

2023

W 1325

GROWTH MINDSET

9TH GRADE CURRICULUM

*Future Ready Skills: A College Career Readiness
Curriculum for High School Freshmen*

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UT EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE



FUTURE READY

9TH GRADE CURRICULUM

8 Units of Essential Skills

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Freshman Bootcamp | 5. Teamwork |
| 2. Who Am I? | 6. Design Thinking |
| 3. Future Me | 7. Communication |
| 4. Decision Making | 8. Growth Mindset |

Future Ready is an innovative college and career readiness curriculum created for students to develop the social, emotional, and interpersonal skills necessary to navigate the world after graduation. Each unit includes lesson plans and student handouts that require minimal preparation.

Students will discover personal strengths, practice effective communication strategies, and explore growth opportunities. The curriculum is aligned with Tennessee Career Exploration course standards and other state standards in STEM, English/Language Arts, and Social Science. It is easily adaptable for Advisory and other settings.

Future Ready was written by former classroom teachers, Dr. Jennifer Richards and Alexis Hall, at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. It was created in collaboration with Hardeman County Schools Pilot Teachers and Unit 1 Co-Authors, Nikki Boatwright, Jennifer Cox, and Sherri Johnson. For more information, contact jennifer.richards@utk.edu.



Unit 8

The **BIG** Idea

How can I develop a *Growth Mindset*?

OVERVIEW

Lesson 1: My Brain is Plastic?

- *Big Idea:* How does my brain change as I learn and experience new things?
- *Time:* 45 minutes

Lesson 2: The Brain

- *Big Idea:* How does my brain change as I learn and experience new things?
- *Time:* 45 minutes

Lesson 3: Overcoming Procrastination

- *Big Idea:* How can we overcome procrastination and achieve our goals?
- *Time:* 45 minutes

Lesson 4: Making Habits Stick

- *Big Idea:* How can I make new habits stick?
- *Time:* 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

Lesson 1: My Brain is Plastic?

- Develop a growth mindset
- Understand that intelligence is not “fixed”

Lesson 2: The Brain

- Develop a growth mindset
- Understand that intelligence is not “fixed”

Lesson 3: Overcoming Procrastination

- Describe why people procrastinate
- Give examples of procrastination from their lives
- Identify strategies for overcoming procrastination

Lesson 4: Making Habits Stick

- Examine one’s progress towards a previously set SMART goal
- Describe the Habit Loop
- Create a plan for developing new habit cues.

My Brain is Plastic?

The **BIG** Idea

How does my brain change as I learn and experience new things?

AGENDA

Approximately 45 minutes

1. Warm up (15 minutes)
2. Triangle peg game (25 minutes)
3. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

Student Materials:

- Devices to play Kahoot game
- Triangle peg game per student

Facilitator Pages:

- Triangle peg puzzle solution

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Develop a growth mindset
- Understand that intelligence is not “fixed”

STANDARDS

- English/Language Arts 9-10.L.VAU.6 Acquire and accurately use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the post-secondary and workforce readiness level; demonstrate independence in building vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- Career Exploration 7: Demonstrate appropriate communication at various levels. Develop and practice active listening skills and effective oral and written communications, appropriate to task and audience, to overcome communication barriers. Demonstrate effective note-taking strategies to summarize main points and speaker/author meanings from multiple sources such as lectures, journals, websites and/or textbooks/manuals. Address the class using a public-speaking activity.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will learn about the key aspects of a growth mindset by discovering how the brain develops, understanding that mistakes are necessary for growth and crafting their own growth mindset statement.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Open each wooden triangle peg game from its packaging and put each in its own Ziploc bag. This will help ensure that pegs don't get lost between classes.
- Consider creating a PowerPoint presentation for the triangle peg puzzle solution.
- Each student will need a computer or smart phone with internet access to play the Kahoot game.
- Set up the teacher computer to run the Kahoot game. If possible, project it for students to see.

VOCABULARY

- **Growth Mindset** – Believing that your abilities and successes can improve with continued resilience, effort, and learning
- **Neuroplasticity** – The brain's ability to change and grow throughout a person's life

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For years we thought that you were born with a certain intelligence level and there was little you could do about that. Now we know that our brains act just like other muscles in our body, and we can TRAIN them to grow! Today we are going to complete activities that teach us how our brain learns, how we can grow our brains and what this means for you as a student.
2. Lead students through the growth mindset Kahoot. tinyurl.com/U6L2kahoot

II. Triangle Peg Game (25 minutes)

1. Give each student a triangle peg game. Remind students that the goal is to remove the pegs by jumping over one at a time and removing the jumped peg until there is only one peg remaining. Allow students to play the game for about 5 minutes. Consider offering an incentive to any student who can successfully “solve” the puzzle twice in a row.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** I know how frustrating that game can be...you always feel like you are just about to solve it, and then suddenly you are out of moves. Let’s take a few minutes and learn how to solve this puzzle together.
3. Using the solving the triangle puzzle handout (consider displaying these step-by-step instructions using a PowerPoint), walk students through the steps to solving the puzzle.
4. Teach steps 1-3 and have students practice these steps multiple times.
5. Teach steps 4-6. Have students practice these steps only, then start back over and practice steps 1-6.
6. Continue this process for steps 7-10 and then steps 11-13.
7. Have students then practice all the steps until they can solve the puzzle fluently.
8. Have students place the puzzle and all the pegs back in the Ziploc bag and seal it.

III. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** We just created a new neural pathway in your brain by learning how to solve the triangle puzzle. Tomorrow we will learn more about neural pathways. At the end of the Kahoot, I asked you to think of something that was challenging for you to overcome. Based on what we’ve learned today, how do you think your brain changed as you worked through that experience? Remind students that they will be learning more about neuroplasticity this week.

Triangle Peg Puzzle Solution

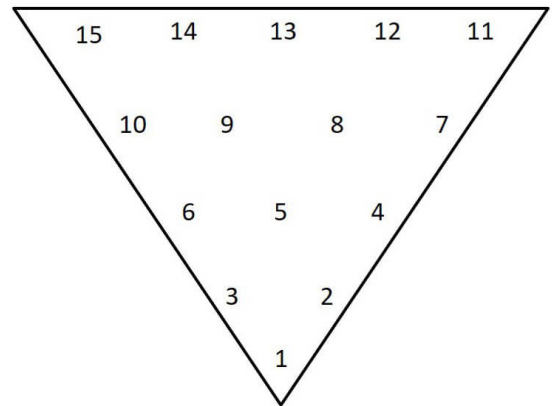
Position the game board so that the triangle point is facing away from you. Now let's assign a number from 1-15 to each hole, starting at the top.

Arrange the pegs so the top position 1 is left open.

1. Move peg 4 to position 1.
2. Move peg 6 to position 4.
3. Move peg 1 to position 6.

This leaves an empty diamond pattern in the base.

4. Now move peg 7 to position 2.
5. Move peg 13 to position 4.
6. Move peg 2 to position 7.



Now you want to clear the second and bottom rows.

7. Move peg 10 to position 8.
8. Move peg 7 to position 9.
9. Move peg 15 to position 13.
10. Move peg 12 into position 14.

You're so close...

11. Move peg 6 to position 13.
12. Move peg 14 to position 12.
13. Move peg 11 to position 13.

Boom! You've got one left in position 13 and have won the game!

The Brain

The **BIG** Idea

How does my brain change as I learn and experience new things?

AGENDA

Approximately 45 minutes

1. Warm up (20 minutes)
2. What's the Process (20 minutes)
3. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

Student Pages:

- **Neuron parts handout**
(1/student)
- **Neurons quiz** (1/student)

Facilitator:

- A small ball (golf, tennis, baseball or softball)
- **How the Brain Changes slides:**
tiny.utk.edu/brainslides

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Develop a growth mindset
- Understand that intelligence is not “fixed”

STANDARDS

- English/Language Arts 9-10.L.VAU.6 Acquire and accurately use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the post-secondary and workforce readiness level; demonstrate independence in building vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- Career Exploration 7: Demonstrate appropriate communication at various levels. Develop and practice active listening skills and effective oral and written communications, appropriate to task and audience, to overcome communication barriers. Demonstrate effective note-taking strategies to summarize main points and speaker/author meanings from multiple sources such as lectures, journals, websites and/or textbooks/manuals. Address the class using a public-speaking activity.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore the components of a growth mindset by learning how the brain grows, that mistakes are opportunities for growth, and creating a growth mindset statement.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Review the **How the Brain Changes Slides** and make any desired changes.
- Make copies of the **Neuron Parts handout** (1/student) and **Neurons Quiz** (1/student).
 - There are 2 copies of the handout on each page, so make sure to cut the pages in half before giving to students.

RESOURCES

How the Brain Works Lesson <https://www.mindsetkit.org/practices/F8TE65Xwx5vMYbPB>

Brain Awareness Lessons <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/baw1.html>

Neurotransmission PowerPoint <https://fi.edu/en/neuroscience-and-society/unit-1-neurons-brain-anatomy>

VOCABULARY

- **Neuron**- a specialized, impulse-conducting cell that is the basic unit of the nervous system, consisting of the cell body and its parts, the axon and dendrites.
- **Axon**- the long thread-like part of the nerve cell (neuron) that transmits impulses out from the cell body
- **Dendrites**- the branching process of a nerve cell (neuron) that conducts impulses from other cells into its cell body
- **Synapse** - the space where a nerve impulse is relayed from one cell to another through chemicals called neurotransmitters

Background information: The chemicals transfer nerve information across the synapse just like a boat carrying a message between two shores. The electrical impulse from one cell triggers a chemical release in the synapse (space), and the chemical flows across the space and triggers the next cell's electrical activity. The message flow is as follows: one cell's axon—to synapse—to next cell's dendrites.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (15 minutes)

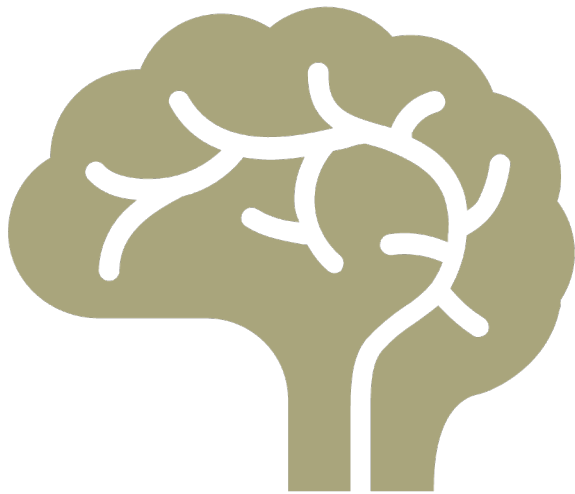
1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In our last lesson, we learned that our brains are plastic. This means they can stretch and grow as we learn more. Today we are going to learn a bit more about the structure of the brain and how we can use that knowledge to improve our learning. Remember from our last class how it got easier to solve the triangle puzzle the more we did it? We are going to start today's class with a similar demonstration
2. Instruct students to stand in a straight line. (You may want to take students outside to do this activity). Once they are standing in a line, explain the rules of the game:
 - a. Explain to students that you are going to time how long it takes to get the ball from the start of the line to the end.
 - b. Students will pass the ball to the person behind them by turning to either the right or the left. The first person will twist to the left to hand the ball to the person behind them. The second person will twist to the right to hand off the ball. Continue this pattern alternating right and left through the rest of the line.
 - c. They should not start until you say, "Go!"
3. Time how long it takes for the ball to travel from the front of the line to the back. Ask students to repeat this a couple of times to see how their time improves with each pass. Then, change the order and have the first person twist right, the second person twist left, and so forth.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Why did it take longer for the ball to travel down the line when we changed directions?
 - a. Direct the discussion to help students understand that they created a **neural pathway** by practicing their handoffs with the original pattern. When the pattern changed, they had to create new pathways to hand off the ball.
5. Remind students that this is the same process our brain goes through anytime we learn something new, whether it is a game, algebra or Spanish.

II. How the Brain Changes (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a closer look at the how the brain actually works.
2. Share the **How the Brain Changes slides** with students.
 - a. tiny.utk.edu/brainslides
3. On slide 5, give each student a copy of the **Neuron Parts handout** to complete.

III. Wrap Up (10 minutes)

1. Give each student a copy of the **Neurons quiz** to test their knowledge.
2. Allow students 5 minutes to complete the questions to the best of their ability.
3. Share the answers on the last slide and ask students to correct any answers they may have gotten wrong.

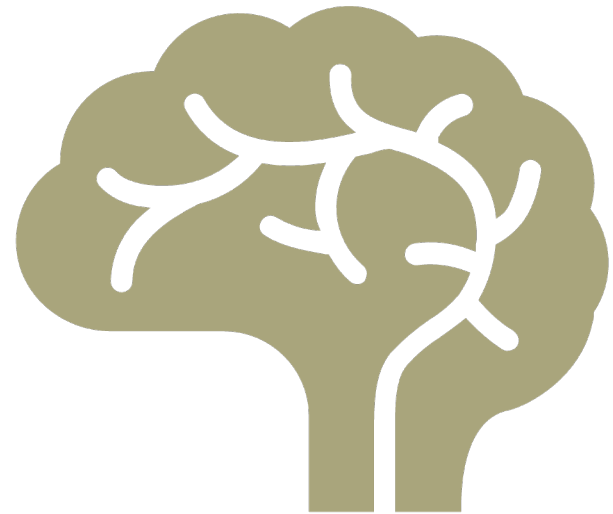


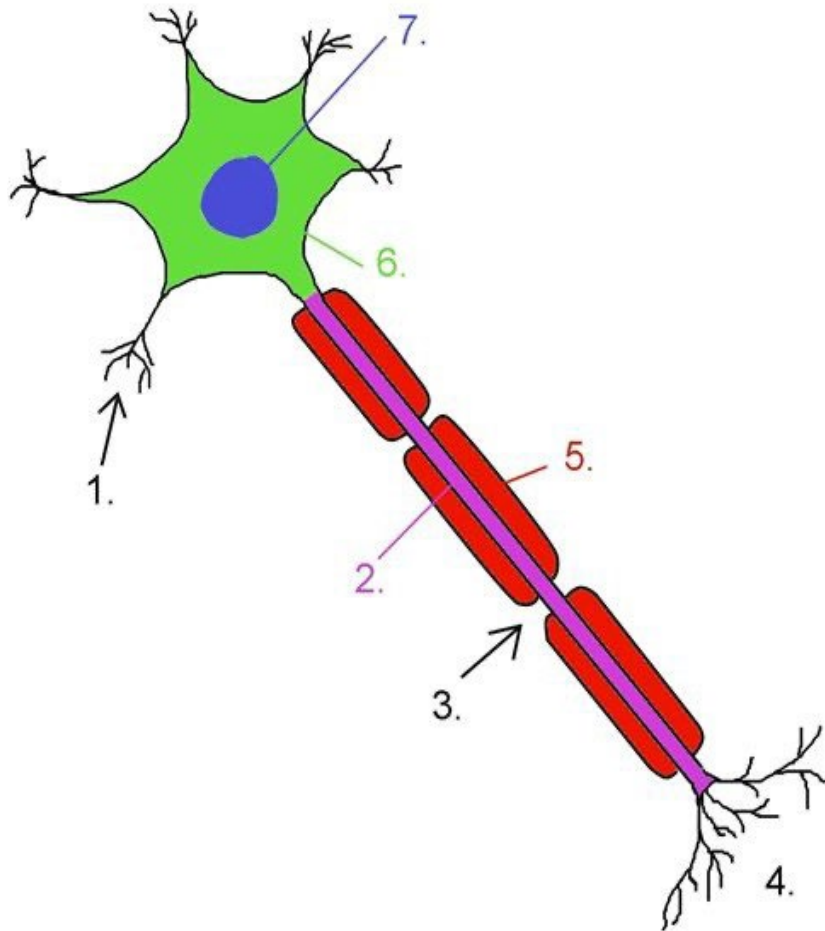
How does my brain
change as I learn and
experience new
things?

THE BRAIN TELLS THE
BODY WHAT TO DO
THROUGH **NEURONS.**

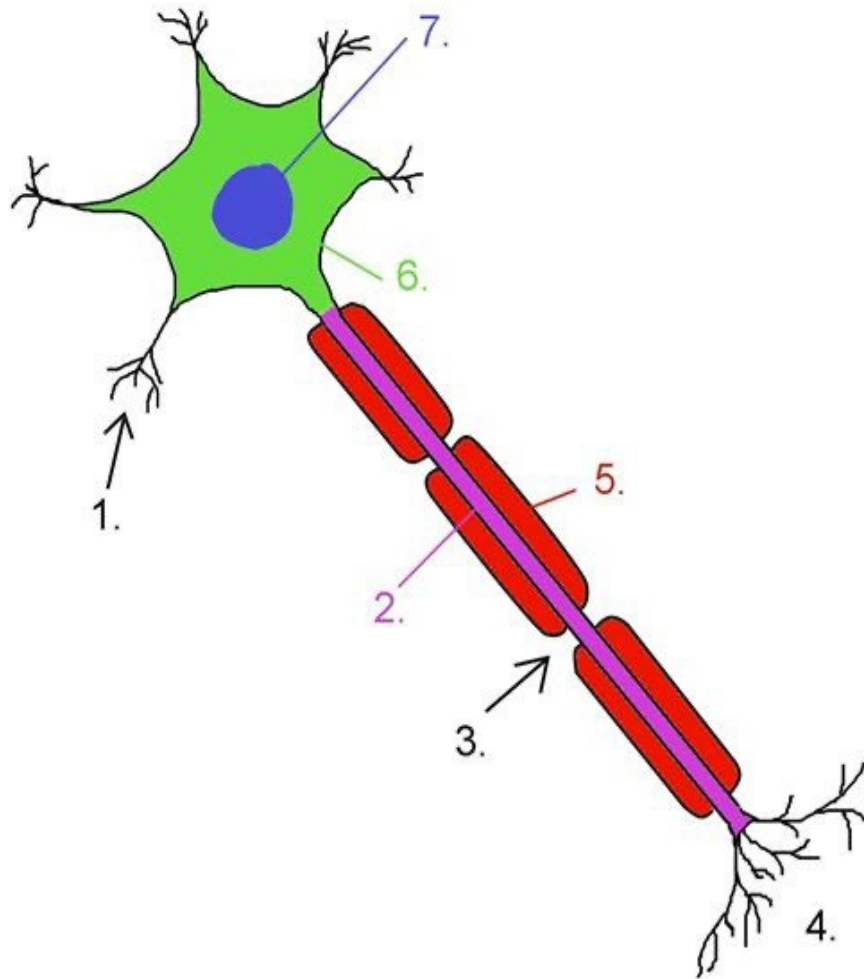
NEURONS

- Nervous system controls the body
- Nervous system is made of neurons
- Neurons = Nerve Cells
- Neurons communicate with body
- Process called neural transmission





- Neurons receive the message, processes it, and passes it along.
- **Dendrites** reach out to receive signals from other neurons.
- The **cell body** has the nucleus, so it is the brain of the cell.
- The **axon** carries the message to other neurons.



Neuron Parts

1.Dendrite

2.Axon

3.Nodes of Ranvier

4.Axon Terminals

5.Myelin Sheath

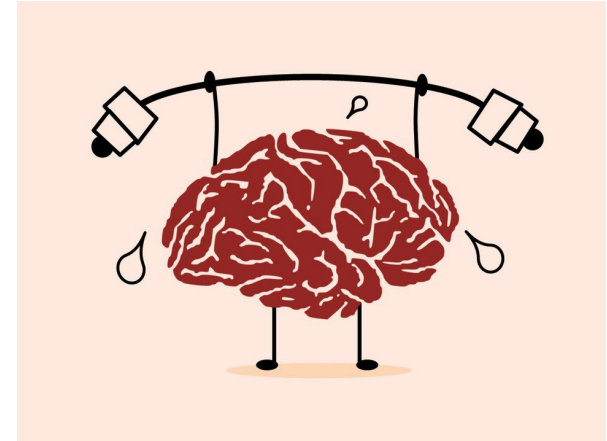
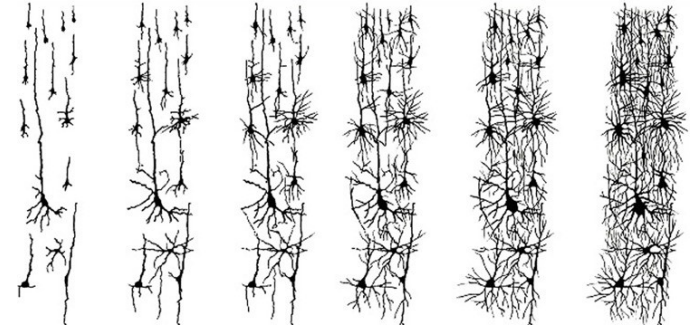
6.Cell Body (Soma)

7.Nucleus

GROWTH MINDSET

We grow new dendrites
when we practice
something.

More Dendrites =
Stronger Brain





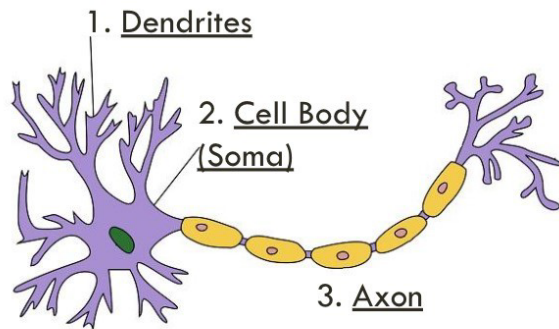
**HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO
GROWTH MINDSET?**

LET'S PRACTICE!

Take 5 minutes to answer the questions on the Neurons Quiz.

Neuron Quiz

Answers



4. How does the brain communicate with the body?

The brain communicates with the body with the help of **neurons**.

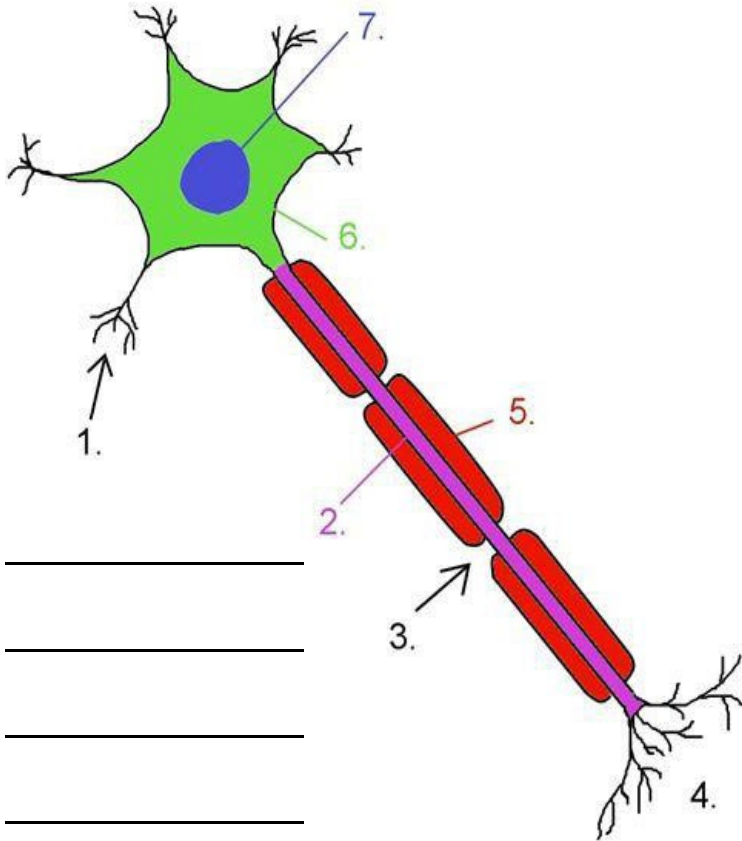
The way in which neurons communicate is called **neural transmission**.

5. What happens to our neurons when we practice a new skill?

Our neurons grow more dendrites.

Neuron Parts

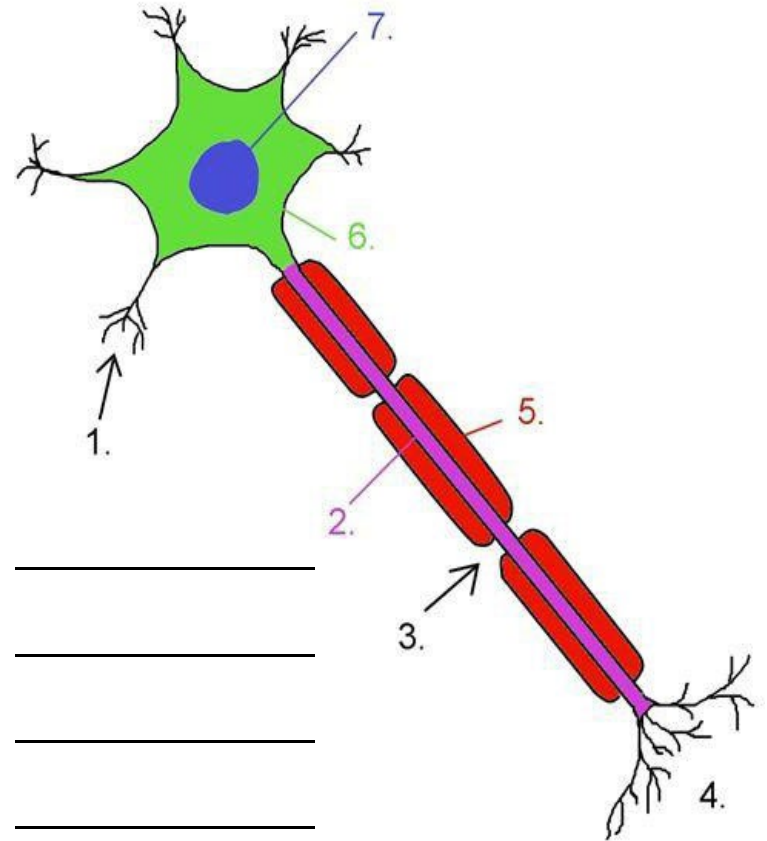
Name _____



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Neuron Parts

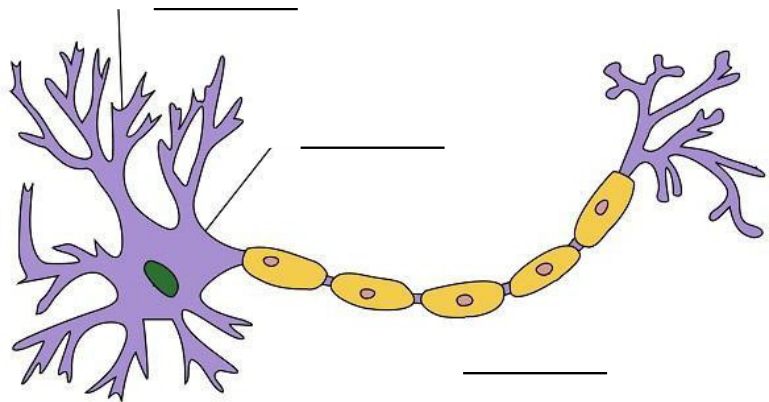
Name _____



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Neurons Quiz

Name _____

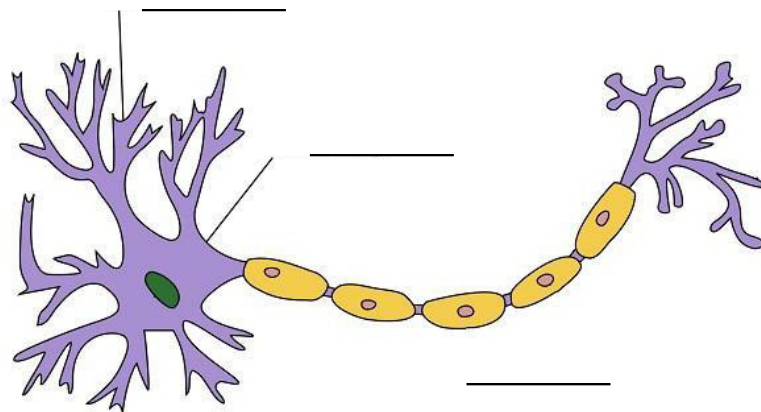


4. How does the brain communicate with the body?

5. What happens to our neurons when we practice a new skill?

Neurons Quiz

Name _____



4. How does the brain communicate with the body?

5. What happens to our neurons when we practice a new skill?

Overcoming Procrastination

The **BIG** Idea

How can we overcome procrastination and achieve our goals?

AGENDA

Approximately 45 minutes

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
2. Ted Talk (15 minutes)
3. Key Points (5 minutes)
4. Letter Writing (15 minutes)
5. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Computer & Projector with Audio
- Tim Urban's TED Talk (Link & QR code below)
 - <https://youtu.be/arj7oStGLkU>



OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Describe why people procrastinate
- Give examples of procrastination from their lives
- Identify strategies for overcoming procrastination

STANDARDS

- English/Language Arts 9-10.L.VAU.6 Acquire and accurately use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the post-secondary and workforce readiness level; demonstrate independence in building vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- Career Exploration 7: Demonstrate appropriate communication at various levels. Develop and practice active listening skills and effective oral and written communications, appropriate to task and audience, to overcome communication barriers. Demonstrate effective note-taking strategies to summarize main points and speaker/author meanings from multiple sources such as lectures, journals, websites, and/or textbooks/manuals. Address the class using a public-speaking activity.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will learn about procrastination by watching a TED Talk. They will summarize the video's key concepts in pairs and write a letter to other ninth graders explaining how to overcome procrastination.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Set up a computer and projector with audio to show the video.
- Scan the QR code or visit the link below so the TED Talk video is ready for viewing.
 - <https://youtu.be/arj7oStGLkU>



VOCABULARY

- **Procrastination:** the action of delaying or postponing something
- **Instant Gratification:** desire to experience fulfillment without delay or deferment

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you're anything like me, you can probably think of a few times when you have **procrastinated** on something. Take a couple minutes to talk to the person next to you about a time when you have put something off until the last minute.
2. Give students a couple of minutes to talk before asking 2-4 students to share their own tales of procrastination.

II. Ted Talk (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** We're now going to watch a TED Talk from a blogger named Tim Urban. While you are watching, write down the most important points from the talk.
2. Play the video, "Tim Urban: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator."
<https://youtu.be/arj7oStGLkU>.

III. Key Points (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, with your partner, I want you to decide what the top three key points or concepts from Tim's talk were. You should write these down.
2. Give 2-3 minutes to write down the concepts.
3. Invite each pair to write 1 key concept on the board (or call on students and write them yourself) until all the following concepts are listed:
 - a. instant gratification monkey
 - b. dark playground
 - c. panic monster
 - d. everyone is a procrastinator
 - e. value of deadlines

IV. Letter Writing (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** It's really easy for students to get behind in their classes because of the instant gratification monkey. Unfortunately, this is something that ninth grade students must face every year. Using your experience and the information from the TED Talk, write a letter that I could give next year's freshmen to help them learn from you. Give them your best advice for overcoming procrastination. You don't have to use the terms from the TED Talk, but make sure to explain why procrastination is a problem and how to overcome it.
2. Give students time to write their letters and help them if they get stuck.

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What's the most important thing you mentioned in your letter? How could you apply this to your life today? Talk about it with your partner.
2. Allow students 2-3 minutes to share with one another. Invite students to share their answers with the class.

Sources:

A Simple Activity for Teaching About Procrastination. <https://davestuartjr.com/procrastination/>

Tim Urban: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator. <https://youtu.be/arj7oStGLkU>

Making Habits Stick

The **BIG** Idea

How can I make new habits stick?

AGENDA

Approximately 45 minutes

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
2. Making New Habits Stick (20 minutes)
3. Creating Cues (15 minutes)
4. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Making New Habits Stick handouts (1/student)
- Creating Cues handout (1/student)
- Highlighters (1 per group)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Examine one's progress towards a previously set SMART goal
- Describe the Habit Loop
- Create a plan for developing new habit cues.

STANDARDS

- English/Language Arts 9-10.L.VAU.6 Acquire and accurately use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the post-secondary and workforce readiness level; demonstrate independence in building vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- Career Exploration 7: Demonstrate appropriate communication at various levels. Develop and practice active listening skills and effective oral and written communications, appropriate to task and audience, to overcome communication barriers. Demonstrate effective note-taking strategies to summarize main points and speaker/author meanings from multiple sources such as lectures, journals, websites and/or textbooks/manuals. Address the class using a public-speaking activity.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will check in on their progress towards completing a study skills SMART goal. They will read an article about developing new habits through habit cues and then create their own habit cues related to their SMART goal.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Make copies of the **Making New Habits Stick** and **Creating Cues handouts** (1/student).
- Each group of 3-4 will need one highlighter.

VOCABULARY

Habit Loop: The process of creating a new habit. The four steps are cue, craving, response, and reward.

Habit Cue: The first step, or trigger, in establishing a new habit.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. This lesson refers to the study habit SMART goal that students set in Unit 3, Lesson 1- SMART Goals. If students still have the ninth grade goals reflection handout from that lesson, they can complete the check-in section during the warm-up. If they do not have the previous handout, you can write the following questions on the board before class for students to answer on paper:
 - Did you succeed in reaching your goal? If yes, explain how you accomplished your goal. Select a new study habit to work on this upcoming week and record it now.
 - If you have not reached your goal yet, explain what challenges you faced. If you reached your goal. Explain how you are going to overcome the challenges you faced this past week.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's think back to the study habit SMART goal that you set in a previous lesson.
3. Give students a few minutes to find their SMART goals handout from Unit 3, Lesson 1 and ask them to reflect on their progress.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Whether you achieved your goal or not, today we are going to talk about another strategy for overcoming procrastination so you can become complete the tasks you need to accomplish.

II. Making New Habits Stick (20 minutes)

1. Give each student a copy of the **Making New Habits Stick handout**.
2. Place students in groups of 3-4. Instruct students to take turns reading one paragraph aloud until the group has read the entire article.
3. Give one highlighter to each group. Ask each group to highlight the paragraph that they thought was the most important.
4. After waiting 2-3 minutes for students to highlight their paragraphs, invite each group to summarize their chosen paragraph for the class.

III. Creating Cues (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You will now use what you have learned to brainstorm cues that would help you achieve your SMART goal.
2. Give each student the **Creating Cues handout**.
3. Instruct students to take a look at the examples given for each of the habit cues and then create their own example that relates to their SMART goal.

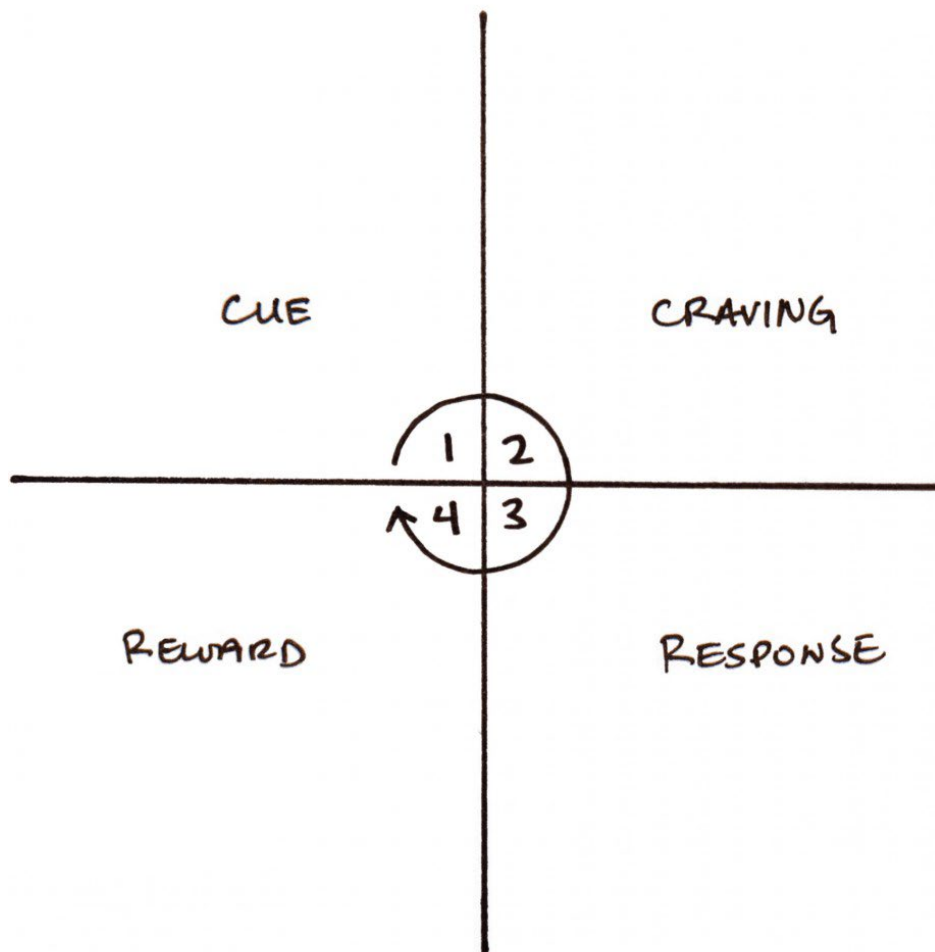
IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Ask for volunteers to share the habit cues they brainstormed. Look for similarities among the class and see if you can create any other ideas as a class.

Making New Habits Stick

In his book *Atomic Habits*, James Clear explains that the process of building a habit can be divided into four simple steps: cue, craving, response and reward. The image below shows the habit loop and how these four factors work together to build new habits.

THE HABIT LOOP



Each phase of the habit loop is important for building new habits, but this article discusses the first factor: **habit cues** (or triggers).

There are five primary ways that a new habit can be triggered. If you understand each of them, then you can select the right one for the particular habit that you are working on. Here's what you need to know about each habit cue...

Cue 1: Time

Time is perhaps the most common way to trigger a new habit. Common morning habits are just one example. Waking up in the morning usually triggers a cascade of habits: go to the bathroom, take a shower, brush your teeth, get dressed, make a cup of coffee, etc.

There are also less commonly recognized ways that time triggers our behavior. For example, if you pay attention you may notice that you repeat certain tasks mindlessly at different points during the day: heading off to get a snack at the same time each afternoon, taking a smoking break at the same time each morning, and so on.

If these patterns are bad habits, then you may want to take stock of how you feel at this time of day. In many cases, your habits are a signal of how you feel. Bored? Maybe your afternoon snacking habit is a way of breaking up the monotony of the day. Feeling lonely? Maybe your smoking break is a way to connect with fellow co-workers. The point is, if you understand the reason why these habits pop up at the same time each day, then it can become easier to find a new habit to fill the void. Bad habits are replaced, not eliminated.

Cue 2: Location

If you have ever walked into your kitchen, seen a plate of cookies on the counter, and eaten them just because they are there in front of you, then you understand the power of location on our behavior. In Clear's opinion, location (i.e. environment) is the most powerful driver of mindless habits and also the least recognized. In many cases, our habits and behaviors are simply a response to the environment that surrounds us.

One theory is that we mentally assign habits to a particular location. This means that all of the current places that you're familiar with (your home, your office, etc.) already have behaviors, habits, and routines assigned to them. If you want to build new habits in these familiar locations, then you need to overcome the cues that your brain has already assigned to that area. Meanwhile, building a new habit in a new location is like having a blank slate. You don't have to overcome any pre-existing triggers.

Cue 3: Preceding Event

Many habits are a response to something else that happens in your life. Your phone buzzes, so you pick it up to check your latest text message. The little notification bar lights up on Facebook, so you click it to see what it signals. These are examples of habits that are triggered by a preceding event.

When it comes to cues that are useful for building new habits, I find preceding events to be one of the most useful. Once you understand habit stacking you can develop all sorts of ways to tie new habits into preceding events. (Example: “When I make my morning cup of coffee, I will meditate for one minute.”)

Cue 4: Emotional State

In my experience, emotional state is a common cue for bad habits. For example, you may have a habit of eating when you feel depressed. Or, you may default to online shopping when you feel bored. The emotional states of depression or boredom are triggers for these negative habits. Unfortunately, although emotions are very common cues for our behavior, I find that they are harder to control and utilize for building good habits. Mostly, I think this is because if you want an emotion to trigger a positive habit, then you often need to be consciously aware of the emotion as you are experiencing it. In other words, you have to be emotional and aware at the same time ... and that can be hard to do. Paying attention is a powerful, but difficult way to build better habits.

Cue 5: Other People

It is probably no surprise to you that the people you surround yourself with can play a role in your habits and behaviors. As far as I can tell, the best way to make use of this information is to surround yourself with people who have the habits you want to have yourself. As Jim Rohn says, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

Before You Choose Your Habit Cue

No matter what cue you choose for your new habit, there is one important thing to understand. **The key to choosing a successful cue is to pick a trigger that is very specific and immediately actionable.**

For example, let’s say you want to build a new habit of doing 10 pushups each day at lunch time. You might start by choosing a time-based cue and saying something like, “During my lunch break each day, I’ll do 10 pushups.” This might work, but it’s not very specific. Do you do your pushups at the beginning of your lunch break? At the end? Any time?

Alternatively, you could create a cue around a very specific preceding event that happens right around your lunch break. For example, “When I close my laptop to leave for lunch, I’ll do 10 pushups.” In this case, the very specific action of “closing the laptop” is a perfect trigger for what to do next (your 10 pushups). There is no mistaking when you should do the new habit and kick off the habit loop. As always, experimentation is the only real answer. Play around with these five habit cues and see what works for you.

Creating Cues

For each of the habit cues listed below, read the example and create your own that relates to your SMART goal.

SMART Goal:

Habit Cue	Example	Your Example
Time	I will check my planner each morning at 8 a.m.	
Location	I will sit in the same spot when I study each night.	
Preceding Event	Before I eat lunch, I will take 3 deep breaths.	
Emotional State	When I feel anxious about an exam, I will text my friend.	
Other People	I will ask my sibling to quiz me using flash cards the night before a vocabulary quiz.	



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