

Resource:

A Profile of the Autonomous Learner

Although composite profiles do not account for significant differences between situations, researchers have identified well over 100 competencies that they have linked with successful independent learning. What follows is a composite list, with the various attributes, characteristics, qualities, and competencies grouped together into “families,” based on qualitative similarities.

Content directly from Candy, Philip C. (1991) *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

AUTONOMOUS LEARNER FACTOR (Attribute, Characteristic, Quality or Competency)	Student is aware of the factor's importance (Y/N)	Student consistently puts forth required effort to improve (Y/N)	Emerging	Developing	Gaining Consistency	Effectively Sustained
Be Methodical/Disciplined						
Have direction ¹						
Be able to focus on an area of interest ²						
Exercise self-discipline ³						
Develop individual plans for achieving goals ⁴						
Be able to analyze and plan the entire learning process and to manage it dynamically ⁵						
Plan learning a long time ahead ⁶						
Plan ahead ⁷						
Make effective use of time ⁸						

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Establish personal priorities ⁹						
Have a sense of what is important ¹⁰						
Translate needs into specifiable objectives ¹¹						
Pay close attention to details of an ongoing project ¹²						
Be able to organize ¹³						
Be able to develop sequential plans based on clear objectives ¹⁴						
Maintain detailed and accurate records of the learning project ¹⁵						
BE LOGICAL/ANALYTICAL						
Be attuned to the whole ¹⁶						
Be able to organize his/her thoughts ¹⁷						
Form generalizations, look for principles, and find basic structures of subjects ¹⁸						
Enjoy questioning, testing, and analyzing ¹⁹						
Be able to analyze define problems ²⁰						
Be able to develop criteria for selecting among alternative solutions ²¹						

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Be able to break general goals down into specific objectives and define explicit criteria for their achievement ²²						
Engage in logical reasoning ²³						
Draw inferences and conclusions ²⁴						
Be able to organize data ²⁵						
Be able to analyze data and see relationships ²⁶						
Be able to identify underlying assumptions ²⁷						
Be able to go beyond simple findings to see implications ²⁸						
BE REFLECTIVE/SELF-AWARE						
Be able to identify needs when he or she encounters a problem to be solved, a skill to be acquired, or information to be obtained ²⁹						
Decide what knowledge and skills to learn ³⁰						
Have access to alternative perspectives for understanding his or her situation ³¹						
Identify personal learning objectives ³²						
Have an awareness of the constraints on their learning - including psycho-cultural assumptions ³³						
Be able to diagnose current problems or needs ³⁴						

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Have a self-concept as an effective learner ³⁵						
Clarify his or her values and establish goals consistent with those values ³⁶						
Understand his or her own learning style and be willing to try others ³⁷						
Know his or her strengths and weaknesses ³⁸						
Recognize when help is needed ³⁹						
Understand his or her own values, interests, abilities, and knowledge ⁴⁰						
Understand what he or she wishes to be as an adult human being ⁴¹						
DEMONSTRATE CURIOSITY/OPENNESS/MOTIVATION						
Be self-starting ⁴²						
Be curious, with a continual need to learn ⁴³						
Be curious about a variety of phenomena ⁴⁴						
Be “cognitively open” with regard to phenomena ⁴⁵						
Have a field of particular interest, and desire to “own” the project ⁴⁶						
Have a taste for learning ⁴⁷						

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Be open to new learning opportunities ⁴⁸						
Be future oriented ⁴⁹						
Discover through investigation ⁵⁰						
Confront questions and problems willingly ⁵¹						
BE FLEXIBLE						
Be able to learn in many situations - from conversations, by reading, and by observation ⁵²						
Be able to learn from listening, taking notes, reading or memorizing ⁵³						
Stick to plans - modifying as necessary ⁵⁴						
Be flexible in view of new evidence and changing circumstances ⁵⁵						
Be able to modify his or her own behavior through an understanding of behavior modification ⁵⁶						
Be able to accept or reject material ⁵⁷						
Be able to achieve or abandon goals ⁵⁸						
BE INTERDEPENDENT/INTERPERSONALLY COMPETENT						
Be amiable and peace loving ⁵⁹						

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Have sensitivity and competence in social interactions ⁶⁰						
Have sustained relationships with faculty members ⁶¹						
Develop small, stable groups of friends ⁶²						
Be able to work cooperatively with others, yet enjoy being on his or her own in learning ⁶³						
Be willing and able to learn from others ⁶⁴						
Be willing and able to learn with others and to share ideas ⁶⁵						
Develop group plans for achieving goals ⁶⁶						
Know how and when to ask for help or direction ⁶⁷						
Analyze group dynamics and become capable of using group decision-making processes ⁶⁸						
Diagnose learning needs with help from teachers and peers ⁶⁹						
Relate to teachers and facilitators ⁷⁰						
Be able to secure cooperation, support, and encouragement from advisors ⁷¹						
Relate to peers collaboratively as resources ⁷²						
Be able to relate to people of differing ages and to assume a variety of roles successfully ⁷³						

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BE PERSISTENT/RESPONSIBLE						
Be emotionally stable, objective, and impartial ⁷⁴						
Be serious, committed, and organized ⁷⁵						
Be self-regulating and systematic in work ⁷⁶						
Be able to assume academic responsibility (that is, be syllabus free) ⁷⁷						
Be capable of intellectual concentration ⁷⁸						
Have an informed acceptance of the responsibility for his or her own learning ⁷⁹						
Stick to plans - modifying as a necessary ⁸⁰						
Renew motivation for learning as required ⁸¹						
Have a tolerance for frustration ⁸²						
Be able to "stick to" a position ⁸³						
Have energy and determination at a job ⁸⁴						
Detect and cope with personal and situational blocks to learning ⁸⁵						
Have knowledge of social barriers facing the learner ⁸⁶						
Work to resolve problems ⁸⁷						

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BE VENTURESOME/CREATIVE						
Be able to develop new conceptual frameworks ⁸⁸						
Be capable of original thinking ⁸⁹						
Be able to produce analogies ⁹⁰						
Be creative ⁹¹						
Construct and develop special materials and devices ⁹²						
Have a right hemisphere style of learning and thinking ⁹³						
Be unafraid of "being different" ⁹⁴						
Be able to discover new possibilities ⁹⁵						
Be able to develop alternative solutions to problems ⁹⁶						
Engage in divergent thinking ⁹⁷						
Be intuitive ⁹⁸						
Be a risk taker (but often lack confidence) ⁹⁹						
SHOW CONFIDENCE/HAVE A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT						
Be able to disagree ¹⁰⁰						
Be unafraid of "being different" ¹⁰¹						

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Be able to "stick to" a position ¹⁰²						
Work for his or her own satisfaction ¹⁰³						
Have a quiet self-confidence ¹⁰⁴						
Know how to achieve his or her goals and objectives ¹⁰⁵						
Pursue excellence based on personal standards ¹⁰⁶						
Project to the world a clarity of purpose ¹⁰⁷						
BE INDEPENDENT/SELF-SUFFICIENT						
Relate to others without depending on them ¹⁰⁸						
Have skills to study independently - reading, writing, listening, reflective thinking, use of time, and self-motivation ¹⁰⁹						
Be able to work autonomously ¹¹⁰						
Take initiative and work independently in learning ¹¹¹						
Be able to work cooperatively with others, yet enjoy being on his or her own in learning ¹¹²						
HAVE DEVELOPED INFORMATION SEEKING AND RETRIEVAL SKILLS						
Intelligently select and use most relevant sources of information ¹¹³						

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Identify, and know how to use, resources appropriate to different kinds of learning objectives ¹¹⁴						
Be able to establish feedback mechanisms for day-to-day performance ¹¹⁵						
Be able to choose relevant resources, on the basis of needs, potentialities, objectives, means, and limitations ¹¹⁶						
Be able to “dig up” material ¹¹⁷						
Know of available opportunities ¹¹⁸						
HAVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT, AND SKILL AT, “LEARNING PROCESSES”						
Be capable of reporting what he or she has learned in a variety of ways ¹¹⁹						
Be able to decode a message - textual, auditory, or visual ¹²⁰						
Be able to collect information using appropriate tools and instruments ¹²¹						
Have skills and competencies required to master productive tasks ¹²²						
Be able to understand learning and behavior change ¹²³						
Be able to use basic study and problem-solving skills ¹²⁴						
Enjoy reading, writing, listening, and discussing ¹²⁵						

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Have developed skills in note taking, remembering, and relating ¹²⁶						
Be able to gain knowledge and skills from resources ¹²⁷						
Know how to use resources for learning ¹²⁸						
Conduct learning activities ¹²⁹						
DEVELOP AND USE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING						
Be able to select what is of value from the mass of information available ¹³⁰						
Participate in diagnosing, prescribing, and evaluating his or her own progress ¹³¹						
Be able to evaluate the appropriateness of new skills, the adequacy of solutions, or the quality of new ideas and knowledge ¹³²						
Be able to evaluate data ¹³³						
Evaluate learning activities ¹³⁴						

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