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Learning Objectives

- Identify the stages of the learning process

Consider experiences you've had with learning something new, such as learning to tie your shoes or drive a car. You probably began by showing interest in the process, and after some struggling it became second nature. These experiences were all part of the learning process, which can be described in the four stages:

Stage 1 Unconscious Incompetence: This will likely be the easiest learning stage—you don't know what you don't know yet. During this stage, you mainly show interest in something or prepare for learning. For example, if you wanted to learn how to dance, you might watch a video, talk to an instructor, or sign up for a future class. Stage 1 might not take that long because you don't know what you don't know.

Stage 2 Conscious Incompetence: This stage can be the most difficult for learners, because you begin to register how much you need to learn—you *know*—what you don't know. In stage 1 the learner only has to discuss or show interest in a new experience, but in stage 2, he or she begins to *apply new skills* that contribute to reaching the learning goal. In the dance example above, you would now be learning basic dance steps. Successful completion of this stage relies on practice. You know how much more you need to learn.

Stage 3 Conscious Competence: You are beginning to master some parts of the learning goal and are feeling some confidence about what you do know. For example, you might now be able to complete basic dance steps with few mistakes and without your instructor reminding you how to do them. Stage 3 requires skill repetition.

Stage 4 Unconscious Competence: This is the final stage in which learners have successfully practiced and repeated the process they learned so many times that they can do it almost without thinking. At this point in your dancing, you might be able to apply your dance skills to a freestyle dance routine that you create yourself. However, to feel you are a “master” of a particular skill by the time you reach stage 4, you still need to practice constantly and reevaluate which stage you are in so you can keep learning. For example, if you now felt confident in basic dance skills and could perform your own dance routine, perhaps you'd want to explore other kinds of dance, such as tango or swing. That would return you to stage 1 or 2, but you might progress through the stages more quickly this time on account of the dance skills you acquired earlier. ^[1]



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1. Mansaray, David. "The Four Stages of Learning: The Path to Becoming an Expert." *DavidMansaray.com*. 2011. Web. 10 Feb 2016. [_](#)

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