

16 ideas to use learning in how you work

Learning is the practical lessons and knowledge we acquire, share and use to help us improve. A good approach to learning helps us continually improve how we fund, manage and provide sport and physical activity, so that more people can benefit.

This guide is a collection of 16 simple ideas you can use to make learning a normal part of how you work. It contains 1 Golden Rule, 4 Essentials, and 11 Practical Ideas.

Got learning ideas to share? Send them to tim.fitches@sportengland.org and we'll include the best in the next version of this guide.

1 Golden Rule for learning	
Get your learning to people who can use it	Share what you learn with people who can use it to improve how sport and physical activity is provided, so more people can enjoy the benefits.

4 Learning Essentials – do this with every project or programme			
1. Set learning objectives	Make learning deliberate by writing a plan of what you want to learn, what the benefit of knowing it will be, how you will you find out, and who or what is involved. Then follow it!		
	What we want to learn	How it will help us	How we'll find out
	1. What's the best way to reach our audience	Reach more of them, more efficiently	Ask those who work with them already
2. Ask simple, powerful questions	Ask yourself and others: What's working? What isn't? What's unexpected? How could we improve it? One way is Driscoll's model of reflection: What? → So What? → Now what?		
3. Make learning continuous	Make learning an ongoing process that informs your work. Don't wait for the next report to share and act on what you've learned – do it in real-time. Learn → Reflect → Adapt; repeat.		
4. Share it and talk about it	Turn what you learn into action by sharing it widely and openly. Put it in newsletters, hold a workshop, email it round your network... Then talk about it and sense-check it. Help each other interpret what it means in different contexts, and how you can practically use it.		

11 Practical Ideas – simple ways to build learning into how you work

<p>1. Schedule time to think and reflect</p>	<p>Give yourself time and headspace to properly reflect and think about what you're learning, whether individually or as a team. Schedule regular time free from interruptions and notifications. It'll be time well spent!</p>								
<p>2. Score it out of 10, then ask why</p>	<p>Score something out of 10 – whether it's a meeting, an event, or progress in a whole project – and then ask why, and what it would take to improve the score.</p>								
<p>3. Add learning to the agenda</p>	<p>Make learning a standing item at team meetings and 121s. Try framing it as questions like 'what do we know about X' or 'what was the best way to do Y'. Or invite staff to share new knowledge, skills or reflections they've learned each week.</p>								
<p>4. Add it to job descriptions</p>	<p>Create the commitment and responsibility for learning by including it in job descriptions, staff objectives, team goals and strategies.</p>								
<p>5. Set up a process to respond to learning</p>	<p>Agree a simple process to record, discuss and sign off the actions you will take in response to what you learn.</p> <p>One example is to keep a log of useful learning – such as operational issues or common feedback – and review it as a team to agree the action you will take in response.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="516 1255 1404 1465"> <thead> <tr> <th>What we learned</th> <th>Source</th> <th>Action to be taken</th> <th>Who & by when</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The finance process was too complicated and confusing</td> <td>Partner feedback</td> <td>We'll streamline the process and give clearer advice</td> <td>Project team – Q2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	What we learned	Source	Action to be taken	Who & by when	The finance process was too complicated and confusing	Partner feedback	We'll streamline the process and give clearer advice	Project team – Q2
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The finance process was too complicated and confusing	Partner feedback	We'll streamline the process and give clearer advice	Project team – Q2						
<p>6. Record what you hear, see, notice</p>	<p>Record useful comments, observations, thoughts. Over time it'll build into a valuable bank of learning, and it may help you identify emerging themes or changing feelings.</p>								
<p>7. Build learning into evaluation</p>	<p>Use evaluation to learn and improve, not just to measure progress. Speak to staff and participants. Track whether things are working as expected. Run experiments like A/B tests to compare which of two choices works best.</p> <p>See Sport England's evaluation framework for more ideas.</p>								

<p>8. Welcome failure as your friend</p>	<p>Learn from success and failure alike. Failure is fabulous if it helps you improve, and being open about it builds trust and credibility. NPC's guide to learning culture mentions 'failure parties' where people get together to share what <i>hasn't</i> worked!</p>
<p>9. Adopt a curious mindset</p>	<p>Be curious, open-minded and inquisitive. Ask questions. Challenge accepted ways. Be constructive rather than critical. Try new things and take a risk.</p>
<p>10. Use simple and engaging language</p>	<p>Use clear language, and creative formats and imagery to bring your learning to life. Design it for the audience. Make it appealing to look at, and easy to understand and act on.</p> <p>E.g. our Swim Local report identifies 5 actions and 10 principles.</p>
<p>11. Use different sources</p>	<p>Collect learning from lots of places. Evaluation, feedback, meetings, events, reflection, conversations, experience, observation, stories, statistics... It all counts.</p>