

Study skills that demonstrate independent learning



This assignment will attempt to identify specific skills and abilities that are required for independent learning. For one to be successful through their academic journey, it is important to be determined and in control of ones studies, including, taking responsibility of the targets one sets and identifying strategies which will allow the journey of study to become fulfilling and enjoyable.

Firstly, this assignment will attempt to define what is meant by independent learning and then go on to identify the key skills required for independent learning. This assignment shall compare and contrast two types of learners, a passive learner and an independent learner, and conclude by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of both types of learners.

What is an independent learner?

An independent learner is one who takes responsibility of their own learning and will take an active role in the process of their own learning and development. By attending lectures and seminars and asking questions, an independent learner is able to further develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

An independent learner will be able to take part in the whole process of learning, asking questions and debating issues. An independent learner is one who does not solely rely on their tutors, but will go and learn using their own resources and learning styles. An independent learner is one who is able to gather and link information to have a better understanding of what they have seen or read. An independent learner is a deeper learner which allow

them to use the information they are given in a more active and productive way.

An independent learner will continue to self evaluate through their studies and have the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses and respond accordingly. An independent learner monitors their progress through keeping journals which will help them to determine their own individual learning style.

An independent learner will always reflect upon their work, by reflecting and asking questions on a particular topic an independent learner will remain focused which will allow them to learn at a more profound level. An independent learner keeps their mind stimulated by taking time to study their subjects through reading, writing, researching and through participating in class discussions, which increases their confidence and credibility as a student.

An independent learner will always set themselves realistic goals and will use their study time efficiently such as prioritizing their work load and making the most of resources available to them, such as, IT and libraries.

One definition of independent learning is The ability to take charge of one's learning.(Holec 1981)

Key Skills required for an Independent Learner

An independent learner will adapt specific skills and learning behaviours that will promote and increase their performance in their studies. Some of their

main strategies that an independent learner will apply are demonstrated below.

Preparing for lectures

An independent learner will always be prepared for lectures by attending lectures on time. They will use different styles of note taking such as, such as spider webs, or pattern notes, or they might develop their own note taking style, which will suit their individual needs. An independent learner will write down questions they need answering in lectures.

Asking Questions for clarification

An independent learner will frequently ask probing questions to enhance their learning as well as to clarify what has been observed. This is also a good way to challenge ideas and theories and introduce new ideas to be considered into the discussion. Through this they will gain more insight into the topic a give rise to new and interesting debates.

Critical thinking

An independent learner will always critically analyse the validity of information by researching, evaluating, comparing and contrasting theories, and weighing up strengths and weaknesses in both viewpoints. Edward Glaser, 1941 (cited in Cottrell S, 2008, pp275) defined critical thinking as:

‘ Critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends’.

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An independent learner whilst critically analysing must give importance to, persistence and should correctly evaluate evidence and ensure the viewpoints are rational and can lead to a conclusion without any implications.

Effective note taking

An independent learner will always first determine which method of note taking is most beneficial to them. An independent learner will always choose a method which is both enjoyable and suitable for their learning style. For an independent learner it is important to take notes in lectures as they can refer back to them when doing their research and it will also help them to gather new ideas and plan their work. Taking notes will help with remembering information that will be relevant to the topic they are studying, for example, books that they may need to refer to.

There are various methods of note taking, such as, writing, audio recording or using mind maps. Mind maps are a very effective way of processing information in a more easy and visual way. Mind maps encourage a learner to use their own words and ideas creatively and also organise information that will be useful and effective. The idea of mind mapping was introduced by Tony Buzan in the 1960s.

An example of a mind map:

Available from <http://www.images.google.co.uk/image> [accessed 30/11/2009]

Reflection

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An independent learner will always reflect upon their learning and make positive changes through self evaluation and monitoring their performance.

An independent learner will learn the skill of reflecting on their learning by carrying out self audits establishing their individual strengths and weaknesses, and applying strategies that will strengthen areas of work where they feel there is room for improvement. An independent learner will also, use feedback from both tutors and peers in a production and construction way. By gathering feedback an independent learner can help identify, limitations, they may have in reaching their full potential.

An independent learner might use different strategies to help them reflect on their work, for example, by keeping a learning journal, which would be useful to help record their personal thoughts and feelings about their learning journey. This is a very productive way of reflecting, evaluation and critically analysing their individual performances and helps develop writing skills.

The benefits of reflection are demonstrated by David Kolb (1984) in his theory of the reflective learning cycle.

Available from <http://images.google.co.uk/images>. [accessed 15/11/2009]

Kolb's reflective learning cycle, is a good technique of reflecting and if adapted by a learner it can give them an insight into ways or methods they can apply to their learning.

Organisation and Good Time Management

An independent learner will have the ability to use methods and skills to become a good organiser and use their time in an effective way. They will
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have targeted goals, which will be realistic and achievable, allowing them to remain focused and motivated in their studies. An independent learner will apply self management skills to help them organise and prepare their workload and set themselves realistic time scales in which they will meet their deadlines. Effective diary keeping as illustrated in Cottrell S. 2008 The Study Skills Handbook is an excellent method of managing ones time effectively. This will allow the learner to keep control of their time and help them organise their studies.

An independent learner is one who keeps oneself motivated and uses strategies to help, overcome anxieties or pressures that come along with studying in higher education. By researching and using other methods to understand and learn the subject, an independent learner minimises the risk of becoming overwhelmed with their workload. Research skills are very important and using different methods will help in becoming more confident in reading and research. Identifying and selecting relevant information as illustrated in Cottrell S. 2008 The Study Skills Handbook is a very good approach to researching and reading. This gives the learner particular strategies to apply to help them learn and understand their subject, such as, using the reading list, select the latest information, select by reliability and select by amount.

Organising and setting a realistic time schedules, will allow an independent learner to become more in control of their studies, as well as preventing themselves to become bored and disengaged with their learning.

Creative

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An independent learner will apply new and enjoyable ways in which will help them learn easily. Creative ways of learning helps individuals acquire their own learning style. It will allow the learner to identify the best way in which they can learn affectively, applying new and old skills for learning. An independent learner will apply and discover new and innovative ways of researching and gathering information to help them with their learning. As illustrated in Cottrell S. 2008 The Study Skills Handbook creative planning, using visual images as well as writing notes can help with capturing your thoughts and ideas in different ways.

Good Social Skills and the Ability to Collectively Work with Others

An independent learner must have excellent social skills and the ability to affectively work and communicate with others. Having good social skills will allow the independent learner to debate and exchange ideas and challenge theories and viewpoints in an assertive way. An independent learner will work with others, offering and exchanging different ideas of learning.

Collectively working with others will enhance your understanding of a subject as well as reassuring the learner at times when they are feeling overwhelmed. Sharing ideas of how to manage with studying and other responsibilities will allow the learner to gain new innovative ways of juggling their work. Independent learners allow being constructively criticised, listening and observing what is being said and ask questions if necessary.

Applying Other Strategies

By understanding what kind of learner you are and then identifying the strengths and weaknesses in this, an independent learner can easily identify <https://assignbuster.com/study-skills-that-demonstrate-independent-learning/>

areas of weakness and apply other strategies that will help overcome barriers.

In addition to the above skills an independent learner may also apply the CREAM strategy to their studies. This is illustrated in Cottrell S, 2008 The Study Skills Handbook. The CREAM strategy means Creative, Reflective, Active and Motivated. These strategies help students in becoming more aware of their individual learning styles as well as applying and discovering new ideas, being creative and imaginative whilst learning, which keeps their minds stimulated and interested in their studies.

Self Evaluation and Monitoring

An independent learner will consistently self evaluate and monitor their performance, using different strategies to help them monitor their progress. Independent learners may use personal journals or carry out self evaluations, as well using feedback from tutors and peers to indentify areas in which they need to develop further. This helps the learner to quickly manage areas of weakness, and apply strategies to overcome this, as well as indentifying their strengths. This approach allows the learner to be in complete control of their learning and development.

Advantages of being an Independent Learner in contrast to a Passive learner

There are many advantages of being an independent learner. An independent learner is actively engaged in the entire process of learning and developing. An independent learner takes a keen interest in their studies and will take an active role in ensuring that they reach their aims and objectives.

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Being an independent learner as opposed to a passive learner is more likely to succeed in their studies. Passive learners take little or no responsibility in their learning and development. They are often known as learners who memorise information rather than understanding what they are learning. Passive learners will always use surface learning and will not process in a productive manner, which will distract them from their studies and they may become easily bored and disinterested in what they are learning. Passive learners are often ill prepared for lectures are unable to actively contribute to group discussions and debates. Due to their passiveness and laid back attitude towards learning they are more likely to miss deadlines and underachieve.

Independent learners will increase their confidence and self reliance and make the most of information they have gathered.

An independent learner will not only meet their full academic potential, but will also be dedicated to their learning and developing themselves as individuals. Independent learners have understood and taken the key skills that are required to become successful in their journey of learning. This demonstrates that by being an active and independent learner one will not only gain respect of tutors and peers, but will also be making their own success.