



What are skills of an independent learner?

There are the obvious foundational skills of Literacy and Numeracy which I won't address here because most schools address these skills as a separate issue. So, aside from being literate and numerate, what are the skills we see as important for our students as we try and support them in becoming effective independent learners (all communication skills such as reading, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting are all included under the broad title of literacy). There are a range of skills that schools are currently considering which break into the four main groupings of social skills, thinking skills, self management skills and information skills. As you look at the lists in detail you will see that there are some aspects that are common to both thinking skills and information skills, this is to be expected as it is difficult to totally separate thinking and information skills. This is not meant to be a complete list of all applicable skills but shows the range of skills that schools are currently working on with their students, feel free to add to these lists. I have set up a page on the '[Future Learning Now](#)' blog that contains this list so people can make comments and input into it.

Social Skills:

A socially skilled person can work, learn and recreate collaboratively with others and has the following skills:

- **Contributing** : the ability to make relevant contributions (spoken

and actions) in group situations

- **Working with Others:** the ability to work collaboratively as a contributing group member
- **Group leadership:** the ability to take a leadership role within group situations
- **Conflict management:** the ability to manage conflict in group situations
- **Conflict resolution:** the ability to de-escalate or resolve conflict

Thinking Skills:

An effective thinker has a wide range of skills that help them to create meaning, gain understanding, make judgments, make good decisions, self analyse and reflect. These skills include the ability to:

- **Identify Purpose:** Be able to identify the purpose for reasoning
- **Identify Distortion and Bias:** ability to recognise the factors that cause distortion and bias such as emotion, background, experiences, culture and perspective.
- **Evaluate Evidence:** Recognise and evaluate evidence offered to support claims.
- **Identify Inferences:** identify inferences and the presence or lack of appropriate supporting evidence.
- **Identify Assumptions:** identify assumptions and the inferences from which they are drawn
- **Identify Opinions:** identify fact/opinions and the chain of evidence, inference, assumptions and biases that may be involved
- **Develop and critique arguments:** Develop and critique arguments to promote, defend or critique a point of view.
- **Make Decisions:** ability to make appropriate decisions considering relevant implications and consequences.
- **Generating and Assessing solutions:** ability to generate a range of solutions and ability to assess a range of solutions looking for strengths, weaknesses, and possible outcomes
- **Ask relevant questions:** ability to ask a range of relevant questions
- **Simplify complex situations:** the ability to simplify complex situations so they can be understood
- **Avoid oversimplifications:** the ability to avoid over simplification
- **Make connections into other contexts:** Make links between current situation and other contexts making relevant comparisons
- **Clarify relevant language:** Clarify relevant contextual language identifying key words and phrases as well as situationally explicit vocab
- **Clarify issues:** ability to examine complex situations, clarify and establish core factors, identifying root, significant and subsidiary issues
- **Discern contradictions:** ability to discern contradictions
- **Discern prejudice:** ability to examine opinions and discern

hidden or underlying prejudice

- **Discern when to suspend judgment:** ability to understand when one doesn't know enough and judgement should be suspended till better information is available
- **Develop criteria for evaluation:** the ability to examine a situation, and create relevant criteria to use for evaluating some aspect
- **Evaluate credibility of information & sources:** ability to evaluate the credibility and validity of information and its sources
- **Make and recognise generalisations:** ability to make generalisations where appropriate and to recognise generalisations others have made
- **Narrow or broaden a focus as appropriate:** ability to broaden or narrow focus as appropriate to ensure all aspects are considered
- **Recognise inadequate information or evidence:** ability to examine information and evidence and make valid judgements about its adequacy
- **Weigh evidence:** ability to weigh evidence to ascertain its relevance, validity, reliability, appropriateness and accuracy

Self Management Skills:

A person who is an independent learner can manage themselves as an individual or in group situations and will have these skills:

- **Goal setting:** The ability to set realistic, relevant, challenging and manageable goals
- **Time and resource-management:** the ability to manage their own time and resources
- **Focus:** the ability to focus on the task in hand and work through distractions

Information Skills:

A person who is an independent learner has a range of information skills that empower them as learners and enables them to:

- **Recognise information need:** ability to recognise their own lack of knowledge and the need to obtain further information or deepen their understanding
- **Ask relevant questions:** ability to ask a range of relevant questions
- **Validate information:** ability to evaluate the credibility and validity of information and its sources
- **Locate Relevant Information:** ability to locate relevant information from a range of resources
- **Recognise and select appropriate sources:** ability to choose appropriate information sources
- **Identify bias:** recognise the differences between fact, opinion

and omissions in information, considering information from a variety of perspectives, critically reflect on the purpose and intended audience of texts related to the subject matter

- **Identify prior knowledge:** reflect on the existence of previous knowledge and experiences showing awareness of ones own tendency to count assumptions as prior knowledge
- **Reflect and evaluate:** the ability to reflect on their own learning skills, evaluate progress and set further goals
- **Use a variety of sources:** ability to use a wide range of sources to find needed information.
- **Apply information:** the ability to apply information to meet the original need, build appropriate understanding or solve the initial problem.