

What is Learning to Learn?

Learning to learn (L2L) is about becoming a better learner than you already are. Those who are really good at it are not necessarily smarter or more intelligent. They just treat learning differently. They tend to look at how they learn and try to understand it, take control of it, and become better at it.

Many things can affect how we learn and how well we learn. Sometimes it's motivation, other times it's habit, technique, resource, etc. Learning to learn, therefore, is about developing different aspects of yourself as a learner. Here are some aspects or dimensions of L2L (see also Figure 1):

■ **Inspirations and Aspirations** (Intentional)

What inspires you to learn something? How do you find your inspiration in learning? Has there been any 'aha' moment that made you see the meaning/value of what you were learning? Share your story and help others find their inspirations and aspirations.

■ **Beliefs and Habits** (Dispositional)

What do you do to build up confidence in your ability to learn? How do you change bad learning habits or develop good ones? What sparks your curiosity? How do you find something interesting in anything you learn? Share your insights and techniques so that others can do the same.

■ **Reflection and Control** (Metacognitive)

How do you manage your study? Do you sometimes stop and think about why/how/how well you learn? How do you adapt to different learning scenarios? What is the key to keep improving at learning? Share your ideas to help other take learning into their own hands.

■ **Motivation and Determination** (Affective-motivational)

How did you find out what motivates you and what not? Do you feel in control of your motivation? How do you deal with stress and frustration arising from study? What makes you keep going in the face of difficulties and setbacks? Share your experience and give others some self-help tips.

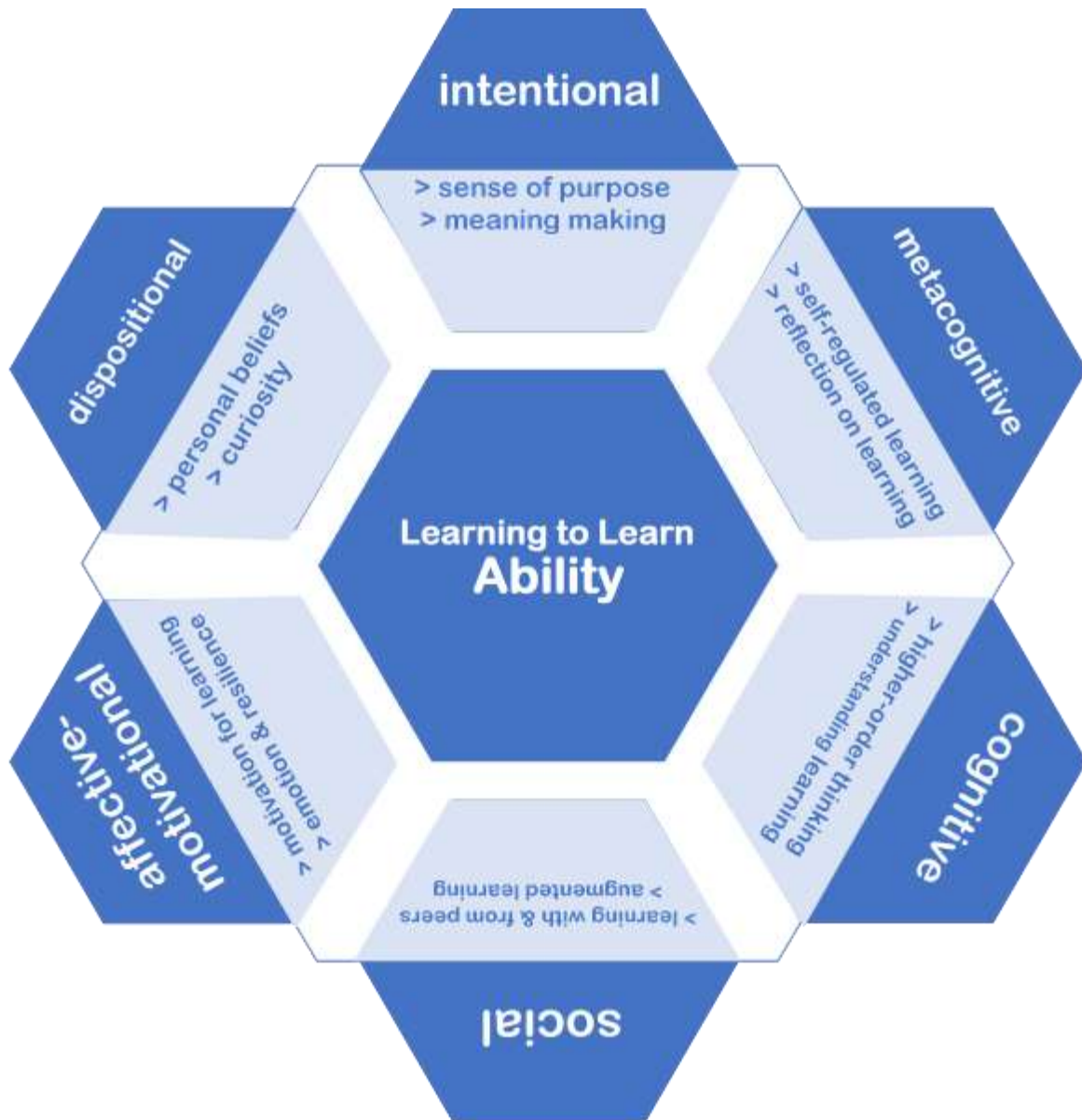
■ **Knowledge and Skills** (Cognitive)

What is learning? What thinking skills are important for university study? How did you develop them? Have you come across an idea/technique on the Internet or in Psychology/Neuroscience that boosted your learning power? Share your discoveries to help others learn more effectively.

■ **Networks and Resources** (Social)

What kinds of mindset/skill do you need to learn from/with others? What makes a study group effective? What apps/tools do you use to manage your learning resources? Share your tips and tools to help others to become better collaborative and independent learners.

Figure 1: Six dimensions of L2L and examples of developmental focuses under each dimension



What makes a 'better' learner?

What are your strengths and weaknesses as a learner? The table below may give you some clues. If you are operating at the 'intermediate' or 'sophisticated' level in any aspects, you may have something to share to help others move from one level to the next.

	Survival Learner	Intermediate Learner	Sophisticated Learner
Sense of Purpose	I see learning as a task or duty; I learn because I am told or forced to do so; I do not associate with what I learn.	I see learning as a means to an end; I learn for achieving short-term and medium-term goals; learning becomes a personal matter to me as I begin to discover or form my aspirations.	I see learning as a process of becoming; I learn for achieving long-term personal aspirations and a deep sense of purpose; learning is a personal matter for me.
Meaning Making	I often feel the subjects that I am studying are irrelevant to myself academically, professionally and personally.	I actively explore the relationships among different subjects and the connections between my study and my personal development.	I give meanings to what I am learning by associating it with what matters to me or what I want to achieve in my life.
Personal Beliefs about Learning	I am not confident in my ability to learn; I believe my ability is fixed and effort does not make much difference.	I become more confident in my ability to learn; I believe my ability can be developed and effort makes a difference; I tend to face challenges positively, make an effort and do not give up easily.	I am confident in my ability to learn; I engage in learning with a sense of control and continuously seek to develop my ability; I embrace challenges, value effort and am resilient to setbacks.
Curiosity	I am not interested in learning new things; I feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar things; I avoid things that I do not understand.	I become more aware of my interests and passion; I am open to unfamiliar things; I do not shy away from things that I do not understand.	I am passionate about learning new things; I feel excited about unfamiliar things; I am eager to learn things that I do not understand.
Self-Regulated Learning	I rely on other people (e.g. teachers) to tell me what, when and how to learn.	I plan my learning, monitor my progress, evaluate my learning strategies and make adjustments as needed.	I am able to improve my learning and adapt to different learning situations by regulating my affective-motivational, cognitive and social strategies.
Reflection on Learning	I seldom reflect on my learning; I rarely challenge or change the way I learn.	I reflect on my learning process and outcomes to evaluate my learning strategies and enhance my performance.	I critically reflect on not only learning process and outcomes but also the assumptions, beliefs and values that underpin my learning approach.
Motivation for Learning	My motivation to learn is dependent on external factors (e.g. how well the teachers teach); I have little control over my own motivation.	I become more aware of the factors that motivate or demotivate my learning; I have some control over my own motivation.	I am aware of the factors that motivate or demotivate my learning; I am able to apply a range of strategies to motivate myself.

Emotion & Resilience	I often feel helpless with the stress and frustration from studying; I give up easily when facing setbacks.	I become more aware of the factors that trigger the negative emotions in me; I have developed some strategies to cope with them.	I deploy various strategies to prevent or manage my negative emotions; I persist through difficulties and stressful situations.
Higher-Order Thinking	I learn and study for examination; I mainly learn by memorising the materials.	I learn and study for understanding; I learn by comparing, analysing, relating and applying ideas.	I learn and study for deep understanding; I learn through reflection, critique, theorising, creating new ideas and solving problems, etc.
Understanding Learning	I do not understand about learning.	I see group work as an opportunity to learn from each other; I actively contribute to group discussions.	I see group work as an opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge; I establish rapport and engage openly and constructively in discussions with others.
Learning with & from Others	I see group work primarily as a division of labour; I seldom interact with others.	I see group work as an opportunity to learn from each other; I actively contribute to group discussions.	I see group work as an opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge; I establish rapport and engage openly and constructively in discussions with others.
Augmented Learning Environment	I see learning as confined to the classroom and the study materials.	I recognise that learning is not confined to the classroom; I actively explore resources and opportunities for learning in the broader physical, virtual and social environment.	I actively expand and create learning environment by visiting places, making good use of learning management tools and establishing personal network for learning.