

# Trial & Error

*“Growth is a process  
of trial and error:  
experimentation.”*

Benjamin Franklin

- This type of learning occurs when an organism attempts to learn by undertaking a number of alternative behaviours (trials) and makes a number of incorrect choices (errors) before the desired behaviour is learned.
- Trial and error learning involves a desire to reach some of goal (motivation) by the learner. It also involves trying a number of different behaviours (exploration). And when the correct response is finally achieved, it is rewarding for the organism (reinforcement).
- Doing things differently is a powerful means to change both thoughts and feelings.

An experiment is:

- (1) The action of trying anything, or putting it to proof: a test, trial.*
- (2) A tentative procedure: a method, system of things or course of action adopted in uncertainty whether it will answer the purpose.*
- (3) An action or operation undertaken in order to discover something unknown, to test a hypothesis, or establish or illustrate some known truth.*

*“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.”*

Albert Einstein

## Stepping outside your comfort zone

There is a clear parallel between the role of behavioural experiments and the role of experiments more generally in testing scientific theories.

As in physics or chemistry, behavioural experiments are designed to help us to build and test a theory by obtaining empirical evidence.

For example, conducting behavioural experiments to test your fears involves going outside of your comfort zone.

Some people find it helps to do this one step at a time, rather than trying to do the hardest possible thing first. Sometimes, if you try to tackle your biggest fear straight away, it can end up being too overwhelming.

## Benefits

**Growth** – Above all, you'll improve as a person. Stepping into the unknown teaches you, gives you new life.

**Pride** – Even if your experience is a complete failure, it feels good to overcome your fears

**Adventure** – Once you push through the initial fears you might find something you love.

**Escape boredom** – At least your life can never be boring if you use boredom as your mark of failure rather than embarrassment or results, you can inject a lot more enthusiasm into your life.

### Avoidance Hierarchy

Construct a ladder of places or situations that you avoid. At the top of the ladder put those which which make you most anxious. At the bottom of the ladder put places or situations you avoid, but which don't bother you as much. In the middle of the ladder put ones that are 'in-between'. Give each item a rating from 0-100% according to how anxious you would feel if you had to be in that situation. Overcome your anxiety by approaching these situations, starting from the bottom of the ladder.

Situation	Anxiety (0-100%)

### Gradual self-exposure.

Make a list of all the situations that you find anxious, and then put them in order, from the least anxious to the most anxious.



Human beings don't see the world as it is – we all 'filter' what we see based on our prior experiences and beliefs.

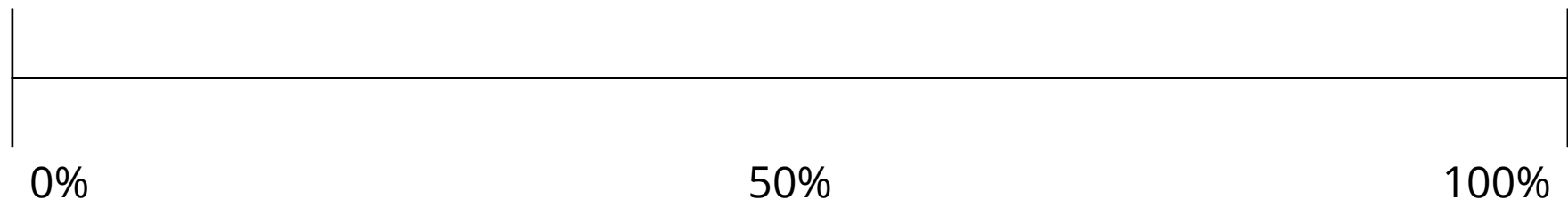
A hypothesis is an idea or a set of ideas we form in order to understand or explain something.

1. Making a prediction about what we think will happen (forming a hypothesis).
2. Carrying out an experiment that will test that hypothesis (more than once if necessary).
3. Examining the results and going back to step 1.

## Continuum work

Use continuum work to test polarised beliefs or assumptions about yourself.

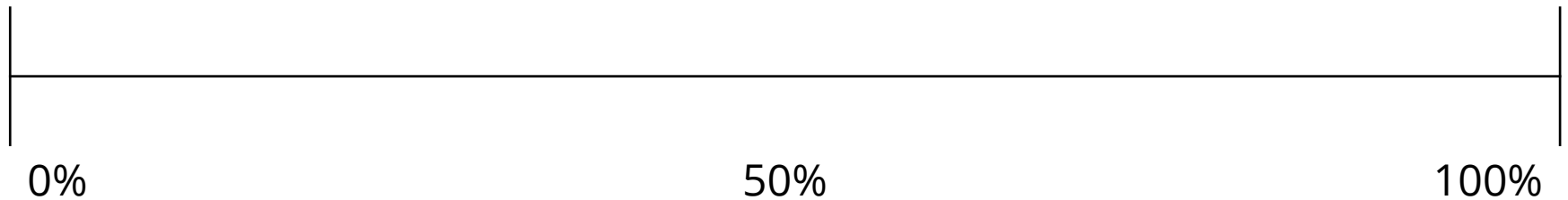
1. Identify a negative belief or assumption about yourself you want to test.
2. Rate on a scale of 0-100, with 0 being not at all, and 100 being total belief, how much you believe the belief?
3. Define the criteria for worst possible 0% and best possible 100%.
4. Identify three people who would be excellent against the criteria that you have defined.
5. Identify 3 people who would be inadequate or poor using the criteria that you have defined.
6. Review your relative position on the continuum.
7. Identify an alternative belief.



# Evidence base

## Continuum work

Belief:

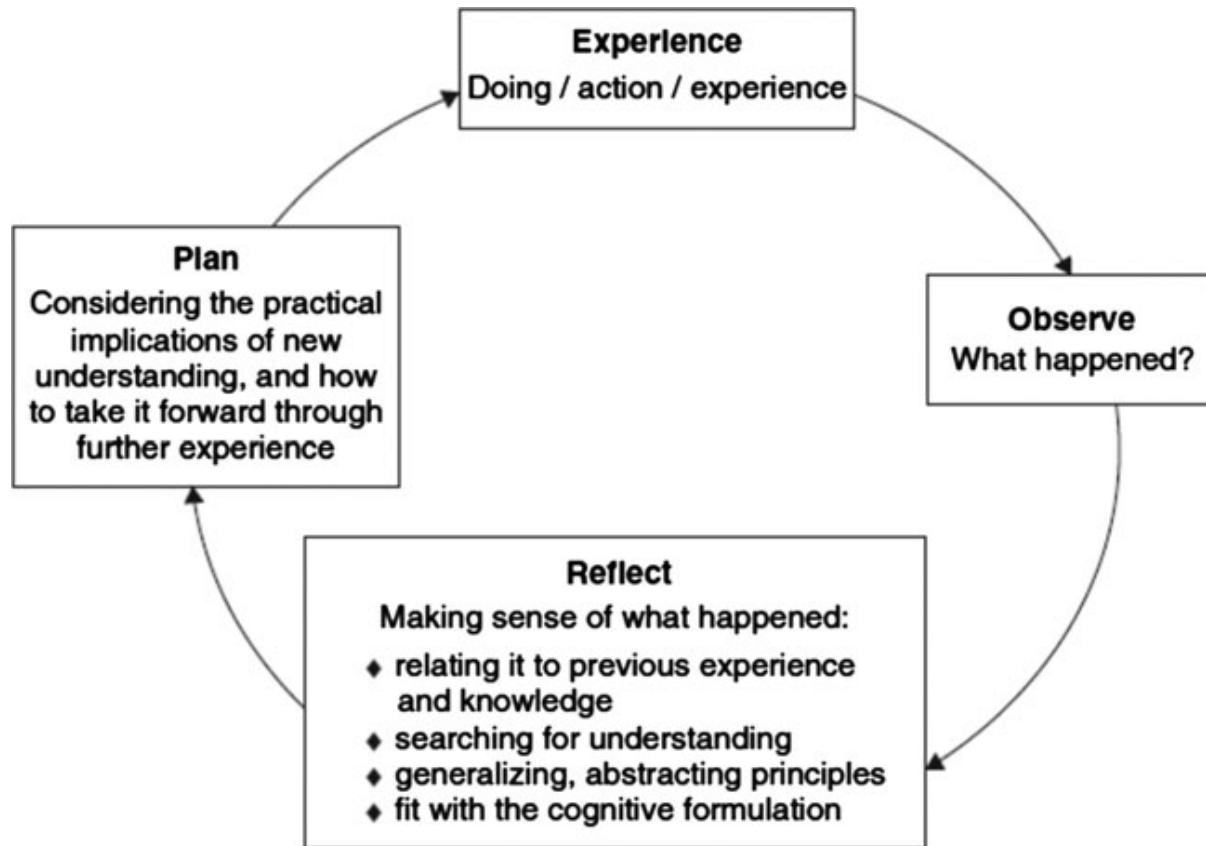


Criteria:

Criteria:

New revised belief:

## Experiential learning



*“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb)*
















**trial + error = try again**  
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**trial + error = try again**  
**trial + error = mastery**

what's the opposite of trial-and-error?



tested, tried, proven



CURRENT THOUGHT		ALTERNATIVE THOUGHT	
SITUATION	PREDICTION	SITUATION	PREDICTION
1.  2.  3. 	1.  2.  80%	1.  2.  3. 	1.  2.  3.  40%
OUTCOME		WHAT I LEARNED	
1.  2. 	1.  ↓ 40% 2.  ↑ 80%		

Life is trial and error.  
 Every relationship  
 is not meant to work.  
 Sometimes you're  
 just meant to  
 learn the lesson.