

Preparation for Individual Exercises

During the Thinking Tactics workshop, there are several individual exercises. In these, you will test out the techniques on a topic of your own choosing. The exercises will be easier if you have some possible topics in mind before class. The best time to think of topics is a day or two beforehand.

1: A Topic for Thinking

For the exercise in unit 1, you need a question of modest difficulty, such as:

- How could I get more free time to do _____?
- What am I going to do about the _____ problem?
- I keep putting off _____. Do I need to do it? And if so, what's the plan to get it done?
- What are my priorities for _____?

Choose a question with no obvious answer. Make sure it is a question you care about answering—it should be worth at least five minutes of your time.

(It is fine to keep this topic private. During discussion, you can describe the process without discussing the actual issue.)

2: A Floundering Task

In unit 3 we will discuss floundering. Floundering means exerting effort, without making reasonable progress toward your goal. Since thinking is your guide to action, floundering is always an opportunity to do some hard thinking about how to guide yourself better.

For the exercise in unit 3, think of a task on which you are making very little progress. It could be a long-term goal or a current project that's bogged down, e.g.:

- A New Year's Resolution that you aren't keeping
- An amorphous project that you're avoiding
- A task that is taking much longer than you think it should

You will have an opportunity to think about how to get this project moving forward.

(Again, it is fine to keep this topic private. During discussion, you can describe the process without discussing actual issue.)

3: A Task to Be Planned

For the exercises in units 4, 5 and 6, you need to think of a large task which is at risk of bogging down or burning you out. A task which will take more than two weeks is appropriate. Here are some suggestions:

- Plan a major event (kickoff meeting, company retreat, conference, wedding)
- Coach a particular person to success (train a new hire, get an existing team member to improve performance, get the kids to _____)
- Organize something (an office procedure, the filing system, the attic)
- Make a strategic plan (plan profits, plan new product development, make a personal financial plan)
- Write a major document (proposal, report, requirements document, book)
- Give a major presentation (to the customer, to your group, to your club)

For this class exercise:

- Make sure you pick a specific project to do, not “organize my whole life.”
- Make it a “doing” project, not a “figuring out” project. (So, don’t make your project something like, “figure out why so-and-so is not performing.”)
- Choose a project that you are qualified to do, not one that would require significant training.
- It’s best if it is an actual project on your agenda.

You will be spending considerable time thinking about this during class, so choose something that is interesting and timely to think about.

Please note: you will be asked to discuss your project in a small (3-person) group.