

## Hints and Tips for Active Learning

During your programme, it is important to actively engage in your studies because by making your learning more meaningful and memorable, you are more likely to learn. Being an active learner means you do more than absorbing information by reading or listening to it, you become involved in your learning. This is achieved by, for example, self-evaluation, work-based learning and discussing the relevance to your own experience and looking for connections, as this all helps you to process and reinforce the information.

This guide will take you through some of the key study skills to help you embrace active listening and reading, and group work.

### 1) Active listening in workshops

It is important to be in control of your own learning and to bring your own knowledge and experience to help you understand new ideas introduced. That is why it is a good idea to start thinking about the subject of the workshop, as it will help to activate the knowledge you have to help you make sense of it.

#### Before

You can do this by:

- Going to your Virtual Learning Environment and take a look/download the PowerPoint slides for the session. Read through them carefully and look up any words you are unsure of. Make a note of them in your notebook so you can easily refer back to them during the lecture.
- Reading the pre-lecture articles and material (if required). Use reading strategies to help such as scanning the text looking at the headings and visuals to get an idea of the content, read the introduction and conclusion to get an overview of what it is about before reading it in detail. Remember it's important to have a purpose for reading to help you read smarter rather longer, why don't you write a set of questions you want to have answered in the text and then answer them when reading it.

NB: remember being well-prepared will help avoid feeling lost and overwhelmed during the workshop.

#### During

It is also important to be actively listening during workshops:

- The objectives of the workshop as well as the introduction provide you with an overview of the content and so you will know the key areas to remember from the session. I like to divide up my paper into those sections so that I can make notes in them as I go along.
- Think about your strategy for note-taking and choose the one that works best for you. Some people like to write their notes in a list/chronological order, whilst others draw mind maps and concept maps, or use the Cornell method to condense and organise your notes.

#### After

Finally, think about what you are going to do with all the information gained in the workshop.

You can do this by:

- Reviewing your notes and going through them to make sure it's clear what you have written. Why not colour code the ideas to group them into relevant areas to help you remember the information better.
- Writing a summary of the key points so it will be easier for you to go back quickly to them to see if they are relevant.
- Writing down any questions on the areas you would like to have further information and clarification about in your next workshop as well as doing further research to explore the areas raised.

NB Remember the session is recorded so you can review the recording and add any information you have missed to your notes.

### **Other ACE resources to consult on your Virtual Learning Environment:**

ACE sections on **Reading, Criticality, Generating and Recording Ideas** (includes note-taking)

## **2) Active Listening in Groups**

As you may not have any body language clues when online, then **active listening** is very important. You can do this by demonstrating you are listening:

- a) Let people know you are listening by using brief verbal affirmations such as '**I see**', '**right**'.
- b) Check your understanding of what's been said by verbally paraphrasing back the information such as '**what you are saying is...**', '**do you mean...?**'
- c) Ask open questions to draw information out from your colleagues as well as to challenge them e.g. '**could you tell me a little more about that?**', '**why do you think that?**'
- d) Reply to questions and ask follow up questions to keep the conversation going, use question words such as '**why?**', '**how?**'

## **3) Active Reading**

As well as being an active listener, be active when reading, don't just simply absorb the information, but ask questions, make notes and summarise the information.

One method you can use is called **SQ3R**:

**(S) Survey:** quickly skim the article and look for clues e.g. read the title and headings and look at graphs, tables etc. This will give you an overview of the structure and purpose.

**(Q) Question:** now write some questions that you would like the article to answer based on your overview and what you already know. This gives your reading a purpose.

**(R) Read:** read for meaning and to find the answers to the questions you wanted answering.

**(R) Recite / Recall:** this could involve repeating the key information, paraphrasing it, testing yourself to see how much remember.

**(R) Review:** review your notes and check you have all the critical information, which will help guide you to do further reading.

Here are some techniques to make your reading active:

- When reading, underline or highlight key words and phrases so it is easier to review when you go back to it later on.
- If you have a paper copy, make notes in the margins as you read. You can also highlight and add comments in a pdf. Remember to use your critical thinking, for example, do you agree with the information? Does it raise further questions?
- Think about what you have learnt and how it fits in with what you already know and how you can use this new information.
- Evaluate the text by asking questions of it. Who wrote it and who for? What's the purpose of the text?

If you can, have a chat with someone about what you have learned. By discussing it and putting it in your words can help you to understand the topic more. Think about what you have learnt and how it fits in with what you already know and how you can use this new information.

#### **4) Being an active participant in group work**

During your programme, you will probably be required to work collaboratively and in group, such as to achieve a task, this might be as part of your workshops or of a more formal assessment. Teams are groups of individuals working collectively toward common objectives. The difference between team failure and success depends on the behaviour of team members. Some people are extremely helpful, organized and make getting the job done easy. Others may be more difficult to work with, or seem to disrupt the group process. In each case, the participants are performing roles that manifest themselves in most groups. There's an overwhelming number of different types of group roles and people usually play more than one role at a time or play a different role from group to group. What is important is that each team member has clear responsibilities for the team to perform at its best. Theories around team roles, such as Belbin or Myers-Briggs type indicator can be helpful when working in groups as they allow you to consider your preferences and skills.

It is important to be an active member of your group to help achieve the common goal to the best of your ability.

**If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with ACE Team!**