

# [Teacher directed vs self directed learning](https://assignbuster.com/teacher-directed-vs-self-directed-learning/)

Self-directed learning is learning in which the individual takes the initiative and the responsibility for their learning. An estimated seventy percent of adult learning is self-directed learning (Cross, 1981). In order to better understand self-directed learning it is important to know how it is different from teacher directed learning, a style in which we are familiar with throughout our childhood education. Knowles (1975) explains the difference between teacher directed learning and self-directed learning as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher directed learning vs. Self-directed learning

## Teacher Directed Learning

## Self-Directed Learning

Assumes the learner is essentially a dependent personality and that he teacher has the responsibility on what and how the learner should be taught

Assumes that the human being grows in capacity (and need) to be self-directing as an essential component of maturing, and that this capacity should be nurtured to develop as rapidly as possible

Assumes that the learner’s experience is of less value than that of the teacher, the textbook, the textbook writers and materials producers as a resource for learning, and that therefore the teacher has the responsibility to see to it that the resource of these experts are transmitted to the learner

Assumes that the learner’s experiences become an increasingly rich resource for learning, which should be exploited along with the resources of experts

Assumes that students enter into education with a subject-centered orientation to learning (they see learning as accumulating subject matter and that therefore learning experiences should be organized according to units of content

Assumes that the students natural orientation is task or problem centered and that therefore learning experiences should be organized as task accomplishments or problem solving learning projects

Assumes that students are motivated to learn in response to external rewards and punishments

Assume that learners are motivated by internal incentives

Many self-directed learners are attempting to gain new skills, knowledge, and attitudes to improve their work performance. Others conduct their self-directed learning to improve family life and health, enjoy the arts and physical recreation, participate in a hobby, or simply increase their intellectual capital (Lowry, 1989). Not all adults prefer the self-directed option, and even the adults who practice self-directed learning also engage in more formal educational experiences such as teacher-directed courses (Brookfield, 1985)

## Application of Self-Directed Learning

Ash (1985), Bauer (1985), Brockett and Hiemstra (1985), Brookfield (1985), Cross (1978), Hiemstra (1982, 1985), and Reisser (1973) provide ideas on how adult educators can facilitate self-directed learning:

Help the learner identify the starting point for a learning project

Encourage adult learners to view knowledge and truth and to appreciate that they can act on their world individually or collectively to transform it

Create a partnership with the learner by negotiating a learning contract for goals, strategies, and evaluation criteria

Be a manager of the learning experience rather than an information provider

Help learners acquire the needs assessment techniques necessary to discover what objectives they should set

Encourage the setting of objectives that can be met in several ways and offer a variety of options for evidence of successful performance

Provide examples of previously acceptable work

Make sure that learners are aware of the objectives, learning strategies, resources, and evaluation criteria

Teach inquiry skills, decision making, personal development, and self-evaluation of work

Act as advocates for educationally underserved populations to facilitate their access to resources

Help match resources to the needs of learners

Help learners locate resources

Help learners develop positive attitudes and feelings of independence relative to learning

Recognize learner personality types and learning styles

Use techniques such as field experience and problem solving that take advantage of adults’ rich experience base

Develop high-quality learning guides

Encourage critical thinking skills by incorporating such activities as seminars

Create an atmosphere of openness and trust to promote better performance

Help protect learners against manipulation by promoting a code of ethics

Behave ethically, which includes not recommending a self-directed learning approach if it is not congruent with the learners’ needs

Based on my readings and learning about self-directed learning I decided that I would like to find out how other educators feel about staff trainings and what type of learning they feel best meets their learning style(s) and needs. I conducted a brief online survey in which I received seventy-one responses from all over the United States and Canada. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the demographics that responded to my survey.

The second part of my survey focused on staff development and trainings that educators have participated in and the types they feel are most beneficial to them in regards to how they learn. The results are shown below in Table 3.

What I find interesting about the results of the survey is that people spend a good majority of their adult learning focused on work-related learning and that the majority of workers are required to participate in such learning. Could this be because people are not self-motivated to learn outside of the required learning, are they too busy with other commitments, or just not interested? When the survey participants were asked about what factors they consider when deciding on training courses their results were as follows:

49% – Having to take off work to attend

76%- The cost

77%- Level of interest

26%- If it is required that you attend or not

27%- Family obligations

47%- The amount of time required

7%- Other reasons

Maybe those that are in charge of conducting adult learning courses are not taking into consideration some of the ideas mentioned earlier in reaching those adult learners. Google has done a great job in meeting these self-directed learning ideas through the use of their Innovative Time Off program. Employees are encouraged to take 20 percent of their time to work on something company-related that interests them personally. Mediratta (2007) said “ It sounds obvious, but people work better when they’re involved in something they’re passionate about, and many cool technologies have their origins in 20 percent time, including Gmail, Google News and even the Google shuttle buses that bring people to work at the company’s headquarters in Mountain View, California.”

When people are inspired they are more likely to take on learning opportunities. As educators and leaders it is our job to reach the adult learner by meeting their needs and making connections with them.

## Self-Directed Learners

“ Millions of people pay a king’s ransom for college tuition to learn what is free for the taking when motivated by a compelling desire to learn. In the movie Good Will Hunting, Will chides an arrogant Ivy League student for paying a fortune for an education that would be free but for the price of a library card. Although this is absolutely valid, very few people believe it (Autodidactic Press, 2010).

Autodidactic Press presents a list of additional self-directed learners on their website. I have always been interested in what motivates learners and what qualities they possess. Being a math teacher of course Albert Einstein is of high interest to me. I use a lot of his educational background to motivate my students and to let them know that there is no obstacle that can get in their way when it comes to learning mathematics. Here are a few of the other famous learners that have always interested me and how they have accomplished great things while being self-directed:

Ansel Adams (1902-1984)- Was taken out of school at an early age because he did not work well with routine. Through self-study Adams made photography a fine art.

Maya Angelou (1928-)- A poet, an actress, a historian, a playwright, a producer-director, and a civil-rights activist who did not finish college

Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922)- Self-taught inventor of the telephone and telegraph. His college experience consisted of only a few lectures.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)- Educated herself by reading classic literature and studying Shakespearian plays.

Samuel Clemens (1835-1910)- Left school at the age of 13 for a “ journey of learning” that included delivery boy, grocery clerk, blacksmith’s helper, typesetter, and river boat pilot.

Michael Dell- Left college after one semester to sell computers

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)- Formal education ended at age 15 and furthered his learning as a court clerk and as a newspaper journalist.

Walt Disney (1901-1966)- Taught himself the art of cartooning with the help of correspondence schools.

Henry Ford (1863-1947)- Left school at the age of 15 and learned about mechanics by repairing watches.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)- Abandoned his formal education at the age of 10 and later became an inventor, public servant, an author, and a publisher.

Jane Goodall (1934-)- Holds a doctorate in her field but anthropologist Louis Leaky selected her to study primates in the wild because of her lack of formal training

Patrick Henry (1736-1799)- A civil libertarian who was educated by his self-educated father.

Milton Hershey (1857-1945)- Attended school only through fourth grade.

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)- A self-educated lawyer with less than a year of formal schooling.

Beatrix Potter (1866-1943)- A self-taught scientist and children’s book author who never attended school.

Orville Wright (1871-1948) and Wilbur Wright (1867-1912)- Self-taught inventors and co-founders of the field of aviation.

Gibbons, Bailey, Comeau, Schmuck, Seymour, & Wallace (1980) analyzed the biographies of twenty acknowledged experts without formal training beyond high school in search of commonalities that might suggest ways people become effectively self-directed in learning and accomplishments. An overview of their list of their twenty subjects in Table 3 and their list of forty characteristics in Table 4 leads to conclusions about self-directed learning.

## Table 3: The Subjects: 20 People Who Became Famous Without Formal Training

Virginia Woolf

Charlie Chaplin

Harry S. Truman

Frank Lloyd Wright

Walt Disney

George Bernard Shaw

Wilbur Wright

Will Rogers

Muhammad Ali

Harry Houdini

H. L. Mencken

Aaron Copeland

Pablo Picasso

John L. Lewis

Gerald Durrell

Ralph Edwards

Amelia Earhart

Henry Ford

Malcolm X

Eric Hoffer

## Table 4: The 40 Most Prominent Characteristics in a Study of the Biographies of 20 People Who Became Expert without Formal Training

Primary Experience in the Area

Industrious

Perseverance

Self-Disciplined Study

Curiosity

Single-minded Pursuit

Creativity

Ingenuity

Self-Confidence

Natural Ability

Assertiveness

Intelligence

Independent Exploration

Observation

Confirmational Support from Others

Integrity

Nonconformity

Ambition

Effect of the Economic Environment

Effect of Personal Major Achievements

Physical Good Health

Altruistic Motives

Sensitivity to Others

Development of Interest in Youth

Personal Charisma

Avid Reading (specific to field)

An Incident that Led to a New Perspective

Emotionally Warm Family Environment

A Primary Relationship is Vital to Life and Career

Psychological Good Health

Conflict in the Field of Expertise

Strong Personal Guiding Principles

Busy, Active Home Atmosphere

Optimism

Pleasing Appearance

Family Coherence

Evidence of Good Memory

Mother Was Major Parental Influence

Accident-Free Life

Sense of Humor

As a result of struggling with a problem with a student’s reaction to his teaching, Grow (1991, 1996) found a concept around which to reorganize his understanding of teaching:

Different students have different abilities to be self-directed

Teachers must adapt their methods in response

Self-direction can be taught

The Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) Model (Grow, 1991) suggests how teachers can actively equip students to become more self-directed in their learning (Table 5). The teacher’s purpose is to match the learner’s stage of self-direction and prepare the learner to advance to higher stages.

## Table 5: The Self-Directed Learning Model

## Student

## Teacher

## Examples

## Stage 1

Dependent

Authority, Coach

Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.

## Stage 2

Interested

Motivator, guide

Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.

## Stage 3

Involved

Facilitator

Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.

## Stage 4

Self-Directed

Consultant, delegator

Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.

The final part of my online survey for educators focused on how the participants described themselves as a teacher (how their class is run) and as a learner (how they learn best) in regards to the stages of self-directed learning in regards to Grow’s (1991) SSDL. Table 6 displays the results of the survey. One thing that I have noticed from the results of this survey is that many educators do not teach in the manner that they perceive to be the way they learn the best. So, are educators taking into account the varying ways that students (of any age) learn? How does this affect the students, the learner?

## Table 6: How Educators Describe Themselves as a Teacher and a Learner in Regards to Grow’s (1991) Self-Directed Learning Model

## Yourself as a Teacher

## Yourself as a Learner

## Stage 1- Dependent Student

## Teacher as Coach

6%

23%

## Stage 2- Interested Student

## Teacher as Guide

30%

22%

## Stage 3- Involved Student

## Teacher as Facilitator

40%

35%

## Stage 4- Self-Directed Student

## Teacher as Consultant

12%

23%

Grow (1991) states that problems occur when dependent learners are mismatched with non-directive teachers and when self-directed learners are mismatched with highly directive teachers. Table 7 displays the match and mismatch between learner stages and teacher styles.

## Table 7: Match and Mismatch Between Learner Stages and Teacher Style (Grow, 1991)

## Student 4: Self-Directed Learner

Severe Mismatch: Student resent authoritarian teacher

Mismatch

Near Match

Match

## Student 3: Involved Learner

Mismatch

Near Match

Match

Near Match

## Student 2: Interested Learner

Near Match

Match

Near Match

Mismatch

## Student 1: Dependent Learner

Match

Near Match

Mismatch

Severe Mismatch: Students resent freedom they are not ready for

## Teacher 1: Authority Expert

## Teacher 2: Motivator

## Teacher 3: Facilitator

## Teacher 4: Delegator

## Conclusion

So I do I become a more self-directed learner? Guglielmino & Guglielmino (2003) suggests ways that one can enhance your readiness for self-direction in learning (SDL) and become a more ACTIVE learner:

Assess yourself as a learner. Become more aware of your preferred learning styles and your strongest intelligences.

Contemplate your previous SDL projects. Think about what you learned and how you learned it. Recall the problems or challenges and how you overcame them. Remember the feeling of satisfaction you gained from your learning.

Take time to think about all the possible resources for SDL. Depending on the type of learning you are doing, your list may include books, articles, manuals, computer databases, Internet Web sites, human experts, experiments, or a variety of other resources.

Investigate and practice using tools that can support and streamline your SDL, such as learning contracts and time/task calendars.

Value and celebrate your learning.

Evaluate and reflect continually, monitoring the accomplishments of your learning goals and identifying new needs for learning.