FOR MYP
4 & 5

SECOND EDITION

Personal Project

Skills for Success

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Contents

Documenting

Evidence of the process needs to be gathered throughout the project to document its development. This evidence should be:

an evolving record of intents, processes and accomplishments

a collection of initial thoughts and developments, brainstorming, possible lines of inquiry and further questions raised

a record of interactions with sources, for example teachers, supervisors, external contributors

a record of selected, annotated and/or edited research to maintain a bibliography

a collection of useful information, for example quotations, pictures, ideas, photographs

the process

a means of exploring ideas and solutions

a place for evaluating work completed

a reflection on learning

devised by you in a format that suits your needs

a record of reflections and formative feedback received.

Documenting the process

■ ATL skills

- ■ Reflection skills
- ■ Organization skills

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Communicator	Reflective

Throughout the personal project, you are required to document and curate the process. This is a way that you can show your approaches to learning (ATL) skills and also demonstrate academic integrity.

■ **Document:** To document means to record something as a means of providing evidence.

■ **Curate:** To curate means to select, organize and present your documentation.

As you set about seeking to achieve your learning goal and create your product, think of how you may consistently record the process by selecting, organizing and presenting this process.

Questions to keep in mind are:

■ How am I making the progress in achieving my learning goal visible?

■ How am I making the process of creating the product visible?

■ Are the pieces of evidence I am selecting to document clearly showing how I am achieving my learning goal and creating the product?

As you saw in the previous chapter, the personal project objectives outline specific steps to take in order to complete the personal project.

Planning
i State a learning goal for the project and explain how a personal interest led to that goal. ii State an intended product and develop appropriate success criteria for the product. iii Present a clear, detailed plan for achieving the product and for achieving its associated success criteria.
Applying skills
i Explain how the ATL skill(s) was/were applied to help achieve your learning goal. ii Explain how the ATL skill(s) was/were applied to help achieve your product.
Reflecting
i Explain the impact of the project on yourself or your learning. ii Evaluate the product based on the success criteria.

> **EXPERT TIP**
>
> It is very important that you document and curate evidence that clearly demonstrates each of the objectives and their corresponding strands. Use the command terms as your guide for the level of detail and type of response that you document.

Ways of documenting the process

There are many different ways that you can document and curate the personal project process. You may choose to:

- use a process journal to document the development of your personal project. You will be familiar with the practice of documenting the development of a project and can draw on approaches used to document the arts process journal, the design folder or similar workbooks in other subject groups
- use a range of tools, therefore documenting evidence across a variety of platforms as you engage in the process of completing your personal project
- develop your own format and design, or perhaps your school will provide you with a template.

The media you choose to document your personal project process is up to you. It can be written, visual, audio or a combination of these, and it can be digital or otherwise. There is a wide variety of documentation tools at your fingertips that you may choose from:

- **Google Docs™** is a great tool to use for documenting your process and allows you the options for embedding research, images and hyperlinks to sources.
- **Google Slides™** is a great tool to use for documenting your process and allows you the options for embedding research, images and hyperlinks to sources. Google Slide Deck works effectively with Google Drawings so it is easy to embed planning documents you have created in Google Drawings.
- **Google Currents™** can serve as a feed that documents your progress and allows you to embed other documents as well. You can set up supervisor conferences on Google Currents and you and your supervisor or mentors can engage in dialogue through the comments and likes features. Furthermore, you can create polls and invite others to provide feedback through quick surveys and questionnaires.
- If you are more of a tactile learner and like to physically write and draw your process you may wish to use a **visual arts diary**. This is an effective tool to use especially if you are developing a visual arts-related project.
- Another medium that you may choose is a **lined notebook**. This can provide you with space to document your process and use sticky notes to bookmark and organize the documentation of your process.
- On all smartphones there are **voice recording** apps that you can download and use to document your process. These can be used for recording reflections and you can also use them to record interviews that you may engage in as part of the research process.

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ATL skills

Self-management skills
Self-management skills include your ability to organize and manage your time effectively to ensure that you are able to complete your project in the time allocated; and also qualities such as persistence, perseverance, motivation and resilience, which will enable you to carry on towards your goal even when you face obstacles.

Communication skills
Communication skills are important in helping you to present your ideas and explain the outcomes of your project, and also in helping you arrive at that point. You will want to elicit feedback from your supervisor and your peers as you work on the project, and you might need to conduct interviews with experts to help you achieve your goal.

Social skills

Although the personal project is an independent project, you will inevitably need to work with others at times. Social skills include working effectively with others, managing and resolving conflicts and helping others to succeed.

Research skills

The personal project is not a research project, but you will need to carry out some investigation. Research skills involve being able to identify and use relevant information, and knowing which sources are reliable and trustworthy.

Thinking skills

These include critical-thinking skills, such as identifying obstacles and challenges; creative-thinking skills, such as generating new ideas; and transfer skills, such as applying knowledge and skills to new and unfamiliar contexts.

Applying skills

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES			
Balanced	Communicator	Inquirer	Thinker

The approaches to learning (ATLs) are a framework of skills which help you develop as an independent and autonomous learner. There are five ATL skill categories: Communication, Social, Self-management, Research and Thinking. Within each category, there are clusters, which are broken down into specific skills. You will practise and develop many of these skills across your MYP subjects over the years. As you work towards your personal project learning goal and product, you will apply a variety of the skills that you have acquired throughout your MYP journey.

As stated before, it is important to remember that the inquiry process is not linear, so you will be applying skills throughout the project, including the planning and reflecting stages. This chapter is structured around the ATLs so that you can develop evidence to use in your report, but that is not to suggest that the application of skills happens **after** the planning stage. There is considerable overlap between the three objectives, and you will hopefully refer to this chapter throughout the different development stages of your project.

This chapter targets some of the skills that are not discipline-specific. It would be impossible to cover all of the ATLs within this book (there are 130!), so do not feel limited by the suggestions posed here. For the most part, the focus is on one skill at a time, but you will notice that some of the skills overlap. In the previous chapter (and in the following chapters) the ATLs relevant to each activity were signposted; however, because this chapter is already structured around the ATLs, your attention should be drawn instead to the Learner Profile traits to emphasize your personal development as a learner through each of the activities.

It is important to note that the activities provided in this chapter are NOT prescriptive. There are multiple ways to demonstrate your development of a particular skill. These activities *can* be used as they are, but you should also feel free to adapt them to show individuality and creative-thinking skills. Whatever skills you apply, and whatever methods you use to apply those skills, you need to make that application of skills **visible**. The activities in this chapter (and throughout the rest of the book) are designed to help you do just that.

Self-management skills

We will start with the self-management skill category because these skills are embedded throughout each stage of the project. Self-management skills are ways of organizing the actual project as well as organizing your state of mind. Ensure you document and make very visible the ways in which you have organized your personal project, as well as how you have organized your state of mind. Remember to include examples and scenarios in order to make sure your thinking is visible.

For many students, this will be the first major project of this nature that you will undertake, so having specific strategies for how to manage your time and state of mind will no doubt be a concern. Some strategies for developing your self-management skills are suggested in this section, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Whole books have been written about self-management, so consider this a carefully curated selection to get you started.

Note: Since reflecting is one of the main objectives of the project and reflection is in fact interwoven within many of the activities in this book, this skill will not be treated here. The focus in this chapter is on organization and affective skills, and reflection will be covered separately in the next chapter.

■ Organization skills: Managing time and tasks effectively

You will have already demonstrated several organizational skills in the planning phase of the project. For example, you have hopefully **set a goal that is challenging and realistic**. You will also have at least started the process of **planning short- and long-term assignments and will be working towards deadlines**, either set by yourself, your supervisor or your Personal Project Coordinator.
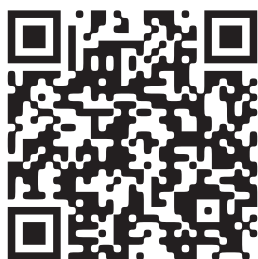
■ Keep an organized and logical system of information files/ notebooks

These days, most of your work may be filed digitally. If this works for you, great. You may, however, prefer to use a more traditional method of organizing the work that you do for your personal project. A popular analogue tool for organizing information is the Bullet Journal®. You can watch a short video on the Bullet Journal method using the QR code here.

Whatever system you use, there should be some order to the information that you collect. There are various ways you could do this, and you will need to choose a method that works for you, but some suggestions might include ordering documents/folders by category or topic, by date or deadline.

■ Select and use technology effectively and productively

Many schools now use Google for Education™. Within the G Suite, you will find lots of helpful tools to help you organize and manage tasks. If you use a different platform, there will likely be similar tools that you can use. We do not endorse any particular platform, but both authors are more familiar with the features of G Suite for Education:

■ Google Drive™ allows you to store folders and files in one place. One of the key benefits of using Google Drive is that you can access your files anywhere, anytime – as long as you have access to the internet – so you are not tied to one device.

■ Google Calendar™ is a good place for managing meetings with your supervisor and other appointments. You can also record deadlines on your calendar and set reminders so that you stay on top of important stages of the project. You might also like to sync your school timetable with your Google Calendar. You can set up

multiple calendars and share between accounts if you have a personal account so that all of your important dates are in one place.

- Google Tasks™ is a good place to keep a daily or weekly to-do list. Google Tasks sits alongside your email inbox, so you do not have to keep multiple tabs or applications open at once. You can add tasks directly from an email, so if your supervisor sends you an email with some to-dos, you do not have to type them in manually. Tasks can allow you to work more efficiently.
- Google Keep™ is a note-taking app. You can add notes, lists, images and audio clips all in one place.

Remember to take risks and be open-minded to the variety of technology within your reach. Select and use technology in an effective and productive manner that is best suited to the needs of your project. If you use digital tools, you can take screenshots to use as evidence of self-management.

■ Affective skills: Managing state of mind

Affective skills are those skills which are linked to feelings, emotions, values, attitudes and behaviours. These are all skills which are needed in order for us to be the most **effective** learners we can be. These skills **can** be learned and **should** be practised. We will now look in more detail at some of the affective skills that are most relevant to the personal project.
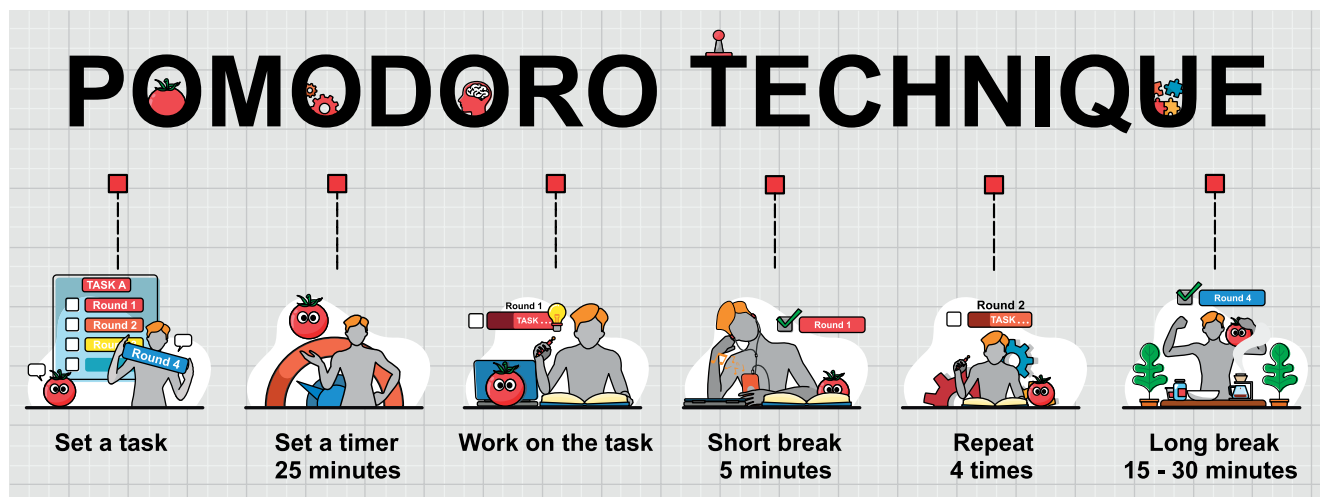
■ Mindfulness: Practise strategies to overcome distractions

Mindfulness strategies empower you to focus your mental and physical energy onto a certain aspect of your personal project in such a way that you are not easily influenced by external distractions, and can maintain mental focus.

As MYP students, you have busy academic schedules. Along with this you most likely also have active social lives, both online and offline. When practising mindfulness strategies to overcome distractions and maintain mental focus, it is a good idea to consider how you orientate yourself in both place and time.
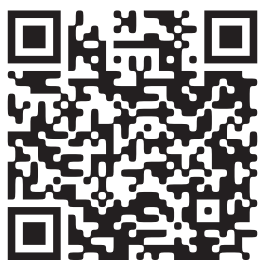
It is natural to become distracted when engaged in a long-term project – and perhaps even more so in today's "plugged-in world". There are, however, lots of digital tools and apps that you can use to stay focused and avoid distractions. A popular strategy is the Pomodoro Technique®, visualized below. You can read more about the Pomodoro Technique using the QR code.
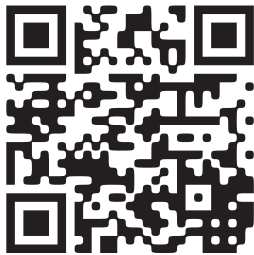
POMODORO TECHNIQUE

| Set a task | Set a timer 25 minutes | Work on the task | Short break 5 minutes | Repeat 4 times | Long break 15 - 30 minutes |

ACTIVITY: PRODUCTIVITY JOURNAL

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Balanced	Reflective

If you have intentionally practised strategies to overcome distractions during the process of completing your personal project, such as the Pomodoro Technique, be sure to explicitly detail **what you achieved** as a result. You might want to keep a productivity journal over the course of a week, like the one suggested here.

A printable example of the productivity journal shown below can be accessed using the QR code.

This week's wins (list 1–3 successes, big or small).

What tasks did I not complete last week?

What challenges did I face in completing them?

What do I need to do to recommit to those tasks?

What have I learned this week?

What tasks need to be carried over to next week?

■ **Perseverance: Demonstrate persistence and perseverance**

Throughout the duration of your project you will undoubtedly come across points where you will need to persist and persevere. A learner with a growth mindset does not give up at this point; they simply stop, pause and reflect, in order to reassess how to move forward from here.

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ACTIVITY: THE MOSCOW METHOD

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Balanced	Reflective

An effective way of reassessing your progress and making decisive steps forward is to employ the MoSCoW method. Break down what you need to achieve into smaller chunks and break this down into what you "must do" and "should do" to achieve this goal, "could do" to go over and above and "won't do" to ensure optimal persistence and perseverance.

Must do	Should do	Could do	Won't do

Must do: Jot down what is absolutely essential for you to persevere and persist to achieve this goal.

Should do: Jot down what you should do to persevere and persist to achieve this goal.

Could do: Jot down what you could do to ensure you are working towards self-assessing your product at an excellent level, even though you may be struggling to persist and persevere.

Won't do: Intentionally plan for blocking out distractions and hindrances to your persevering and persisting to complete this goal.

Seeing these small successes will help you persist and persevere. Remember, personal project success is made up of multiple small successes that culminate into significant project success.

■ Emotional management: Practise strategies to reduce stress and anxiety

Although you will have several months to complete your personal project, you will be doing this alongside your other MYP subjects and fulfilling your service as action requirements. You might also be involved in extra-curricular activities within or outside of school which will put even more demands on your time. There **will** inevitably be times of stress and anxiety, but you can learn to manage those feelings so that you do not become completely overwhelmed.

ACTIVITY: ABC OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Balanced	Reflective

We do not want to suggest that we have the solution to eliminating stress, but we can suggest a coping strategy which can work for bringing feelings of stress and anxiety under control. It is called the ABC of stress management. Different sources label the A, B and C of stress management differently, but we will use the following easy-to-remember acronym. Use this to reflect on your own sources of and solutions to stress.

If you are feeling completely overwhelmed and unable to manage stress on your own, that is when you need to reach out to your support network: your supervisor or other teachers, parents or guardians, or friends.

A	Awareness	What is the root cause of my stress? How does stress affect me – physically and emotionally?
B	Balance	What actions do I need to take, or behaviours do I need to adopt to respond to stress? **Note:** A certain level of stress can be healthy. Recognizing how much stress you can handle to perform effectively is an important part of emotional management.
C	Control	What are the consequences of my actions or behaviours? What have I learned that I can use next time I experience stress? What habits can I adopt to feel more in control of stress in the future?

■ **Self-motivation: Practise analysing and attributing causes for failure and practise positive thinking**

Self-motivation requires habits of mind that focus on thinking about the bigger picture. At the beginning of your personal project you will have established your goal explaining why this project is important to you. When problems occur and you experience failure, it is a good idea to reflect back on why your project is important to you.

When attributing causes for failure, it is important to keep the positives in mind. It is a good idea to begin with listing what has gone well so far and then exploring from here the causes for failure. Once you have analysed and attributed the causes for failure, ensure you then refocus on the bigger picture of why persevering and persisting in this project is important to you.

When we experience failure in a large project it can be easy to go down a negative spiral of doubt. Practising positive thinking can help build the growth mindset required for personal project success.

Due to the sustained inquiry nature of the personal project, it is beneficial to stop and pause at points along the way and reassess your progress, celebrate what you have achieved thus far and clarify the steps forward that you will take.

ACTIVITY: COMPASS POINTS

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Balanced	Reflective

The Compass Points visible thinking routine is an effective tool to calibrate your personal project situation and assess "where to from here".

Information gathered from this reflection may mean you need to adjust your planning tools and criteria; this is fine, remember the personal project is a journey of continual reflection. In your process journal, make sure you document your reflection of your organization and self-management skills.

Needs: What else do you need to find out, or skills do you need to acquire, to move forward?

Worries: What have you found worrisome about your project progress thus far?
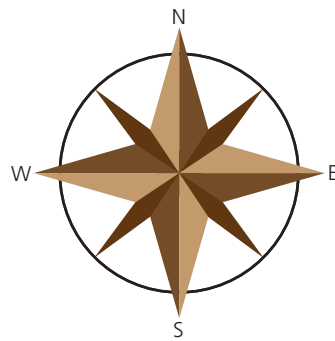
Excitements: What excites you about what you have achieved thus far?

Steps or Suggestions: What should your next step be? Show your peers, family or supervisor your Excitements, Worries and Needs. What suggestions do they have for you?

■ **Resilience: Practise dealing with disappointment and unmet expectations**

Finally, we will consider resilience. At some stage, you might have to face up to disappointment. Perhaps your goal was too ambitious, or your product did not meet your expectations. That is okay. As long as you reflect on the experience, and what you *learned* from it, then the project itself is not a failure.

ACTIVITY: I HAVE, I AM, I CAN

LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

Balanced	Reflective

The I have, I am, I can routine was developed by Edith Grotberg, a researcher with the International Resilience Project in The Netherlands.

I have, I am, I can factors	Example of using this factor this week
I have (people who are around to support me)	
I am (my strengths, my feelings, what I think and what I believe)	
I can (skills I use to cope)	