

BUILDING LEARNING POWER

Good learners vary a lot, but they tend to approach challenges and problems with a core set of habits, interests and attitudes. One way of “mapping” these qualities is in terms of the Four Rs: Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflection and Reciprocity (relationships). Each of these in turn can be unpacked into a number of features.

Resilience — is being ready, willing and able to lock onto learning, even in the face of shifting feelings and distractions. It includes:

- Absorption — being able to lose yourself in learning; becoming rapt or engrossed
- Perseverance — keep going in the face of difficulties; channelling the energy of feelings like frustration and confusion productively
- Managing distractions — knowing how to deal with external distractions; creating your own best environment for learning
- Attentive noticing — learning is more than thinking — it involves immersing yourself in the patterns, details and nuances of what is going on; being perceptive

Resourcefulness — is being ready, willing and able to be proactive and flexible in learning; to make smart use of both internal and external resources to learn in different ways. It includes:

- Questioning — being curious; wanting to get to the bottom of things; puzzling things out
- Making links — being alert to connections between different events, experiences or areas of learning; looking for the “big picture”; using analogies and metaphors
- Imagining — using the sensory “rehearsal studio” of the mind; playing with possibilities; sensitivity to the intuitive gleams and glimmerings of creativity
- Reasoning — knowing when and how to think rigorously, and to critique other people’s arguments; organising information systematically
- Capitalising — drawing on all kinds of external resources to support learning: books, the Internet, libraries, emails, other people...

Reflection — is being ready, willing and able to be strategic about learning, and to have a good sense of yourself as a developing learner.

It includes:

- Planning — thinking about where you are going, what you will need, and what obstacles you might need to overcome
- Revising — monitoring, reviewing and evaluating as you go along; being flexible and alive to unforeseen opportunities
- Distilling — mulling over your learning, pulling out the essential features and lessons for the future; being your own learning coach
- Meta-learning — thinking of yourself as a growing, developing learner; learning to talk about the processes of learning

Reciprocity — is being ready, willing and able to learn from and with others, as well as on your own.

- Interdependence — not losing yourself in company; having the courage of your convictions; knowing what balance of social and solitary life suits you best
- Collaborating — being a good team learner; knowing how to draw from the strengths of a group, and also how to help build that strength
- Empathy and listening — being ready to put yourself in other people’s shoes, to enrich your own learning perspectives; hearing other people accurately
- Imitation — being open to other people’s smart ways of thinking and learning; picking up the values and habits that develop your own learning