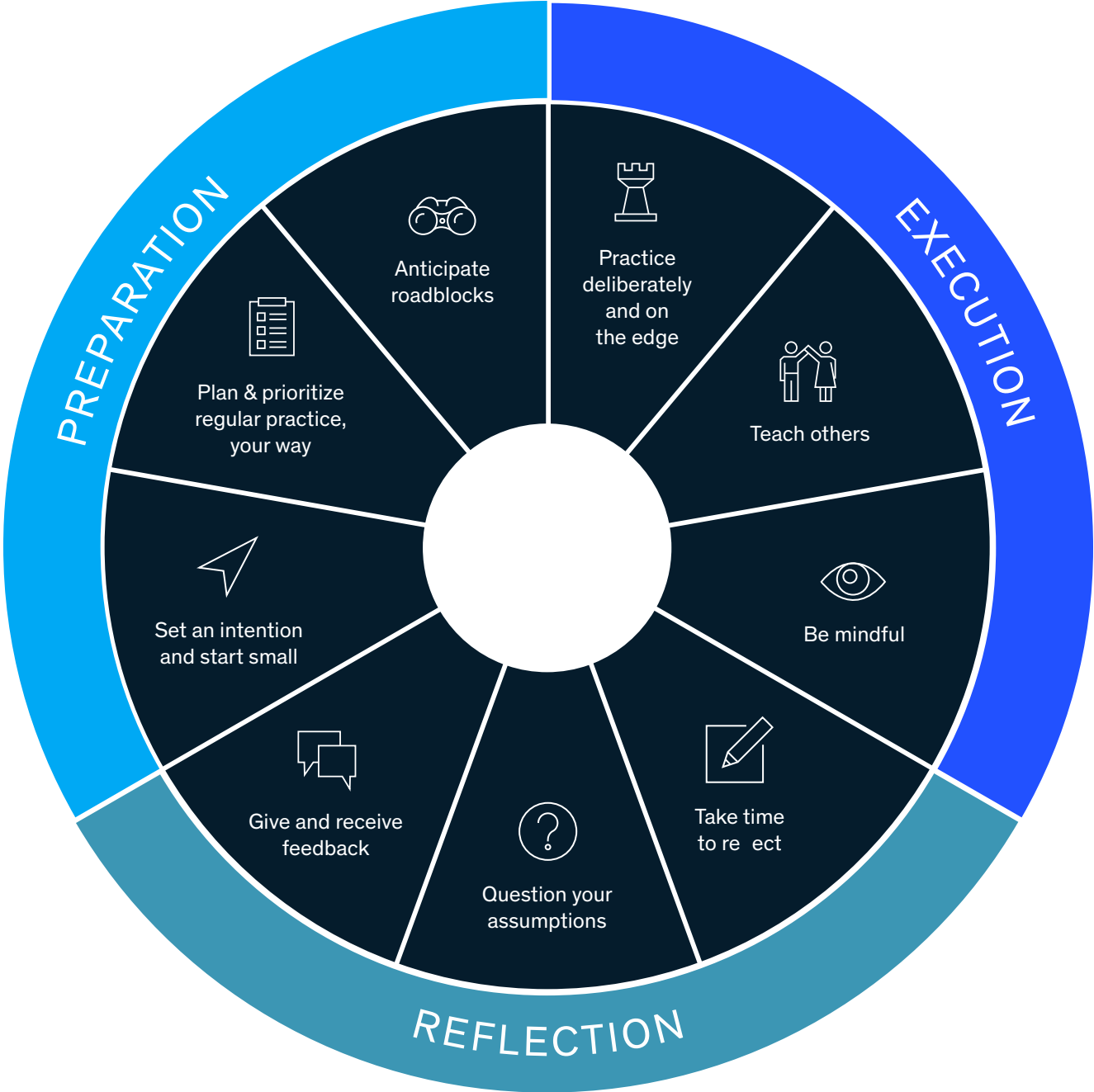


Behaviors of effective learners



Preparation

Investing the time and energy to set yourself up for success

Set a learning intention and then break it down into subcomponents

Start with a learning intention—what do you want to be able to do? Setting an intention makes it more likely that the learning will happen and that you will enjoy yourself in the process. When the overall goal seems overwhelming, break it into smaller parts. This will allow you to get started more quickly and help you maintain momentum—small accomplishments provide a rush of dopamine, giving you the motivation to continue.

TIPS

- Break your learning intention into the least intimidating, smallest pieces you can think of.
- Write them down to make them even more tangible. Extra credit: visualize yourself having fun on the journey towards these goals.
- Then focus on the first one. Just do it!

Think ahead to possible obstacles and continue to calibrate

Before engaging in an activity, imagine the challenges you might face, whether it's a matter of skill (ability to do it), will (desire to do it), or opportunity (chance to do it). More importantly, consider how you will work around anticipated challenges. This kind of proactive behavior will help you learn more efficiently in new contexts.

TIPS

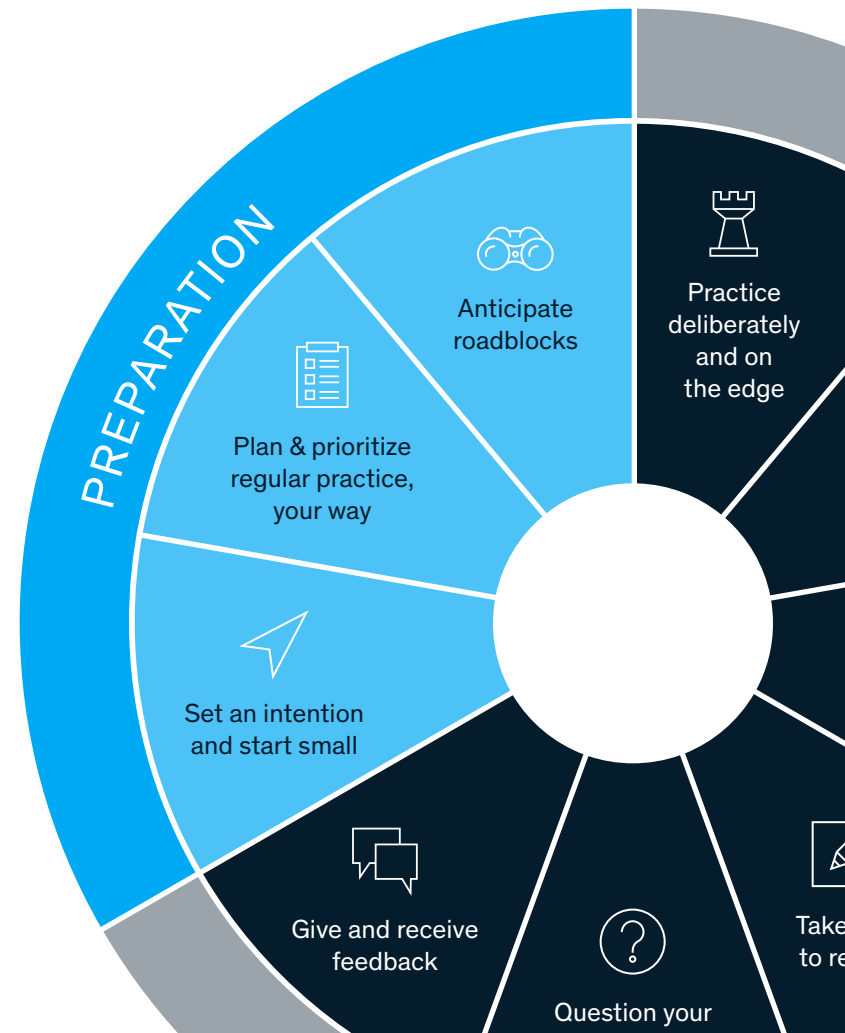
- Conduct a formal pre-mortem: what are the things that might be challenging? How likely are they to occur? What would the impact be?
- Now think about possible solutions for when those challenges arrive, or even consider how you might avoid those situations. For example, if you anticipate being too tired to learn after work, could you learn before you start your work day? Many people do!

Organize your learning to create focused space and time in your schedule

Make learning a priority by breaking out the steps you will need to take and including them in your schedule as “must-dos” rather than as optional activities. By taking ownership over your learning, you will satisfy your human need for autonomy. When we do things our way, we feel rewarded.

TIPS

- Make a mini-timeline of when you will accomplish each step of your learning plan. Make sure to plan enough rest and time away from the learning. Also include opportunities to practice (starting in a safe setting).
- Block out times in your Outlook or diary where you can “uni-task” on learning.
- Instead of considering learning moments to be extra work, reframe learning as a joyful, energizing part of your day.



Execution

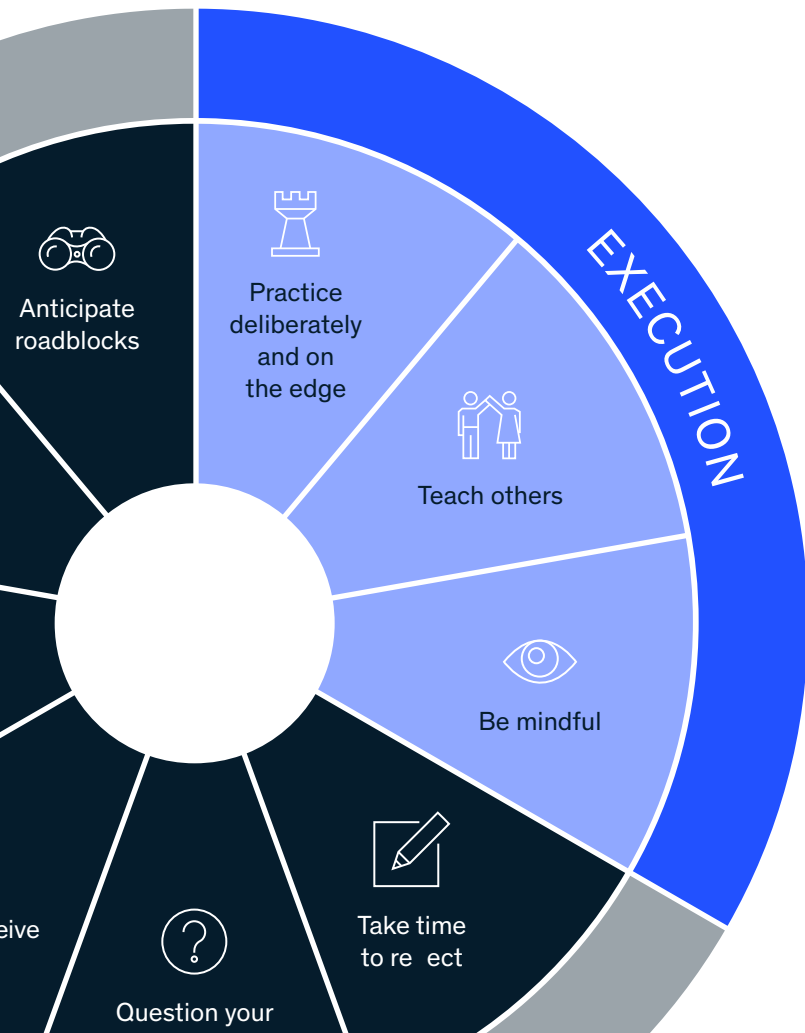
Learning and performing to the best of your capabilities, and enjoying yourself in the process

Focus your activity at just the right level of challenge to extend expertise

Our most important learning experiences come from prolonged engagement in a challenging process. As humans, we are wired to enjoy this process, so don't run from it! Challenging yourself (on the highest priority things) actually helps you to build confidence. The important part is finding a balance so that the task is difficult enough to remain interesting, but not so difficult that it discourages you from continuing or experimenting with new ideas—it should be just on the edge.

TIPS

- Next time learning feels challenging, don't give up! Remark to yourself, "Great! I'm practicing at the right level of challenge!" and plan to give yourself some sort of reward.
- If you feel like your practice isn't challenging enough, intentionally "up the stakes" just a bit. For example, instead of running your presentation by your friend, run it by a slightly more senior colleague. Keep upping the stakes as you improve.
- If you fall short, flip your mindset immediately. What did you learn from your practice (not failure)?



Share what you know with others

One of the best ways for our brains to process information is to teach it to someone else. Teaching helps overcome the common phenomenon of thinking we've learned something when actually we have only been exposed to the information.

TIPS

- Set up a recurring check-in with a friend from work to swap ideas about what you've been learning lately—in a class, from life, etc.
- Reach out to someone you know who would be interested in learning what you've been learning, and offer to share. Or, just share with an unsuspecting loved one.
- Raise your hand to present something at your next team meeting.

Master the art of paying close attention

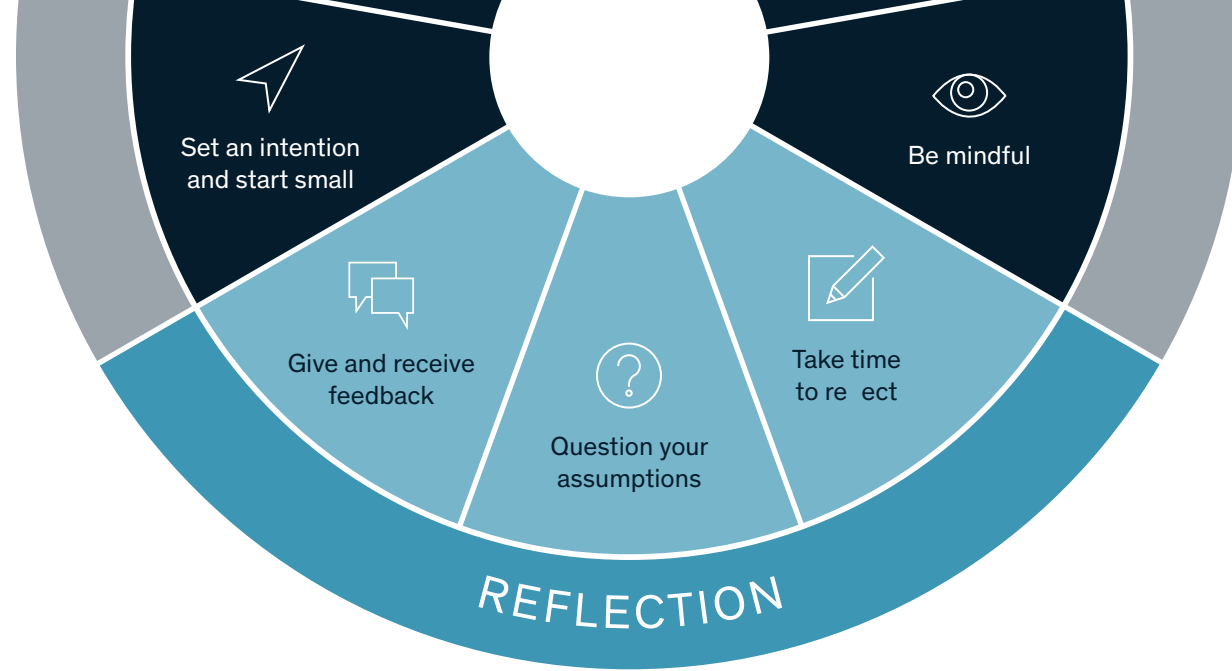
Learning is a continuous process of collecting information, evaluating it in context, trying new things, and considering alternatives. The art of really paying attention, and not learning "on autopilot," can help us do this better (and make learning more interesting!).

TIPS

- Practice paying attention very actively. In the moment, ask yourself why you are finding yourself interested or disinterested? What does this remind you of? If you are learning something, ask what seems like a great idea and what seems suspect? (Do it now, for this course!)
- Coming out of your next conversation, meeting, or learning experience, ask yourself, how might I apply these ideas to other situations I am in right now?
- If you are struggling with awareness, it could be that you are experiencing a "learning killer" (e.g., too much stress, not enough sleep). See if you can address the issue and come back to the learning later.

Reflection

Learning from your past actions



Establish a feedback loop to refine your new skills

Sometimes we need additional perspectives on how we're doing, especially with skills others can see, like communication, managing others, etc. Ask for feedback from those around you, and use it to enhance your learning.

TIPS

- Reach out to someone you know who has mastered the skill you're working on. Get their feedback and ask for their ideas on how to improve.
- Reach out to someone you trust more broadly and ask for feedback.
- Close your meetings by following up with a team member to hear their reflections.

Self-examine often

We can prevent our learning from falling into disrepair by addressing what psychologists call self-serving bias. This is our tendency to accept greater-than-deserved praise for our successes and to deflect blame for our failures. Self-examination forces us to hold up the mirror instead of taking the information that suits us and ignoring that which does not.

TIPS

- Consider the assumptions you might be holding as well as alternative perspectives, beforehand, in the moment, and after the fact. For example if you are learning communication skills, ask yourself, what might others say about the most recent presentation I did?
- Imagine the actual people you are interacting with and challenge yourself to see things through their eyes.
- Think about what's going well and what's challenging and push yourself to understand why.

Dedicate active time to think about what you are learning and what it means

Reflection is the mechanism that turns experiences into lasting learning. By taking the time to process learning we can continually refine our understanding and skills. Without reflection, even the most powerful experiences will eventually fade from memory.

TIPS

- In the same way you should plan for learning, plan for reflecting on that learning.
- Block out times in your Outlook or diary.
- Write down the big ideas you are walking away with.