

Strategies for improving your skills

Aim: To enable students to identify practical steps they can take to build their skills

Age range: 11-14 and 14-16

Introduction

Explain to students that they each have skills that they are good at and are practising and improving regularly, like teamwork or numeracy. For other skills, such as problem-solving or using initiative, it can be harder to identify when we are using them, because we don't think of what we are doing in this way.

Steps

1. Encourage students to identify and discuss examples of opportunities they have to develop their skills in their everyday lives, such as communication and negotiating skills through debating competitions, teamwork through playing sport, or organisation through getting their homework in on time
2. Discuss the idea of self-awareness regarding our skills: the idea that we're not always good at knowing how well we use our skills. Some people may be over-confident about their skills while others may underrate their skills. A good way of improving how we evaluate our skills is to reflect on each skill, ask others about what they think we are good at, and come up with actions of what to improve
3. Hand out the student sheet and make sure students understand what each skill means, explaining that these are the skills valued by employers. Discuss how they might already be using some of these skills and actions they could set to improve them by using the examples in the table (e.g. – communication might be giving a presentation at school, improving this skill might be asking questions in class to demonstrate active listening)
4. Students should pick a skill, rate themselves, write down evidence and think of ideas for improvement using the student sheet. There is space for them to return to the sheet at a later date to add more evidence and adjust their ratings as they improve
5. Suggest that they ask for feedback on their skills and how they are improving from peers, teachers, parents, careers advisors, sports coaches or other adults
6. If you have time, cover additional skills over several sessions (for example during tutor time). You might need to supply students with multiple copies of the student sheet
Note: Discourage students from rating themselves zero or five: everyone should have some level of each skill, but still have room for improvement

Taking this activity further

If your students are ready to explore how to build their skills for the workplace further, why not try the 'Recognising and building personal skills' lesson (11-14 and 14-16): barclayslifeskills.com/personalskills or 'Exploring personal strengths for employment' lesson (11-14 and 14-16): barclayslifeskills.com/exploringstrengths
You could also take a look at the 'Social Action toolkit' (14-16 and 16-19): barclayslifeskills.com/socialactiontoolkit

Improving your skills

What are your strongest skills? Which ones do you need to improve the most?

Personal presentation	Enthusiasm and positivity	Communication	Literacy	Numeracy
Honesty	Problem solving	Creativity	Teamwork	Digital and computing
Resilience and confidence	Proactivity and initiative	Leadership	Negotiation and decision making	Time management and organisation

1. Choose a skill and write it in the first grid below along with today's date
2. Rate how well you think you use this skill at the moment from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong)
3. Write examples of how you already demonstrate that you can use this skill
4. In the final column, write ideas for ways you could improve how you use this skill
5. In a few weeks, check your progress. Rate yourself again, or ask others to rate you, and add new ideas for improvement

How am I doing now?

Skill:		Date:
Rating	What have I already done to demonstrate this skill?	What goals can I set to help me improve this skill?

How have I improved?

Skill:		Date:
Rating	What have I already done to demonstrate this skill?	What goals can I set to help me improve this skill?