look at failure in this way then you will be more able to try things that don't work first time but might give you useful ideas for later work. Link to the website [here](#).

I can make my work different from everyone else's.

I can make people surprised. I can end a story in an unusual way or mark art with something different.

I can do something that could go wrong. For example, I might perform to an audience.

I have taken part in an exhibition or production in which my work was included along with that of others for people outside my class (or school) to see.

I have chosen a task, club, event or piece of work to do which uses skills which are not my strongest but which are best suited to my idea and completed the task successfully.

When I design or create something I have an established process of trying out various ideas before assessing which will be the best one to follow through. I always include new ideas or new methods that I have never tried before. I value the unexpected or surprising and see opportunities in my past mistakes.

I can use performance or media or any other form to produce a piece which deals with a difficult subject. It may be a subject I feel uncomfortable about or a subject that is in the news and has caused some emotion. I am sensitive to how people might feel when they see my work. I do the work to explore if I can do it sensitively rather than to challenge people's feelings.

I can deal with an issue where there are very different opinions on both sides or I could trust others to produce new work on my behalf. I am aware my work might make people feel uncomfortable or emotional. There is quite a high chance that the idea could fail or cause people to misunderstand me but I think it is an important idea and a risk worth taking.

I am pushing at the boundaries of new ideas. I innovate but I also make it more possible for others to innovate by taking the risk for them. If for example I were to commission a play about a sensitive topic I could then invite new writers to produce writing for it. It is risky for me but frees them up to be more creative.

Reflective learners

UR1 - Set yourself challenges

Set Positive Challenges. You are the kind of person who is positive about learning and can keep moving forward by setting realistic personal targets to improve yourself. You know yourself well enough to understand the way you work best and can both play to your strengths and focus on your weaknesses. Link to the website [here](#).

I know where I work best but I'm going to try working somewhere new.

I have set myself a challenge. I am going to try to do something I can't do now.

I know something about the way I work and I have tested this idea out. For example, I have tried doing art with music on and without it on and now I know which helps me work best. (Other people gave me ideas)

I can tell you what I am good at and what I am not so good at. I have chosen one of the things I'm not good at and have decided to challenge myself to make it better. I have some ideas about why I don't have confidence already and how the challenge will help me.

I can look at a list of tasks and activities and select the one I am likely to be best at by matching my strengths and skills to the requirements of the task. I can discuss my decisions with others and use their ideas and views to help me decide but without depending on them. Using this method I can decide on a personal challenge.

I have examples of when I deliberately chose to try a different learning style so that I could challenge myself and increase my range of skills. For example, something that I would normally choose to explain by writing about it I chose to make a diagram or drawing to explain it instead. I never close down my options by saying things like "I'm no good at" I see these weaknesses as perfect challenges to set myself and improve.

I can work out what went well and what went wrong with the way I approached learning. For example if I am revising for an exam I can try different approaches and work out which ones work best for me. I can experiment and change the way I approach my learning. This helps me set myself new challenges and find ways of achieving them.

I can de-construct my learning. This means I can look at all of the things that make me successful and come up with ways of improving. I might consider the place I work, how often my breaks are, who it is best to get help from, what learning style to use, how to motivate myself and when to stop. I have the confidence to set myself quite ambitious challenges in areas that are new to me and I know myself well enough to predict I could be successful.

I firmly believe that anything is possible if you put your mind to it. I know my strengths well enough to know how I can use them to improve or compensate for my weaknesses. I set long term career and personal targets that are challenging and will need me to work on them consistently if I am to achieve them. As evidence I can share my long term aspirations and explain what current challenges I have set myself to help me move closer to completing my ambitions.

Reflective learners

UR2 - Plan-do-review

Deliver real improvement projects. When you have developed this skill you will consistently improve your learning because you will actually complete plans, deliver on targets you have set yourself and learn from the process of review. You are clear about SMART targets and making sure that you use these effectively to make progress. Link to the website [here](#).

I have chosen an activity and done it for ten minutes.

When I am making something I plan what I need before I start. As I work on it I have new ideas and make it better.

When I am learning something on my own or making something on my own I plan how, where and when I am going to do it. Half way through my plan I improve it a bit. I finish carrying out my plan.

Last week I learnt something new or a new skill all by myself. When I decided to do it, I made a plan with dates and times on it. I kept a diary to show how I stuck to my plan and how I improved it during the week. I could use this diary as evidence.

I have carried out a personal project that took me a few weeks. I made myself a schedule to remind me what I needed to get finished by the end of each week. As the weeks went on, I kept a diary. At the end of each week I looked back over the week and planned the next week. Did you achieve as much as you thought? What could you have done to make it better?

I plan and carry out a personal project over a six week period. My plan contains SMART targets with Specific (detailed), Measurable outcomes, Achievable, a planned mid Review and with Timings, feedback and mentor discussions. I keep a 'learning journal' to record how and why I have adapted my plan and which deadlines I kept. I have been carrying out my plan for at least three weeks and have carried out the first review.

I planned and carried out a personal project taking at least ten weeks. I built in at least three clear review points and kept a journal as evidence of how the plan was carried out and modified. I invited discussion / feedback points from mentors. I delivered my planned SMART targets to deadlines and set such measurable outcomes that I was able to evidence them in my journal. I planned the evaluation and challenge / support from specialists.

I have planned and carried out a personal project of at least 6 months which had clear measurable outcomes, SMART targets and aims for each week. Although the project covered a long time I reviewed my progress as I went, adapted and modified my plan, invited feedback from others and worked steadily on achieving the targets I achieved something I was unable to do before OR I learned a great deal trying. I kept a journal or blog and can take sections from this to support my evidence.

I am very proficient at achieving my own personal goals. I always have multiple plans on the go at the same time but because I maintain a good diary with my own deadlines in, review points in and notes to myself about improvements, I keep to them all and so am a true lifelong learner, improving my skills independently all the time. To evidence this you need to show some external proof of achievement and the plan that led to it. For example you could have structured your own learning of Japanese without the use of a course and have a GCSE as evidence

Reflective learners

UR3 - Invite feedback

Invite feedback and deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism. Imagine if everyone knew how you could be much more successful but they were just afraid to tell you. When you have developed this skill you will be really keen to know what people think of you and your work. You will invite people to point out the problems and the successes because you will want to improve. If you are good at this skill then you will have the help of everyone you work with to improve your effectiveness. Link to the website [here](#).

I ask if people like my work.

I can improve a piece of work after hearing or reading comments on it.

I can tell people what I like about their work and how I think they could make it better. I thank them when they do this for me.

When I give feedback to other people I am positive, truthful and helpful. I ask for feedback from other people and whatever they tell me I respect their opinion and thank them. I don't argue with them. Evidence could be video clip of me getting feedback or giving feedback.

I like hearing other people's views and ideas about my work. I can describe how I changed something or added something to my piece/work after listening to the comments of my friends/class/colleagues. I can also explain how I invited the feedback in the first place.

I know other people can help me make my idea/piece/work better and because of this I ask them for their comments and ideas and record them. If someone says something they do not like about my work it does not make me feel cross with them. I have found a method of getting more people to give feedback on my work. I may have made a set of survey questions and collected people's opinions this way. My evidence will show how I collected feedback and how I used it to improve.

I am able to listen to feedback which is about me personally rather than just my work. Until proven otherwise, I trust that the person is telling me to help me improve. Where possible I choose to hear such advice in one to one conversations and it is me who starts such conversations. I can describe when I dealt with getting feedback about me that I found difficult to accept at first but now believe has really helped me.

I am open and approachable and people know they can tell me exactly what they think about my work and the way I work without me taking offence or holding it against them. I know that people who are lacking in confidence or self esteem may react badly to criticism even if it is constructive because it makes them feel less secure. At times I feel insecure too and when this happens I don't blame the critic but rather I have friends and colleagues I trust from whom I can get a second, honest opinion. I can describe just such an event.

I work out ways of gaining feedback from a representative cross-section of the communities within which I work. If I am in a position of authority I will conduct a 360 degree appraisal in which everyone in the organisation has the chance to give me feedback on how I am doing. I make sure that the feedback I receive leads to actual changes in my work which I report back to the people who gave me feedback.

Reflective learners

UR4 - Share learning

Share learning with peers. You can be reflective in your learning. You can be constructively self critical and share how and what you learned in a way which helps other people both as a role model and as someone who made the mistakes and learnt from them so that others could be more successful. Link to the website [here](#).

I can tell you something I learned today.

I can explain the most important thing I learned today and the least important. (Video diary?)

I can think about what happened over the last few days. I can explain what I would do differently if I had the chance to do it again. I can prove to other people that I think about my actions after I have done them.

I can show I learn from my mistakes. For evidence I could make a short training film or PowerPoint teaching others how to do what I have done but without the mistakes. For example if I organised a sleep-over badly I could say what went wrong and how it could be better next time.

Everything I do has good and bad parts. I can list the three best and three worst decisions I took during a project I was doing. I can discuss these with the group I worked with and see if they agree. Life gives you lots of experiences and you understand the need to filter out the good from the bad.

I have presented my work to a colleague or fellow student. I drew out the key reasons for doing it, the outcomes (positive and negative) and my conclusions around how my colleague could use the work to improve their own work and how I could support them. Evidence I use is balanced and honest.

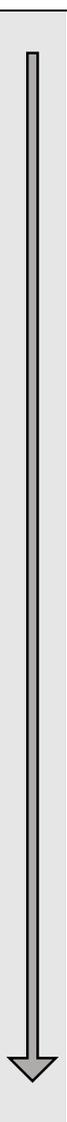
I have presented my work to other people (five to ten people). I made sure the work could be understood by people who have not been as involved in my project. I started by explaining what I was trying to improve, how I planned to do this and how I had to change the plan (if at all). I clearly showed evidence of where I was successful and was honest about where I was not. At least one member of the audience asked me to help them improve by doing a similar project.

I have presented my work to an audience of my peers and taken further opportunities to share my experiences outside of the institution I usually work in. I have made the project accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience. I made it clear how much mentoring, coaching and feedback was involved. I referred to research; feedback and evidence where it would help others adapt my findings into their context. Evidence I have presented is balanced and honest.

I have used numerous methods to allow others to engage in my work, including presenting my ideas, publishing a resource, producing research papers and guidance material. My aim is clearly to allow others to improve through my successes and mistakes. I am able to pull out the key reasons for success and am honest about the amount of work required and what I would do differently next time.

IE1 - Explore a question

Engage with, devise, plan and carry out research. When you have developed this skill you will have lots of research ideas you would like to follow. You will be able to take one of your research ideas and plan a fair and balanced piece of research and complete the research. Your research will be good enough quality to keep people informed and maybe even uncover new links. Link to the website [here](#).



I can find something out by myself. I sometimes make models to help me explore.
I can choose what I would like to learn, record what I have found out and share it with other people.
I can do a project about something and give myself questions to find out about before I start. For example I might do a project on penguins and start with the question 'Why don't they fly?'
I have found out information about a topic that nobody else I know has studied. I started by asking different questions like 'how', 'what...' and 'why...'
I can ask questions and then predict answers to them. For example, I may wonder why people smoke when they know it is killing them. I may think of a few reasons why this might happen. What questions do you need to ask to find out which of your ideas is most likely to be true?
I fuel questions in other people. I can be honest about not knowing the answer to questions and can encourage others to ask questions too. I can use conversation to explore new questions and help work out the most important questions to ask. For evidence I could record a discussion I have had.
I ask informed questions. The answers to my first questions generate new ones. As my knowledge grows I am able to ask more complex questions that may have lots of parts. For example, you could want to understand why the Iraq war happened but you would realise that before you do this you might need to find out about the history the religions and the region.
I can explore a theory. I manage to find previous thinkers who have asked questions similar to mine and can read around the topic before deciding on the area of research I will be asking my questions about.
I can quickly scope the range of questions I could ask to cover the topic from all angles. I then categorise these without bias to prioritise questions and lines of enquiry. My desire to understand the complexities of the problem drives me to ask questions that are fundamental and which link all the other questions together.

Enquirers

IE2 - Evaluate evidence

Determine reliable and useful findings or sources. Analyse and evaluate information, judging its relevance and value. When you are researching you will come across lots of information which is inaccurate or untrue. You may even come across material that has been designed to deceive you. When you are excellent at this skill you will be able to analyse all of your research and decide which parts are useful valid and accurate. Link to the website [here](#).

I can give reasons why something is true.

I can play 'Twenty questions' and win. Someone thinks of a mystery thing. I have just twenty questions to guess what it is. Only yes/no answers are allowed.

When I am doing a project, I choose which information to use and which pieces not to use. The pieces I choose are all on the same subject.

I collect information although some of it is not relevant. From all this information I can choose pieces that help me answer the questions in my project. I can explain why I didn't use some of the information if it is not obvious.

I can sort information into useful/not useful and sort the useful information into an order of most valuable to least, explaining why. My reasons are specific to the task and topic I am researching.

I understand that a piece of information which is of great value, use and relevance in one piece of work can also be less useful or relevant in another context, even if the subject is the same. For example in two pieces of work on the same topic I have selected different sources and information for each.

I can find my own evidence from sources of information not directly related to the topic I am studying and identify how they are relevant. I can raise questions about sources that I feel may be more opinion than fact and those which have not been researched as fully as I would expect.

When selecting evidence to include in my project I refer to relevance, accuracy, bias and how appropriate the work is. I make these assessments fairly and with a speed that allows me to compile and organise sufficient evidence in the time scale available to me. Sources that contain a margin of error or uncertainty are backed up by more evidence to help reduce this uncertainty.

I have established a clear strategy for assessing the value and relevance of a piece of information/research with criteria based on author/source reliability, accuracy and context. This strategy is embedded in my way of working, automatic and consistent.

Enquirers

IE3 - Stay objective

Look from different perspectives. When you are researching and enquiring it is easy to assume that your own experiences are most important because you know most about these. When you have this skill you are able to put yourself in the shoes of others and really explore the issue you are researching from their position. You can take into account their culture and how life experiences and chances may have been different from your own. You will be able to explore issues, events or problems from different perspectives. Link to the website [here](#).

I know different people have different ideas.

I can use other people's ideas as well as my own to try and solve a puzzle or problem.

I can write or record two different views. For example I could play both parts in a pretend argument.

When I am exploring a question in a project where there are at least two different opinions I spend the same time on each one. For example some people think we should eat meat and other people think we should not. I would explore both views equally.

When I do research I always use a range of sources. I try to find sources that disagree with each other. Too little research may give me a misleading result. How do you show you have researched thoroughly? Some sources are produced in order to make you believe the author's point of view, are you sure you have chosen enough sources to allow for these?

I can explain how the same event can be reported differently depending on the perspective of the reporter and explain why as well as how they are different. I can do this with an event which has happened recently as well as in the past.

I can take an issue I am very sure about and construct an argument that supports the opposite point of view. For example I may feel strongly that animal testing should not happen. I can make the case for it to happen.

I can give an example of a time when, through discussion or research I realised that a belief in something I took for granted as being true may not be. Describe how you engaged with, yet challenged these other perspectives and were able to reflect on your own views. You can find examples of where others have accidentally added bias to their work because they may not have challenged their own views sufficiently.

I never dismiss an opinion or perspective or consider it inferior to my own. When hearing a range of perspectives that are very different from mine I can sensitively question to gain a better understanding of how the person reached their perspective. In understanding this I take account of the wide range of influences, beliefs and cultural differences that lead people to create their own convictions.

Enquirers

IE4 - Reach conclusions

Draw balanced and focussed conclusions. With this skill you will be able to bring all your research together to write or present a final report. You will have the skill to record your findings in a way that others can learn from your research and get an accurate and balanced view. You have the skills of analysis and interpretation so that your work is of genuine value with the conclusion adding new insight. Link to the website [here](#).

I can decide what I believe after hearing what others believe.

At the end of each day I can tell you something I found out.

At the end of my project I can make a list of the things I have found out and say which one was most important.

My project started with questions I wanted to know the answer to. Now I have finished my project I have found answers to some of my questions. If other people looked at my project they could see how I found these answers too.

I can produce a conclusion that uses evidence to answer the original questions I was trying to answer and evaluates how accurate these conclusions are. I suggest alternative conclusions and what evidence there might be for these.

My conclusion contains analysis of the information that reveals a pattern and allows me to comment on accuracy. I might use maths, graphs, data or further research to achieve this. The conclusion clearly answers the questions research was exploring but it also explains the limitations of the evidence.

After I had completed research into a complex question I produced a complex conclusion. The conclusion deals with lots of smaller questions but manages to bring these together to show patterns and new ways of interpreting all of the information. I am clear about which questions need more research, which ones have patterns with high accuracy and which ones are less reliable because of possible bias, error or missing data.

I gain some unpaid work as a researcher either through my own organisation or from outside. My research makes clear reference to other work in the field and people who commissioned it from me feel confident that reading my conclusions will give them as much unbiased insight into the field as if they had done the work themselves. My work is completed to the deadline set and is used. The organisation will recognise the quality of my work.

I have demonstrated that the speed, accuracy and even-handedness of my research are of a professional standard. I may have demonstrated this by gaining paid work as a researcher, or by researching a piece of work of my own that is then published or by having created a well referenced reader which is downloaded or used by over one hundred people.

Team workers

PT1 - Take responsibility

Confident to take on a responsibility and see it through. Take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution. This is one aspect of leadership and as it grows you take on more and more responsibility. This area of skill includes negotiation, empowerment, confidence, respect, understanding team roles, engagement and winning the hearts and minds of others. Link to the website [here](#).

I volunteer for jobs.

I can work out rules in games or in teams. I can take turns and share the different jobs

I have put together a team of four and we had our first meeting. We agreed jobs for each of us. We worked out some rules we would all have to follow to make it fair. I have kept to what I agreed.

I have led in a team where I have a daily role. I have remembered to do my job every day and sometimes when someone else in the team is away I have done their job without being told to. My team and I decided on the different roles and who should do them. We change roles sometimes.

I lead a team of people who offer a service, run a club or event or do a job together. Everyone has very clear roles and I can explain what they are. We agreed the roles together and I have done mine well and not let people down. As evidence I could explain what our team will be doing, who does what role and how we decided on these. I could share my thoughts and concerns about what could go wrong and how I would deal with it.

I have led a team of 4 people or small company and have been in control of a budget. When I set up the team we negotiated roles and now everyone is clear on their roles and what tasks they personally need to do for the team to succeed. If there is an issue, complaint or if people have an argument in the team I will get involved and take responsibility for making sure it is sorted out fairly. I personally know what all the team members are working on at the moment.

I have led a project, service or business that involves more than one team. I regularly meet the leaders from each of the smaller teams to make sure they are all pulling together in the same direction. I make sure I have accurate feedback from our 'customers' and from the teams. I take personal responsibility for any issues that arise and I make sure they are resolved. I share power by providing opportunities for the team leaders to take more responsibility. I have developed clear rules that we all follow and we have all agreed.

I took responsibility for leading a staff or community group, made up of multiple teams and a considerable budget of time, money OR resources. I developed policies and ground rules which were agreed by all the team and followed by them. These included policies for dealing with people who let the team down so they were given clear support to change behaviour or change role. I took responsibility for problems and made sure policy was followed by me and others. Your evidence could be how you led through a difficult patch but please don't give specific names.

I am the leader of an organisation which manages its own budget and direction. I take active responsibility for ensuring that all of my staff feel valued, provide quality and are treated fairly. I take responsibility for the well-being and professional development of all my staff and make sure that their views are recognised and they are given opportunities to develop their competencies. I insist on being well informed about all aspects of my organisation. I share power and decisions but keep the final responsibility.

Team workers

PT2 - Manage the team

Managing a team effectively to complete a project. This is the role of a project manager. You make sure that the project and team function coherently and well. You keep the pace up and the focus as well as reviewing targets and plans to keep them on target and on budget. If you are good at this skill area then you are an incredibly valuable member of the team because you make sure that all of you work together in sequence. Link to the website [here](#).

I help people who are finding work hard.

I help people in my team so that our whole team does really well.

I make sure everyone in our team knows what they need to be doing and if they look like they are running out of time I help them myself or ask others to help them.

I make sure that everyone in our team knows what our team targets are. I keep the group on task. For evidence I could let you see a plan I have made that shows who is supposed to do what and by when OR a video/ audio of me getting the team working.

I produce project plans that show what everyone in the team should be doing and what their deadlines are. I organise meetings to discuss the plan and make sure everyone is clear about what they need to do. My evidence needs to include the plan and something about how the meetings have helped.

In a project that lasts for at least six weeks I have negotiated SMART weekly targets for each member of the team. Our meetings review the plan and make sure everyone is on task and meeting deadlines. We provide a good service that is value for money and reliable because of the team and my management of it.

I have strategies I use when people don't meet their SMART targets. I remain calm and focussed. I re-negotiate when I feel people have a good case for missing a deadline. Although I may have to step in and do more of the work myself, this is not my first step. I may raise the issue with the whole team. I deal with the effects on the project by reviewing and re-scheduling.

I have managed a project which was quite complex or which required me to work with people remotely and in different teams who may have had their own project managers. For example I may have project managed an international partnership between schools in different countries that came together online for a final large event. I am very efficient with my time and keep records of all decisions. Your evidence is in the actual outcomes you achieve and how you managed changes on the way.

I have held the role of PROJECT MANAGER for a large scale project such as building a new school. I use GANT charts or similar systems to track numerous staff doing numerous tasks in ways which are connected to each other. Your evidence would be successes in delivering a project on time and on budget to the client's specification.

Team workers

PT3 - Build team strengths

Recognising and using the strengths of everyone in the team. Once in a team, each member has an individual responsibility for the well-being and development of its members. This means knowing strengths and weaknesses, building on the strengths by using them and praising them but also addressing the weaknesses by giving advice and support. There is a requirement to hear the views of each individual and also to reflect the diversity of these views and respect by the whole team for them. Link to the website [here](#).

I understand that people should show respect to each other. They should listen to what they say and look after each other. Evidence could be me encouraging someone else.

I take into account the needs of others. I can tell if someone is sad or happy and I can check they are OK. I know what people are good at and what makes them feel happy.

When I work together in a team I make sure everyone is heard by sticking up for them or inviting them to speak. I help to make sure everyone gets the jobs they want to do OR are best at. My evidence will come from other team members explaining how I supported them.

For level 4 you need evidence that you can put yourself in other people's position and see THE SAME argument from two different sides. When two people are arguing can you understand both points of view. For evidence you could re-enact or explain when you used this skill to solve an argument in your team.

I have evidence that I can MIRROR. This is about listening to someone and reflecting their feelings back to them. I may use examples of times when I felt the same. I know I have mirrored well if the person recognises themselves in what I say. I can evidence doing this on video or explain when I used it to make people feel more listened to in my team.

I have found examples of the hundreds of tiny things that affect people every day. For negative examples a snigger when someone is sharing how they feel or looking away when they are half way through a sentence. For positive examples a pat; on the arm, smiles, and questions about how they are, remembering something that they said etc. I have found examples of these and can explain how they have helped to build or damage my team.

I understand the term 'Ethos'. I can give examples of ways in which I have improved the collaborative ethos of my team. I actively prevent negativity, promote solutions and positive action and make sure every member of the team feels listened to and valued. For evidence you could use short video clips of each team member giving examples of how you have built their confidence or supported their ideas.

I am aware that some in my teams may be being treated differently simply because of others prejudice. I understand the role that 'jokes' can play in putting people down for example. I always challenge such behaviour and train others to do so also. Your evidence could be from those whom you have empowered by making sure that others did not dominate meetings or the work place.

I have developed fair working practices like a head of human resources might do. I have analysed why a team was not functioning well. I have challenged key dominant people who were having negative impact on the esteem of others and have provided opportunities to praise and spread best practice. I can give examples of when I have spotted potential in someone and given them the opportunities and conditions to excel.

Team workers

PT4 - Evaluate the team

Recognise the efforts and achievements of others and praise them. The role of quality control is essential in most modern settings. People who work with your team will come to expect a level of quality from you and it is vital that this is maintained. Your role is also to celebrate what has gone well and make sure there is some shared identity in your team. Link to the website [here](#).

I can say 'well done' to other people when they have done something well.

In my team I can praise each person for something they did really well. They would agree with me.

I can praise each person in my team of 4 using their names and I can tell what I did well that helped the team and what I did badly?

When someone in my team has a complaint about me, I listen to what they have to say, make lots of eye contact and see if I can agree with anything. I thank them and don't get cross. I praise each person in my team very specifically (say exactly how and what they did well) and am honest and open about exactly what I have done well and badly.

I can look at the whole team and suggest ways we could all work together better using positive suggestions. If I think there is a problem, I can only raise it if I have a suggestion. Evidence could be an evaluation of how well the team has met its targets and why or how well the team delivers its service.

People who have worked together on a big project need people to appreciate them. At the end of a project I produced a report/presentation/video that shares our successes with people outside our team and also makes the team feel proud of the work they have achieved. It must also hint at improvements needed for next time?

Even though it is essential people feel praised and valued after a big project, there will have been mistakes and problems and it is just as important that these are recognised and not repeated. My skill is to report on the successes and the lessons learnt together. The balance is difficult to get right and I know I need to find ways of being sensitive and supportive with positive suggestions.

When working in a group that I was not leading, I recognised the things people (including me) did that caused distraction and lack of focus. I found ways to describe these to people and describe my own failings so that I was able to reduce the distractions caused in the group without taking any control from the group leader.

I have worked in the fields of QUALITY CONTROL or INSPECTION and have produced reports/presentations/media based on evidence I have collected. My reports have helped team leaders make decisions about how to move forward. I am balanced in my praise and criticism. All criticism is constructive with specific suggestions for improvement and sensitive to the feelings of the team and the need for people to be motivated and happy in their work.