

## UNIT 10

# LIFELONG LEARNING



MODULE 1

„All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective“ is how European Commission defined lifelong learning in 2001. It is a form of self-initiated education that is focused on personal development that occurs outside of a formal educational institute, such as school, university, or corporate training.

For example, in childhood, we learn how to talk and ski, as adults we learn how to use a smartphone or how to drive a car. Lifelong learning is usually voluntary and self-motivated, often informal, sometimes self-taught while motivation is out of personal interest. It's never too late, you're capable of far more than you'd believe. Albert Einstein once said: "Once you stop learning, you start dying".

## Understanding the benefits of life-long learning

### What is life-long learning?

Whenever we think of learning we frequently think of formal education that takes place at school, college, university, but it can take place in many forms and many different places. "Formal schooling" is just one type of learning. There are many other opportunities to further your knowledge and develop various skills one needs through life.

Humans have a natural drive to explore, learn and grow. We have natural curiosity, and we are natural learners. We develop and grow thanks to our ability to learn. Although education may maximise our potential to find more satisfying jobs and have more fulfilling careers, it is informal education that makes the difference and all the skills we develop along the way.

If you are reading these lines, it already means that you are a lifelong learner. Whatever your motivation may be – whether you are motivated to learn for personal or professional reasons, lifelong learning enhances our understanding of the world around us and provides better opportunities in life. There are many more reasons why one should never stop learning.



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



Learning  
Foreign  
Languages  
Online

# 5 benefits of life-long learning

## 1. Creates opportunities for a better job

Our capacity to learn is directly related to our willingness to learn. If you are currently unemployed use the time well to improve your skills as some skills become outdated and it is important to stay sharp. Employers are looking for employees with transferable skills who are willing to develop and continuously grow. If you are already employed, it is always good to take advantage of any kind of training or take up a course provided by your company thus continuously working on your professional development. Sometimes these new skills might be crucial in being promoted or landing a new job.

In short, the more skills you possess, the more valuable asset you are to your company.



## 2. Builds new skills and improves those you already have



There are many new skills that one can acquire along the way, such as sewing, learning to ski or learning a new language (like you are doing now). But sometimes some of those skills can help us improve those we already have, such as public speaking, or learning to use new technology such as smart devices or new software applications.

Although learning these skills might seem quite simple and straightforward, there are many other skills that we are developing along the way, like problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership.

## 3. Boosts our confidence and self-esteem

Especially if we look at every learning opportunity as a chance to grow. Carol Dweck introduced the concept of “growth mindset” as a mindset that is fully aware that failure is an opportunity to grow, as challenges help us grow. People with growth mindsets like to try new things, believe that feedback is constructive and are inspired by the success of others. Unlike “fixed mindsets” that believe failure is the limit of their abilities, that they are either good at something or they are not. They do not like to be challenged and their potential is predetermined. When frustrated, they give up. Life-long learners tend to have growth mindsets and they are aware of their development which is why this boosts their confidence and self-esteem.



## 4. Nurtures curious minds, and makes us more adaptable to change

Not only does life-long learning help us develop and grow, but it also keeps us curious and helps us find what inspires us and drives our motivation further. You never know where this curiosity might lead you and what kind of new doors it might open for you.

Many companies see life-long learning as very desirable as they like to see their employees adaptable and flexible for the organization to stay competitive.



## 5. Improves memory and keeps your brain healthy



There is a common belief that continuous learning and having an active mind throughout life may delay the progress of some forms of dementia. There is no doubt that having an active brain has many advantages. Having improved memory, being one of them. Some studies have shown that learning something new, for example a new skill, or taking up a new hobby can help boost your memory as it increases the efficiency of your brain.

“If you don’t use it, you lose it” is a saying commonly used to refer to muscles in our body, when in fact the same could be applied to our brain. One study conducted on Harvard Medical School found that seniors involved in higher levels of intellectual stimulation had a considerably marked delay when it comes to the onset of memory issues and Alzheimer’s symptoms.

Did you know that you can rewire your brain and create new neural pathways until the day you die? Therefore, learning something new and having active hobbies and skills increases efficiency of your brain activity – certain high-challenge activities strengthen the numerous networks in your brain. Maintain your brain, just like you would any other muscle in your body. Paul Nussbaum, PhD, director of the Aging Research and Education Center in Pittsburgh said:

*“Every time your heart beats, 25% of that blood goes right to the brain. But while exercise is critical, it may be education that is more important. In the 21st century, education and information may become for the brain what exercise is for the heart.”*

---

### More resources

1. [Benefits of lifelong learning](#)
2. [15 ways how to become a lifelong learner](#)
3. [Why you NEED to be a lifelong learner](#)
4. [Embrace being a Lifelong Learner](#)
5. [The Importance Of Lifelong Learning](#)

