

Learning Independently, Here We Come!

A Checklist for Identifying Skills needed for Learning Independently



Developing specific learning strategies can help individuals with disabilities to pursue postsecondary education and training experiences by enhancing their learning and improving their understanding and retention of information. This checklist identifies some key skills needed to learn more effectively, optimize learning experiences, and achieve better results from learning experiences. These learning strategies can assist in postsecondary transition programs for students with

cognitive disabilities, college or university degree programs, and vocational training programs. Additionally, these learning strategies can assist in personal learning, job training, and other life-long learning opportunities.

Directions: Check off each skill that has been mastered under each area. Unmarked skills can serve as a guide to creating transition goals for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or other goal plans. After the unmarked skill has been mastered, check it off as well.

Area: Goal Setting

Establishing clear and realistic learning goals provides individuals with learning disabilities a sense of direction and purpose.

Skills:

- ☐ Sets clear, realistic, and achievable goals
- ☐ Sets short-term goals
- ☐ Sets long-term goals
- ☐ Creates an action plan to meet goals
- ☐ Tracks progress towards goals

Area: Prioritization and Time Management

Being able to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively allows for sufficient time allocation for different subjects/topics and avoids procrastination.

Skills:

- ☐ Makes a task list

- ☐ Assesses task importance and urgency
- ☐ Uses the Eisenhower Matrix to prioritize tasks
- ☐ Estimates task duration
- ☐ Creates a daily or weekly schedule
- ☐ Sets deadlines and milestones
- ☐ Reassesses and readjusts tasks and priorities
- ☐ Uses timers or reminders
- ☐ Breaks tasks into manageable chunks
- ☐ Establishes consistent routines
- ☐ Uses calendars, to-do lists, color-coded organizers, and/or visual schedules to help keep track of deadlines

Area: Notetaking

Taking organized and concise notes during classes, lectures, or while studying helps reinforce understanding and aids in reviewing and revisiting important information later.

Skills:

- ☐ Uses graphic organizers to organize notes
- ☐ Captures key points, important concepts, definitions, examples and any additional information from lectures and classes
- ☐ Summarizes key points, references, and important data or quotes from research
- ☐ Summarizes key arguments, main ideas, supporting evidence, and any questions or thoughts from readings
- ☐ Uses outlines, mind mapping, and/or assistive technology to organize and retrieve information

Area: Memory Techniques

Utilizing memory techniques can improve memory retention and recall of information.

Skills:

- ☐ Uses mnemonic devices such as acronyms
- ☐ Uses visualization to create vivid mental images
- ☐ Uses chunking techniques to break large amounts of information into smaller, manageable chunks
- ☐ Uses practice and repetition to help reinforce memory
- ☐ Uses mind mapping to create a diagram to represent ideas or concepts
- ☐ Uses association to link new information to something already known
- ☐ Uses storytelling to transform information into a narrative or story to make it more memorable

Area: Collaborative Learning

Working with others to learn allows for diverse perspectives and helps reinforce understanding through shared knowledge and feedback.

Skills:

- ☐ Engages in group discussions
- ☐ Participates in study groups
- ☐ Participates in collaborative projects
- ☐ Shares knowledge and feedback with others
- ☐ Shares the workload in collaborative learning environments
- ☐ Builds relationships with teachers, counselors, and mentors who can provide guidance and support for learning
- ☐ Recognizes, accepts, and understands constructive criticism

Area: Information Organization

Developing skills to organize information can enhance comprehension and facilitate easy retrieval of information when needed.

Skills:

- ☐ Creates outlines
- ☐ Creates concept maps
- ☐ Develops summaries
- ☐ Uses graphic organizers
- ☐ Takes and organizes notes
- ☐ Creates hard copy and digital files to organize information
- ☐ Uses appropriate digital file management tools or software to help organize information

Area: Communication Skills – Written and Oral

Communicating effectively with others through both written and oral means can play a crucial role in enhancing the learning process and achieving better results.

Skills:

- ☐ Expresses thoughts clearly and concisely when taking notes, summarizing information, writing papers, or communicating with others through written mediums
- ☐ Actively listens to audio recordings, online lectures, or podcasts
- ☐ Asks thoughtful and relevant questions to engage with the material and clarify uncertainties

- ☐ Communicates with others to express difficulties, request clarification, and/or seek additional resources or guidance
- ☐ Engages in discussions, shares ideas, and provides feedback in group learning situations
- ☐ Communicates learned knowledge to others through presentations
- ☐ Uses appropriate body language when communicating with others in learning situations
- ☐ Verbally communicates with others clearly and concisely
- ☐ Demonstrates proficiency in digital communication, including online etiquette, collaborative tools, and participation in virtual discussions
- ☐ Pays attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling in written works
- ☐ Understands the consequences of plagiarism
- ☐ Understands copyright laws
- ☐ Understands how to cite reference sources properly to give credit to original authors

Area: Seeking Support

Recognizing when to seek support and utilize available resources is an important skill for youth and young adults with disabilities who can benefit from such support.

Skills:

- ☐ Reaches out to disability support services in postsecondary institutions
- ☐ Works with a tutor when needed
- ☐ Works with a mentor who can provide guidance and support
- ☐ Seeks out professionals in agencies/organizations that can provide support, such as vocational rehabilitation, mental health services, etc.

Area: Problem-Solving

Recognizing when to seek support and utilize available resources is an important skill for youth and young adults with disabilities who can benefit from such support.

Skills:

- ☐ Breaks down complex problems into smaller components
- ☐ Evaluates information, arguments, and evidence objectively to make informed decisions or judgments
- ☐ Generates innovative ideas and/or thinks “outside the box”
- ☐ Assesses different options
- ☐ Considers the pros and cons of situations
- ☐ Makes choices based on available information and desired outcomes

- ☐ Looks at root causes, contributing factors, and underlying issues of problems
- ☐ Uses flexibility and adaptability when changes occur
- ☐ Evaluates the effectiveness and success of past problem-solving strategies to improve future decisions

Area: Reading Comprehension

Being able to understand and extract key information from learning material presented in written form is crucial for independent learning.

Skills:

- ☐ Identifies main ideas in written passages
- ☐ Identifies supporting details in written passages
- ☐ Makes connections between ideas in written passages
- ☐ Builds a strong vocabulary by learning new words, their meanings, and how to use them in context
- ☐ Builds reading fluency to read quickly, accurately, and with proper expression
- ☐ Previews the text
- ☐ Highlights or underlines key points
- ☐ Understands the structure of different types of text
- ☐ Draws inferences
- ☐ Summarizes text
- ☐ Uses context clues, word analysis and word relationships to find the meaning of unfamiliar words
- ☐ Uses assistive technology such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, etc. to access text
- ☐ Uses available accommodations and resources available to aid in reading comprehension

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Independent Futures that Work!
 A project of the Alabama Parent Education Center
 PO Box 118, Wetumpka, AL 36092
 334-567-2252 or 866-532-7660
<https://independentfuturesthatwork.com>

