

The Learning Voyage

Learning, like sailing the world, is an epic journey of exploration, skill, and discovery. It requires preparation, navigation, perseverance, and, ultimately, reflection on the vast horizons conquered.

The 4 Cs of Sailing the Learning Sea

The core process of deep learning is reflected in the journey from port to open sea and back. If our journey of learning is to be successful we must understand where we are now, where we need to be and how we will get there.

- **Concept (The Destination):** This is the **harbour or destination** you are aiming for. It's the new skill, idea, or body of knowledge you intend to master. It sets the course for your voyage.
- **Conflict (The Storm):** This is the inevitable **storm, the rough sea, or the unexpected squall**. It's the moment the learning becomes challenging, confusing, or overwhelming. Without the push and pull of the waves, you don't learn how to handle the vessel; no genuine learning occurs without navigating this conflict.
- **Construct (The Navigation):** This is the **expert act of navigation**—trimming the sails, adjusting the rudder, and using the stars to find your way. It's where you actively synthesize information, test theories, and make sense of the chaos, leading to a "Eureka!" moment of clear understanding.
- **Consider (The Logbook):** This is the **entry into the ship's logbook**, where you pause the navigation to chart your position, review your course, note the challenges encountered, and plan the next leg. It's the metacognitive stage—thinking about your thinking and strategies used.



The Ten Steps of the Learning Voyage

Step One – Preparation: Outfitting the Vessel

To successfully sail the world, you must first outfit your vessel. Learners **gather the necessary charts (information), stock the hold with provisions (resources/prior knowledge), and check the rigging (mental readiness)**. Learning requires a prepared mind and the right tools—the knowledge of basic knots before you leave the harbour.

Our learners need to be ready for learning. They become ready through learning-focused relationships, having the right equipment and resources for learning and having a can do attitude.

Step Two – Use Your Mentors: The Experienced Captain

A solo novice sailor won't make it far. You need an experienced **Captain or First Mate** to guide you. This guide provides encouragement, teaches you to read the weather (advice on tricky concepts), and demonstrates complex manoeuvres (models good practice). The teachers are the captains. Without this experienced teacher's wisdom, advice, and examples, navigating the vast sea of knowledge becomes exponentially more difficult and dangerous. Teachers guide our students with the new learning. They give explicit instructions and explanations that allow the learner to understand the learning tasks.

Step Three – Break It Down: Short Tacks and Anchorages

You don't sail across an ocean in a straight line; you sail in **short tacks** (adjusting course to the wind) and make **regular anchorages** to rest and resupply. Learning complex topics requires this step-by-step approach. An anchorage is a **quiet time to drop anchor, check the ship's condition (reflect on what's been tried)**, and ensure the charts are accurate. Brains, like sailors, need rest, nourishment, and a moment of quiet consideration to process the voyage so far. We can't get to the desired learning destination without breaking the learning into chunks. We need to set targets along the way. Whilst the learning journey may be straight forward for some, for others the course involves multiple stops with additional scaffolding to reach the end point.

Step Four – Overcome Anxiety: Fear of the Unknown Horizon

We all feel anxiety when venturing into the open ocean. Will we capsize? Will we get lost? The **fear of the unknown horizon** or a looming storm is the maritime equivalent of fearing failure. **Overwhelming "what-ifs"** plague the mind when leaving the comfort of the coast. Learning requires leaving your comfort zone, and facing the churning water of a new concept can bring similar apprehension. If learning is too hard, our students feel anxious or worried. If it is too easy, they do not grow and excel. As teachers we need to believe in our students. More importantly they need to **know** we believe in them and have high expectations.

Step Five – Believe in Yourself: The Skipper's Resolve

Many ships attempt the world voyage, but only those with the proper **skipper's resolve** succeed. It's not just about the quality of the ship; it's the **mental toughness and self-belief** of the person at the helm. Determination keeps the bow pointed forward through days of calm and nights of rough seas. Self-belief doesn't guarantee smooth sailing, but it is the inner engine that powers perseverance.

Once our students know we believe in them, they can believe in themselves. We want our students to have growth mind frames. To be resilient and persevere. They must know that they may not get the learning the first time, but every attempt builds on previous experience and knowledge.

Step Six – Teamwork: The Crew

No great vessel sails alone; it relies on a **skilled crew**. In a storm, the crew is tied to safety lines. If one sailor slips, the others secure the line, preventing them from being swept overboard. Being a part of a learning team offers **safety, security, and helps maintain pace**. Team discussions and **bouncing ideas off the crew** (strategising) allow for the collective wisdom needed to navigate the next challenge.

We do not learn in isolation. We learn with and from others. That ‘learning thing’ happens through discussion, collaboration, support and teamwork. Our students can explain their thinking to others and that can help others in their learning journey. We are in this learning together. We leave no-one behind.

Step Seven – Persevering Through Challenge: Tacking Against the Wind

Sailing is not a straight cruise; it often involves **tacking against the wind**—an arduous, physical, and mentally taxing process. You must repeatedly push the boat into the wind, feeling the resistance and the ache of effort. This is the **learning pain**; the struggle that says, "Enough!" To stop is to drift backwards. Learners must **keep sailing regardless** and work through the difficulty to gain ground, knowing that **no struggle, no mastery**. We often tell our learners that if it's not challenging you, you are not learning.

Step Eight – Encouragement: Lighthouse Beacons and Radio Calls

When the fog is thickest and you are ready to give up, you need a **lighthouse beacon or a radio call** from the shore—encouragement, **feedback**, and **feedforward**. "Adjust your sails, you're nearly through the squall!" Learning is no different. Students need the guiding light of the teacher's advice and the cheers of their classmates when feeling completely lost. Developing strong learners and learning focused relationships means our students must also develop the **inner voice** that guides your own vessel. They need to develop the metacognitive skills to self assess and actively reflect.

Step Nine – Celebrate the Successes: Making Port 🏴‍☠️

Making it to a new port is a success. Every nautical mile covered, every small squall successfully weathered, is a success in itself. **Celebrate docking the boat safely!** Celebrate the major milestones and the small victories of navigation. This recognition is its own form of encouragement toward the next voyage. **Own your harbor; you are the one who sailed the ship.**

We often often forget to stop and celebrate along the way. It's not enough to wait for the big wins. We must celebrate the small learning steps too. Success builds success. Meeting that goal deserves recognition. Celebrating the successes builds joy in learning and builds confidence to take on the next challenge.

Step Ten – On the Other Side of the Ocean: New Horizons

After reaching your destination, you can **drop anchor, process the journey, and reflect** on all you achieved. You review the charts and your logbook. From this vantage point, everything seems easier and clearer. At the peak of our metaphorical learning voyage, we can **synthesise ideas and plan new routes**. This is true learning. But new information always emerges—new lands, new currents—which challenges what we know, and soon, **a new voyage begins**.

Self reflection for learners is a critical skill. It allows them to adapt their approaches to learning. Where am I now? What did I do well? Where do I need to go next? How will I get there? What resources do I need to help me?

We are getting our students ready to sail out into the world, to navigate the waves along the way so that they can make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others.