Change.
For the better.

A learning guide

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Better skills.
Better you.
Better year.

Learning is a unique and powerful thing. It can change your life — and even the world around you. And while we agree there is a kind of magic to it, it all starts with some very real steps. They're not difficult, in fact, you're probably doing at least some of them every day. This interactive guide puts all those steps together so you can build better skills for a better year.

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Step 1: Set a Goal

First things first – before diving into your course, let's create a goal to define what you want to achieve through your learning. This goal should be tied to real–world outcomes – not just simply completing your Udemy course. Try using the SMART goal framework:

S **Specific** ❯ Your goal is direct, detailed, and meaningful.

M **Measurable** ❯ Your goal is quantifiable to track progress or success.

A **Attainable** ❯ Your goal is realistic and you have the tools and/or resources to attain it.

R **Relevant** ❯ Your goal aligns with your company mission.

T **Time-Based** ❯ Your goal has a deadline.

For example, let's say you enrolled in a Adobe Illustrator course because you'd like to be able to create graphics for work. Your goal might look something like this:

By the end of Q1, I will use Illustrator (and what I learned in my Udemy course) to create 1 header image and 1 logo for our Q2 company newsletter.

This goal is **specific** to what you want to to do, able to be **measured** using the deliverables you identified, **attainable** because you have the tools (Illustrator & your Udemy course) to achieve it, **relevant** to your work on the Q2 company newsletter, and **time–based** with an end of quarter deadline.

❯ Don't just keep your goal in your head, though – write it down! Writing down your goal makes it _ that you'll achieve it. Use the space below to write down your learning goal, and keep it somewhere you can see it.

Step 1: Cont'd

> Picture yourself completing this goal. What does it look/feel like? If you didn't achieve this goal, what impact would that have?

Step 2: Get Started

The best way to start achieving the learning goal you just set is to start! Open the new Udemy course you just enrolled in and watch the first few lectures. Once you've done so, answer the questions below.

> What prior knowledge or level of familiarity do you have of the topic you're learning?

> What is one new thing you learned in the first few lectures?

> What are you most excited to learn about in the remainder of the course?

Step 3: Practice & Apply

This step is the KEY to learning. While you may remember facts from a course, the true learning happens when you integrate what you've learned into your life in a way that is meaningful to you. Learning is DOING, not just watching. It takes active, deliberate practice and effort on your part to learn new things and apply them to your work and life.

As you continue your course, stop to complete any exercises, activities, or assessments that the instructor has included. Try to do these practice activities as soon as you reach them in the course so that the new information you just received is fresh in your mind.

> Beyond completing the activities within the course, how can you make your new knowledge relevant to you and your goal? What other practice might you need to apply what you've learned to the specific goal you created?

Step 4: Reflect

Reflection in an essential part of learning. As you take in information, you must pause and connect new pieces of knowledge to your own life. As you reflect on your learning, you may find that something is actually unclear, so you go back to review what was taught. As you complete a course activity, you might reflect on how it is getting you closer to your goal, as well as how you might apply the same type of activity outside of the course.

You may have noticed that you've been asked to reflect along the way through these steps. That's because reflection is not a one-time event. Reflection should happen continuously as you learn, so you can think critically about the information you've received, how it relates to you, how you will use it, and what other things you might need to know.

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Step 4: Cont'd

After you've completed a portion of the course, stop to ask yourself a few questions:

> What is the most surprising thing you've learned so far?

> Which topic or concept has been most difficult? What other information or practice might you need here?

> Think back to your goal. What have you learned that is bringing you closer to this goal? What else do you still need to learn in order to achieve it?

Step 5: Make it social

Learning is most effective when it's shared. Not only can we learn directly from others, but we can reflect on what we've learned and solidify that knowledge through discussion and collaboration.

As much as possible, try to involve others in your learning. A few ways to do this:

Discover online communities. Figure out where others interested in the topic you're learning hang out online. Are there LinkedIn, Facebook or Reddit groups you could join? Is there a big player in the field you can follow on Twitter or Instagram? What blogs or sites are dedicated to your topic? Ask questions or participate in discussions to learn from others.

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Step 5: Cont'd

While your Udemy course is a great place to start learning, tapping into these other communities will help you further your knowledge of the wider field.

Recruit an accountability buddy. This is someone who will check-in with you and discuss what you're learning. This person may or may not be taking the same course as you.

- If they are, talk about your takeaways or open questions. Do you have similar or different interpretations of the material, or areas of difficulty? You may find that your buddy has a good grasp of a concept that totally confused you, and can help you better understand.

- If they aren't taking the course with you, take the opportunity to teach THEM about your topic. Summarize the key points, walk them through processes, or have them try their hand at some of the activities with your guidance. This isn't just for their benefit – it's been found that learning can be solidified when you teach someone else.

> Who's your accountability buddy?

Not only is your accountability buddy someone to discuss your learning with, but they can help you stay on track with your goal. The American Society of Training and Development found that people are 65% more likely to meet a goal after committing to another person and their chances of success increase to 95% when they have ongoing meetings with their partner to check in on their progress. Talk about a win-win!

Step 6: Build the habit

Doing all of the above once is a good start, but for learning to make the biggest impact in your life, it must be repeated and actively practiced on a regular basis.

A simple way to start building this habit is to commit to regular learning time. Plan ahead and schedule the time you'll spend learning so that it is built into your calendar. One way to do this is with the learning reminder feature on the Udemy app. You'll be able to choose the times each week you want to dedicate to learning, and will receive a reminder notification at those times.

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Step 6: Cont'd
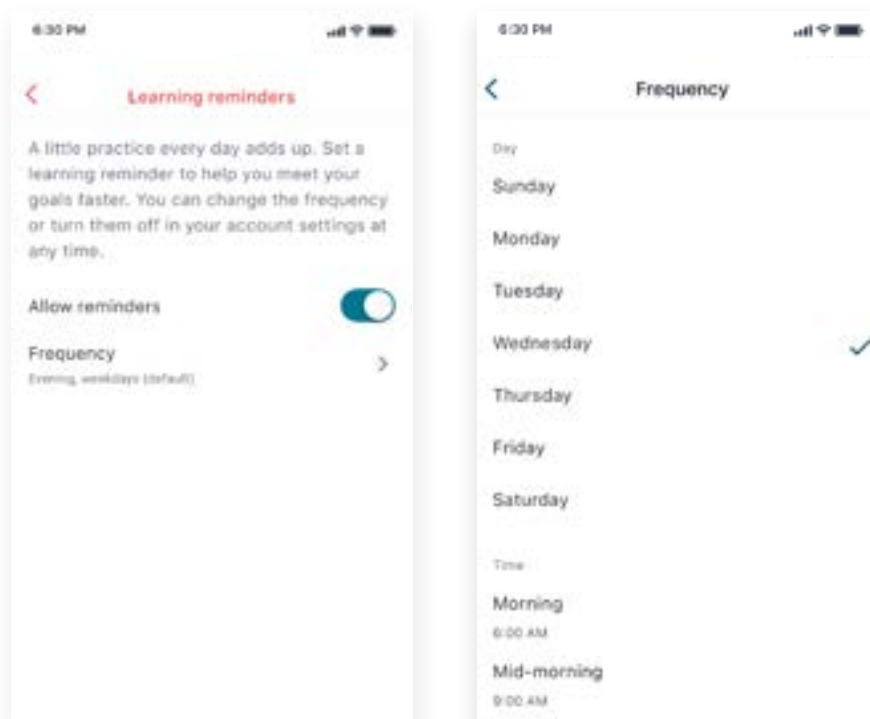
Whether you use the learning reminders feature, or simply schedule time on your own calendar, plan ahead and commit to the learning time you set aside for yourself. It can take up to 66 days to form a new habit, so nothing is going to happen overnight. Stick with it so that continuous learning becomes a regular part of your routine!

As you continue learning:

- Check in regularly on your goal. Note the progress you're making towards it, and what other knowledge or practice you might need to achieve it.

- If you lose motivation, remind yourself WHY you're doing this and the impact your new learning will have.

- Apply new information to the exercises in the course as well as to your real-world work or activities.

- Keep reflecting on what you're learning, how it connects to your life, and any additional information you need to achieve your goal.

- Lastly, make this a habit – schedule your learning time so it becomes part of your routine as a lifelong learner.

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We hope this guide helps you make the best of your learning. And we invite you to share your goals with us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) — because sharing your goals is another positive step towards realizing them. Here's to your best year of learning yet!

Learn on,

The Udemy Team