

# Tips on self-directed learning (SDL)

SDL involves us taking initiative of some aspects of our own learning, either alone or with help from others.

As we all have different learning styles, finding what suits us best can be a challenge. The **NORSE** system helps us search through the maze of available options:

**NORSE** stands for:

**N**needs  
**O**bjectives  
**R**esources  
**S**trategy  
**E**valuation.

We will now look at each of these in more detail:

## Needs

This can be best researched by looking at:

- Long and short-term career plans
- Strengths and weaknesses (challenges)
- Personal interests

## Objectives

From the identified learning needs:

- Formulate your SMART objectives (**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, **t**imely)
- Decide whether to adopt a pre-existing learning package (e.g. a distance learning course), or design and develop your own learning program

## Resources

- Identify resources necessary to support your learning
- Such resources may be educational (learning guides and AV material), experiential (placement experience in a local clinic), and human (e.g. access to a mentor via email or telephone)

## Strategy

- Select & implement learning strategies appropriate for your learning style
- Quickly preview learning material to decide which sections you are familiar with and which require the most attention
- Draw up a schedule for learning and try to stick to it
- List the questions you want answered for each section; don't just read through the material passively

## Evaluation

- Participate in the assessments (if you are doing a distance learning course)
- Evaluate your learning outcomes against your initial objectives (if you are designing your own programme)
- Reflect on the experience (on either case)

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## Bibliography

1. Leung WC (2002) "Tips on Self-Directed Learning"; BMJ 2002; 324 (suppl): s119, 12/10/2002