

Learning Skills

Student Name: _____

Many of you reading this article are involved in a sport or a creative activity such as music, art or drama. Can you imagine what your chances of success in these fields would be if you did not receive instruction on how to make changes and improvements to your performance? Sports people, musicians, writers, and actors are constantly looking at ways to make their performance better. Success in any of these fields of activity rarely happens without making adjustments and changes to training if needed. Study is no different.

As a first step in training yourself to get better at studying, it is well worthwhile taking time out to look critically and honestly at the precise way you go about studying and rate your study performance as it now stands.



Many companies also realise the importance of this approach in business. The most successful companies and organisations spend a sizeable amount of their budget exploring ways that their workforce can be more efficient. This involves workers and managers working together and looking closely at how they go about their work. The improvement in 'work practice' that results brings benefits both to the business and to the staff.



What do you want?

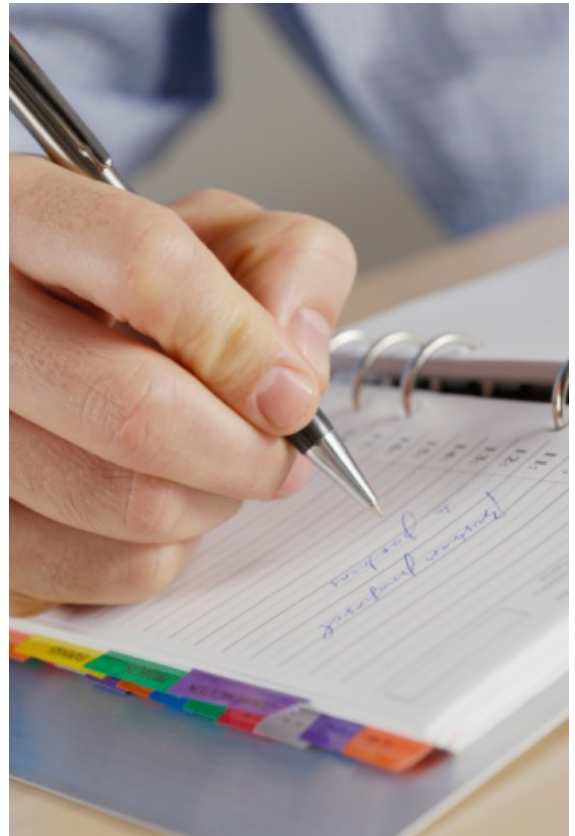
The first step is to reflect on what you want to achieve in terms of your Leaving Cert. results. The goals you set should be realistic and attainable. At the same time they should be results that you would be proud to achieve. Students who have gone before you have said that writing down their goals helped them make their targets more real and easier to remember.

It is ok to change and adjust your goals, just don't abandon the process! Some students reported it was only after they set their targets for the first term, got back their scores from their teachers, and then readjusted targets for the following term that the importance of this exercise dawned on them.

Study Behaviour

Look at your current study methods

Are your study habits and behaviours helping or hindering you achieving your target results? The Study Skills test that forms part of this Learning Skills guide should give you a good idea of your study performance. It is a way of getting you to look at what you do in detail when you are studying. The aim of this test is to get you to examine your 'work practice' as a student. The results of the test will rate your study performance in terms of how productive you are likely to be at the moment.



Effective studying

The Study Skills test and the accompanying worksheets can help you distinguish between the things that you are doing that are helping you achieve your goals and those that may be holding you back. You will be alerted to aspects of your study behaviour that you may need to change.

Effective study is all about learning to learn as much as possible, in the shortest period of time, with the most successful outcome. How you study is what matters. What exactly you do during your study time can be more important than the amount of time you give to your work.

Take the Study Skills Test online at www.careersportal.ie/studyskills

When you have completed the test, attach the results sheet to this document, or fill in your results below:

Date: _____

Place of Study	<input type="text"/>
Organisation	<input type="text"/>
Motivation and Goal Setting	<input type="text"/>
Reading Skills	<input type="text"/>
Note Taking Skills	<input type="text"/>
Revising and Exam Preparation	<input type="text"/>
Examination Performance	<input type="text"/>
	Poor OK Good Very Good Excellent

Optimising your Performance

Your Study Skills test has given you a good estimate of your study performance. You now need to explore the specific study behaviours and habits that go to make up this performance. Furthermore, you need to be become aware of which of these habits and behaviours are helping or indeed hindering your study. Psychologists tell us that everything we do when we engage in study can be seen as either moving us towards what you want to achieve or pulling us in the opposite direction, away from your goals.

We now invite you to read through the worksheets for each of the 7 study areas analysed by the test (download at www.careersportal.ie/studyskills). Follow the instructions on these sheets to identify the main habits and behaviours that make up your performance as a student.

The diagram below graphically illustrates the seven categories used in the test, with space available to write in both your positive and negative study behaviours. The goal is to achieve the best Leaving Certificate you can, the positive behaviours pointing towards this goal (they assist you),

and the negative behaviours pointing away (indicating that they hinder your performance).

Using the results gained from the seven worksheets, complete the diagram below. For each category:

1. Write into the top (positive) boxes the specific behaviours that are drawing you closer to your goals.
2. Write into the bottom (negative) boxes your specific behaviours that are preventing or pushing you away from reaching your goals.



It is only by controlling, managing or eliminating the negative study behaviours and finding ways of increasing and strengthening your positive behaviours that your study performance will improve and thereby increase your chances of getting the target results you want to achieve.

MY LEAVING CERTIFICATE

<p><i>Enter your strongest 'positives' for this category</i></p>								
<p><i>Enter your weakest 'negatives' for this category</i></p>	<p><i>Place of Study</i></p>	<p><i>Organisation</i></p>	<p><i>Motivation and Goal Setting</i></p>	<p><i>Reading Skills</i></p>	<p><i>Note Taking Skills</i></p>	<p><i>Revising and Exam Preparation</i></p>	<p><i>Examination Performance</i></p>	