

What is self-regulated learning?

Self-regulated learning is defined as your ability to monitor and motivate yourself to learn and develop independently as an individual. Research suggests that if you can self-regulate your learning, you increase your chances of success and achievement and this is not just achievement of grades but achieving your own life goals and controlling the direction of your own careers. Self-regulation essentially means self-generated thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Zimmerman, 2002). A simple example might be beginning a number of Maths questions, setting your own target of getting 7/10 correct, being aware that you may struggle with this challenge and finally reacting to this challenge by choosing the correct methods and strategies to achieve your goal e.g. re-watching a video, contacting your teacher, re-reading the question etc. Finally, a really strong self-regulated learning is an expert at motivating themselves to do difficult things so this might be setting up a reward for yourself after a task or using 'self-talk' to push you through e.g. 'Come on Sam, I know you can do this and you are nearly at the end!'

This guidance has been designed to help you plan how to learn by yourself, monitor any progress that you are making, evaluate how successful you are after engaging with work. It has been divided up into different aspects of self-regulated learning and there is no particular order that they have to be followed in. The information is there to help you plan, monitor, evaluate and finally motivate you to achieve by yourself. Finally, you will also notice that I might have information that is referenced with a name of a person i.e. (Harwood, 2020) or Harwood (2020). This indicates the information has been taken from evidence of a key educational researcher.

Firstly, here is a quick overview of what self-regulated learning looks like for you. Zimmerman (2002) says there are several components of self-regulation:

- a. Setting proximal (short-term/ daily) goals
- b. Adopting strategies for learning and/or memorising
- c. Monitoring for signs of progress – check your daily goals every now and then
- d. Restructuring physical and social environment accordingly (is there anything distracting you in your room that could be changed)
- e. Managing time – have you spent a long time on one subject and has that time been productive?
- f. Self-evaluating – after you finish a subject or exercise, do you check to see how successful you are?
- g. Adapting for future methods – what changes would you make next time?

Guidance on how to become a more self-regulated learning

Below are a number of criteria with questions to ask yourself. The criteria do not necessarily have to be followed in any particular order and they are designed to make you think about how you learn by yourself and what simple changes you could make to enhance your own learning without the assistance of a teacher. Firstly, let's start again with a guiding principle to help you understand what self-regulation is with a simple motto:

“Self-regulated students focus on how they activate, alter, and sustain specific learning practices in social as well as solitary contexts.”
(Zimmerman, 2002).

In other words, whether you are working with others or working by yourself, you are in control of how much you learn every time.

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 1 – goal-setting

1. What do you say yourself at the start of learning a topic in a subject?
2. Are you setting small achievable goals?
3. Just because you cannot see an outcome at the start of a lesson, does it mean there is no outcome there?
4. Do you set personal, motivational goals before you start learning a subject?
For example, ‘if I learn five new words in Spanish today, I will award myself with an extra 20 minutes of TV later’ or ‘I’d love to understand what that person said to me in Spanish when I was on holiday there last year!’

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 2 – adopting learning strategies

1. Were you able to condense the information that you wanted to learn?
2. What memory triggers did you use when memorising new information?
3. When you read through a piece of text, did you make a note of the key ideas?
4. Do you read the subtitles or key headings in a long piece of reading so that you have some structure in your head?
5. Are you re-reading difficult pieces of text?
6. Are you highlighting words you do not understand and finding a definition for them?

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 3 - monitoring

1. Do you remind yourself of the goal you set yourself at the start of a piece of learning? In other word, if you set out to learning ten facts about Charles I in History, can you quickly count how many you can recall off the top of your head?
2. If you are finding you are getting a number of answers wrong in Maths, do you review the strategy that you are using to find the answer?
3. Do you try something different during an activity if you feel you are not achieving a goal?
4. Do you engage in any ‘self-talk’ during the learning to keep you motivated?
For example, do you say to yourself ‘you are very close to achieving this goal’ or ‘I think I have actually learned something new here’?

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 4 – Restructuring your environment

1. How do you react to the various interactions in your house?
2. Did you discuss the learning goal with your colleagues that you were working with?
3. Did you notice any occasion where the learning you were doing became more difficult?

Self-regulated Learning Guidance for Students Home-learning

4. Do you have distractions at your desk that you use sometimes when you come across a difficult topic or task?
5. Do you avoid completing more difficult tasks and prioritise easier tasks as you may feel a sense of accomplishment completing any task?
6. If you are using music to help you focus, how loud would you play it and at what point does it become a distraction rather than a focus tool?

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 5 – Time-management

Tip – next time you complete a piece of home learning, time yourself and assign a difficulty level it. Do this for a few pieces of home learning and then make comparisons between them.

1. How do you know when to stop revising for a test? How much information should you expect to remember when you test yourself?
2. If you feel you have spent too long on one activity, how do you know?
3. If you learn a new topic for 30 minutes, how did you break down the 30 minutes i.e. what did you do for the first 5 minutes, second five minutes?

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 6 – Self-evaluation

“Interestingly, simply asking students to self-record some aspect of their learning, such as the completion of assignments, often led to ‘spontaneous’ improvements in functioning (Shapiro, 1984). These effects, termed reactivity...implied that students’ metacognitive (i.e., self) awareness of particular aspects of their functioning could enhance their self-control.” (Zimmerman. 2002)

In other words, if you can identify how you learned something, this will increase your awareness and control and can be a very positive feeling.

1. How do you notice if you have made an improvement in a topic or subject?
2. What feelings come to mind after you finish a task/ exercise or test and how do those feelings influence your next approach to learning something new?
3. If you felt de-motivated when you are learning new information, do you reflect on why you might have felt de-motivated?
4. Can you identify what you did yourself to learn new information? In other words, you should praise yourself for being responsible and effective at learning something new. How do you reflect on your power as a learner?
5. Were there any strategies that were particularly effective for you when you were learning?
6. Did you find you were able to remember key information for a particular task and if so why do you think that is?

Self-regulated Learning Criteria 7 – adapting for future learning

“Learning is viewed as an activity that students do for themselves in a proactive way rather than as a covert event that happens to them in reaction to teaching.” (Zimmerman, 2002)

In other words, learning something new should not be a secret or invisible to you, you can find a learning opportunity anywhere and if you identify **how** you are

Self-regulated Learning Guidance for Students Home-learning

learning, think about the importance of this and search for new ways of learning then this positive process of learning will eventually become automatic.

1. When you are planning on learning the next subject or topic, what new strategies might you try out now that you have reflected on your previous learning?
2. Are there any strategies that you want to discard because they were ineffective or distracting?
3. If you found you were not very motivated to work in a previous lesson or day or topic, what new motivational strategies are you going to adopt to motivate yourself? Can you discuss this with somebody at home or a teacher?
4. If you found reading comprehension challenging, what strategies can you adopt to break down the reading or identify difficult words?
5. Who will you need to contact before learning another subject if things need to be clarified?