
The 5 Learning Levels

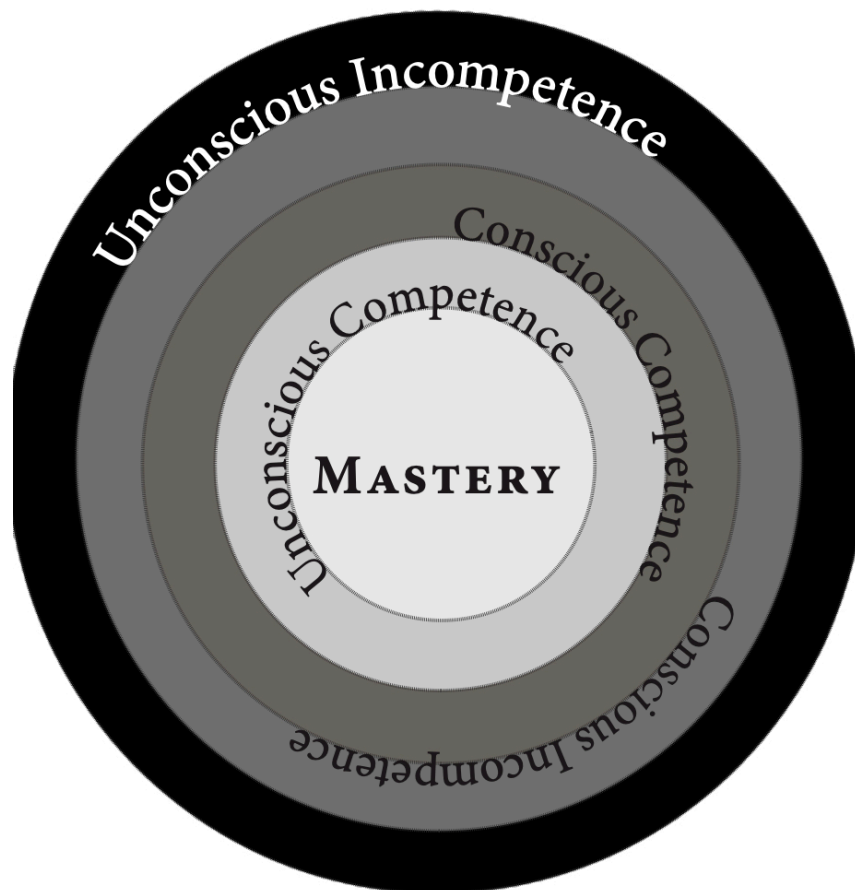
NLP helps us track our learning by spelling out five levels of learning.

Unconscious incompetence means that the person is not only lacking competence in a skill or subject, but they don't even realize that it's an issue. This is the clue-free zone of learning.

Conscious incompetence means that the person is aware of the issue and can become motivated to learn.

Conscious competence happens as the person develops the skills and is able to use them.

Unconscious Competence sounds odd. Why would you want to become subconscious? Well, you've heard people say they can do something in their sleep. What they really mean is that the skill has become so much of a set of reflexes or habits that they do not require a lot of conscious thought. The beauty of that is that they have made room in their brains for more learning. Brain scans show us that the brain is a pattern-recognition tool. Once it learns the pattern and can translate it into a reflex that can be fired off, it moves the pattern into a lower brain center, freeing the higher brain areas to actively acquire



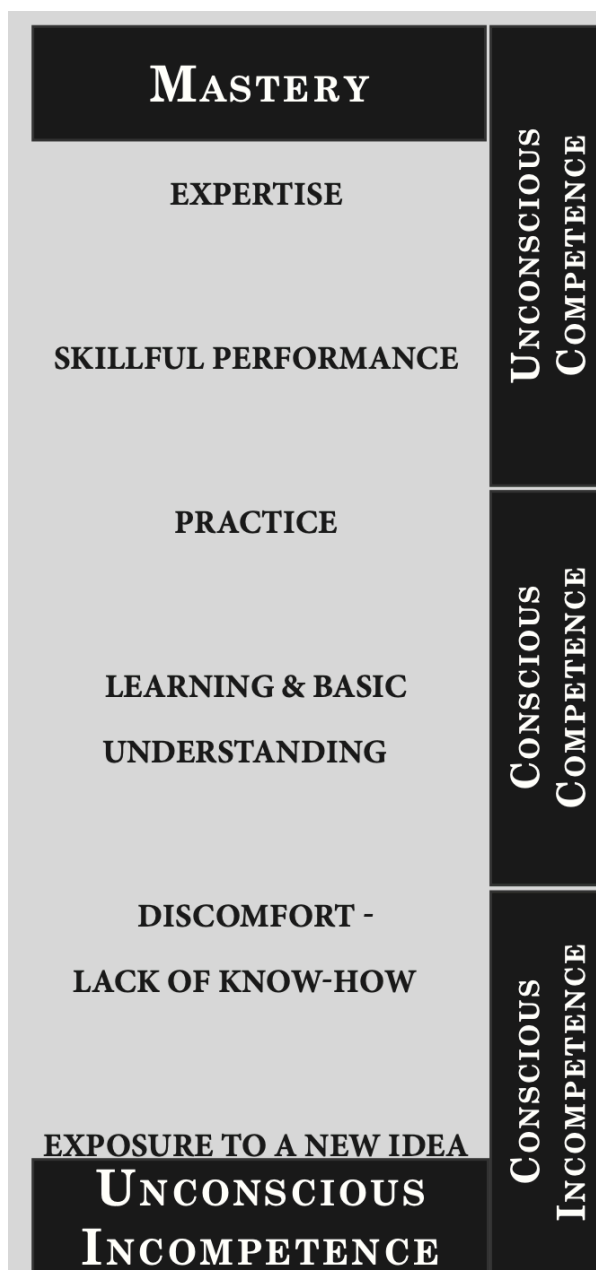
skills that are even more sophisticated to layer on top of that earlier learning. And you know what you get when you add sophisticated skills to largely subconscious skills: mastery.

At the level of mastery, the person does more than create excellent results; they are creative and flexible; they can respond to new conditions and improvise. They have extra brainpower left over to come up with innovative and adaptive strategies. A master is the one that people turn to for inspiration and training. Mastery has also been called "conscious mastery" or "subconscious mastery." This means that you are able to gain more conscious access to material that, for most people, is not conscious. This is like expanding your intelligence into a larger landscape or into a bigger brain. Artists do this when they learn to trust their creativity or their muse, accepting signals from their subconscious and trusting those signals to lead them through a productive creative process. Intuition is also like this, because the person has learned how to trust their subconscious to guide them in sizing things up and making good decisions.

Do you see how these phases of learning can guide you in sequencing your learning and figuring out where your needs are? Think of a skill you are building, maybe NLP, and see where you are in these phases. Then ask, "What do I most need at this phase?"

In language learning, you will often hear students say, "I wish there was a pill that I could take so I could learn the language overnight." It is true that it would be great if we could snap our fingers and magically speak another language, but the learning process is not a short one, so the result is that it takes months or years to learn a language.

As we do this, we go through many different stages, so in the beginning, we may only know a few words, but by the end, we sound like a native speaker. On this timeline, there is an important point where the learner knows the basics but still has to think about what they are doing. So in language learning, this is like the point where you can make sentences, but if you



don't want to make mistakes, you really have to concentrate. We call this stage "conscious competence."

This process is much different from how children learn a language. A child learns through unconscious competence when they do not think about what they are learning; they simply learn it.

Obviously, this is a huge advantage because you can skip the conscious competence stage and learn much faster. However, even as adults who have gone to school, people who have learned this way will often have trouble explaining grammar points to non-native speakers, so when asked why grammar is a certain way, they simply respond, "Because it is that way." Clearly, this is not very helpful to students. So we can see that there is some benefit to conscious competence, even if you already perform this task extremely well. When you make an unconscious competence conscious, you can refine and improve it. Also, you can focus on what exactly you do to perform this task well and use these skills to help improve other skills you would like to improve.

The 21

Presuppositions

Presuppositions are, in general, the underlying assumptions of a system. To fully comprehend NLP, one must first gain a thorough understanding of its underlying assumptions. Even if the statement itself is not necessarily true, the cultivation of a useful result is accomplished. Or to put it another way, we act as if these statements are "facts" solely for the purpose of bringing us one step closer to our desired outcomes. As an example, suppose you want to have a strong and loving relationship with your children. You choose to not get upset by your teenage son's recent outburst, instead offering support, unconditional love, and patience, acting on the assumption (presupposing) that we are more than our behavior (#7). You seek to understand the deep structure that has contributed to the inappropriate behavior, and instead of reflexive conflict, you show empathy and care, knowing that your son's rudeness was a temporary reaction initiated because it was the most useful (#8) in that specific context (#9). Remembering that your reaction to his outburst is critical (# 11 and # 12), you take a step back and say, "You have the right to be angry, and I am here to listen whenever you are willing to talk to me about it." Compare that to yelling at him, "Stop acting like a child! You're grounded! Now go to your room!"

The NLP Presuppositions

1. The map is not the territory.
2. People respond according to their internal maps.
3. Meaning operates context-dependently.
4. The mind and-body affect each other.
5. Individual skills function by the development and sequencing of rep systems.
6. We respect each person's model of the world.
7. Person and behavior describe different phenomena. We are more than our behavior.
8. Every behavior has utility and usefulness—in some context.
9. We evaluate behavior and change in terms of context and ecology.
10. We cannot not communicate.
11. The way we communicate affects perception and reception.
12. The meaning of communication lies in the response you get.
13. The person who sets the frame for the communication controls the outcome.
14. There is no failure, only feedback.
15. The person with the most flexibility exercises the most influence within the system.
16. Resistance indicates a lack of rapport.
17. People have the internal resources they need to succeed.
18. Humans have the ability to experience one-trial learning.
19. All communication should increase choice.
20. People make the best choices available to them when they act.
21. As response-able people, we can run our own brains and therefore choose our behavior.