

THE POWER OF CHECKLISTS

Checklists have different functions and are used as tools for different things. Atul Gawande wrote extensively about this in 'The Checklist Manifesto' after conducting research in a range of settings.

Gawande quotes many studies. The main one is this: *'When doctors and nurses in an ICU create their own checklists for what they think should be done each day, the consistency of care improves to the point where the average length of patient stay in intensive care dropped by half. He also uses examples from aviation as well as medicine on how in all kinds of situations, things are missed by highly skilled people.'*

WHY ARE CHECKLISTS IMPORTANT?

- Even brilliant professionals forget things, especially when there is so much going on.
- Checklists can make the implicit, explicit and deliberate.
- They are an aid not a straitjacket.
- Checklists can be brilliant in a crisis when it is easy to forget the basics.
- Gawande argues that using a checklist effectively brings success.
- They are not the same as a to do list.
- They are not for every single thing – they are for things that may be forgotten or crucial steps.
- There are different functions of checklists: 'Do - Confirm' and 'Read - Do'.
- In PiXL, we also have a 'Read - Diagnose' approach which we call a Personalised Learning Checklist which is a Core PiXL Approach.

SO WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A GOOD CHECKLIST?

A checklist for a checklist!

1. Have a clear 'pause point' – when am I going to use this checklist?
2. It must not be lengthy – 5 to 7 things is the capacity of working memory.
3. One page, no clutter, 'clean' look.
4. It is not EVERYTHING you need to know but the key things that may be overlooked.

Here are some examples of the different types of checklists and why they are a good tool to use.

CHECKLIST 1: Do - Confirm

These are great when students can check if they have covered all the key points and have not missed anything vital. They would do the work FIRST and then confirm they haven't missed anything through using the checklist. For example:

For students:

- Exam/assessment checklists – check that I have done all these things in my answers.
- Have I planned correctly? Check each stage has been included.
- Have I included everything? Tick this list.
- Is my work ready to hand in? Check this list

CHECKLIST 2: Read - Do

These are great when students want to follow instructions or a model taught.

- This is like a recipe, do them and check them off
- How to fill in the front of an exam paper
- How to draw a graph
- How to deconstruct a text
- How to be ready for a lesson

CHECKLIST 3: Read - Diagnose

For students, PLCs (Personalised Learning Checklist) can be used in the following ways – written as a checklist for them!

- Read the key knowledge that students need to know for this term (key memories).
- How confident/quick students are to retrieve this? Is their knowledge/skills secure? RAG
- Diagnose where they need to focus their attention and compile a revision timetable.



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