



Taking Ownership of Your Learning¹

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You have more control over your learning than you might realize. Taking ownership means setting your own goals, making choices that matter to you, tracking your progress, and adjusting your approach when something is not working. Researchers call this *learner agency*—and it is a skill you can develop, not a trait you either have or lack. The choices you make about how you approach your coursework reveal the kind of learner—and professional—you are becoming.

Taking ownership of your learning helps you:

- Build the self-direction and adaptability that employers value
- Persist through challenges with greater confidence
- Engage more deeply with content that connects to your goals
- Prepare for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world

Research shows that three things help you take ownership of your learning: **competence** (feeling capable of success), **autonomy** (having meaningful choices), and **connection** (feeling supported by others). When these needs are met, you engage deeply and persist through challenges.

How to Take Ownership

Taking ownership involves four interconnected practices: building your confidence, making meaningful choices, strengthening your connections, and managing your own learning. Each will serve you beyond school—at work and in life.

¹ Content developed with AI, based on [the CAST UDL Guidelines™](#), scholarly sources, and web resources. Icons courtesy of [Flaticon.com](#) contributors.

1. Build Your Confidence

Confidence grows when you understand what success looks like, why it matters, and how to get there. Seeking clarity about expectations is a strategic move that lets you direct your energy purposefully.

Strategies:

- Review assignment rubrics before you begin and identify where to focus your effort
- Ask your instructor when requirements are unclear—this shows responsibility, not confusion
- Use low-stakes checkpoints or self-assessments to gauge your progress before high-stakes work

2. Make Meaningful Choices

Having choices that align with your interests and goals changes how you engage. When your preferences matter, you think more creatively and process ideas more deeply.

Strategies:

- When given options, choose topics or formats that connect to your career goals or interests
- If choice feels unfamiliar, start small—even choosing task order builds decision-making confidence
- Advocate for yourself—ask instructors about options if none are offered

3. Strengthen Your Connections

Feeling connected to instructors and peers does more than make learning enjoyable. These relationships help you persist through difficulty and take the risks that real learning requires.

Strategies:

- Share your learning goals, needs, or challenges with your instructor—reach out via email, visit office hours, or request a quick conversation
- Engage genuinely in group work—relationships built through collaboration support your network
- Seek peer support when you struggle and offer help when others need it

4. Manage Your Own Learning

Setting goals, managing time, tracking progress, and adjusting strategies are skills you can learn. Many students arrive without much practice in these areas. Developing them now prepares you for lifelong learning and professional success.

Strategies:

- Set specific learning goals at the start of each term or assignment—then revisit them at the midpoint
- After completing assignments, reflect on what strategies worked and what you would change
- Use campus resources like tutoring, the writing center, or academic coaching

Key Takeaway

Taking ownership of your learning is not about doing everything alone—it is about becoming an active partner in your education. When you build confidence, make meaningful choices, strengthen connections, and manage your own learning, you become someone who thrives in uncertainty. The skills you build now—setting goals, adapting strategies, persisting through challenges—are exactly what you need for lifelong success. What you do here matters. Make it count!

Resources

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