

A FIELD GUIDE TO LEARNING FREELY.

Six classrooms. Nineteen pages. No grades, leaderboards or shame. Just useful questions, thoughtful practice and room to revise.

NOTICE / COMBINE / QUESTION

RECALL / DECODE / MAKE

THE LEARNING CHARTER

This is a place to learn, not a place to rank.

You can start anywhere and stop whenever you wish.

WHY THIS EXISTS

A measure can tell you something about a specific performance. It cannot tell you the full story of someone's curiosity, care, potential, conditions or worth. Learning also depends on relationships, culture, practice and opportunities. This guide uses questions and real situations rather than public comparison.

HOW TO USE THESE PAGES

Each classroom has two pages: a concept with a realistic scene, then a small studio exercise. Use the blank space with pen or pencil. Disagree with any prompt you find unhelpful. Ask what evidence supports a claim and what might be missing.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

OpenClass is not anti-assessment. Diagnostics, feedback and credentials can be useful in the right setting. The project simply refuses to make a person's value interchangeable with a score. The exercises are educational, not medical or professional advice.

SIX OPEN DOORS

01 Attention under pressure • 02 Everyday skill combinations • 03 Fair tests for beliefs • 04 Retrieval and explanation • 05 Web literacy • 06 Thoughtful iteration

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO UNDERSTAND MORE CLEARLY?

When attention gets crowded

Pressure changes what is easy to notice. Before judging a person, inspect the demands on their attention.

THE IDEA

A late bill, an urgent deadline or an unresolved conflict can occupy mental space. Under pressure, immediate problems may crowd out planning, reflection and small but important details. Researchers have investigated links between financial scarcity and cognitive performance, but the effects are not identical for every individual or situation. A difficult environment is not a personality flaw.

A DEEPER LOOK

The useful move is to separate capacity from character. Someone missing a detail might need clearer instructions, more time, help, rest or simply a different way to organise the work. This does not mean responsibility vanishes. It means a good explanation considers both a person and the conditions around them.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

A volunteer managing a community event keeps forgetting names. Instead of concluding that they do not care, the team notices they are answering six conversations at once. A shared sign-in sheet and a quieter welcome station improve the experience without a lecture on discipline.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

Scarcity is not a universal formula: urgency can also sharpen focus on the immediate task. Ask what kind of attention a situation requires, rather than assuming all pressure damages all thinking.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

If the environment were kinder to attention, what behaviour might change?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Choose one frustrating task. List what is consuming attention, what information is missing, and one low-cost change in the environment. Try the change once; observe whether it helps.

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Name the specific behaviour without an identity label.
- 2 List two situational pressures and one alternative explanation.
- 3 Change one condition and observe what actually happens.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

"They are so careless with the sign-ins."

"Possibly. What is happening at the welcome desk when they miss one?"

"Three people are asking for directions at once."

"What could we change before deciding the cause?"

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

Build a constellation of skills

Useful abilities become powerful when they work together, but there is no magic percentile formula.

THE IDEA

Competence is often interdisciplinary. A baker uses measurement, sensory judgement, timing, hospitality and budgeting. A reliable colleague may combine careful listening with clear writing. We overlook these combinations when we reduce a person to a job title or examination result.

A DEEPER LOOK

The famous idea that two “top 20 percent” skills always beat one “top one percent” skill is not an established law. Specialisation matters in some fields; combinations matter in others. The practical question is whether a specific mixture helps solve a real problem and whether the person has the time, tools and opportunity to practise.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

Someone who repairs bicycles learns to photograph faults and explain maintenance in plain language. The new skill does not replace technical depth; it helps customers understand what was fixed and why.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

Do not romanticise scarcity or pretend everyone has equal access to training, equipment and free time. Appreciate ordinary expertise without ranking communities or promising easy economic returns.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

How could two modest abilities create a more humane service together?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Write down three useful things you can do. For each, name the setting in which it is useful. Pair two and imagine a small service, explanation or artefact that combines them.

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Name one skill you already practise in ordinary life.
- 2 Pair it with a different skill that makes it easier to share.
- 3 Make one small demonstration and ask a real person if it is useful.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

"I only know how to run a small shop."

"What do you notice when someone needs help choosing?"

"Budget, preferences, substitutes, stock and timing."

"That sounds like several kinds of judgement worth naming."

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

Give an idea a fair test

Strong curiosity is not certainty. A belief improves when you know what could change your mind.

THE IDEA

We make useful guesses all day: that a friend is upset, that customers prefer an item, that one study technique works better than another. Trouble begins when a guess dresses up as a fact. To reason well, write down the claim, the observations behind it and the rival explanations that might fit the same evidence.

A DEEPER LOOK

A falsifiable hypothesis names an observation that would count against it. Not every meaningful question can be settled by one experiment, and an absence of evidence is not automatically evidence of absence. Still, distinguishing observations from interpretations makes disagreement less personal and decisions more revisable.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

A club organiser believes nobody wants weekday events because attendance fell. A second hypothesis is that members never saw the calendar change. The organiser checks message reach and offers two dates before declaring the community uninterested.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

“First principles” is a useful way to question assumptions, not a guarantee of reaching indisputable truths. Analogies and expert knowledge can also be valuable evidence when their limits are understood.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What would a fair test look like if the result could surprise you?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Take a confident sentence such as “Nobody reads long articles.” Rewrite it as a testable claim: who, where, under what conditions, and what observation would challenge it?

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Write one claim and mark what you observed versus inferred.
- 2 Generate at least two rival explanations.
- 3 Name a low-risk observation that could change your view.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

“Our newsletter failed because people hate reading.”

“What else could explain the low clicks?”

“The link was buried in a long email.”

“How could we test that explanation without blaming readers?”

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

Retrieve, explain, revisit

Feeling familiar with a page is not the same as being able to use what you learned.

THE IDEA

Reading can make an idea look easy because the answer is still in front of you. Close the material and try to explain the idea or retrieve the steps from memory. That small act reveals gaps you can repair. Spreading practice over time is often more effective for long-term retention than packing the same study time into one sitting.

A DEEPER LOOK

Simple explanations can expose uncertainty, but simplicity alone does not prove expertise. A restaurant analogy for a software API may help someone begin, while hiding technical constraints that matter later. Good learning uses both accessible language and increasingly precise detail.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

After reading about photosynthesis, a student puts the book away and sketches where light, water and carbon dioxide enter the process. They compare the sketch with the source, correct a mistake and revisit the topic a few days later.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

Self-testing should be supportive, not a way to shame yourself. Practice questions need feedback, and the right methods vary by subject and learner. A failed recall attempt is information, not a verdict.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What did a failed retrieval attempt teach me about the next explanation I need?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Read a short explanation for three minutes. Close it, write what you remember, reopen it and correct one gap. Revisit the same idea on another day, not just later in the same session.

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Pick one small concept worth remembering.
- 2 Recall it from memory and check against a reliable source.
- 3 Schedule a relaxed revisit after some time has passed.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

"I understood the article yesterday but cannot explain it now."

"What are the three parts you do remember?"

"The cause, the change and the example."

"Good starting point. Let us check the missing link."

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

Make the web less mysterious

A browser page is a collaboration between protocols, servers, documents, styles and programs.

THE IDEA

When you visit a website, your browser locates a server, requests resources and uses HTML, CSS and JavaScript to present and interact with content. Some things can be inspected on your device; other logic lives on servers and is not visible in the page source. Knowing the distinction helps you ask better questions and exercise more control over the tools you use.

A DEEPER LOOK

The ability to view source code is a door into digital literacy, not a claim that every web service is simple or transparent. Network requests, authentication, data storage, accessibility and privacy may all matter behind the scenes.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

A community group wants a simple public noticeboard. A single static HTML page works for announcements; collecting registrations would introduce new obligations around storing personal details, security and consent.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

Open web standards make learning more accessible, but devices, connectivity, language and disability access still create barriers. Designing a small accessible site is a practical act of inclusion.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What is the smallest accessible web page that would actually help someone?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Create a text file named `hello.html` with a heading and paragraph. Open it locally in a browser. Change a colour in CSS, then identify what did and did not require an internet connection.

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Inspect the structure of an ordinary webpage.
- 2 Change one local HTML or CSS element and observe the result.
- 3 Identify a privacy or accessibility question before publishing.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

"The page looks complicated. I could never make one."

"What if we start with just a heading?"

"That is only a few lines."

"Exactly. Then add behaviour only when it serves a purpose."

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

Treat the first version as evidence

A draft is information about an idea, not a referendum on the maker.

THE IDEA

Creating means moving between intention and reality. A first draft makes assumptions visible: whether an explanation lands, whether a product fits a hand, whether a page can be read on a phone. Feedback becomes more useful when it names an observable issue and helps test a specific change.

A DEEPER LOOK

Iteration does not mean producing endless work at high speed. Sometimes slow reflection, rest or deep mastery is the right choice. The aim is to lower the cost of learning and to keep authorship with the maker. One carefully chosen revision can be more useful than ten frantic ones.

A SCENE FROM ORDINARY LIFE

A writer shares a 300-word introduction with a trusted reader and asks, “Where did you feel lost?” The reader points to a missing example. The writer adds one illustration, rather than rewriting their identity as a “bad writer”.

WHERE THE IDEA CAN MISLEAD

The frequently repeated pottery-class quantity-versus-quality tale should not be treated as established experimental proof. Practising, evaluating and revising can help, but quality is not automatically proportional to output volume.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

Which part of this draft is an assumption I can test gently?

Make the idea your own.

No marks. No required answers. One genuinely useful experiment.

A SMALL PRACTICE

Share a safe, unfinished artefact with one person. Ask for one observation and one question, not a rating. Choose a change that is reversible. Compare the before and after versions.

THREE GENTLE STEPS

- 1 Produce a small, reversible draft with a clear purpose.
- 2 Request specific observations, not a score for the creator.
- 3 Revise one thing and note what the evidence actually shows.

HOW A RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION MIGHT SOUND

"The introduction is boring."

"Can you point to where you lost interest?"

"The first paragraph repeats the title."

"Thank you. I will test opening with the example instead."

ONE THING I NOTICED / WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

What else could be true?

An impression is not a diagnosis. Explore the missing conditions.

01 THE SILENT TEAMMATE

A teammate says little during planning. Someone concludes they lack initiative.

CONTEXT What did the task instructions make easy or difficult?

ALTERNATIVES What else might silence mean?

NEXT QUESTION Who could ask an open question without placing blame?

02 THE MISSED DEADLINE

A freelancer delivers late twice. Someone calls them unreliable.

CONTEXT Were scope, dependencies and deadlines shared explicitly?

ALTERNATIVES Could capacity, unclear requirements or a genuine mistake explain this?

NEXT QUESTION What small agreement would reduce uncertainty?

03 THE FORGOTTEN LESSON

A reader finished a book last week but cannot explain its main idea.

CONTEXT Was there an opportunity to retrieve and practise the idea?

ALTERNATIVES Would drawing, explaining or revisiting reveal the gap?

NEXT QUESTION What does this attempt teach about learning design?

REMEMBER

These lenses are questions, not explanations of anyone's hidden motives. Listen to real people, and stay ready to change your interpretation.

What else could be true?

An impression is not a diagnosis. Explore the missing conditions.

04 THE QUIET MARKET STALL

A vendor seldom advertises online. A visitor decides the business lacks skill.

CONTEXT What local knowledge, inventory judgement and trust work is invisible?

ALTERNATIVES Does online visibility measure competence here?

NEXT QUESTION What would respectful curiosity reveal?

05 THE REJECTED FIRST DRAFT

A designer receives “this is confusing” and wants to abandon the whole project.

CONTEXT Which specific interaction confused the reviewer?

ALTERNATIVES Could one example or navigation change help?

NEXT QUESTION What reversible revision could be tested?

06 THE CONFUSING WEB PAGE

Visitors do not complete an online form. The team says visitors do not care.

CONTEXT Is the form usable by keyboard and on small screens?

ALTERNATIVES Could unclear labels or a broken control explain abandonment?

NEXT QUESTION What would an accessibility check reveal?

REMEMBER

These lenses are questions, not explanations of anyone’s hidden motives. Listen to real people, and stay ready to change your interpretation.

The five-minute inquiry.

A worksheet for replacing certainty with a fair question.

01 OBSERVATION

What happened? Describe only what another observer could see or hear.

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

02 INTERPRETATION

What story did I tell myself about what happened?

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

03 OTHER EXPLANATIONS

Name at least two interpretations that also fit the available facts.

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

04 WHAT WOULD CHANGE MY MIND?

A question, comparison or observation to seek next.

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

The gentle feedback canvas.

A worksheet for making, revising and retaining authorship.

01 THE PURPOSE

What should this draft, explanation or object help someone do?

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

02 WHAT I OBSERVED

What did a real user or reader do or say? Avoid scoring the person.

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

03 MY NEXT REVERSIBLE CHANGE

What is one safe edit that might answer the open question?

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

04 WHAT I LEARNED

What changed, what stayed uncertain, and what would I try next?

WRITE OR SKETCH HERE

A guide, not a verdict.

Source notes, limitations and a way back to the wider universe.

WHAT IS EVIDENCE, AND WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

Research supports some educational recommendations more strongly than others. Practice testing and spaced learning have substantial evidence; the exact impact of scarcity varies by context. Ideas about mixing skills and testing small creative drafts are practical frameworks, not proven formulas for life success. The scenes in these pages are illustrative fiction.

READ FURTHER

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KEEP THE QUESTION. LEAVE THE RANKING.

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