

Expert Characteristics

The Stages of Expertise

Dr. Paul G. Schempp

It's neither talent nor an inherent set of characteristics that determines one's level of expertise. Rather, expertise is the result of extensive knowledge and years of experience and practice. Further, one does not make a casual leap from novice to expert. Expertise develops in stages or levels. In this article the characteristics that define a particular level of expertise are identified, with the goal of helping you understand your current level of expertise and providing guidance on attaining the next level, and the next level beyond that.

Novice

- Behavior: rational, inflexible, procedural
- Rule bound and conforms to norms
- Does not take responsibility for outcomes
- Lacks comfortable, efficient routines
- Learns best from experience and demonstrations

Capable

- Begins to see similarities across context
- More responsive to situation, and less rule bound
- Strategic knowledge begins to develop (knows when to follow and when to break rules)
- Learns best from experience, but gains some knowledge from other sources

Competent

- Uses contingencies in planning
- Distinguishes important from unimportant
- Develops a sense of timing, and maintains momentum in practice
- Depends on rational goals and long term plans to guide learning
- Learns more from others, and less from experience

Proficient

- Highly developed skills
- Responds instinctively in situations, rather than relying on rational analysis
- Established routines permit a natural, easy flow to practices
- Learns most from others and outside sources (e.g., reading, seminars)

Expert

- Intuition is highly developed
- Behavior characterized by high levels of automaticity
- Sharply attuned to the atypical
- Extensive knowledge is highly organized and easily recalled

Has and unquenchable thirst for knowledge and will look to any resource

Dr. Paul G. Schempp, President of Performance Matters, Inc, speaker , coach and researcher is an expert on expertise. He can be reached at 706-542-6372, dr.schempp@PerformanceMattersInc.com, or www.PerformanceMattersInc.com