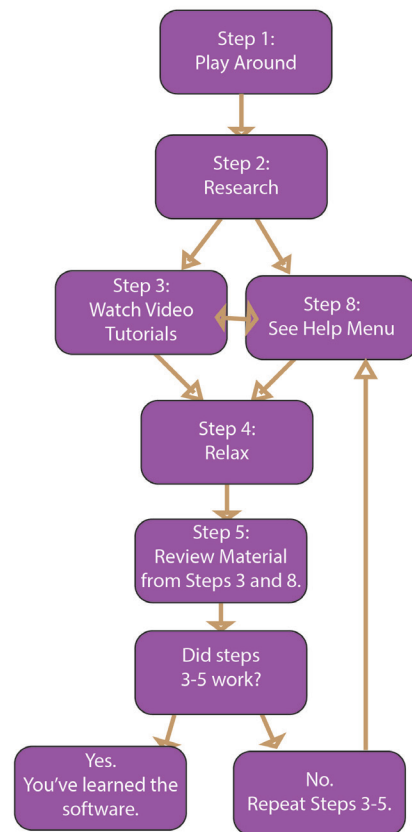


LEARNING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Everyone has been there: you have to learn a new software on a deadline, but you have absolutely no idea where to start. Well, never fear. There are many ways to figure out a software quickly, but the difference between being quick and being proficient is one that could make or break you in the work place. If you're struggling to understand a software, this procedure will help you. So, get ready to learn how to use a new software in eight steps.

Before you begin the procedure, it's important to be aware of a couple things. You should be able to access the software at the time you work through this procedure. This might mean working on it at work, or possibly downloading a free trial software. Do be aware that if you download a free trial, you may only have access to the software for a week or a month. This will make you feel incredibly rushed. The best option is to find a way to access it for a long time without compromising time on other projects or with your family. If your company has access to the software you want to learn, or need to learn, make sure you know where to go to access it. Is it on your cubicle computer? Or do you have to go to a specific lab to use it? **Tip: If you're learning a software that is part of a suite – such as Adobe InDesign or Illustrator – be sure that you only download the free trials for what you're working with.** Adobe is one of the companies that runs 7 day trials before you have to pony up and pay.

You should also be aware that this is a frustrating process. You will fail several times before you understand it. This is okay. It's natural. So, if you get frustrated, see step 4. **Warning: Do not try to do this all in one sitting.** This will make step 4 even more necessary and will set you back a few hours as frustration and weariness give in.



Step 1: Play around with the software. See what you can figure out on your own. Most software makers have the most fundamental tools – such as typing, changing fonts, and saving a file – in logical places that tend to carry over from program to program. Finding these will save lots of trouble if the assignment is a simple thing. However, it's also important to note that you should be able to do a few basic things in any software by simply playing around; if you can figure it out in five seconds on your own, then you need not worry about those skills in the tutorials or help sites (see steps 3 and 8 below) unless you don't know how you did that.

Step 2: For the more complex tools that you cannot figure out, do some research. Many sites will offer tutorials. If you can't find a video tutorial on a site without having to pay, try YouTube; many of the videos will offer small, in-depth tutorials or a grand, overarching tutorial. Pick what you need based on what part of the software is troubling you.

Step 3: After watching the tutorial, try it yourself. This is where you can make or break your time estimate. *Do not wait until the night before your assignment is due to figure out an important piece of the assignment. This is not helpful for anyone.* Instead, take time before the deadline hits to do this, preferably before you even start an assignment in that software if you're not used to it.



Image by Alfonso Romero, Free Images

Step 4: If the task still doesn't make sense, this is the time to take a break. Get up and dance. Get up and just do something else unless

you have to work on the software orientation. This is a good time to make yourself lunch, take a nap, watch a movie, something. Relaxation is key at this point. Otherwise, you will get too frustrated. **Tip:** at this point, take an inventory of what you have done before you leave the computer. Make sure to save anything if you want to be able to play around with the same document. This will at least help you feel like you've accomplished something instead of feeling frustrated that you haven't learned anything.

Step 5: With frustration mitigated, take a few minutes to review the tutorial you tried the first time. This time, work the issue step by step as you watch the video. This may include pausing and rewatching multiple times. Do it.

Step 6: If steps 3-5 don't work, repeat step 4.

If step 5 works for you, skip to step 7. **Tip:** If you can't get a task without the tutorials right, that's okay. Keep the tutorials handy and up just in case you need to go back and watch them again while doing the tasks after this point – especially if you feel you may be repeating step 5 quite a few times.

Step 7: Once you have worked through a few items with the tutorials, try them on your own again. If you get your bearings this time and can do it, wonderful! If not, repeat step 4 before coming back to step 7. Try it out with a simple task first. Look back at step 1 for some examples of simple tasks you could do in any software system. However, if you're working with a specific software, look up some of the simpler tasks to try.

Step 8: If video tutorials aren't doing it for you, see if the software company has a help menu. This is usually the best place to go if you are someone who learns by reading and trying. Follow steps 3-7 with the help menu. Step 4 is particularly needed here since written instructions translated into English from another language can be hard to understand. **Tip:** if you have hard to read instructions, you can always look on the internet for more specific tutorials or for better worded tutorials.

Repeat these steps as often as you need. Once you have completed step 8 for the final time, celebrate! You have just taught yourself how to use a new software. Pull out the soda, watch a movie, have a candy bar, do something to celebrate. Or get back to work on your project, if you're at work when you finally figure it all out. Either way, you can now use the same technique to teach yourself more new software. Go forth and learn new software.