# YOUR GUIDE TO:

## THE LEARNING THEORIES & **MODELS YOU NEED TO KNOW**

# USING LEARNING THEORIES & MODELS **TO IMPROVE YOUR TRAINING INITIATIVES**

As the world around us changes, staying ahead can be challenging. Yet, as a learning professional, standing still isn't an option. It's imperative that you seek out opportunities to improve your learning strategy at every stage. But where should you start?

Enter learning models and theories. These are the guiding frameworks that shed light on the intricacies of knowledge acquisition and retention. Utilising them effectively paves the way for impactful and engaging learning experiences.

In this collection, we present **12 models** and **12 theories** that every learning professional should know. Ready to cultivate ongoing growth within your organisation? Then let's dive in.

## 12 Learning Models

1. The Forgetting Curve
2. Bloom's Taxonomy
3. The ADDIE Model
4. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
5. The VARK Model
6. The 70:20:10 Model
7. The Hook Model
8. The Socratic Method
9. Fogg's Model for Behavior Change
10. Dale's Cone of Experience
11. Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation Model
12. Gagne's Nine Levels

## 12 Learning Theories

1. Behaviorism Learning Theory
2. Cognitivism Learning Theory
3. Constructivism Learning Theory
4. Humanism Learning Theory
5. Connectivism Learning Theory
6. Social Learning Theory
7. John Dewey's Learning Theory
8. Experiential Learning Theory
9. Information Processing Theory
10. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences
11. Knowles' Adult Learning Theory
12. Self-Determination Theory

# 12 LEARNING MODELS **YOU HAVE TO KNOW**

Despite advances in neuroscience, the way we learn is still shrouded in mystery. Our pursuit of the most effective instructional methodologies remains ongoing. There is no indisputable 'ideal' approach.

Thankfully, learning models give us a structure by which we can understand this complex process and guidelines for successful instruction. With this in mind, we've collected **12** of the most important learning models for your consideration.

These are all models that have played pivotal roles in shaping modern instructional experiences. That said, they are just guidelines rather than a strict set of rules. These models may not be scientifically proven, but they are based on rigorous research.

In this section of the white paper, we'll explore the principles and strategies linked to each model, how they can be applied and why they're important. But before we dig in, let's define what a learning model is.

## What is a Learning Model?

A learning model is a specific application or representation of a learning theory. As a result, it's more concrete and practical. It usually incorporates clear theoretical principles or a structured framework for designing and delivering learning experiences.

This means learning models can provide useful guidelines and strategies for educators in a variety of different fields. Perhaps one or more of these models can help to set the strategy for your structured workplace learning initiative?

# 1. THE FORGETTING **CURVE**

## A Stark Reminder Of How Quickly We Forget...

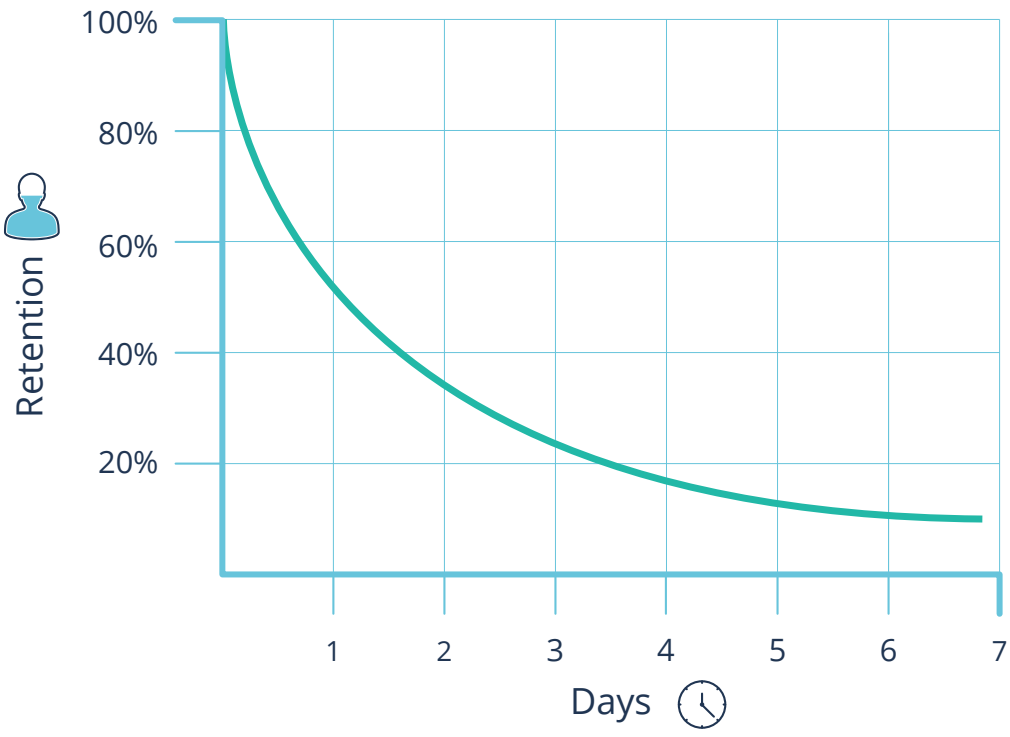
Hermann Ebbinghaus's Forgetting Curve shows us how information is lost over time if you don't make an effort to retain it. In the latter half of the 19th century, Ebbinghaus ran a series of tests on his own memory.

These tests saw him memorising nonsense syllables and repeatedly testing himself after various time periods. By plotting the results on a graph, he created the 'Forgetting Curve', as shown below.

The curve shows us that information leaks out of our brains at an exponential rate. In fact, we forget...

- **50%** of everything we learn within a day.
- **75%** of everything we learn within 3 days
- And **90%** of everything we learn within a week.

But it's not all bad news. Ebbinghaus was also able to demonstrate that every time you reinforce information, the rate of decline decreases. This shows us the importance of spaced repetition in a learning context.



# 2. BLOOM'S **TAXONOMY**

## Unleashing Better Learning Objectives And Higher-Level Thinking...

Educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom devised the first version of his now-famous taxonomy in 1956. His aim was to place learning objectives within specific categories based on complexity.

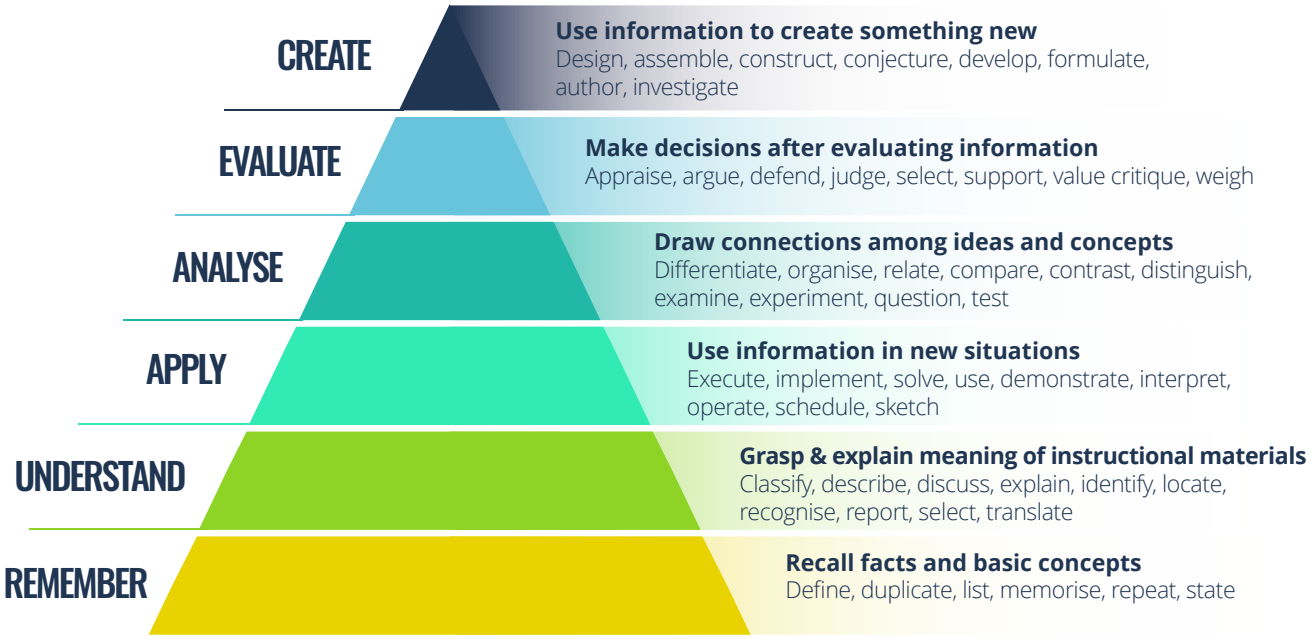
These categories help us to understand the associated level of educational achievement linked to every learning task. Bloom's Taxonomy was revised back in 2001 and is now structured as below.

The taxonomy has a hierarchical structure. Students start with basic learning and move their way up through each level until they have mastered the subject at hand.

The learning experience becomes more active as they progress. What begins with rote memorisation ends with being able to use the information to create something new.

Bloom's Taxonomy has a number of uses for teachers, instructors and corporate trainers. First and foremost, it allows you to assign learning objectives or tasks, based on your audience's competency level.

In addition, we can also use the taxonomy to assess the level of our audience's educational achievement over time.



# 3. THE **ADDIE MODEL**

## Designing Success, One Instructional Journey At A Time...

Creating compelling learning experiences requires an effective instructional design approach. ADDIE provides a framework to help instructional designers to structure their learning experiences in the right way.

It was first created by the US army back in the 1970s, as a way to guide their own learning programmes. Nowadays, ADDIE is also a common approach within the corporate learning sphere.

Indeed, despite its age, it's still far and away the most common learning and development model. In fact, it's the basis for over 100 spin-off models. How's that for influence?

As you may have guessed, it's an acronym. It stands for:

**Analysis**: At this stage, you'll need to analyse your training needs. This analysis will help you to understand your audience's current competency level and skills gaps. You'll then be able to set objectives accordingly.

**Design**: Once the analysis is complete, you can start planning and designing your learning experience. You should keep your learning objectives at the forefront of your mind throughout.

**Development**: With all that planning out the way, you can now gather your assets and get building. This may take some time, but if you've done your due diligence in the previous steps, it should come together relatively quickly.

**Implementation**: Now that you've built the learning experience, it's time to share it with your learners. Ensure you have a clear implementation plan and that your learning materials are easy to access.

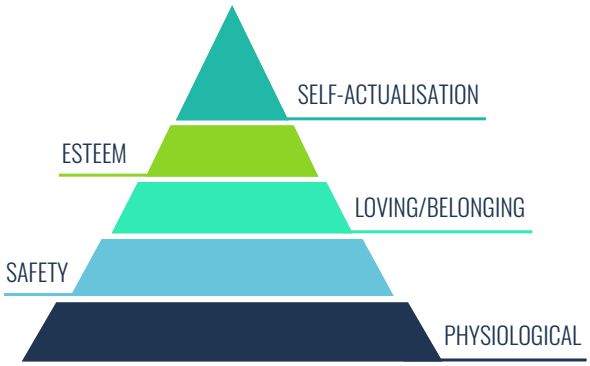
**Evaluation**: Finally, you should gather feedback relating to the learning experience. This will help you to evaluate how successful it has been. Take care to determine whether your audience feels the learning objective has been satisfied.

# 4. MASLOW'S **HIERARCHY OF NEEDS**

## Understanding How Our Needs Impact Our Behaviour...

In 1943, Abraham Maslow published a paper called *A Theory of Human Motivation*. This paper contained his 'Hierarchy of Needs', a model that would transform the way we think about motivation and goal attainment.

The hierarchy is presented in a pyramid format, with five levels. The four lower levels are physiological needs. The fifth and topmost level is a 'growth' need. In order for our growth needs to influence our behaviour our lower level needs must first be satisfied.




1. **Physiological:** Our physical needs, such as air, food, water, sex and sleep.
2. **Safety:** Our security needs, such as health, property and employment.
3. **Belongingness:** Our love needs, such as family, friendship and romance.
4. **Esteem:** Our status needs, such as self-esteem, achievement and confidence.
5. **Self-actualisation:** Our purpose needs, such as morality, creativity and problem-solving.

This hierarchy helps us to understand what drives our learners and enables us to prioritise accordingly. It also helps us to understand how physiological factors may affect our learners' capacity for effective learning.

# 5. THE **VARK MODEL**

## Establishing Your Learners' Sensory Preferences...

The VARK model was created by Neil Fleming and Colleen Mills in the late 1980s. It categorises different learning styles based on perceptual channels. It suggests that individual learners have preferences for how they like to receive and process information.

What it doesn't suggest, however, is that these preferences inform learning outcomes. Indeed, the idea of learning styles is not without controversy. Put simply, it is not well supported by evidence.

That said, the model does help us to think through the different ways learners receive information. Indeed, it gives us a platform to think about our strengths and weaknesses in different areas of perception.

Let's break down the acronym:

**Visual:** This learner type prefers to use videos, images, charts, graphs and other visual aids to process information. They like to see and observe.

**Auditory:** This learner type prefers lectures, discussions and verbal instructions. They benefit from discussing concepts with others.

**Reading/Writing:** This learner type prefers to read, take notes and engage in written and text-based activities.

**Kinesthetic:** This learner type prefers to participate in hands-on experiences and physical activities. Active engagement is the order of the day.

# 6. THE **70:20:10 MODEL**

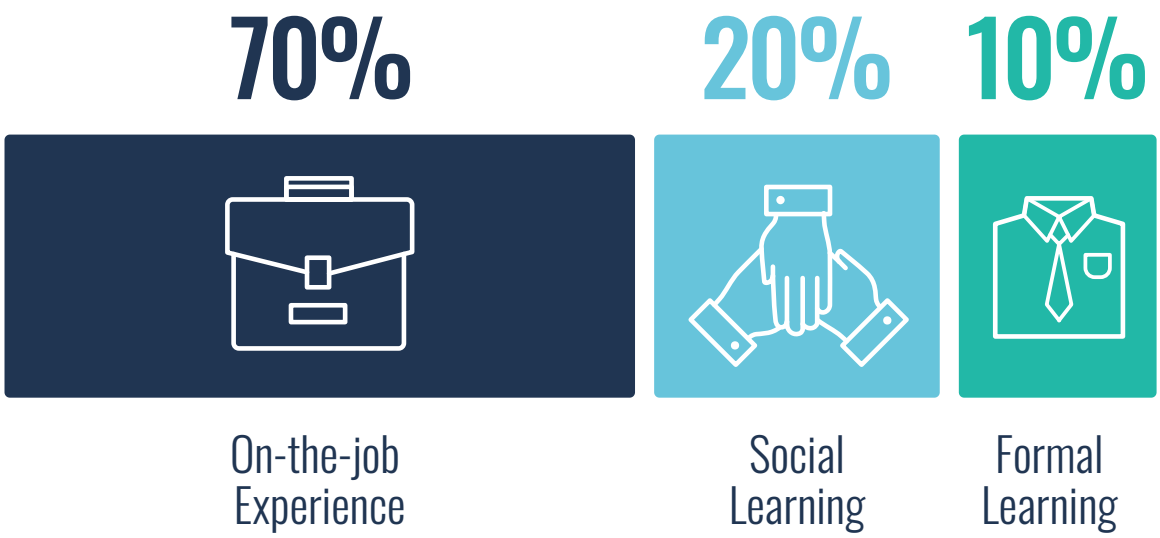
## Recentering Informal Learning Experiences...

The 70:20:10 Model helps learning professionals to understand how we take in information from the world around us. As a result, it can help us to plan and prioritise our training initiatives accordingly.

The model was created in the 1980s by Morgan McCall, through a survey launched for the Centre for Creative Leadership. Their research found that:

- Only **10%** of what we learn happens through formal training. That's things like pre-set curricula, classroom events, dusty textbooks and so on.
- **20%** of what we learn happens through developmental relationships. In other words, through a social context between two or more people.
- And a whopping **70%** of what we learn happens through on-the-job experience. This is a significant slice of the overall learning pie.

Accordingly, this information helps us to understand where we should apply our focus. Relying too heavily on formal training interventions will slow you down. Instead, you should create an environment where informal, social and experiential learning thrive.



# 7. THE **HOOK MODEL**

## Habit-Forming Hooks That Deliver Behaviour Change...

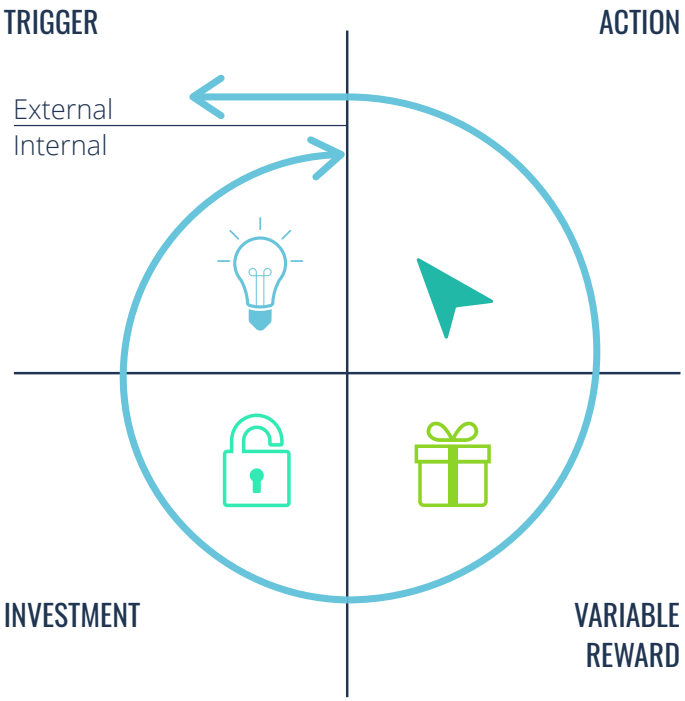
The Hook Model, as formulated by author Nir Eyal, is a four-phase process for creating new habits. Understanding this process can help us to drive behaviour change.

After all, when an activity becomes habitual, we start to do it automatically and without too much thought. Imagine what you could achieve if you turned learning into a habit?

The Hook Model shows us that there are four steps required to forge a new habit:

1. **Trigger:** A prompt to action. This could be an external trigger (for instance, an email) or an internal trigger (for instance, a craving).
2. **Action:** The desired behaviour. In other words, the act prompted by the trigger.
3. **Variable Reward:** A reward for completing the activity or displaying the right behaviour. By varying the reward you are appealing to your learners' innate sense of curiosity.
4. **Investment:** By moving through the first three steps, your learners are making a time and effort-based investment into the hook cycle.

This investment makes it easier to go through the hook cycle again (and again). After all, your learners have already made a commitment of sorts. If they repeat the cycle enough, then voila: a new habit will have been formed!



# 8. THE **SOCRATIC METHOD**

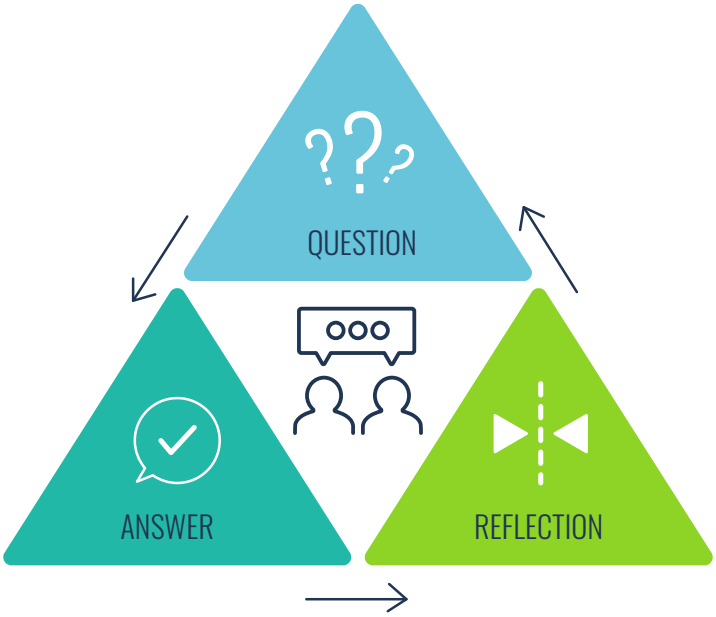
## Unveiling Truth One Question At A Time...

The Socratic Method is a learning methodology that uses questioning to stimulate critical thinking. Adopting this method turns conversations into a cooperative dialogue or an argument that's designed to drive genuine insights.

As you might have guessed, it's named after the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. After all, the Socrates that was portrayed in Plato's dialogues was known for his relentless pursuit of truth through questioning and critical thinking.

The key features of the Socratic Method include:

- **Questioning:** Rather than directly stating facts, this methodology uses questions to guide the learner. This helps them to explore new ideas and uncover contradictions.
- **Dialectical Process:** Learning takes place in the form of a back-and-forth dialogue, or a dialectic. Specifically, the result is a series of questions and responses.
- **Critical Thinking:** By focusing on questioning and thoughtful dialogue, the Socratic Method encourages learners to turn information over in their mind.
- **Cooperative Learning:** The Socratic Method is a coordinated dance between two or more partners. It focuses on working collaboratively to seek out meaningful insights.
- **Inductive Reasoning:** Questioning guides the learner to draw connections and identify implications based on specific principles and examples.



# 9. BJ FOGG'S **MODEL FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

## Tiny Habits That Drive Big Transformations...

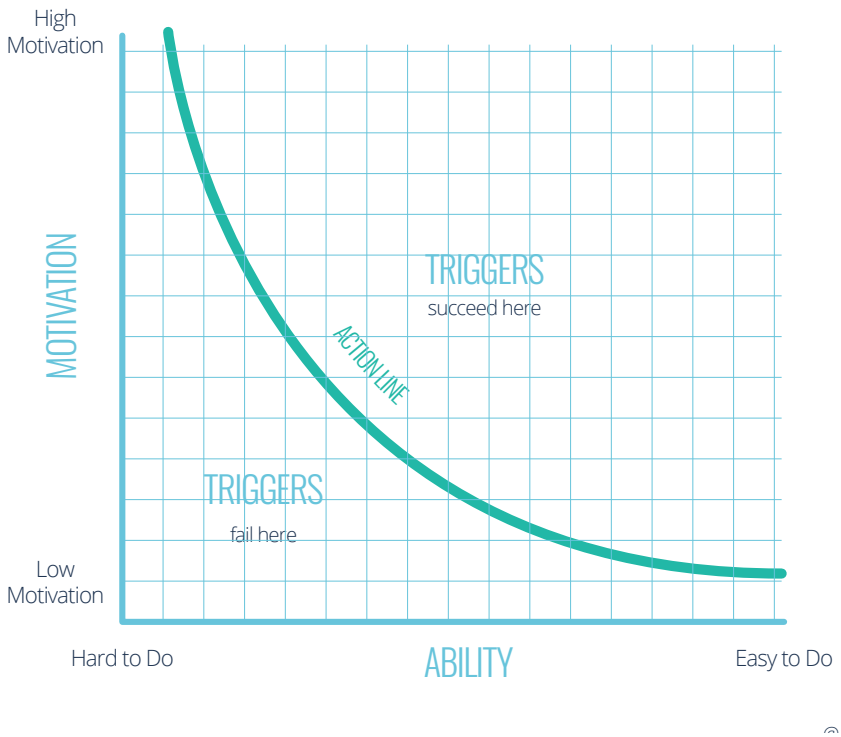
All learning initiatives worth their salt have a common goal in mind: behaviour change. Unfortunately, this is no easy task. It's much easier to stick with what we know than it is to embrace new approaches.

That's where BJ Fogg comes in. Back in 2009, he and his team at the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University published a practical framework. In short, this framework shows us how to drive behaviour change throughout an audience.

The model suggests that behaviour change requires **three** things:

- **Motivation:** We must understand the benefits relating to the action or new behaviour. This, in turn, must make us want to act.
- **Ability:** We must be able to complete the action. Time, money and physical effort may act as detractors here.
- **Trigger:** The final piece of the puzzle requires prompting your learners to spring into action.

This model can be presented as a helpful equation: **B = MAT**. If your learners have the motivation and the ability to complete an activity, then all they'll need is the right trigger.



# 10. EDGAR DALE'S **CONE OF EXPERIENCE**

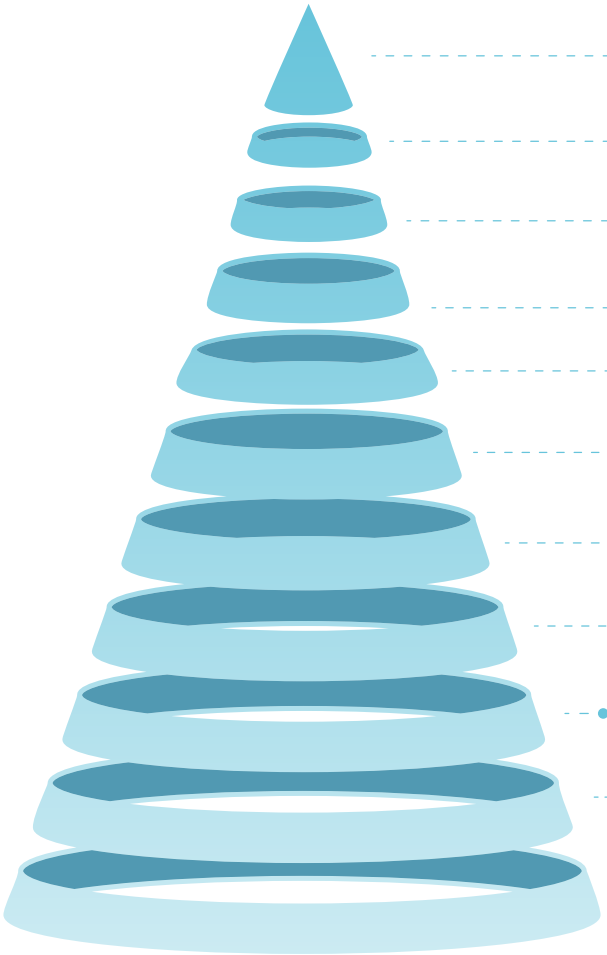
## Moving From Experience To Expertise...

Edgar Dale first introduced his Cone of Experience (aka. The Cone of Learning or the Learning Pyramid) in 1946. It is arguably the most commonly misrepresented and misunderstood learning model on this list.

The cone is an 11-stage model that places multimedia assets into categories based on their 'concreteness'. By this, we mean their ability to accurately capture reality.

Regrettably, the cone has been distorted over time, with imaginary retention scores superimposed onto the model. You've probably heard that you remember 10% of what you read, 20% of what you hear and so on. This is bogus.

This model is a simple showcase of how sensory data is lost across different learning experiences. The levels are organised in a cone shape, with the more concrete experiences at the base, and the more abstract and passive experiences at the top.



| | |
|---|---|
| Verbal Symbols | Using words to convey information, ideas or concepts. |
| Visual Symbols | Engaging with visual representations such as charts, graphs or diagrams. |
| Recordings, Radio & Still Pictures | Using audio recordings or podcasts to deliver educational content. |
| Motion Pictures | Incorporating films or video to communicate your message. |
| Educational Television | Using TV or video as a means to convey educational content. |
| Exhibits | Interacting with displays or exhibits to help further learner understanding. |
| Study Trips | Educational field trips or visits that enhance learning through direct observation. |
| Demonstrations | Presentations that showcase a concept or a process step-by-step. |
| Dramatized Experiences | Role-play situations or dramatisations that simulate real-life experiences. |
| Contrived Experiences | Situations or scenarios designed to drive learning outcomes. |
| Direct Purposeful Experiences | Firsthand real-world experiences that involve the learner. |

# 11. KIRKPATRICK'S **TRAINING EVALUATION MODEL**

## Unlocking New Levels Of Insight...

The Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model is a popular framework that is used to assess the effectiveness of training programmes. It was developed by Donald L. Kirkpatrick in the 1950s. Its influence remains strong today.

The model consists of four levels, each representing a different aspect of evaluation.

1 LEVEL

**Reaction:** At this level, you're assessing your learners' immediate reactions and feelings about your training. You'll need to gather their feedback on your training content, your instructors and the overall learning experience.

2 LEVEL

**Learning:** By this stage, you're assessing whether your learners have acquired new knowledge or skills as a result of your training. You'll need to use quizzes, tests and demonstrations to complete your evaluation.

3 LEVEL

**Behaviour:** At level three, you're assessing whether your learners are applying their newfound knowledge and skills in the workplace. To do this, you'll need to conduct observations and performance reviews.

4 LEVEL

**Results:** This is the pinnacle of Kirkpatrick's model. Here you're assessing the impact of your training against organisational objectives. You'll be looking for improvements in key performance indicators and assessing your ROI.

As you can see, each level is sequential, with each stage laying the foundation for the next. Whilst training evaluation can be difficult, Kirkpatrick's model gives us a simple structure to follow that helps to illuminate the tangible impact of our training efforts.

# 12. GAGNE'S **NINE LEVELS OF LEARNING**

## Your Blueprint For Comprehensive Learning Experiences...

Robert Gagné was an American educational psychologist who helped to pioneer the science of instruction and learning. In 1965, he published *Conditions of Learning*, which set out the nine steps that learners should experience when they are being taught something.

The 'Nine Levels of Learning' help trainers and educators to structure their learning materials in the right way. In addition, the model provides a framework for creating instructional activities and a way of thinking about learning progress.

Let's break down the nine steps involved:

1. **Gaining attention:** You can't teach someone anything if they're not paying attention.
2. **Informing learners of the objective:** Establish what the learning intervention will cover.
3. **Stimulating recall prior to learning:** Ask the learner to reflect on their previous experiences relating to the subject matter.
4. **Presenting the stimulus:** Present the learner with new information relating to the learning objective.
5. **Providing learning guidance:** Reinforce the information presented with alternative approaches.
6. **Eliciting performance:** Get your learners to demonstrate their newfound knowledge.
7. **Providing feedback:** Communicate any feedback necessary to help your learners to improve.
8. **Assessing performance:** Test your learners' knowledge and understanding.
9. **Enhancing retention and transfer:** Show your learners how they can apply their knowledge to different contexts and situations.

# LEARNING MODELS: **FINAL WORD**

If you're new to the world of instructional design or learning models, you may be feeling overwhelmed. There are an endless number of learning models to explore and approaches to consider. It can be difficult to know where to apply your focus.

We'd recommend starting with your audience. After all, you can't design an effective training experience if you don't understand the needs of your learners. Once you have this knowledge, you can then alter and fine-tune your approach accordingly.

Perhaps you'll decide to use the ADDIE framework to develop your content. Maybe you'll focus on combating The Forgetting Curve by using campaign learning. If motivation becomes an issue, you could look to BJ Fogg's Model for Behaviour Change.

Either way, you'll be building on insights from some of learning's brightest minds and utilising models that have stood the test of time. That sounds like a good starting point to us.

# 12 LEARNING THEORIES **YOU HAVE TO KNOW**

Like with fingerprints, our brains are all unique. As a result, no two learners are alike. This is why there are a number of different ways we learn and a variety of different learning theories.

Psychologists and researchers have spent countless years hypothesising, researching and experimenting to better understand how we learn. In this section, we'll explore **12** of their most popular and influential theories.

In doing so, we'll see how our understanding of learning has changed over time, moving from simplistic behavioural theories to theories that foreground experience, reflection and engagement.

## What is a Learning Theory?

Learning theories are conceptual frameworks that explain how we best acquire, retain, recall and apply new knowledge and skills. They consist of premises and conclusions and are sometimes based on models or taxonomies.

Put another way, learning theories explain the processes that take place during learning and provide insights into the factors that influence us during this experience. As a result, they're remarkably useful tools for educators, instructors and trainers.

The choice of a learning theory often depends on the context, the nature of the subject matter and the preferences of your learners. As such, it's good to have widespread knowledge of the options available to you. With this in mind, let's dig into the theories themselves.

# 1. BEHAVIORISM **LEARNING THEORY**

## Your Major Proponent: B.F Skinner

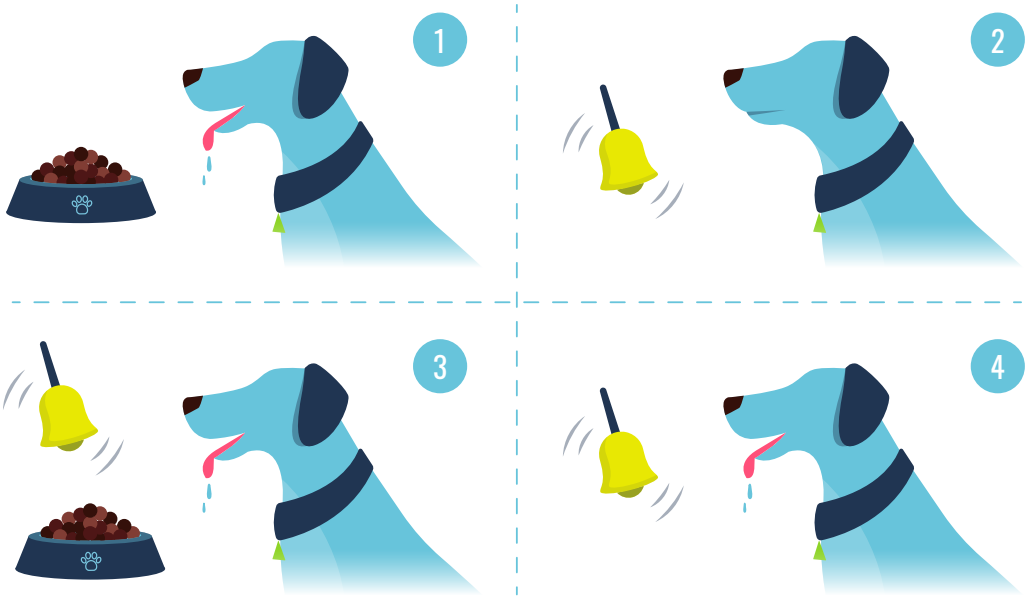
Behaviorism is a theory that focuses on observable behaviours and external stimuli, without considering internal mental processes. It emerged as a dominant force in psychology in the early 20th century.

To put it simply, our behaviour is shaped by our environment. As a result, you can teach new behaviours by conditioning your learners' response to stimuli. In the context of a learning programme, this means introducing positive and negative reinforcement.

Behaviorism was founded by the American psychologist John B. Watson. However, it was the research conducted by Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner that led to the formulation of operant conditioning. This is typified by Pavlov's dog experiments.

1. An unconditioned stimulus (e.g. food) is introduced. This naturally produces a response (e.g. dog salivation).
2. Another unconditioned stimulus (e.g. the bell) is introduced. This naturally produces no response.
3. The combination of two unconditioned stimuli (e.g. bell and food) is used to programme (i.e. condition) a response (e.g. salivation).
4. This results in the conditioned stimulus (e.g. the bell) eliciting the same response as the food. Hence, the dog salivates when the bell rings as the only stimulus.

This shows us that behaviours can be learned through the association of various stimuli. With that said, behaviourism does tend to oversimplify the learning process. After all, it doesn't leave room for any cognitive factors. That brings us to our next theory!

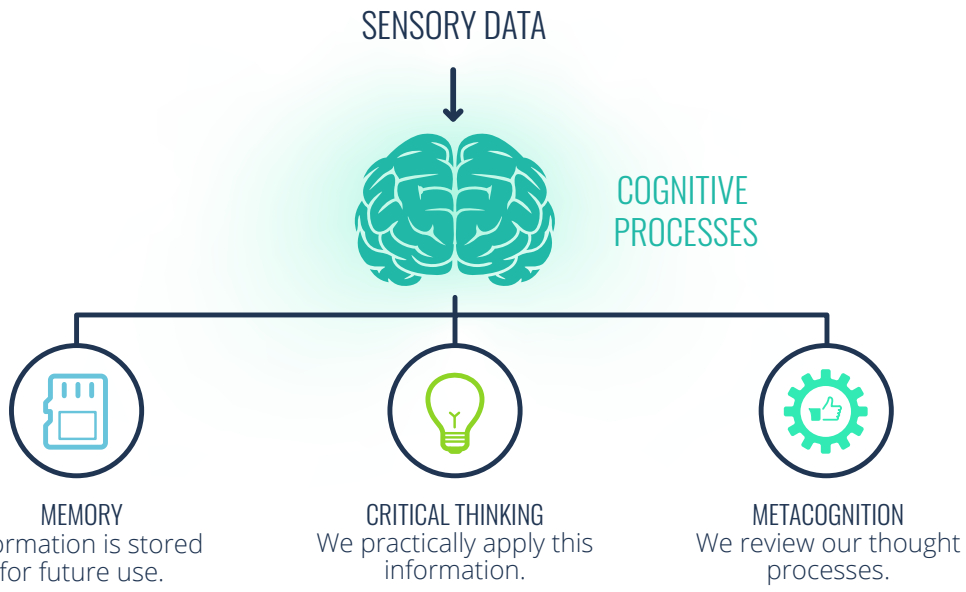


# 2. COGNITIVISM **LEARNING THEORY**

## Major Proponent: **Jean Piaget**

Cognitivism suggests that we are more than just a product of our environment. We are active agents. Indeed, cognitive learning theory suggests that internal processes and external factors are both important elements within a learning experience.

Plato and René Descartes (famous for "Cogito, ergo sum", i.e. I think, therefore I am) are two of the first philosophers that focused on cognition and how we think. This led to a lot more research in the area, including the work of Jean Piaget.




According to Piaget and this theory, understanding experiences is the way to learn.
As learners understand how their thinking impacts their learning and behaviour, they are able to assert more control over it. Let's break down the key principles of cognitive learning theory.

- **Information Processing:** Cognitivism views the mind as a processor of information. It doesn't just collect data, it organises and makes sense of it. We'll see this view expanded on later with Information Processing Theory.
- **Memory:** This theory also foregrounds the role of memory (short-term and long-term) in a learning process. Without memory, cognitive functioning is simply not possible.
- **Critical Thinking:** With cognitivist approaches, learners aren't passive recipients of information. They are actively engaged and use their problem-solving and critical thinking skills throughout the process.
- **Metacognition:** The theory also recognises that we have awareness and control over our thought processes. This means we are able to plan, monitor and evaluate our own learning progress.

# 3. CONSTRUCTIVISM **LEARNING THEORY**

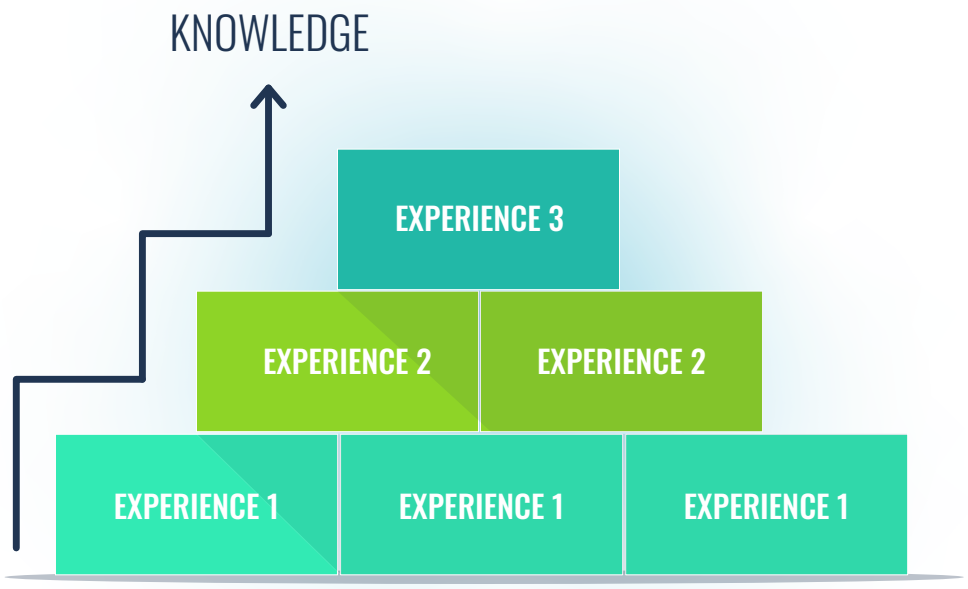
## Major Proponent: **Jean Piaget**

The aptly named constructivist learning theory built on behaviourism and cognitivism by placing the learner at the centre of every learning experience.

Indeed, constructivism suggests that learners actively construct their understanding of the world as a result of their experiences and interactions. This focus proved to be highly influential for the likes of John Dewey and David Kolb (more on them shortly).

This construction process is personal and unique to each learner. As a result, the theory recognises that learning outcomes will differ based on how learners interpret their experiences. The key principles of constructivism include:

- **Active Learning:** Learning is not a passive process. We must be actively engaged to drive positive outcomes. As a result, we should strive to deepen our understanding by exploring, questioning and problem-solving.
- **Prior Knowledge:** Constructivism recognises that learning isn't a one-off event. Our previous knowledge and experiences have a role to play. We use these experiences to add context to information and structure to what we learn.
- **Scaffolding:** As learning is a construction process, a good learning experience benefits from structure. For instance, we should break topics up into chunks and start at a beginner level before diving into more complex subject matter.
- **Reflection:** With a constructivist approach, learners are encouraged to think about their thinking. In other words, we reflect on our experiences to help develop a deeper understanding.



# 4. HUMANISM **LEARNING THEORY**

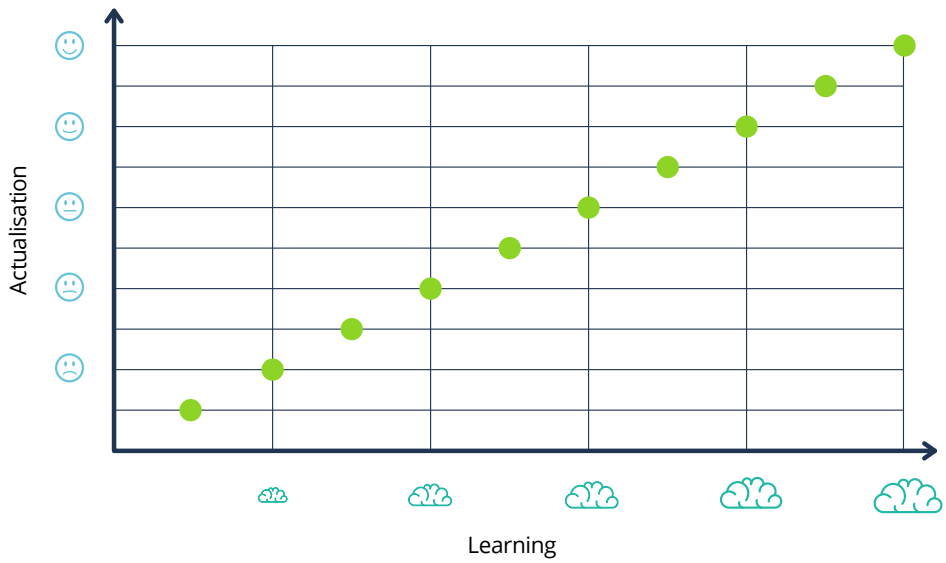
## Major Proponent: **Abraham Maslow**

Humanism is a philosophy that suggests we're all seeking self-actualisation. This is the point at which all our needs are met and we feel content that we are the best possible versions of ourselves. This focus is what drives our growth.

This sense of direction, when combined with human values (such as respect and empathy) helps to fuel positive learning experiences. Indeed, humanism stands in stark contrast to behaviourism and cognitivism, as it highlights the value of our own subjective experiences.

Most humanists don't actually believe that any of us achieve self-actualisation. This is almost besides the point. It's the pursuit that matters. As a result, these are the central tenets of humanistic learning theory:

- **Learner-Focused:** Humanism places the learner at the centre of every learning experience. It champions personalised learning programmes that are characterised by exploration and discovery.
- **Autonomy:** Similarly, learners should be free to explore and engage at their own pace. This encourages them to take responsibility and ownership over their learning experiences.
- **Needs Satisfaction:** The theory also recognises that we must first satisfy our basic needs before we seek to achieve more lofty goals. Self-actualisation is difficult if you don't have a roof over your head or food on your plate.
- **Holistic Development:** According to humanists, we shouldn't just focus on building our intellectual capacity. We should also seek to improve our emotional and social capabilities.



# 5. CONNECTIVISM **LEARNING THEORY**

## Major Proponent: George Siemens

Connectivism is a theoretical framework for understanding how we learn in the digital age. It explores how technology enables us to connect, engage and share information. It was first introduced in 2004, which makes it the newest theory on this list.

Stephen Downes describes connectivism as "the thesis that knowledge is distributed across a network of connections, and therefore that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks".

This theory suggests that humans acquire and process information by forming connections. In this sense, we're like databases. We capture more data as we interact with a variety of data sources and devices.

Learning happens when we connect information together and technology helps to facilitate these connections. This makes the connections that empower us to learn considerably more important than our existing knowledge base.

Modern organisations already use some principles of connectivism in their L&D programmes. However, to fully utilise connectivism, you'll need to have a digital learning strategy in place enabled by a learning platform, social media, forums, videos and blogs.

# 6. SOCIAL **LEARNING THEORY**

## Major Proponent: Albert Bandura

When you break it down, social learning theory is quite simple. It suggests that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. This means that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others.

This theory arose in the 1960s as a response to the behaviourist models that were popular at the time. For Albert Bandura, learning doesn't happen solely by interacting with our environment. It's also a byproduct of our interactions with other individuals.

He demonstrated this with his Bobo Doll Experiment. When children observed adults displaying aggressive behaviours toward an inflatable doll, they were more likely to imitate this behaviour in turn. This shows us the impact of social modelling and reinforcement.

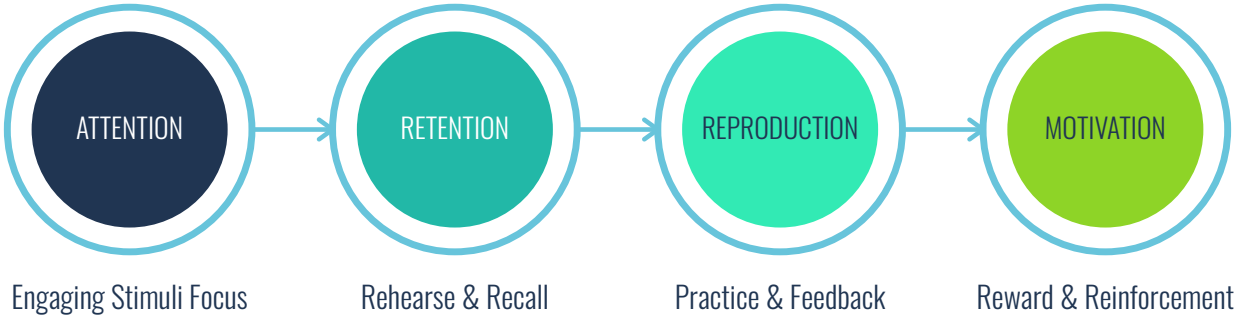
According to Bandura, imitation is driven by the following mediational processes:

- **Attention:** First things first, you need to grab your learners' attention. After all, imitation can't happen without engagement. Our conscious minds can only handle 40-50 bits of information a second, so make sure yours stands out.

- **Retention:** It's not enough just to observe. You also need to process and remember what you've seen. It's only then that you can use this information to drive future behaviour. After all, social learning is usually not an instantaneous process.

- **Motor Reproduction:** We must also be physically, mentally or emotionally capable of imitating the action in question. Merely observing Michael Jordan make a three-pointer doesn't grant us the ability to reproduce such a skill.

- **Motivation:** Last but not least, motivation plays a key role in behaviour change. If we see no benefit in imitating the behaviour then we are unlikely to do so. But if we observe that it leads to positive outcomes then we're likely to change our tune.

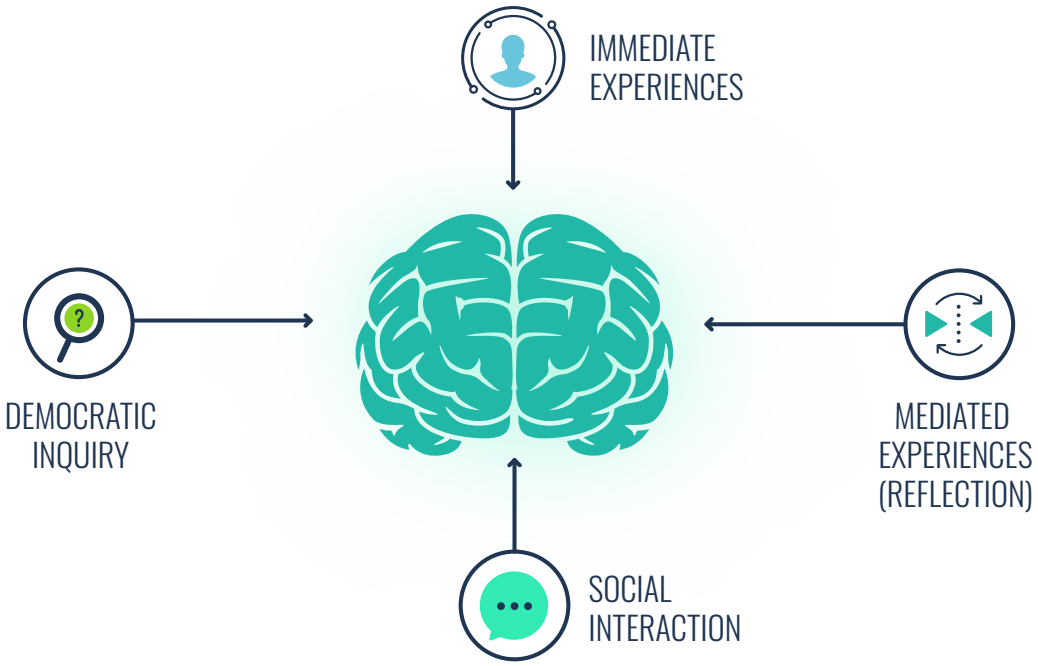


# 7. JOHN DEWEY'S **LEARNING THEORY**

## Major Proponent: **John Dewey**

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a renowned American philosopher and educational reformer. His views on education are collectively known as John Dewey theory or John Dewey's learning theory.

This theory is linked to Dewey's broader philosophy of pragmatism. It emphasises the role of experience, inquiry and problem-solving in the learning process. In other words, learning is an active process that goes beyond rote memorisation.




As Dewey notes, *"there is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education"*. Moreover, learning experiences become even more meaningful when we are given opportunities to engage, question and critique.

Unfortunately, Dewey's theory lacks formal structure. With that said, here are its central tenets as we see them:

- Learning happens through experience, or by getting 'hands-on'.
- Learning is not a passive process. It requires active engagement.
- Learning takes place within a social context.
- Learning should be a democratic process.
- Reflecting on our experiences produces more meaningful learning outcomes.

# 8. EXPERIENTIAL **LEARNING THEORY**

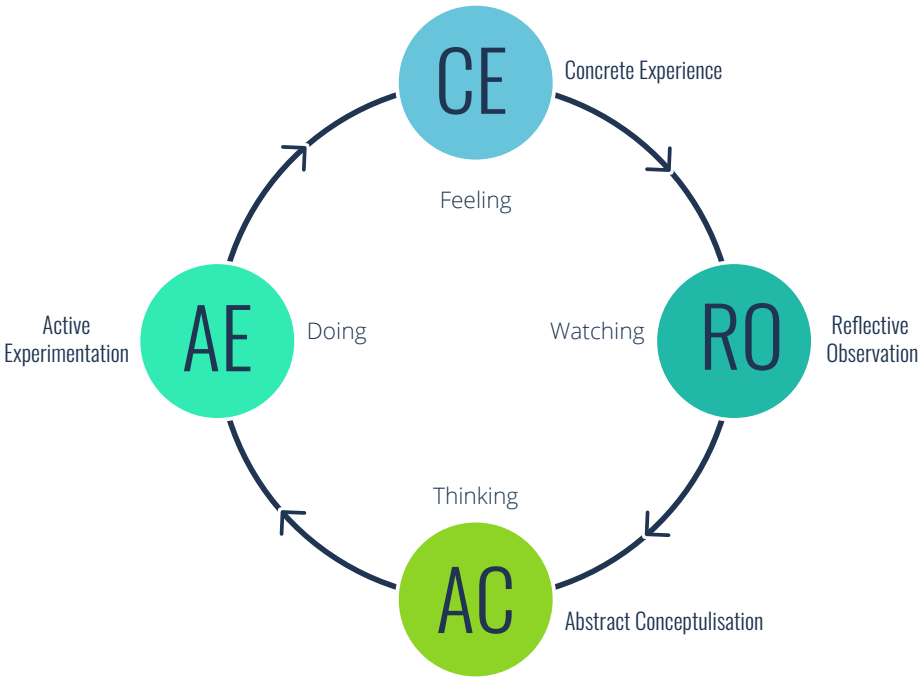
## Major Proponent: **David Kolb**

According to American educational theorist David Kolb, learning is the process of transforming experience into knowledge. In other words, we learn by doing. He first formulated this theory in a popular 1984 paper.

Let's hear from the man himself. According to Kolb, learning is "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming the experience."

As you may be able to tell, Kolb was heavily influenced by John Dewey (as well as the likes of Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget). However, he took things a step further by outlining the experiential learning cycle. This cycle has four different stages.

- **Concrete Experience:** Learning begins with a direct experience or a specific event. At this stage we get hands-on and engage in a particular activity.
- **Reflective Observation:** Once the experience is over, we then reflect on what happened. Typically, we'll consider how it made us feel and what we learnt.
- **Abstract Conceptualisation:** Following this, we'll then analyse our reflections and draw conclusions. This can lead to us forming new ideas and hypotheses to test.
- **Active Experimentation:** Armed with these insights, we'll then test out what we've learned in different contexts. This experimentation leads to the cycle starting anew.



# 9. INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

## Major Proponent: George Miller

Information processing theory first emerged as a cognitivist framework in the 1950s. It focuses on what we do with information or stimuli once we come across it. Ultimately, we don't just collect data. We use various cognitive processes to catalogue, store and apply it.

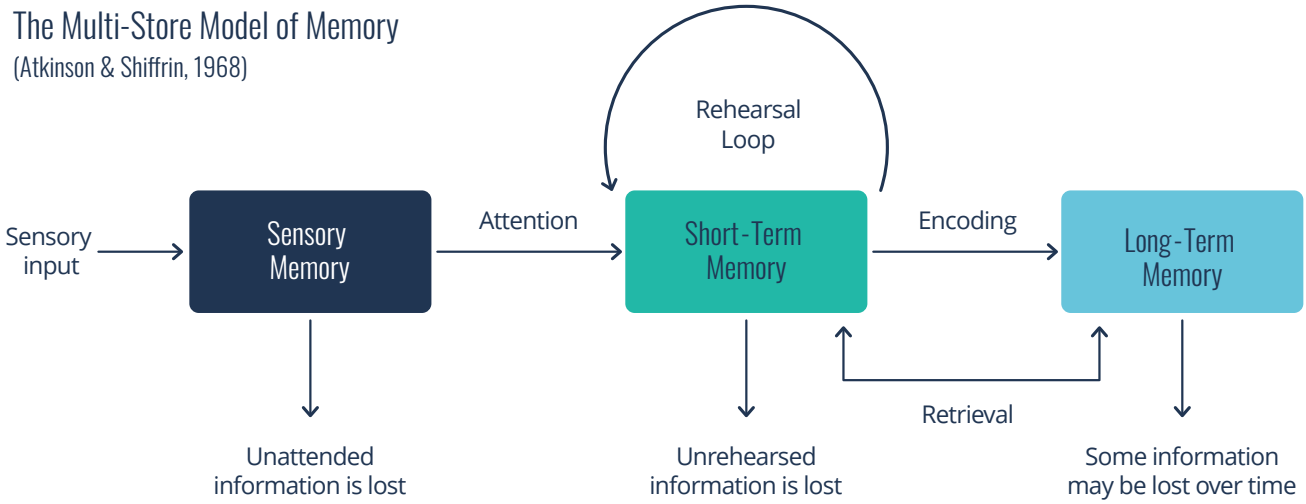
The theory draws an analogy between the human mind and the functioning of a computer. After all, a computer doesn't just receive data. It codes information, stores it and uses it to produce an output. We do the same thing when we receive information.

This analogy also led to George Miller discovering the capacity of our working memory. It's generally agreed that we can hold up to seven items in mind at any given moment (plus or minus two items).

The key components of information processing theory include:

- **Input:** This represents the sensory data that we receive. It's the result of what we see, what we hear, what we touch and so on.
- **Processing:** We then process this sensory data using our cognitive faculties. As a result, this information is encoded, organised and stored for future use.
- **Output:** Processing this data creates an output or a response. This can help to guide decision-making or lead to behaviour change.
- **Feedback:** We receive feedback from our output in the form of new sensory data. This is fed back into the model and the process begins again.

The Multi-Store Model of Memory
(Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968)



# 10. THEORY OF **MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**

## Major Proponent: **Howard Gardner**

The theory of multiple intelligences was first put forward in 1983 by Howard Gardner, an American psychologist and Harvard professor. It remains popular to this day, despite lacking empirical evidence.


Gardner suggested that there are various distinct types of intellectual competencies. In other words, a single IQ test is inefficient. Human intelligence is more complex than this. In fact, it can be broken down into eight different categories.

1. **Linguistic:** The ability to grasp and communicate concepts through words and symbols.
2. **Logical/Mathematical:** The ability to effectively use numbers and recognise patterns.
3. **Spatial:** The capability to process information though qualities like shape, form and size.
4. **Bodily-Kinesthetic:** The ability to perform activities that require strength, speed, dexterity or coordination.
5. **Musical:** The ability to perceive, interpret and express oneself through various musical forms.
6. **Interpersonal:** The ability to understand and easily relate to others.
7. **Intrapersonal:** The ability to understand and regulate your own emotions and behaviour.
8. **Naturalist:** The ability to recognise and categorise the world around us.

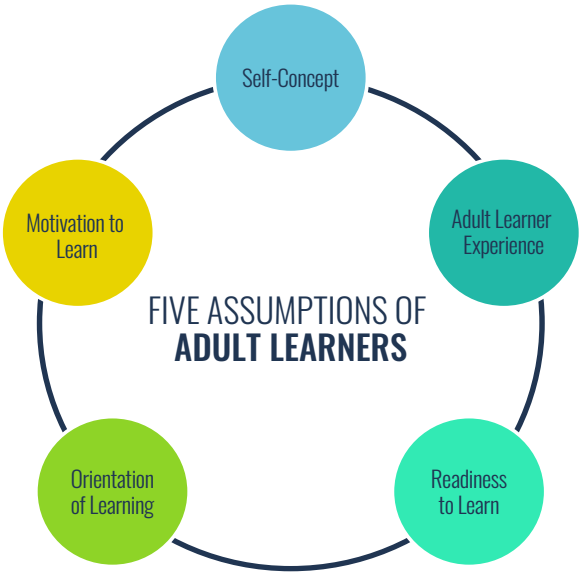
It's worth noting, Gardner never claimed that we as individuals are confined to a particular type of intelligence. We all possess multiple abilities to varying degrees and all types of intelligence are equally valuable.

# 11. ADULT **LEARNING THEORY**

## Major Proponent: Malcolm Knowles

Malcolm Knowles was an influential educator and theorist who is often referred to as the father of andragogy - the art and science of adult learning. His groundbreaking adult learning theory was formulated in the late 1970s and early 80s.

This theory was important because it highlighted the ways that adult learners differ from younger learners. After all, you've probably noticed that it gets harder to learn as you get older. Knowles' theory helps us to understand why.




Adult learning theory is based on five key assumptions.

1. **Self-Concept:** As we grow older, our understanding of our position in the world changes. Adults, unlike children, understand that they are responsible for their own wellbeing and are capable of making their own decisions.

2. **Experience:** Adults also bring a wealth of experience to every learning opportunity. This in itself is a valuable resource. Incorporating life experiences into educational processes can enhance engagement and improve learning outcomes.

3. **Readiness:** Adults have a variety of responsibilities to contend with. As such, they are drawn to learning experiences that contain relevant information and are applicable to their lives.

4. **Orientation:** Likewise, adults are interested in practical information that can help them to solve problems, make better decisions or improve their standing. Our current circumstances matter.

5. **Motivation:** Finally, whilst children are primarily motivated by extrinsic factors, this changes as we grow older. We often come to appreciate intrinsic factors, such as the desire for personal growth or fulfilment.

# 12. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

## Major Proponents: Richard Ryan & Edward Deci

Let's wrap things up with a theory of motivation. After all, motivation plays a leading role in the success of any learning and development initiative. Without it, your programme is doomed to failure.

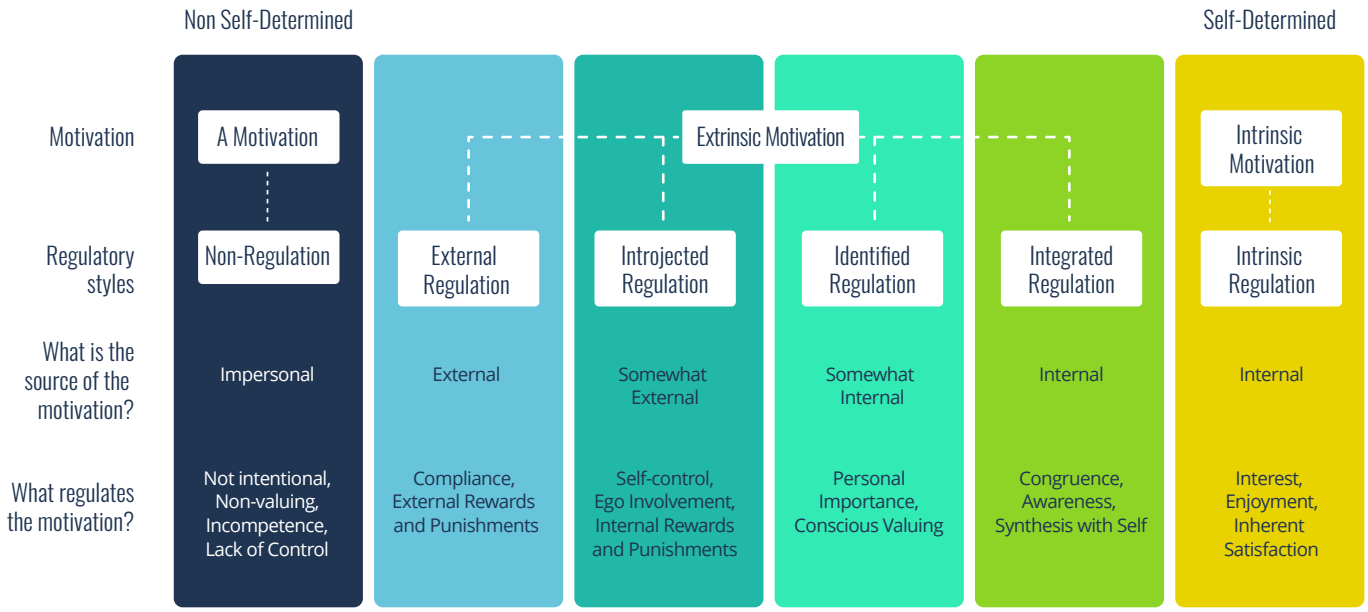
Self-Determination Theory posits that we have three basic psychological needs that contribute towards intrinsic motivation and well-being. If we can satisfy these needs, we can help to motivate our learners to take action.

1. **Autonomy:** We need to feel like we have freedom of choice and control over our actions. This sense of self-direction is powerful. If we feel like we are being coerced or controlled, our motivation levels will plummet.

2. **Competence:** We also need to feel effective within the environment or context in question. That sense of accomplishment is deeply satisfying. On the other hand, we tend to shy away from opportunities to showcase our own shortcomings.

3. **Relatedness:** Finally, we also have a need to connect with others. We long to feel a sense of belonging and attachment. We are drawn to opportunities that fulfil this need and are less interested in existing in a social vacuum.

If these three psychological elements are in place, then we achieve self-determination. And if you've cultivated an audience of self-determined learners then you won't need to rely on external rewards to change their behaviour.



# FINAL **WORD**

There you have it, a full breakdown of 12 of the most influential learning theories. These theories, alongside the 12 models we saw earlier, offer us a rich tapestry of perspectives on how individuals acquire knowledge and skills.

Whilst a behaviourist focuses on observable behaviours and external stimuli, cognitivists direct their attention to mental processes. These theories have evolved over time, with learners starting to take a more central role.

Indeed, Albert Bandura emphasised the significance of social interaction and David Kolb placed experience at the forefront of the learning process.

No single theory provides a comprehensive explanation of the complexities involved in learning. Instead, you should seek to synthesise these theories to craft versatile learning programmes that empower your learners.

These learning theories provide you with a toolbox of strategies. Now it's time to get to work.

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