

28. Practice Activity: Will vs. Skill

If you ask most pupils what they spend most of their revision time on, if they are honest they will say revising things that they like doing. It's quite normal when you think about it. We all like to spend time on activities we feel comfortable or confident doing.

The problem can be that we're putting off things we feel uncomfortable with or don't like doing.

Everyone has heard of Usain Bolt – the world's fastest man to ever run 100 metres. He has an interesting way of approaching his training. He works out where his weak spots are and then spends most of his time training on them. For Bolt, that's the start of his 100 metres. He's a big guy and getting out of the blocks requires a lot of effort for him. He says he knows that it's his area of vulnerability. He's not great at it (he's 'low skill' when it comes to bursting from the blocks), and what's more, he doesn't particularly enjoy this aspect of his training (he is 'low will' in this area – that is, he has to force himself to do it, almost against his will). Despite these obstacles, Bolt spends a significant part of his training on this element because he knows that this is where he can improve the most.

The will vs. skill matrix is a useful way of helping you to identify where you need to spend your time practising. It's not just Bolt's idea; it was made popular in the *Tao of Coaching* by Max Landsberg. Let's see if it helps you like it helped Usain Bolt.

Step 1

Pick one of your subjects. Make a list of all the topic areas that you need to cover in your revision. If you've done a nine-box grid for the subject, this will be much easier...

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Step 2

Next, put each of the topic areas into the grid below. You need to make two judgements about the topic area to place it correctly. First, how good at it are you (that's the level of skill)? Second, how keen on it are you (that's your level of will)?

- » **High will/low skill.** Here you put the topics that you like doing but you are still developing your skills. For example, you might like research methods in sociology but you know that you need to develop your expertise.
- » **High will/high skill.** Here list all the topics that you love doing and that you are good at.
- » **Low will/low skill.** In this box write a list of the topics you don't like and you know that your skills need developing.
- » **Low will/high skill.** This is an interesting box. It's the topics you might not be keen on but you are good at them.

Will ↑	High will/low skill	High will/high skill
	Low will/low skill	Low will/high skill
	Skill →	

When you've added all the topics to the table, it's time for some reflection.

Where have you been spending most of your revision time? Is it time to tackle the low will/low skill box?

Final Thoughts

It's important to choose a high energy, positive time of day to tackle low will/low skill topics and subjects. If you had to choose a time of day when you feel most alert would it be:

- ☐ Early morning
- ☐ Late morning (pre-lunch)
- ☐ Early afternoon (post-lunch)
- ☐ Late afternoon just after school
- ☐ Evening

Now choose a day of the week when you've got some space and freedom at that time of day, and set aside an hour or two to tackle a low will/low skill topic or subject.

Finally, make sure you line up a great reward for getting the job done!