



TITLE

WHAT IS LEARNING?

KEY IDEA

Learning is an important process

CONSPECTUS

1. Introduction: Definition of learning
2. Key idea: Learning is an important process
3. Reasons:
 - 3.1. Be able to interact with the world
 - 3.2. Stay young
 - 3.3. Be more successful
4. Consequences:
 - 4.1. Learning is more than just a mass of information
 - 4.2. You have to keep on learning
5. Conclusion: Don't stop learning

REFERENCES

Bednorz, P. & Sschuster, M (2002) Einführung in die Lernpsychologie. UTB Reinhardt, München.
Myers, D.G. (2014, 3rd edition) Psychologie. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg.



OBJECTIVES

- You can recognize correct statements about learning
- You can identify the different ways of learning something
- You can recognize correct statements why learning is important

FULL TEXT

1. Introduction: Definition of learning

"To learn something" means to gain new abilities and skills. Some of these new abilities and skills have mainly to do with thinking: for example, how to read. Other abilities and skills have more to do with the body: for example, how to walk. They can also concern the personality: for example, how to interact with other people. Or a person can learn an emotion, for example fear. When a small child burns his or her finger, the child will learn to be afraid of fire. The first and oldest way of learning is to play: both humans and animals play.

2. Key idea: Learning is an important process

When you learn something, you put something new into your brain. In Austrian Sign Language, the sign for "to learn" shows how you put something into your head. Through learning, humans and animals can adapt to their environment. This means that learning is a process. For example, when a child learns how to walk, the child cannot just stand up and walk. First he or she has to learn how to stand, then he or she has to keep his or her balance. Finally, the child will learn how to move one foot in front of the other. This will not work at once – the child will fall down lots of times. But after some time and lots of attempts, the child will know how to walk.

When you learn something new, this new knowledge may change your behavior. Sometimes you may even stop doing something completely. For example, the child that has burnt his or her finger will keep away from the flame the next time. The brain remembers what happened the last time



and the child changes his or her behavior. In contrast, another child that has never seen a flame before, may be curious and try to touch the flame. This is why learning is very important for us.

Learning is always based on a person's individual experiences. This means that learning leaves some "traces" in your brain. When you learn something new, the brain produces new connections. It is important to use these new connections again and again. If you do not use these connections, you will start to forget what you have learned before.

3. Reasons

3.1 Humans start learning after they are born. The babies react to what happens around them. Imagine that a baby is not able to do this: This will lower the baby's chances for a healthy development. Learning is important for the survival of humans.

3.2 If you learn something new, your brain is working. Our brain loves learning new things. Learning keeps your brain young. People who stop learning grow old quickly, because their brains are bored. Also, learning often means that you will meet new people: when you meet new people, you will have more interaction and more communication. This keeps your brain fit.

3.3. People who learn something are more successful in life. You will get a better job. Or maybe you will be promoted if you learn new things? If you stop learning, other people will know more than you do. This means that other people will get the good jobs and the promotions.

4. Consequences

4.1 People used to think that the brain and human memory are like containers which are filled with information: it is better to have a lot of information in your brain. Today scientists have found out that it is not so important how much information you have in your brain. It is more important how well the data are connected within the brain. Also, it is important all the



different regions of the brain work well together.

4.2 Some years ago, people thought that the things you learned in school, at the university and for your job were enough for your whole life. Today this has changed. Now you have to keep learning all your life long.

4.3 Learning has changed through modern technology. With computers and the internet, information changes fast. You can access a giant amount of knowledge through your computer or your smartphone at any time. This means that you do not have to remember everything anymore, because you can look up a lot on the internet. Instead, you have to learn how to use a computer or a smartphone. You also have to learn where to find the information you need. After you have found the information, you have to know how to use this information.

5. Conclusion: Don't stop learning

Humans can learn new knowledge. Humans can also learn new skills – what to do with that knowledge. This is even more important – although you can look up information on the internet, this is not enough: then you need to know how to use this information.

Humans must not stop learning new things! When you keep improving your knowledge and your skills, this will help you to be happy, healthy and successful.