From the quietly confident doctor whose advice we rely on, to the charismatic confidence of an inspiring speaker, self-confident people have qualities that everyone admires.

Self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of our lives, yet so many people struggle to find it. Sadly, this can be a vicious circle: people who lack self-confidence can find it difficult to become successful.

After all, most people are reluctant to back a project that's being pitched by someone who was nervous, fumbling, and overly apologetic.

On the other hand, you might be persuaded by someone who speaks clearly, who holds his or her head high, who answers questions assuredly, and who readily admits when he or she does not know something.

Confident people inspire confidence in others: their audience, their peers, their bosses, their customers, and their friends. And gaining the confidence of others is one of the key ways in which a self-confident person finds success.

The good news is that self-confidence really can be learned and built on. And, whether you’re working on your own confidence or building the confidence of people around you, it’s well-worth the effort!

## How Confident do you Seem to Others?

Your level of self-confidence can show in many ways: your behavior, your body language, how you speak, what you say, and so on. Look at the following comparisons of common confident behavior with behavior associated with low self-confidence. Which thoughts or actions do you recognize in yourself and people around you?

| **Confident Behavior** | **Behavior Associated With low Self-Confidence** |
| --- | --- |
| Doing what you believe to be right, even if others mock or criticize you for it. | Governing your behavior based on what other people think. |
| Being willing to take risks and go the extra mile to achieve better things. | Staying in your comfort zone, fearing failure, and so avoid taking risks. |
| Admitting your mistakes, and learning from them. | Working hard to cover up mistakes and hoping that you can fix the problem before anyone notices. |
| Waiting for others to congratulate you on your accomplishments. | Extolling your own virtues as often as possible to as many people as possible. |
| Accepting compliments graciously. “Thanks, I really worked hard on that prospectus. I’m pleased you recognize my efforts.” | Dismissing compliments offhandedly. “Oh that prospectus was nothing really, anyone could have done it.” |

As you can see from these examples, low self-confidence can be self-destructive, and it often manifests itself as negativity. Confident people are generally more positive – they believe in themselves and their abilities, and they also believe in living life to the full.

## What is Self-Confidence?

Two main things contribute to self-confidence: self-efficacy and self-esteem.

We gain a sense of **self-efficacy** when we see ourselves (and others similar to ourselves) mastering skills and achieving goals that matter in those skill areas. This is the confidence that, if we learn and work hard in a particular area, we'll succeed; and it's this type of confidence that leads people to accept difficult challenges, and persist in the face of setbacks.

This overlaps with the idea of [self-esteem](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_80.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gif, which is a more general sense that we can cope with what's going on in our lives, and that we have a right to be happy. Partly, this comes from a feeling that the people around us approve of us, which we may or may not be able to control. However, it also comes from the sense that we are behaving virtuously, that we're competent at what we do, and that we can compete successfully when we put our minds to it.

Some people believe that self-confidence can be built with [affirmations](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/affirmations.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifand [positive thinking](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_06.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gif. At Mind Tools, we believe that there's some truth in this, but that it's just as important to build self-confidence by setting and achieving goals – thereby **building** **competence**. Without this underlying competence, you don't have self-confidence: you have shallow over-confidence, with all of the issues, upset and failure that this brings.

## Building Self-Confidence

So how do you build this sense of balanced self-confidence, founded on a firm appreciation of reality?

The bad news is that there’s no quick fix, or five-minute solution.

The good news is that becoming more confident is readily achievable, just as long as you have the focus and determination to carry things through. And what’s even better is that the things you’ll do to build your self-confidence will also build success – after all, your confidence will come from real, solid achievement. No-one can take this away from you!

So here are our three steps to self-confidence, for which we’ll use the metaphor of a journey: preparing for your journey; setting out; and accelerating towards success.

## Step 1: Preparing for Your Journey

The first step involves getting yourself ready for your journey to self-confidence. You need to take stock of where you are, think about where you want to go, get yourself in the right mindset for your journey, and commit yourself to starting it and staying with it.

In preparing for your journey, do these five things:

### Look at What You've Already Achieved

Think about your life so far, and list the ten best things you've achieved in an "Achievement Log." Perhaps you came top in an important test or exam, played a key role in an important team, produced the best sales figures in a period, did something that made a key difference in someone else’s life, or delivered a project that meant a lot for your business.

Put these into a smartly formatted document, which you can look at often. And then spend a few minutes each week enjoying the success you’ve already had!

### Think About Your Strengths

Next, use a technique like [SWOT Analysis](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05_1.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifto take a look at who and where you are. Looking at your Achievement Log, and reflecting on your recent life, think about what your friends would consider to be your strengths and weaknesses. From these, think about the opportunities and threats you face.

Make sure that you enjoy a few minutes reflecting on your strengths!

### Think About What's Important to You, and Where you Want to Go

Next, think about the things that are really important to you, and what you want to achieve with your life.

Setting and achieving goals is a key part of this, and real confidence comes from this. Goal setting is the process you use to set yourself targets, and measure your successful hitting of those targets. See our article on [goal setting](https://www.mindtools.com/page6.html) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifto find out how to use this important technique, or use our [Life Plan Workbook](https://www.mindtools.com/store/product.php?productid=16143&cat=250&page=1) to think through your own goals in detail (see the "Tip" below).

Inform your goal setting with your SWOT Analysis. Set goals that exploit your strengths, minimize your weaknesses, realize your opportunities, and control the threats you face.

And having set the major goals in your life, identify the first step in each. Make sure it’s a very small step, perhaps taking no more than an hour to complete!

### Start Managing Your Mind

At this stage, you need to start managing your mind. Learn to pick up and defeat the negative self-talk which can destroy your confidence. See our article on [rational positive thinking](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_06.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifto find out how to do this.

Further useful reading includes our article on [imagery](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_04.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gif– this teaches you how to use and create strong mental images of what you'll feel and experience as you achieve your major goals – there’s something about doing this that makes even major goals seem achievable!

### And Then Commit Yourself to Success!

The final part of preparing for the journey is to make a clear and unequivocal promise to yourself that you are absolutely committed to your journey, and that you will do all in your power to achieve it.

If as you’re doing it, you find doubts starting to surface, write them down and challenge them calmly and rationally. If they dissolve under scrutiny, that’s great. However if they are based on genuine risks, make sure you set additional goals to manage these appropriately. For help with evaluating and managing the risks you face, read our [Risk Analysis and Management](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_07.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifarticle.

Either way, make that promise!

#### Tip:

Self-confidence is about balance. At one extreme, we have people with low self-confidence. At the other end, we have people who may be over-confident.

If you are under-confident, you’ll avoid taking risks and stretching yourself; and you might not try at all. And if you’re over-confident, you may take on too much risk, stretch yourself beyond your capabilities, and crash badly. You may also find that you’re so optimistic that you don’t try hard enough to truly succeed.

Getting this right is a matter of having the right amount of confidence, founded in reality and on your true ability. With the right amount of self-confidence, you will take informed risks, stretch yourself (but not beyond your abilities) and try hard.

So how self confident are you? Take our [short quiz](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifto find out how self-confident you are already, and start looking at specific strategies to improve your confidence level.

## Step 2: Setting Out

This is where you start, ever so slowly, moving towards your goal. By doing the right things, and starting with small, easy wins, you’ll put yourself on the path to success – and start building the self-confidence that comes with this.

### Build the Knowledge you Need to Succeed

Looking at your goals, identify the skills you’ll need to achieve them. And then look at how you can acquire these skills confidently and well. Don’t just accept a sketchy, just-good-enough solution – look for a solution, a program or a course that fully equips you to achieve what you want to achieve and, ideally, gives you a certificate or qualification you can be proud of.

### Focus on the Basics

When you’re starting, don’t try to do anything clever or elaborate. And don’t reach for perfection – just enjoy doing simple things successfully and well.

### Set Small Goals, and Achieve Them

Starting with the very small goals you identified in step 1, get in the habit of setting them, achieving them, and celebrating that achievement. Don’t make goals particularly challenging at this stage, just get into the habit of achieving them and celebrating them. And, little by little, start piling up the successes!

### Keep Managing Your Mind

Stay on top of that positive thinking, keep celebrating and enjoying success, and keep those mental images strong. You can also use a technique like [Treasure Mapping](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCT_94.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifto make your visualizations even stronger!

And on the other side, learn to handle failure. Accept that mistakes happen when you’re trying something new. In fact, if you get into the habit of treating mistakes as learning experiences, you can (almost) start to see them in a positive light. After all, there’s a lot to be said for the saying “if it doesn’t kill you, it makes you stronger!”

## Step 3: Accelerating Towards Success

By this stage, you’ll feel your self-confidence building. You’ll have completed some of the courses you started in step 2, and you’ll have plenty of success to celebrate!

This is the time to start stretching yourself. Make the goals a bit bigger, and the challenges a bit tougher. Increase the size of your commitment. And extend the skills you’ve proven into new, but closely related arenas.

#### Tip 1:

Keep yourself grounded – this is where people tend to get over-confident and over-stretch themselves. And make sure you don’t start enjoying cleverness for its own sake…

#### Tip 2:

If you haven't already looked at it, use our [How Self Confident Are You?](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gifquiz to find out how self-confident you are, and to identify specific strategies for building self-confidence.

As long as you keep on stretching yourself enough, but not too much, you'll find your self-confidence building apace. What's more, you'll have earned your self-confidence – because you’ll have put in the hard graft necessary to be successful!

Goal setting is arguably the most important skill you can learn to improve your self-confidence. If you haven't already read and applied our goal setting article, you can read it [here](https://www.mindtools.com/page6.html) https://www.mindtools.com/images/tooltip/reading-plus-grey.gif.

## Key Points

Self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of our lives, and people who lack it can find it difficult to become successful.

Two main things contribute to self-confidence: self-efficacy and self-esteem. You can develop it with these three steps:

1. Prepare for your journey.
2. Set out on your journey.
3. Accelerate towards success.

Goal setting is probably the most important activity that you can learn in order to improve your self-confidence.

"Learn to take risks." "Fail early, and often." "If you don't risk big, you can't win big."

You've heard all these bits of business advice, and many more like them, probably more times than you can count. [Taking risks](http://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/how-the-smartest-leaders-handle-risk-and-so-should-you.html), and being [willing to fail](http://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/7-amazing-ways-smart-leaders-turn-failure-into-an-asset.html), are considered so important these days that leaders at even large companies puzzle over how to make their employees into bigger risk-takers, and having started a business that went under is considered a badge of honor.

Missing from all this hoopla about the glories of risk-taking is a clear-eyed calculation of what it actually means for your business. Just ask Don Kurz, CEO of ad agency[Omelet](http://omeletla.com/). His company is so risk-friendly that its very name expresses a willingness to break a few eggs on the way to reaching its goals. While risk-taking has worked out well for Omelet, it isn't for everyone, he says.

Instead, he advises, when pondering a risky move, consider the following before you decide:

## 1. Any risk should serve your company's mission.

Risk-taking shouldn't be reckless, it should be [highly strategic](http://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/why-you-should-lead-for-the-long-term.html), Kurz says. For example, the company co-owns Betsy's Best, a line of nut butters, and recently produced a feature-length documentary about ex-gang leaders now rebuilding their communities. While these endeavors may sound way off base for an advertising agency, they fit with Omelet's long-term strategy, Kurz explains.

"We're not trying to be a traditional agency," he says. "Any potential endeavor has to fit with that mission, which implies being disruptive to the status quo." Beyond that, he says, any new project has to take full advantage of Omelet's core competencies of crafting strategic insights and creative story telling, something both these projects did.

"Perhaps most importantly, anything we evaluate, we assess through the lens of 'Will it enhance the Omelet brand and ultimately the value of the company?'" Kurz says. Daring or not, a new project has to meet all these criteria before Omelet will take it on.

## 2. You really have to be OK with failure and losses.

"If you want to take these kinds of risks, you must commit your entire business strategy to that," Kurz says. "Everything has to be consistently aligned and you have to be prepared for short-term profitability hits."

That can be a big challenge for a young company working on a thin margin, he concedes. But if you can manage it, it may be worth it. "The goal is that the company's worth is higher in the long term because you're creating a pipeline of innovation along with new sources of revenue." (Here are [8 things you can do](http://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/8-really-smart-ways-to-create-an-ideas-culture-in-your-small-business.html) to foster innovation in your company.)

## 3. It's perfectly fine not to take risks.

As Kurz notes, risk-taking, and the failure that goes with it, are very fashionable notions these days. But don't make the mistake of basing your business strategy on what's fashionable.

"There's nothing wrong with being risk-averse," he says. "You can organize your systems correctly, hire employees who are also risk-averse, and still be a fine company. It's when companies put out mixed messages that they run into problems."

## 4. Risk-taking comes at a cost.

"Any untested initiative will inevitably strain cash flow," Kurz notes. And that means some tradeoffs. "It could impede everything from reinvesting in the core business, to employee raises and bonuses, to the company's ability to make new hires, and more."

So if you're going to take risks, he says, you must budget carefully for those risks, have a clear idea of how much you're willing to spend (i.e. lose) and have the discipline to stick to that number. "You also must be realistic about when these investments will generate a return, if ever."

## 5. It can take a very long time for risky endeavors to pay off.

"It will always take a lot longer to generate a return than you think and that's why you must also assess 'soft benefits' such as enhancing the brand value and the ability to attract the best employees due to the excitement of taking some risks," Kurz says. "Sometimes you shouldn't necessarily expect a cash return, but should instead expect other benefits that are tougher to measure." The gang documentary fits in this category for Omelet, he adds.

Making substantial investments in projects with delayed returns--or none at all--will reduce the profitability of a small business, at least for a while. "Any investment that won't pay off in the short term must be factored into your working capital projections," Kurz says. "So planning these investments is critical."

Interpersonal skills are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups.  People who have worked on developing strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives.

Employers often seek to hire staff with 'strong interpersonal skills' - they want people who will work well in a team and be able to communicate effectively with colleagues, customers and clients.

This section of SkillsYouNeed is full of information and practical advice that you can use to improve your interpersonal skills.

Interpersonal skills are not just important in the workplace, our personal and social lives can also benefit from better interpersonal skills. People with good interpersonal skills are usually perceived as optimistic, calm, confident and [charismatic](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/charisma.html) - qualities that are often endearing or appealing to others.

Through awareness of how you interact with others - and with practice - you can improve your interpersonal skills.

Skills You Need aims to help you learn and develop your interpersonal skills by providing an extensive library of quality content.  We hope that you find our content useful and rewarding.

[**Interpersonal Skills Self-Assessment**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ls/index.php/343479/)

**Discover your interpersonal skills strengths and weaknesses.**

Our free self-assessment covers listening skills, verbal communication, emotional intelligence and working in groups.

### A List of Interpersonal Skills Includes:

* [Verbal Communication](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/verbal-communication.html) - What we say and how we say it.
* [Non-Verbal Communication](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/nonverbal-communication.html) - What we communicate without words, body language is an example.
* [Listening Skills](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html) - How we interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages sent by others.
* [Negotiation](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/negotiation.html) - Working with others to find a mutually agreeable outcome.
* [Problem Solving](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/problem-solving.html) - Working with others to identify, define and solve problems.
* [Decision Making](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/decision-making.html) – Exploring and analysing options to make sound decisions.
* [Assertiveness](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/assertiveness.html) – Communicating our values, ideas, beliefs, opinions, needs and wants freely.

The menu to the left is a list of our full library of Interpersonal Skills pages.

### You Already Have Interpersonal Skills

We've all been developing our interpersonal skills since childhood - usually subconsciously.

Interpersonal Skills become so natural that we may take them for granted, never thinking about how we communicate with other people. With a little time and effort you can develop these skills. Good interpersonal skills can improve many aspects of your life - professionally and socially - they lead to better understanding and relationships.

Interpersonal skills are also sometimes referred to as: **social skills, people skills,** [soft skills](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/soft-skills.html)**, communication skills** or **life skills**. Although these terms can include interpersonal skills they tend to be broader and therefore may also refer other types of skills.

## Develop Your Interpersonal Skills

There are a variety of skills that can help you to succeed in different areas of life and SkillsYouNeed has sections covering many of these.

However, the foundations for many other skills are built on strong **interpersonal skills** since these are relevant to our **personal relationships**, **social affairs** and **professional lives.**

Without good interpersonal skills it is often more difficult to develop other important life skills.

Unlike specialised and technical skills (hard skills), interpersonal skills ([soft skills](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/soft-skills.html)) are used every day and in every area of our lives.

Find out how to improve and develop your interpersonal skills including:

### Learn to Listen

**Listening is not the same as hearing.** Take time to listen carefully to what others are saying through both their verbal and non-verbal communication. Visit our [**Listening Skills**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html) pages to learn more.

### Choose Your Words

**Be aware of the words you are using when talking to others.** Could you be misunderstood or confuse the issue?  Practise clarity and learn to seek feedback to ensure your message has been understood.

Encourage others to engage in communication and use appropriate questioning to develop your understanding.

Our page: [**Verbal Communication**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/verbal-communication.html), introduces the subject, you may also be interested in [**Effective Speech**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/effective-speaking.html) for tips on how to use your voice to full effect and [Conversational Skills](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/conversational-skills.html) for all you need to know about holding a relaxed conversation. Also, [**Questioning**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/questioning.html) which can help you encourage communication in others and clarify what they have said.

### Understand Why Communication Fails

**Communication is rarely perfect and can fail for a number of reasons**. Learn about the various barriers to good communication so you can be aware of - and reduce the likelihood of - ineffective interpersonal communication and misunderstandings.

Our page [Communicating in Difficult Situations](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/communication-difficult-situations.html) offers further ideas to help you to get your message across when stress levels or other emotions are running high.

### Relax

**When we are nervous we tend to talk more quickly and therefore less clearly.**  Being tense is also evident in our body language and other non-verbal communication. Instead, try to stay calm, make eye contact and smile.  Let your confidence shine.

### Clarify

Show an interest in the people you talk to. Ask questions and seek clarification on any points that could be easily misunderstood.

### Be Positive

Try to remain positive and cheerful.  People are much more likely to be drawn to you if you can maintain a [positive attitude](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/positive-thinking.html).

### Empathise

Understand that other people may have different points of view. Try to see things from their perspective. You may learn something whilst gaining the respect and trust of others.

### Understand Stress

Learn to recognise, manage and reduce stress in yourself and others.  Although stress is not always bad, it can have a detrimental effect on your interpersonal communication. Learning how to recognise and manage stress, in yourself and others, is an important personal skill.

### Learn to be Assertive

You should aim to be neither passive nor aggressive. Being assertive is about expressing your feelings and beliefs in a way that others can understand and respect.  Assertiveness is fundamental to successful negotiation.

### Reflect and Improve

Think about previous conversations and other interpersonal interactions; learn from your mistakes and successes. Always keep a positive attitude but realise that you can always improve our communication skills.

### Negotiate

Learn how to effectively negotiate with others paving the way to mutual respect, trust and lasting interpersonal relations.

### Working in Groups

We often find ourselves in group situations, professionally and socially. Learn all about the different types of groups and teams.

Every organization uses this age-old method in the selection process. Apart from your answers, an interviewer may judge you on various parameters, like your body language, dress sense, confidence level, and so on. It is essential to understand how and what to answer during an interview. Here is what you should avoid during a job interview:

1. **Do not be overconfident**: There is a fine line between confidence and overconfidence. Boasting too much and aggressive tones are a strict no-no at an interview.
2. **Refrain from joking:** Be articulate about what to say and know when to say it. Light humor certainly lightens the environment and projects you as a happy-go-lucky person. But one too many jokes can reduce your chances of getting the job, unless you are being interviewed for a comedian’s role.
3. **Do not criticize past employers:** Even if your experience with the previous organization is the reason for quitting the job, do not say anything negative about it. You may come across as a complainer and as imprudent. This will not get you the job.
4. **‘I hate my job’:** You just reduced your chances of being hired. All right, you do not like anything about your job. But wasn’t that your decision? Cribbing is extremely unprofessional.
5. **Avoid saying just ‘yes’ and ‘no’:** Remember not to answer every question in monosyllables. Give some explanation to elaborate your answer or opinion.
6. **Do not lie:**Big or small, a lie is a lie. Whatever the circumstances, avoid giving false statements and answers. The interviewer is more experienced than you are and can easily tell when you are lying.
7. **Avoid discussing salary:**Unless you are asked about it, do not bring up the topic of remuneration. The motive of this round of interview is to judge whether you are suitable for the post. The discussion of compensation is taken up once you clear this level.
8. **Do not appear needy:** Even if you need the job, do not make your desperation apparent during the interview.
9. **Avoid using conflicting words:** Words like ‘stepping stone’, ‘non-team-player’, and so on are unsuitable for the occasion and should not be used.
10. **Avoid using slang language:** Strictly control what you say during an interview. Choose your words wisely, dress appropriately, and show your passion to get the job. The last thing you want is to be blacklisted by the company and barred from applying for future job opportunities.
11. **Do not go over-prepared:**This is not a contradictory statement. Writing answers to common questions and memorizing them by heart is a common practice. Such answers lack the conversational tone and you could be perceived as a parrot.
12. **Keep personal issues at bay:** Sure, you are going through some tough times at home. But an interview room is not the place to discuss your family problems.