

Learning is a Game of Skill

Educator's Guide to the Exercise

The goal of this exercise is to start a conversation with students about the process of improvement.

We want to draw parallels between the way we improve in activities of all kinds, so that a student who is struggling in a particular activity can see the roadmap to getting better based on their understanding of an activity they're already good at.

We start with our three examples: a sport, an art form, and academics.

In our discussion of those three examples,

1. We talk about **the big picture**: what does it look like to be good at this game?
2. We talk about **the moves**: what are the basic, fundamental skills that a player needs to master **before** they can become good at this game?
3. We talk about **the process**: how much time and effort does it take to get good?
4. We talk about **expectations**: Given how much time and effort we just said it takes in the last question, is it fair of us to expect ourselves to be great at something immediately? Is it reasonable to be disappointed if we're not?

What we intend the students to notice is that, for all three examples, the answers to those four questions are remarkably similar. Why? Because they're all games of skill! And you can master any game of skill using the same set of steps.

The next step is to encourage them to think about other games that they can connect to this concept.

This is meant to be an open conversation—let them lead the discussion and talk about the ones they like and are particularly good at.

Remember, any sport, art form, academic subject, most board games, and most video games count as games of skill, so don't be shy about calling out categories.

And if you are worried you might come up against a bit of reticence at first, have an example of your own in your back pocket to start the conversation!

Once you've gotten a few good examples out of your students, lead them through the four steps to mastering a game of skill on the last page.

Call back to specific examples from your discussion as you talk about getting the big picture and mastering the moves, and then ask those students to talk about what practicing the moves in combination looks like.

- For the footballer, when do you want to try to dribble past a defender? When do you want to try to cross?
- For the guitarist, how do you figure out the order of the chords? Do you have different ways of positioning your hands for different chord changes?
- For the maths student...how do you tell which formula you have to use to solve a word problem?

Lastly, remind them that the last step says "Play the game a lot!"—it's not "Play the game once" or "Play the game a few times." It takes time and effort to become as good as you want at a game of skill—which means, if you're not good right away, the only logical way forward is to keep playing!