

The page features three blue, 3D-rendered circles of varying sizes. One large circle is at the top right, a smaller one is in the middle right, and another large one is at the bottom right. Two thin blue lines originate from the top left and extend towards the right, framing the circles and the text area.

LEARNING LOGS or LEARNING JOURNALS

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LEARNING LOG or LEARNING JOURNAL

A Learning Log is basically a log or record or journal of your own learning. It is not necessarily a formal 'academic' piece of work. It is a personal record of your own learning. As such it is a document which is unique to you and cannot be 'right' or 'wrong'. A Learning Log helps you to record, structure, think about and reflect upon, plan, develop and evidence your own learning

What is a Learning Log?

A Learning Log is a journal which evidences your own learning and skills development. It is not just a diary or record of "What you have done" but a record of what you have learnt, tried and critically reflected upon.

For example if in your Learning Log you include details of what you did or how you did something then consider asking yourself questions such as:

- Did it go well? Why? What did you learn?
- Did it go badly? Why? What did you learn?
- How can you improve for next time

A Learning Log contains your record of your experiences, thoughts, feelings and reflections. *One of the most important things it contains is your conclusions about how what you have learnt is relevant to you and how you will use the new information/knowledge/skill/technique in the future.*

It may contain details of problems you have encountered and solved (or not solved). Examples of where you have started to try out and practice a new skill and examples of your own formal and informal learning. Formal learning is 'taught' in a formal academic setting - for example via a lecture. Informal learning is learning which takes place outside a formal academic setting, for example, though talking with friends or colleagues in a social setting.

A Learning Log is a personal document. Its content may be very loosely structured and only of relevance to you. Once you have commenced a

Learning Log you will find it a valuable and useful 'tool' to help your learning and to help you to think about and structure your own learning.

How do I 'do' a Learning Log?

Try to write something down after every new learning experience. Normally use an A4 pad ring binder of paper.

- What you did
- Your thoughts
- Your feelings
- How well (or badly) it went
- What you learnt
- What you will do differently next time.

On a regular basis (usually 3-5 weekly) review what you have written and reflected upon this. Be honest with yourself.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- Have I achieved anything? If so, what?
- What progress have I made
- Have I put any theory into practice?
- How does what I have been doing lead to me becoming better at a skill?
- How can I use this to plan for the future?
- How can I use this to plan new learning?
- Experiences?

In addition to 3-5 weekly reflection you should also ask yourself these questions the next day or within 24-48 hours of each one of the taught sessions you attend or within 24-48 hours of having practiced a new skill. You will find that how you view something, (your perception of something) changes over time. For example you may have been trying to develop your communication skills and have had a bad or negative learning experience when something went wrong and you feel you have made little or no or even backwards progress. You may reflect upon this the next day and your

thoughts and feelings may be mainly negative ones. If you reflect about the experience 3-5 weeks later on you may find that you have now overcome the negative experience and have used it to develop further and improve yourself. Skills rarely suddenly develop or improve 'overnight'. Learning new knowledge and applying it within a skills context usually takes time, effort and perseverance. A Learning Log will help you to become more aware of how you learn, what learning tasks you enjoy (and don't enjoy) and of your emotional and cognitive (thought) processes

At first it may seem difficult to start to critically reflect upon your own learning. Over time though you will find that it becomes easier. The more often that you practice the skill of self reflection then the easier it will become.

You can use your Learning Log to record courses you went on, books you have read, discussions you have had, Internet sites you have looked at, television programmes you have watched. At the end of the day your log should become something that is directly relevant to you and your learning.

Is there a 'best' or 'correct' way of producing a Learning Log?

Not really, the log should be relevant to you and your job/studies/role/activities. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way of producing a Learning Log. Perhaps the three key questions when engaging in the process of producing a Learning Log are:

- **Am I being honest with myself?**
- **Is this a useful process for me?**
- **Is this helping my own process of learning?**

If the answers are 'yes' then your Learning Log is correct and right for you. If the answers are 'no' and you have genuinely asked yourself some of the questions previously mentioned then perhaps a Learning Log may not really be of much use to you.

If you require any help, advice or guidance about your Learning Log or about how to get started on one then please discuss it with your tutor.

How can producing a Learning Log and developing the skill of critical self reflection help me?

Again, that depends very much upon you. Some people will get more out of engaging in the process of producing a Learning Log than other people will. Research has identified that reflection can help people to change. Some of the changes which have been identified are listed below.

(Adapted from C Miller, A Tomlinson, M Jones, Researching Professional Education 1994, University Of Sussex).

Changes associated with reflection.

From	→	To
Accepting		Questioning
Intolerant		Tolerant
Doing		Thinking
Being Descriptive		Analytical
Impulsive		Diplomatic
Being Reserved		Being more Open
Unassertive		Assertive
Unskilled Communicators		Skilled Communicators
Reactive		Reflective
Concrete Thinking		Abstract Thinking
Lacking Self Awareness		Self Aware

LEARNING LOG

- What did I do?

- How do I think/feel about this?

What did I think about but not say (or what did I want to say but did not)

- How well (or badly) did it go?

- What did I learn?

- What will I do differently next time?

- How will I do it differently next time?

- What have I achieved?

What have I learn about myself?

- How have I put any theory into practice?
- How does what I have been doing lead to me becoming better at a skill
- How can I use this to plan for the future?
- (How) can I use this to plan new learning experiences?