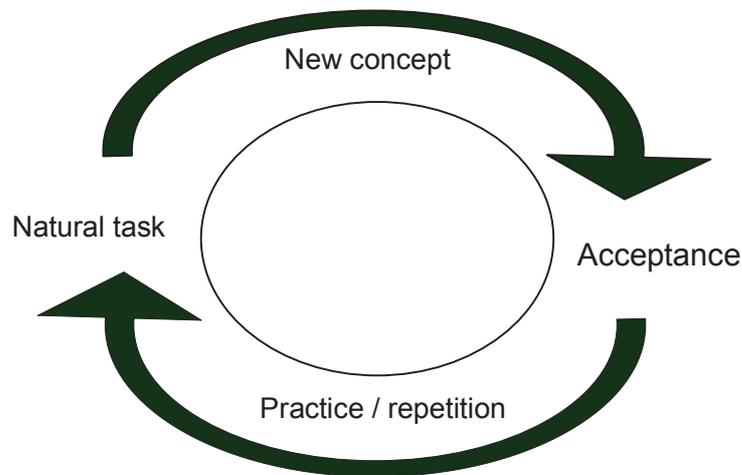


## Learning styles and assessing knowledge

Learning is easy; it has to be otherwise how would we develop into who we are today and what we will become tomorrow? People learn in a great variety of different ways; some learn from reading books, others prefer lecture-based learning while many of us learn through experiential learning (learning by doing).

Learning is a process that cycles through various stages, from when we are first introduced to a new idea and asked to accept that idea or process. We must then practice that new idea until we become happy or familiar with the process until it finally becomes a natural movement.



If we accept that learning is a natural process, we may then be able to accept the theory that our interest is stirred towards a certain piece of knowledge then our mind becomes focused on researching more data and information on that subject. Our search will bring new concepts and ideas that will create discussions on that subject with our peers or within our own mind. It is from these discussions that we formulate new ideas, accept new learning and finally act upon this form of self education.

But no matter how we naturally choose to educate ourselves, it is vitally important that the learning be assessed to see whether it was appropriate (covering the correct subject matter) and, if from a commercial training provider or college, value for money and time.

Many training professionals throughout the world use a system known as the **SMART** system as a rational approach to assessing training and learning objectives:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Specific</b>   | The learning outcome must be specific to the learning aims   |
| <b>Measurable</b> | The learning outcomes must be measurable   |
| <b>Attainable</b> | The learning outcomes must be attainable / reachable   |
| <b>Realistic</b>  | The learning must aim to represent real life wherever possible   |
| <b>Traceable</b>  | The learning outcomes must be traceable and measurable against time scales and in many cases timed against business needs. |

### **Assessing learning objectives**

When an individual has undertaken any type of learning experience, it is essential that the learning be assessed to ascertain whether the learning experience was beneficial and effective. The easiest way in theory, although incredibly hard in actual practice is to utilise the SMART method.

Being able to effectively assess anyone is vastly subjective, based on your own personal experience, education and preferences; and it is important to realise this and not allow previous experiences to cloud your judgement. For an example, let us assess someone's ability to make a cup of tea (an everyday practice for many people) and the various methods available.

### **Making a cup of tea**

**Method one:** Written assessment to prove that they understand the complete process from start to finish:

- Ensure that the kettle contains enough water.
- Turn the kettle on.
- Place loose tea (into a diffuser) or tea bags into a previously warmed teapot.
- Pour hot water into the teapot and replace teapot lid.
- Cover and keep warm for three minutes.
- Remove cover and teapot lid and stir tea.
- Replace teapot lid .
- Pour cold milk into a cup.
- Pour tea into the cup.
- Add sugar if necessary.
- Drink tea.

I am sure that the above list details the basic theoretical requirements to make a cup of tea. However it fails to take into account:

- Risk assessment when working with hot liquids.
- Order of task list as per personal preference as I normally use milk at the end of the process.
- Personal expectations – is the taste of the tea acceptable? Some people prefer weak tea to strong tea.

**Method two:** Would a practical assessment be acceptable? How would you assess this practical test? The task would be specific, but how do you measure it and against what, time or flavour etc?