



Track, progress, success

Monitoring to improve

It is impossible to make progress, identify strengths, and address areas for improvement if you do not track what you do and reflect on it! A nutritionist will ask a client to maintain a food diary; a coach will ask a marathon runner to chart their weekly running distance totals; a manager will ask an employee to regularly report on their progress towards key performance indicators.

The best mindset to take when you approach monitoring your study progress is to frame it in the context of improving your productivity in the short-term and improving yourself in the long-term.



We often forget that successful people have practised for thousands of hours. What most people neglect to recognise, however, is that a lot of time has also gone into reflection to learn from mistakes and act differently in the future. Do not equate *making* a mistake with *being* a mistake. When you think of a ‘fail’, you should see it as the First Attempt In Learning.

In addition to your daily, weekly, and semester planning habits, there are a few activities you can use at regular intervals to revisit your goals, track your progress, and make amendments when and where necessary. When it comes to tracker tools, you can go old-school and use a paper notebook, or get mobile with apps like [Momentum](#) (for iOS) and [HabitBull](#) (for Android).

The examples below focus on intrinsic (self or individual) reflection. For extrinsic (external) reflection and feedback, see [Asking questions](#).

Daily and weekly review

Monitoring your daily and/or weekly progress may become tedious if you are unclear about its purpose and your focus. You want to be ready for any unexpected delays to the foundation plan you’ve set out, plus observe what works and what doesn’t work for you, so that you can make changes to improve your productivity the next day or the next week.

The following activity, a minute paper, can be used at the end of the day or week. You could use it to review a whole day or week (i.e. everything you did) or focus on a specific project (e.g. an assignment):



Activity 1: Minute Paper

Note: **X** = today / this week / this project / this class / this unit, etc.

1. What was most memorable/stands out in your mind about **X**?
2. What was the most surprising and/or unexpected thing that happened **X**?
3. What unanswered questions do you still have? Is there anything you didn't understand?
4. What struck you as things you could / should put into practice again? Was there anything you want to change?

Beginning a project or semester

Whenever you have the opportunity to pause and reflect on where you are at and where you would like to be at a commencement point (e.g. the start of a new semester, the beginning of an assignment, the outset of an internship), do it! It can be even more helpful to reflect with a group of friends or classmates because you can support each other by sharing tips on individual strengths in those areas.

Below are a few activities to choose from:



Activity 2(a): Strengths

1. From the list of skills and traits below, identify ten that describe you.

results-oriented	willing to take risks	dependable	strong research skills	able to motivate others
able to follow instructions	good sense of humour	approachable	able to get along with others	self-motivated
mature	assertive	able to manage projects	able to learn quickly	sincere
logical mind	good at speaking in public	able to negotiate	good communicator	willing to learn new things
willing to ask questions	honest	enthusiastic	able to solve problems	patient
punctual	ambitious	hardworking / productive	curious	good attendance
intelligent	creative	pride in doing a good job	willing to be a leader	decisive

2. From those ten strengths, which three do you consider to be your top skills and traits?
3. How will these be useful for your project or in your uni studies?
4. (Optional: group activity)
 - Identify two traits and skills that you need to improve.
 - Share these two traits and skills with your group.
 - Find someone in your group who has strength in your 'improvement area' and exchange your challenges and their tips or approaches.



Activity 2(b): Academic Tasks

1. Identify two university tasks you find easy to do and explain why.

For example

(1) Writing an essay: *I find it easier than writing a report because I've written more essays, I'm familiar with the general structure, I really enjoy constructing arguments with evidence in each paragraph to make a single point, and I like writing introductions that outline where the essay is going and conclusions that tie everything up to make a solid case.*

(2) Using Turnitin: *I'm good with tech stuff, software, systems, learning how to use things quickly and the best way to use them. Turnitin is great, after you use the guide the first time, to figure out if you have any plagiarism and academic integrity issues. I really struggle with referencing, so I made an extra effort to get to know Turnitin really well.*

2. Identify two university tasks you find challenging and explain why.

For example

(1) Writing a report: *I don't have a lot of experience writing reports and I really don't like the rigid structure with all those headings. It's so constrictive compared to an essay. It feels like you have to be really concise and precise about what you want to say, and sometimes I don't know what that is until I've written it out. I find that I have to do a zillion more drafts when I do a report, compared to an essay.*

(2) Referencing: *Citing sources is different for every unit I do. It's so confusing.*

3. Compare the approach you take to tasks listed in (i) far above and (ii) immediately above. What are the differences?

Project debrief

When working on a group project, it's good practice to debrief after completion to assess what worked well, what didn't and what you would do, individually and collectively, next time. It also gives you an opportunity to praise each other's work and offer constructive feedback on areas for improvement.

You can also debrief individually on solo projects. This can be done with assignments. You should do the activity below before approaching a tutor or unit coordinator with more detailed questions about the assignment comments.



Activity 3: The Bridge (after Hurford & Reed, 2005)

1. Bring your assignment, feedback, and the assignment rubric (marking criteria) together.
2. Identify one criterion at a time.
3. Think about where you are now (A), where you want to be (C), and what you need to do to bridge the gap (B):

For example:

A Current	B Steps to improve	C Future
Criterion Weaker assignments tended to provide: limited evaluation without clear reference to wider reading	<i>How could you get from A to B?</i> <i>I can back up my own viewpoints with relevant readings</i> <i>I can read more critically... ask, 'Is this viewpoint backed up with evidence?'</i> <i>I can reflect on my own experience; I can analyse this in the light of reading and other people's experience</i>	Criterion Stronger assignments tended to provide: evidence of analysis and reflection with clear reference to wider reading