

Learning Contracts

A learning contract is a written agreement between teacher and student that will result in students working independently. The contract helps students to set daily and weekly work goals and develop management skills. It also helps the teacher to keep track of each student's progress. The actual assignments will vary according to specific student needs.

Step 1: Diagnose your learning needs.

A learning need is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in regard to a particular of competencies.

Step 2: Specify your learning objectives.

You are now ready to start filling the first column of the learning contract. Be sure that your objectives describe what you will learn, not what you will do.

Step 3: Specify learning resources and strategies.

When you have finished listing your objectives, move over to the second column of the contract (resources and strategies) and describe how you propose to go about accomplishing each objective. Identify the resources (material and human) you plan to use in your various learning experiences and the strategies (techniques, tools) you will employ in making use of them.

Step 4: Specify target dates for completion.

After completing the second column, move over to the third column and enter a target completion date. Put realistic dates, unless there are institutionally or other required deadlines.



Step 5: Specify evidence of accomplishment.

Move to the fourth column (evidence) and describe what evidence you will collect to indicate the degree to which you have achieved each objective.

Step 6: Specify how the evidence will be assessed.

For each objective, first specify the criteria by which you propose the evidence will be judged. For example, if you produce a paper, who will you have read it and what are their qualifications?



Step 7: Review your contract with consultants.

After you have completed the first draft of your contract, you will find it useful to review it with two or three friends, supervisors, or other expert resource people to obtain their reaction and suggestions. Here are some questions you might have them ask about the contract to receive optimal benefit from their help:

- Are the learning objectives clear, understandable, and realistic? Do they describe what you propose to learn?
- Can they think of other objectives you might consider?
- Do the learning strategies and resources seem reasonable, appropriate, and efficient?
- Can they think of other resources and strategies you might consider?
- Does the evidence seem relevant to the various objectives, and would it convince them?
- Can they suggest other evidence you might consider?
- Are the criteria and means for validating (judging) the evidence clear, relevant, and convincing?
- Can they think of other ways to validate (judge) the evidence that you might consider?

Step 8: Carry out the contract.

You now simply do what the contract calls for. But keep in mind that as you work on it you may find that your notions about what you want to learn and how you want to learn changing. So don't hesitate to revise or renegotiate your contract as you go along.

Step 9: Evaluation of your learning.

When you have completed your contract you will want to get some assurance that you have in fact learned what you set out to learn. Perhaps the simplest way to do this is to ask the consultants you used in Step 7 to examine your evidence and validation data and provide you their judgment about adequacy.

<http://home.twcnj.rr.com/hiemstra/contract1.html>

Learning Contract

Learner: _____

Course: _____

Instructor: _____

Contract Grade: _____

[illegible]