

MENTOR HANDBOOK

B10 | BEHAVIOUR: INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

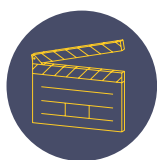
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can promote behaviours that support independent practice if they understand that:

- > Pupils need to understand the benefits of practice to their long-term learning, even if it feels hard.
- > To practise independently, pupils need enough support and clear behavioural expectations. Teachers also need to check pupil understanding of support and expectations.
- > Pupils need to be held to account to practise independently.

Get yourself into a strong position to mentor your teacher by working through the following:



**CLICK TO WATCH
MODULE VIDEO**

Or visit ambition.org.uk/ecf.



**READ THE EVIDENCE
SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Ms Silva feels that her pupils are now more open to challenge and will sometimes try to work without scaffolding. However, they still prefer to work with teacher or peer support and may be reluctant to work on their own. Ms Silva finds pupils engage well in helping her solve a tricky problem on the board, but when she says, “your turn”, there are some blank faces. How can she get pupils to adopt behaviours that support independent practice?

KEY IDEA

Regular, purposeful practice is vital for pupil learning, so teachers need to develop routines and behaviours that support independent practice.

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF GETTING PUPILS TO PRACTISE

Independent practice is vital to pupil learning and success. To learn, pupils need to think hard about the content they have been taught (Coe, 2013). Effective teachers give plenty of class time for independent practice (Rosenshine, 2012). It has clear benefits for pupils learning in terms of:

- > **Developing pupil fluency:** When pupils practise, their understanding becomes more fluent and automatic, making it easier for pupils to apply their knowledge and learn new material (Rosenshine, 2012).
- > **Helping pupils remember:** For example, retrieval practice (getting pupils to recall what they have learned) is one of the best ways to ensure pupils remember learning at a later date (Pashler et al., 2008).

Sometimes pupils avoid thinking hard – we all do. They also form unrealistic views of how much they know. Therefore, when given a choice, they often don't choose effective study approaches (Pashler et al., 2008). For example, re-reading their notes may feel easy. Trying to recall what they have learned without support from peers or scaffolding feels harder, but is far more effective (Dunlosky et al., 2013). As pupils are also easily distracted, Ms Silva can best ensure they think hard by insisting that pupils practise independently.

GETTING PUPILS READY FOR INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Ms Silva should ask herself whether pupils are ready to practise independently. Do they realise why the effort of independent practice is important for their learning? Explaining the benefits of independent practice will help. For instance, she could explain that:

- > We learn what we think hard about.
- > Less support leads to better learning once pupils are ready to practise.
- > Effort makes success more likely (Coe et al., 2014).

She also needs ensure pupils practise successfully, as failure can damage pupil motivation and sense of self-worth (Coe et al., 2014). Independent practice is best done alone, so Ms Silva needs to provide enough support to ensure success. For example:

- > Introducing a manageable amount of new material.
- > Leading teacher-guided practice on the same material pupils will practise independently.
- > Providing scaffolding (Rosenshine, 2012).

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND ROUTINES ENHANCE INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Ms Silva can set up independent practice consistently, in a way that develops routines over time. This is likely

to contribute to pupil success, helping pupils to value practice. So, Ms Silva should consider how she will consistently:

- > **Set clear behavioural and task expectations:** (Coe et al., 2014) This means outlining the behaviours she expects to see during independent practice: "I should see everyone focusing on their own work silently", and the task and support she expects pupils to use: "I want you to complete this exercise on the worksheet, without looking at the work we did last week".
- > **Check for understanding:** When introducing the independent practice tasks, teachers should ask specific, task-focused questions to get a clear sense of whether pupils have understood instructions (Rosenshine, 2012). Ms Silva should avoid questions like: "do we all understand this?", where pupils' default answer is "yes", even if they may not understand, or social pressure prevents them admitting to gaps in understanding (Rosenshine, 2012).
- > **Circulate:** Checking pupils are following instructions and holding them to account is distinct from supporting with work (Lemov, 2015). Research suggests that as teachers circulate, they should check in with individual pupils for no more than around 30 seconds (Rosenshine, 2012). Longer contacts could disrupt pupil independence by suggesting that teacher support is available.

If Ms Silva is finding many questions arise during independent practice, it might be that pupils are not ready or that they do not understand expectations. She might consider stopping practice, checking that enough support is in place and that pupils have understood her expectations.

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

Teachers should not set independent tasks when pupils have very little knowledge of a topic (Coe et al., 2014). Pupils will need to be built up and supported through teacher input first. Once this has happened, relevant homework can also be good independent practice of what has been learned, particularly for older pupils. For young pupils, playful practice can be led by pupil interest and teachers should provide just enough support for pupils to be successful (Deans for Impact, 2019).

Effective monitoring during independent practice is often non-verbal – for example, the teacher standing and visibly scanning the classroom. While the importance of reinforcing behaviours with public praise is well known (IES, 2008), during independent practice there is a risk of this distracting pupil attention.

There are also benefits of collaborative learning (Kirschner et al., 2018; Rosenshine, 2012), however Ms Silva might prioritise getting independent practice right first to make it more likely collaborative practice succeeds.

SELECT

Before you observe, first select a **DEVELOPMENT AREA** to focus on. Next, familiarise yourself with the **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**, as you will zoom in on one of these during your observation. Finally, craft a **PRECISE TARGET** when you observe your teacher (examples are provided below).

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
Establishing clear expectations for independent practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher explains to pupils the importance of independent practice and their behavioural expectations for independent practice. > Teacher ensures pupils know what to do during independent practice as well as the conditions to work in. > Teacher supports pupils to turn the expectations for independent practice into a routine by keeping certain expectations the same and having pupils practise them. 	
Ensuring pupils understand expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher checks that pupils understand the instructions and behavioural expectations before they begin independent practice. > Teacher models to pupils the behaviours and steps to take during independent practice when they think pupils may struggle. 	<p>If your teacher is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not doing it at all: Ask pupils to repeat back the instructions for the independent task to check they have understood what to do. > Doing it but needs some improvement: Ask pupils to repeat back the instructions for the independent task including the behaviours that are expected of them and what to do if they are stuck. > Doing it well, but needs some stretch: If a pupil asked cannot tell you the instructions for the task or behaviour expectations, have a peer state them and return to the initial pupil to repeat them.
Circulate to check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher is clear on the behaviours they need to check for when circulating the classroom and phrases these as visible and positive behaviours. > Teacher pre-emptively circulates to check pupils are meeting their expectations and acknowledges where pupils are doing so. > Teacher supports pupils to meet behaviour expectations, e.g. using non-verbal reminders for a pupil or a whole class reset if there are lots of pupils who need reminding. 	

RECORD YOUR THINKING HERE

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
(select before observing)	(select whilst observing)	(select/write whilst observing)

OBSERVE

Consider the following questions based on a short (approximately 15 minute) observation of your teacher.

What was your teacher's **previous** target? Are they meeting it? How do you know?

For the **DEVELOPMENT AREA** you are focussing on for this observation, what is your teacher already doing well?

Next, go to the previous page and select a **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA** to further zoom in on. Then select (from the examples) or write one **PRECISE TARGET** (bite-sized action) to coach your teacher on. You can choose to stick with the previous target if your teacher have not made enough progress yet.

How will you model the target to your teacher to show them what good looks like? What questions will you ask to check your teacher understands the model? For example, 'How it is different from your current practice?', 'What impact might it have on your practice and pupils?', 'What links can you see between the model and the module principles (below)?'

Reminder: Your model should help your teacher develop their ability in some of the following:

- > Teach and rigorously maintain clear behavioural expectations for independent work.
- > Monitor pupil work during lessons.
- > Give manageable, specific and sequential instructions.
- > Check pupils' understanding of instructions before a task begins.
- > Create and explicitly teach routines in line with the school ethos that maximise time for learning.
- > Reinforce routines.

Next, meet with your teacher to work through the 'Feedback' stage of instructional coaching. See the guidance on the feedback stage in the appendices of the Mentor Handbook for support.

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