

25. Effort Activity: Packing My Bags

Often, our perception of our own effort is inaccurate. We frequently judge it by the people we surround ourselves with. So, if someone asked you how hard you are working, you might think about your three closest friends, figure out how you're doing compared to them and then give an answer. This is fine if all your friends are really hard working. If not, you might be kidding yourself that you're doing enough work.

It can be useful to do a checklist to review how hard you are working and see if you need to make any changes.

Have a go. First, you need to look at the behaviours listed below and then decide if this is something you do consistently (at least once every week), sometimes (at least every three weeks to a month) or rarely (once a term or even never). Then you have to decide whether you think this is a development need (something you should improve). If you think that it's something you should consider as a development need, your final task is to prioritise it as either high, medium or low, depending on how you think it will impact your performance.

Behaviour	Demonstrated consistently/ sometimes/rarely	Development need: high/ medium/low
I always hand my homework in on time.		
I leave things until the last minute.		
I do the minimum amount of work I can get away with.		
I hand in extra exam work for marking.		
In most classes my main goal is to do the minimum needed so I don't have to work very hard.		
I work hard at home.		
I do ten hours a week of independent study at home.		

The next step is to decide what you are happy with and what you aren't happy with.

This activity uses the analogy of packing your bags for a holiday. Imagine you're leaving the present you behind and moving to a new you. There are going to be some things that you want to take with you – elements of your current habits and work practices that you really like – and some things that you will definitely want to leave behind – things that annoy you about yourself or end up causing you stress and anxiety.

Use the table below and decide what you need to improve (put those in the 'pack' column) and what you need to leave behind.

Pack to take	Leave behind

Pack to take	Leave behind

Finally, you need to decide on a date – that is, the date you're leaving behind all the stuff you don't want to be part of your school life (everything you've put in the right-hand column).

Give yourself a few days. You'll need to be mentally ready to count down to this date and look forward to it.

A tip: we've found it's good to make it a Thursday or Friday. It'll be tiring being the new you. Start on a Monday and by Wednesday you'll be exhausted! We've found that pupils have more success when they give themselves a day or two of their new self before a weekend comes along to save them ...

Date to change:

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Final Thoughts

Sometimes, after setting a date, a pupil has a setback. They forget their new pattern of behaviour just for a day, and things go wrong. When that happens, it's tempting to abandon the whole plan. Don't do that! If something goes wrong and you slip, just put it behind you, and commit to starting again the following day. Sometimes there are two or three false starts before you crack it!