

A photograph of a female teacher with blonde hair, wearing a grey cardigan over a white top, leaning over a desk to assist a young male student with brown hair wearing a white t-shirt. The student is looking down at a colorful, patterned object in his hands. They are in a library or computer lab setting with bookshelves and computer monitors in the background. The image is partially covered by a teal overlay at the top and bottom.

**Developing active learning skills  
for learners working  
from pre-Entry to Level 1**

*learning your way*

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## Introduction

Enabling learners to take a more active role in their learning gives them a greater sense of agency and control. Being more involved in their learning can help motivation and raise aspirations. Learners working at *all* levels are capable of playing a part in the learning process. While the skills needed to actively engage in learning are often not explicitly taught, for learners working at lower levels and particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it can be helpful for teachers to consciously build these skills in their learners.

## How to get learners actively involved

Most learning providers are committed to putting the learner at the heart of their learning experience, but it is not always easy to picture what that looks like in practice with learners working at Entry and level 1. How do you involve Entry 1 learners meaningfully in target-setting, for example?

The tables below set out some reasonable expectations for learners working from Entry 1 to Level 1 in terms of their ability to engage with different aspects of the learning process including:

- dealing with new settings and learning experiences
- understanding themselves as learners
- making choices about learning
- target-setting
- managing their own support
- reviewing progress
- recognising achievements
- preparing for the future.

The skills in the tables have been adapted from research undertaken by Natspec, the membership body for specialist FE providers, who worked with independent specialist providers and general FE colleges to better understand how young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can become more actively involved in their learning.

There is no suggestion that all learners should have all of the skills or knowledge included at a particular level. Some aspects of learning skills are likely to be more important or relevant than others for different individuals. Equally, learners are also likely to have 'spikey profiles', with greater ability to engage in some parts of the learning process than in others. We would recommend, however, that all learners are given the opportunity to develop their learning skills, by broadening out their skills and/or increasing their skill levels - so that they can become more active agents in their learning, and ultimately in their own lives.

## Making use of this resource

Managers can use the table to:

- review how effectively their organisation supports active engagement in learning for students working at Entry and Level 1
- set expectations for how teachers should involve learners in the learning process
- develop staff understanding of active learning for students working at lower levels.

Teachers can use the table to

- identify how engaged learners currently are in their learning
- get ideas for new ways or next steps for developing individual learners' learning skills
- set targets for greater engagement as learners develop their learning skills
- help build a learning skills curriculum.

## Recognising learners' developing skills

If you are interested in accrediting the skills that your learners are developing through active engagement in the learning process, then why not check out Gateway Qualifications [Skills for Active Learners qualifications](#)? We offer Awards and Certificates in Skills for Active Learners at Entry 1, 2 and 3 and Level 1. You can select the units most appropriate to your learners, combining units at different levels to reflect your learners' spikey profiles.

All the Entry level units from the Skills for Active Learners qualifications are also included in our [Skills for Independent Living](#) qualifications at Entry levels 1, 2 and 3. This means that you could create a broad programme of learning, combining units in learning skills alongside units in personal and social skills and/or employability skills. This may be more appropriate for some learners than a qualification solely focused on learning skills.

## Focus: Adjusting to a new setting/Starting out on a new learning experience

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
Recognise key personnel directly involved in delivery or support of their learning programme and/or peers with whom they are learning	List the people who can help them, how they can help and where to locate them	Identify the key members of staff who will be involved in own learning programme and their role	Locate and access places, staff and services, relevant to their own needs
Recognise key areas or places that are relevant to them in their learning	Identify key staff involved in different aspects of their learning	Know some of the different types of support available, particularly for supporting their learning	Know the health and safety procedures in case of fire, accident or injury
Show awareness that the experience is different from what they were doing before	Know what to do in the case of emergency (eg if the fire alarm sounds)	Access support staff and/or facilities, including IAG, relevant to their needs	Know the organisation's procedures for reporting feeling unsafe
Demonstrate positive or negative reactions to a new experience	Know what they should do if they hurt themselves	Access key locations on site which are relevant to them	Know their own responsibilities in terms of safe practice
	Know who to tell if they feel unsafe	Know how they can benefit from the new experience	Know what they can expect to achieve by completing the learning programme and how that links to their own goals
	Know the main reasons why they are beginning a new learning experience	Know what they want to achieve through their learning programme (eg a qualification or readiness for work)	Know the location, timings and relevant equipment for each session on their timetable
	Know what they want from the new experience	Use previously learnt skills in different situations within the new learning experience	Understand what each session covers and how the learning is relevant to them
	Know their own timetable and/or routines	Know what they will be doing within the different sessions on	
	Follow instructions to carry out routine, familiar tasks, using existing skills, in a new setting		

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
	<p>Communicate with peers within the new learning experience on topics of shared interest</p> <p>Follow instructions to work with peers within the new learning experience, to complete shared tasks</p> <p>Communicate which aspects of the new experience they are enjoying and which they are not</p>	<p>their timetable and why they are relevant</p> <p>Initiate conversations with their peers with whom they are learning</p> <p>Listen and respond to the ideas and suggestions of their peers during learning sessions</p> <p>Work with their peers to achieve given outcomes as part of the new learning experience</p> <p>Communicate which elements of the new experience are going well and which are not</p>	<p>Use existing skills in different situations within the new learning experience, making minor adjustments as required by the new context</p> <p>Engage in different forms of communication with peers</p> <p>Offer support to peers when appropriate</p> <p>Give and receive feedback from peers in a positive manner</p> <p>Reflect on what is positive about the new learning experience</p> <p>Articulate issues or concerns relating to the new experience and suggest ways to address these</p>

## Focus: Developing self-awareness as a learner/identifying own starting point

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
Indicate to others aspects of learning they like and do not like	Communicate key likes and dislikes in relation to learning and topics of interest	Communicate likes and dislikes and main interests in relation to learning and reasons for these	Identify strengths and areas of difficulty in relation to learning, including why they find some things difficult
Indicate what they are good at and what they find difficult	Identify some key aspects of support that they need and how it helps with their learning	Identify key motivating factors that support them to persist in their learning	Recognise how some of their strengths will help them to progress
Indicate when they are learning in a way that suits them and when they are not	Identify existing skills in response to direct questioning	Identify routine situations where they need support and the key aspects of the support needed	Identify own motivators, why these work for them and recognise when motivation levels have dropped
Communicate their need for support to others	Identify some skills that they would like to develop or build on	Know some of the key skills they already have and some of the main areas they need to develop, as relevant to their learning programme	Identify the main types of support previously used in learning situations, which have been successful and how they have helped
	Give examples of positive learning experiences in the past		
	Identify some things they do well and some they find difficult	Know when they learn best and why that is the case	Identify learning situations in which they are likely to need support
			Know what skills they already have and what they will need to develop if they are going to progress
			Identify different circumstances in which they learn well and in which

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
			<p>they do not – and reasons why that is the case</p> <p>Recognise that having an awareness of own starting point can help in taking an active role in learning</p>

## Focus: Making choices about learning

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
Contribute to the decision-making process about the content of their learning programme, e.g. through expressing a preference between given options	Contribute ideas about the possible content of their learning programme, in discussion with others	Communicate their wishes about the content of their learning programme in relation to skills and topics	Communicate to others what they want to learn and why particular aspects of a programme or ways of working are important to them
Have a basic understanding of the key characteristics of the learning options to support choice-making	Recognise that different activities provide opportunities for different sorts of learning	Give reasons why they want to learn certain things, including making links to longer-term goals	Find out or ask for key details about learning options to help make informed decisions
Indicate likes and dislikes in relation to learning options	Choose learning activities which interest them and which are relevant to their longer term goals	Know what skills can be developed through specific learning activities on offer	Take into account a range of factors when choosing learning activities including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relevance to future ambitions</li> <li>• own interests</li> <li>• own strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul> Make compromises when choosing learning options if/when necessary

## Focus: Target-setting

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
<p>Contribute to setting their own targets</p> <p>Show awareness of their own targets</p>	<p>Suggest areas of learning in relation to which targets could be set</p> <p>Identify the main skills or aspects of knowledge to be developed in order to achieve each of their targets</p> <p>Know how achieving each target will help them in the future</p>	<p>Identify targets which address skills or knowledge which they need to develop</p> <p>Know why achieving their targets is important and how they relate to their aspirations for the future</p> <p>Know what skills or knowledge they need and how they plan to develop these in order to achieve each of their targets</p>	<p>Recognise how target-setting supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• motivation</li> <li>• planning learning</li> <li>• monitoring progress</li> </ul> <p>Identify targets which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• address relevant skills or areas of knowledge</li> <li>• relate to their future aspirations</li> <li>• are challenging and achievable</li> </ul> <p>Use the suggestions of others to develop and refine targets</p> <p>Through discussion with others, agree dates for target completion which allow a suitable time for the learning needed</p> <p>Know the knowledge, skills or behaviours they will need to develop to meet each target, including the standard required</p> <p>Know how specific activities or elements of their programme will</p>

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
			provide opportunities to work towards each target  Know about the relationship between current targets and longer-term goals

## Focus: Managing own support

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
			<p>Identify, as situations arise, when they need support and when they do not</p> <p>Use appropriate communication to make the relevant person or people aware when they do or do not need support</p> <p>Communicate in advance some anticipated support needs relating to routine situations</p> <p>Identify an appropriate source for the sort of support that they require</p> <p>Request support from appropriate people, making clear the nature and method of support required</p> <p>Give clear instructions for straightforward tasks to people providing support, whether or not they are familiar to self</p> <p>Make arrangements for support in routine situations when they can clearly anticipate what they will need</p> <p>Indicate which aspects of their support are meeting their needs</p> <p>Describe any factors, situations or approaches which they think could be handled differently to better meet their needs</p> <p>Suggest possible improvements to the support they are being offered</p> <p>Communicate to relevant people when a change in circumstance means that their support needs have changed</p> <p>Respond positively when another person explains how s/he thinks their support needs have changed</p> <p>Know how taking an active role in setting up and managing own support package benefits them</p>

## Focus: Developing self-awareness as a learner/identifying own starting point

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
Identify what they can do now that they could not do before they started their course	Give examples of new skills developed or new knowledge or understanding gained on their course	Identify new skills or knowledge developed in relation to their aims, goals or targets	Identify areas where they are making progress and areas where they are not, and where progress has been fast and slow
Contribute to discussions on how they are progressing	Identify areas where progress is slow or not happening	Identify areas where they have not been able to make progress or where progress is slower than expected and suggests reasons why that may be the case	Identify factors enabling success and barriers to progress
Respond to the comments of others on the progress they are making	Make simple statements about their progress	Use feedback from others to help them make progress	Suggest ways of doing things differently to improve progress
	Answer straightforward questions about their progress		Use self-assessment and other people's feedback to help them adjust their approach
			Be able to learn from own mistakes

## Focus: Recognising own achievements

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
Identify some of the achievements they are working towards	Identify the main skills or areas of knowledge that they need to develop in order to achieve their targets or goals	Know what they will know or be able to do once they have achieved each of their targets or goals	Know what their achievements will enable them to do
Be aware when they have achieved something	Identify that a target or goal has been met	Communicate to others what they have achieved and why the achievement is relevant to them	Know what success will look like: the levels or standards they will need to have reached in order to achieve
	Describe what they can do or know as a result of their learning	Provide evidence of their achievements to others	Know what qualification, certification or other form of recognition they will gain if successful

## Focus: Preparing for the future

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
<p>Have an awareness of some options for the future, including different ways they could spend their time</p> <p>Communicate some preferences about potential future options</p> <p>Take part in activities designed to help them develop skills relevant to their future plans</p>	<p>Know about some different options for the future</p> <p>Communicate to others some things that they would like to do after completing their programme of learning</p> <p>Participate in activities or learning situations which will support their progress</p> <p>Recognise some of the ways in which their lives will change when they move on from their learning programme</p>	<p>Know about possible options relevant to their future (e.g. types of entry level job; available courses; supported living versus independent living) and the key differences between options</p> <p>Communicate own wishes for the future and give reasons for their preferences/choices</p> <p>Recognise what skills will help to make the progression to the next stage in their lives</p> <p>Engage in different learning activities designed to develop skills relevant to their planned progression route</p> <p>Know some of the ways in which their life will change when they progress</p> <p>Identify key aspects of the support they will need to progress and how it will help them</p>	<p>Know about potential options for the future (e.g. in relation to employment, further study, living arrangements) and the advantages and disadvantages of each</p> <p>Make decisions or express preferences about the future based on relevant factors such as suitability, availability, own wishes</p> <p>Know how their existing skills are relevant to the future they are hoping to achieve and what new skills they will need</p> <p>Develop or improve their skills to facilitate successful progression</p> <p>Anticipate change, recognising how things will be different, and take part in preparing for specific changes in the near future</p>





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