

The successful lifelong learner is someone who:

1. Takes initiative

This first one is core to the entire concept of “self-directed.” The successful self-directed learner does not wait for someone else to say “you must learn this.” Rather, they are intrinsically motivated toward self-learning.

2. Is comfortable with independence

Self-directed learners do not always act autonomously or independently. Indeed, increasingly they must cultivate their networks to learn effectively. Nonetheless, successful self-directed learners know how to be self-reliant.

3. Is persistent

Self learning – like all learning – takes time, it takes repetition, it takes practice. Successful self-directed learners stick to it.

4. Accepts responsibility

The successful self-directed learner embraces responsibility for doing the work of learning and doing it well.

5. Views problems as challenges, not obstacles

The successful self-directed learner embraces a growth mindset and is not easily thwarted when the going gets tough.

6. Is capable of self-discipline

Even when learning is enjoyable (which, for the successful self-directed learner, it usually is), it often requires discipline. The self-directed learner knows (or learns!) how to develop and maintain the discipline needed for self learning.

7. Has a high degree of curiosity

Successful self-directed learners have a high propensity for asking why – and lots of other questions.

8. Has a strong desire to learn or change

The successful self-directed learner is intrinsically motivated. They have a will to learn and see learning as a positive path forward.

9. Is self-confident

Successful self-directed learners have a solid sense of “self-efficacy” – the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals.

10. Is able to use basic study skills

Skills like taking notes effectively are useful for a lifetime. The self-directed learner knows this. (Look up – cornell note taking)

11. Organizes his or her time

While self-directed learning does not require the obsession with productivity that seems to be everywhere on the Internet, the successful self-directed learner nonetheless knows how to find and manage time effectively to allow for learning.

12. Sets an appropriate pace for learning

The successful self-directed learner recognizes that learning is as much (if not more) about the process than the outcome and doesn't try to do too much too fast.

13. Develops a plan for completing work

Setting a plan is part of setting the pace and ultimately reaching the destination. The successful self-directed learner recognizes planning as a critical element of self learning.

14. Has a tendency to be goal-oriented

While not all self-directed learners consciously set goals, they nonetheless tend to have an end in mind when they start down the learning path.

15. Enjoys learning

The proverbial bottom line: *the successful self-directed learner simply likes to learn.*