**LEARNING**

Learning is acquiring new, or modifying existing, [knowledge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge), [behaviors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behavior), [skills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skill), [values](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_%28personal_and_cultural%29), or [preferences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preference) and may involve synthesizing different types of [information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information). The ability to learn is possessed by humans, animals and some [machines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_learning). Progress over time tends to follow [learning curves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_curve). Learning is not compulsory; it is contextual. It does not happen all at once, but builds upon and is shaped by what we already know. To that end, learning may be viewed as a process, rather than a collection of factual and procedural knowledge. Learning produces changes in the organism and the changes produced are relatively permanent.

Human learning may occur as part of [education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education), [personal development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_development), schooling, or [training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Training). It may be [goal-oriented](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goal-oriented) and may be aided by [motivation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation). The study of how learning occurs is part of [neuropsychology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuropsychology), [educational psychology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_psychology), [learning theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_theory_%28education%29), and [pedagogy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy). Learning may occur as a result of [habituation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habituation) or [classical conditioning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning), seen in many animal species, or as a result of more complex activities such as [play](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Play_%28activity%29), seen only in relatively intelligent animals. Learning may occur [consciously](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscious) or without conscious awareness. Learning that an aversive event can't be avoided nor escaped is called learned helplessness. There is evidence for human behavioral learning [prenatally](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prenatal), in which [habituation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habituation) has been observed as early as 32 weeks into [gestation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestation), indicating that the [central nervous system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_nervous_system) is sufficiently developed and primed for learning and memory to occur very early on in [development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmental_psychology).

**Four Stages of Learning**

The Four Stages of Learning provides a model for learning. It suggests that individuals are initially unaware of how little they know, or unconscious of their incompetence. As they recognize their incompetence, they consciously acquire a skill, and then consciously use it. Eventually, the skill can be utilized without it being consciously thought through: the individual is said to have then acquired unconscious competence.

1. **Unconscious incompetence**

The individual does not understand or know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. They may deny the usefulness of the skill. The individual must recognize their own incompetence, and the value of the new skill, before moving on to the next stage.The length of time an individual spends in this stage depends on the strength of the stimulus to learn.

1. **Conscious incompetence**

Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize the deficit, as well as the value of a new skill in addressing the deficit. The making of mistakes can be integral to the learning process at this stage.

1. **Conscious competence**

The individual understands or knows how to do something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires concentration. It may be broken down into steps, and there is heavy conscious involvement in executing the new skill.

1. **Unconscious competence**

The individual has had so much practice with a skill that it has become "second nature" and can be performed easily. As a result, the skill can be performed while executing another task. The individual may be able to teach it to others, depending upon how and when it was learned.

**Conscious Competence**

**Conscious Incompetence**

**Unconscious Competence**

**Unconscious Incompetence**

Four Stages of Learning