

Marginal Gains

The power of incremental improvement

The little things really do add up, and that's an idea that can easily be used within education. In this one-hour interactive workshop, we share a process with your students that will help them to identify the factors that influence their academic results and encourage them to make simple changes that can increase their performance and ultimately, results.

RATIONALE

Sir Dave Brailsford, former performance director of British Cycling, revolutionized the sport using the theory of marginal gains. Brailsford believed (and showed) that if you make a 1% improvement in a host of tiny areas, the cumulative or 'aggregated' benefits would be astonishing. The theory of marginal gains has been credited for shifting the British cycling team from a mediocre performer to 16 gold medals over two Olympics and seven Tour de France wins in eight years. The principle of marginal gains is connected to the idea that we form habits very easily through repetitive action, and then the sum of these small, repetitive actions impacts seriously on long-term results. This means that poor performance is not usually because of something that happened overnight, but more likely because we have formed unuseful habits, affecting us more than we realise. The relevance of this to students may not be immediately obvious. However, just as it led to more gold medals for the cycling team, this approach over time can lead to huge improvements in a students' academic results.

"Find a 1% margin for improvement in everything you do."

Sir David Brailsford (2000)

OBJECTIVES

- To understand and apply the theory of marginal gains.
- To inspire students to take responsibility for their self-directed studies.
- To enable students to identify their current strengths and weaknesses.
- To help students reflect on negative habits and behaviours in relation to their studies
- To help students identify areas for development and choose positive actions.

SKILLS taught and their BENEFITS

Open-mindedness involves being receptive to a wide variety of ideas, arguments, and information. It involves being able to recognise when a certain perspective or belief does not serve us as well as we thought it did in the past. Being able to change and revise out-dated or incorrect beliefs is an important part of learning and personal growth.

The Wheel of Balance acts as a representation of a students' personal and academic life. The wheel requires significant self-reflection and the ability to assess their current situations. By knowing more about the wheel, your students can determine whether they have the priorities they intend and decide when to make changes to their routines and habits.

Identifying current habits is an important skill if a student is looking to make improvements. Only once they have noticed current patterns of behaviour, can they look to modify or challenge them.

Establishing positive study habits include finding a quiet location to study, taking breaks, setting goals, and taking practice tests. Studying can be hard. The good news is that anybody can develop good study habits to make studying more effective, efficient, and enjoyable.

"I've realised how much of a difference the small changes can make. Gave me the motivation to revise more."

Year 11 Student, All Saints Academy (2022)

OUTCOMES

By the end of the workshop, your students will have:

- Understood the theory of marginal gains and feel confident to apply this to their studies and revision plan.
- Felt empowered to take responsibility for their independent studies.
- Improved their ability to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Identified negative habits and behaviours that may be impacting their studies.
- Understood how to positively impact and manage behaviours and habits in relation to their studies.

GATSBY Benchmarks: 3,5,8
NERUPI Framework: Choose, Become, Understand
PSHE Core: Living in the wider world

Statutory Guidance, Curriculum and Frameworks