Developing self Confidence

Confidence is not something that can be learned like a set of rules; confidence is a state of mind. [Positive thinking](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/positive-thinking.html), practice, training, knowledge and talking to other people are all useful ways to help improve or boost your confidence levels.

Confidence comes from feelings of well-being, acceptance of your body and mind (your self-esteem) and belief in your own ability, skills and experience. Confidence is an attribute that most people would like to possess.

What is Self-Confidence?

**Although self-confidence can mean different things to different people, in reality it simply means having faith in yourself.**

**Confidence is, in part, a result of how we have been brought up and how we've been taught. We learn from others how to think about ourselves and how to behave - these lessons affect what we believe about ourselves and other people. Confidence is also a result of our experiences and how we've learned to react to different situations.**

**Self-confidence is not a static measure. Our confidence to perform roles and tasks and deal with situations can increase and decrease, and some days we may feel more confident than others.**

**Low-confidence** can be a result of many factors including: fear of the unknown, criticism, being unhappy with personal appearance (self-esteem), feeling unprepared, poor time-management, lack of knowledge and previous failures. Often when we lack confidence in ourselves it is because of what we believe others will think of us. Perhaps others will laugh at us or complain or make fun if we make a mistake. Thinking like this can prevent us from doing things we want or need to do because we believe that the consequences are too painful or embarrassing.

**Over-confidence** can be a problem if it makes you believe that you can do anything - even if you don't have the necessary skills, abilities and knowledge to do it well. In such situations over-confidence can lead to failure. Being overly confident also means you are more likely to come across to other people as arrogant or egotistical. People are much more likely to take pleasure in your failure if you are perceived as arrogant.

Related Areas

**Confidence and self-esteem are not the same thing**, although they are often linked. Confidence is the term we use to describe how we feel about our ability to perform roles, functions and tasks. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves, the way we look, the way we think - whether or not we feel worthy or valued. People with low self-esteem often also suffer from generally low confidence, but people with good self-esteem can also have low confidence. It is also perfectly possible for people with low self-esteem to be very confident in some areas.

For more discussion see our page: [**What is Self-Esteem?**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/self-esteem.html).

**Performing a role or completing a task confidently is not about not making mistakes.** Mistakes are inevitable, especially when doing something new. Confidence includes knowing what to do when mistakes come to light and therefore is also about problem solving and decision making.

Visit our sections on both [**Problem Solving**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/problem-solving.html) and [**Decision Making**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/decision-making.html) for more information.

**This page provides practical advice about things that you can do to build your confidence.**

Ways to Improve Confidence

**There are two sides to improving confidence. Although the ultimate aim is to feel more confident in yourself and your abilities it is also worth considering how you can appear more confident to other people. The following list has lots of ideas on how to achieve this.**

Planning and Preparation

**People often feel less confident about new or potentially difficult situations. Perhaps the most important factor in developing confidence is planning and preparing for the unknown.**

If you are applying for a new job, for example, it would be a good idea to prepare for the interview. Plan what you would want to say and think about some of the questions that you may be asked.  Practice your answers with friends or colleagues and gain their feedback.

There are many other examples of planning for an interview. Perhaps you should visit the hairdresser before you go. How are you going to travel to the interview and how long will the journey take? What should you wear? Take control of unknown situations the best you can, break down tasks into smaller sub-tasks and plan as many as you can.

In some situations it may be necessary to also have contingency plans - backup plans if your main plan fails. If you had planned to travel to your interview by car but on the morning the car wouldn't start how would you get there? Being able to react calmly to the unexpected is a sign of confidence.

Learning, Knowledge and Training

**Learning and research can help us to feel more confident about our ability to handle situations, roles and tasks.**

Knowing what to expect and how and why things are done will add to your awareness and usually make you feel more prepared and ultimately more confident.

However, learning and gaining knowledge can sometimes make us feel less confident about our abilities to perform roles and tasks, and when this happens we need to combine our knowledge with experience. By doing something we have learned a lot about we put theory to practice which develops confidence and adds to the learning and comprehension.

First-time parents to-be may well feel nervous and less than confident about having a baby. They are likely to buy books or visit websites which can offer advice and dispel some of the mysteries. They are also likely to talk to other parents to gain knowledge and understanding.

In the workplace, training may be provided for staff to teach them how to manage or work with new systems and procedures. During a period of organisational change this is particularly important as many people will naturally resist changes. However if those affected by the changes are given adequate information and training then such resistances can usually be minimised as the staff feel more prepared and therefore more confident with the new system.

See our page: [**Lifelong Learning**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/lifelong-learning.html) for more information.

Positive Thought

**Positive thought can be a very powerful way of improving confidence.**

If you believe that you can achieve something then you are likely to work hard to make sure you do if, however, you don't believe that you can accomplish a task then you are more likely to approach it half-heartedly and therefore be more likely to fail. The trick is convincing yourself that you can do something - with the right help, support, preparedness and knowledge.

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

**Helen Keller** - *Author, political activist, and lecturer. The first deaf and blind person to earn a BA degree in the US.*

There is a lot of information about positive thinking both online and in print. The basic rules of positive thinking are to highlight your strengths and successes and learn from your weaknesses and mistakes. This is a lot easier than it sounds, and we often dwell on things that we are not happy with from our past - making them into bigger issues than they need to be. These negative thoughts can be very damaging to confidence and your ability to achieve goals.

**Try to recondition the way you think about your life:**

**Know your strengths and weaknesses.** Write a list of things that you are good at and things that you know need improvement. Discuss your list with friends and family as, inevitably, they will be able to add to the list. Celebrate and develop your strengths and find ways to improve or manage your weaknesses.

**We all make mistakes.** Don't think of your mistakes as negatives but rather as learning opportunities.

**Accept compliments and compliment yourself.** When you receive a compliment from somebody else, thank them and ask for more details; what exactly did they like? Recognise your own achievements and celebrate them by rewarding yourself and telling friends and family about them.

**Use criticism as a learning experience**. Everybody sees the world differently, from their own perspective, and what works for one person may not work for another. Criticism is just the opinion of somebody else. Be assertive when receiving criticism, don't reply in a defensive way or let criticism lower your self-esteem. Listen to the criticism and make sure that you understand what is being said so you can use criticism as a way to learn and improve. See our page: [**Dealing with Criticism**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/dealing-with-criticism.html) for more information.

**Try to stay generally cheerful and have a positive outlook on life.**Only complain or criticise when necessary and, when you do, do so in a constructive way. Offer others compliments and congratulate them on their successes. You may find our page [**Offering Constructive Criticism**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/constructive-criticism.html) helpful.

Talking to Others and Following Their Lead

**Find yourself a confidence role-model.**

Ideally this will be someone that you see regularly, a work colleague, a family member or a friend - somebody with a lot of self-confidence who you'd like to mirror. Observe them and notice how they behave when they are being confident. How do they move, how do they speak, what do they say and when? How do they behave when faced with a problem or mistake? How do they interact with other people and how do others react to them?

If possible talk to them to learn more about how they think and what makes them tick.

Speaking to and being around people who are confident will usually help you to feel more confident. Learn from others who are successful in fulfilling the tasks and goals that you wish to achieve - let their confidence rub off on you.

As you become more confident then offer help and advice, become a role-model for somebody less confident.

Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence.

**Vince Lombardi** - Successful American Football coach.

Generally people are attracted to confident people - confidence is one of the main characteristics of charisma. See our page: [**What is Charisma?**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/charisma.html) for a full explanation.

Experience

**As we successfully complete tasks and goals, our confidence that we can complete the same and similar tasks again increases.**

A simple example of this is driving a car. Most people who have been driving for some time do so almost automatically - they don't have to think about which peddle to push or how to handle a junction in the road, they just do it. This contrasts to a learner driver who will probably feel nervous and have to concentrate hard. The learner lacks experience and therefore confidence in their ability to drive.

Gaining experience and taking the first step can, however, be very difficult. Often the thought of starting something new is worse than actually doing it. This is where preparation, learning and thinking positively can help.

Break roles and tasks down into small achievable goals. Make each one of your goals fit SMART criteria. That is to make goals Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timed. Our page [**Setting Personal Goals**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/setting-personal-goals.html) explains this in more detail.

Whatever you do, aim to become as good as you can. The better you are at doing something the more confident you become.

Be Assertive

**Being assertive means standing up for what you believe in and sticking to your principles.**

Being assertive also means that you can change your mind if you believe it is the right thing to do, not because you are under pressure from somebody else.

Assertiveness, confidence and self-esteem are all very closely linked - usually people become naturally more assertive as they develop their confidence.

See our [**Assertiveness**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/assertiveness.html) section and [**Assertiveness Techniques**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/assertiveness-techniques.html) page for more information.

Keep Calm

**There is usually a correlation between confidence and calmness.**

If you feel confident about a task then you will likely feel calm about doing it. When you feel less confident you are more likely to be stressed or nervous.

Trying to remain calm, even when you're under stress and pressure, will tend to make you feel more confident.

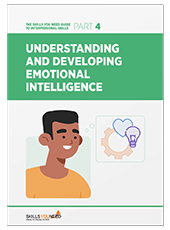
To do this it is useful to learn how to relax. Learn at least one relaxation technique that works for you and that you can use if you're feeling stressed. This may be as simple as taking some deliberate deep breaths both in and out. For more ideas see our page, [**Relaxation Techniques**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/relax.html).

Avoid Arrogance

**Arrogance is detrimental to interpersonal relationships.**

As your confidence grows and you become successful, avoid feeling or acting superior to others. Remember - nobody is perfect and there is always more that you can learn. Celebrate your strengths and successes, and recognise your weaknesses and failures. Give others credit for their work - use compliments and praise sincerely. Be courteous and polite, show an interest in what others are doing, ask questions and get involved.

Admit to your mistakes and be prepared to laugh at yourself!

[](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/shop/interpersonal-skills-guide.html)

Further Reading from Skills You Need

[**Understanding and Developing Emotional Intelligence**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/shop/interpersonal-skills-guide.html)

Learn more about emotional intelligence and how to effectively manage personal relationships at home, at work and socially.

Our eBooks are ideal for anyone who wants to learn about or develop their interpersonal skills, and are full of easy-to-follow, practical information.

Developing Your Self-Confidence Skills

**Self-confidence can diminish over time if you don't practise your skills or if you hit set-backs. As you become more self-confident you should continue to practise your skills to maintain and boost your confidence further.**

Set yourself '*confidence targets*' that require you to step out of your comfort zone and do things that make you feel a degree of nervousness or apprehension.

Potential confidence targets may include:

**Start a task or project that you've been putting off for a long time.** Often we put off starting important tasks because they seem overwhelming, difficult or awkward to complete. Simply making a start on such a task can boost confidence and make you more inclined to complete it.

**Make a complaint in a restaurant if there is a problem with your order.** If you would not usually complain about a problem, then doing so is a good way to improve your confidence and assertiveness skills. Our page [**How to Complain, Effectively**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/effective-complaints.html) can help with this.

**Stand up and ask a question at a public meeting or in a group.** By doing this you are making yourself the center of attention for a few minutes.

**Volunteer to give a presentation or make a speech.** For many people speaking to a group of people is a particularly scary prospect. The best way to overcome this fear and gain confidence is with experience.

**Introduce yourself to somebody new.** This could be somewhere where people have something in common - like at a party or a conference, making it potentially easier to have a conversation. Or you could talk to a complete stranger in a lift/elevator.

**Wear something that will draw attention - such as a garish color.** Personal appearance is an important factor in self-esteem and people with lower self-esteem tend to try not to be noticed. Make a statement and stand out in a crowd!

**Join a group or class in your community.** You will potentially benefit in lots of different ways by meeting new local people and learning new things while improving your confidence.

**Take an unfamiliar journey on public transport.** Travelling to a new place using an unfamiliar route and with random people will make most people feel at least slightly uncomfortable.