

INDUSTRY PRECOURSE BASICS: YOUR GATEWAY TO THE POOL AND SPA PROFESSION

WEEK 9: MANAGING TIME AND WORK PRIORITIES FOR POOL AND SPA PROFESSIONALS

LEARNER GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

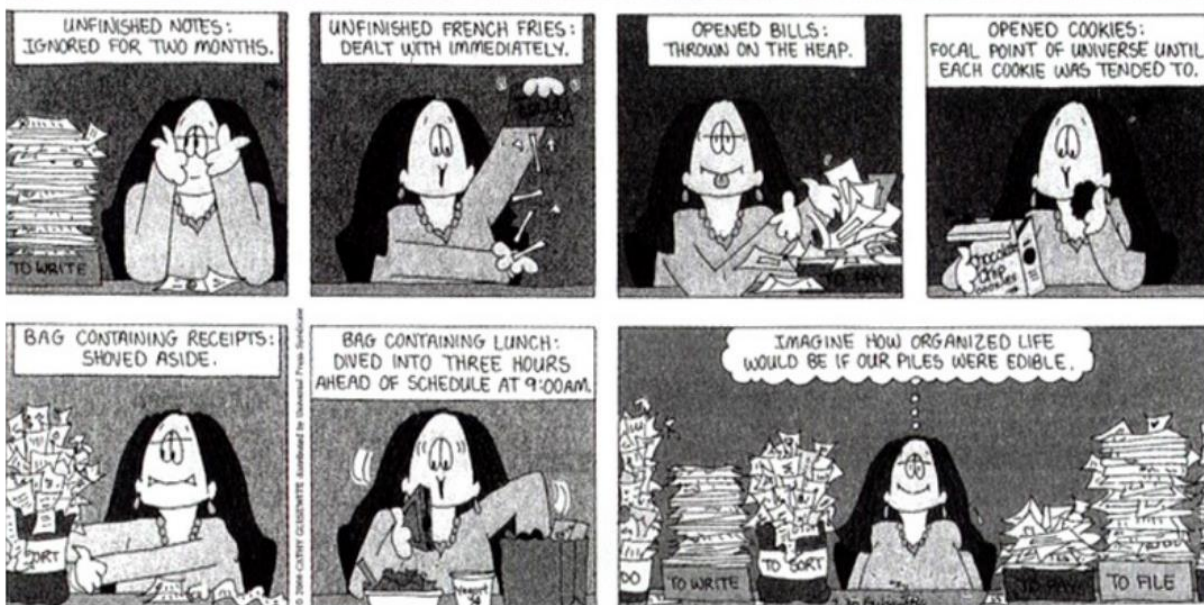
The world has not just turned upside down. It is turning in every which way at an accelerating pace.

We must learn to love change as much as we have hated it in the past. Change must become the norm.

The bottom line: if you can't point to something specific that's being done differently from the way it was done when you came to work this morning, you surely have not earned your pay cheque by any stretch of the imagination.

— Tom Peters, "Thriving on Chaos"

CATHY By Cathy Guisewite



Your ticket to employment



Effective time management applies to everyone. It impacts on how we manage our day to day to managing our lives. We do this well when we take time to identify priorities and make plans to achieve them.

This course is designed to introduce you to powerful time management processes and practices tailored specifically for professionals in the pool and spa industry. One of the biggest challenges is the coordination and cooperation by other tradespeople.

We can set priorities yet if others we are working with have different priorities then this impacts ours.

Effective time management does not mean obsessing over every second. It means:

More time for pleasurable and leisure activities

- Achieving more of what you want to do in the areas of your life
- Less stress
- Less guilt
- Better sleep

*How I manage my time,
is how I manage my life.*

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

- Gain an understanding of your current approaches to time management
- Gain an understanding of the processes and techniques that may work better for you
- Learn to use various time management tools to assist you with planning and scheduling
- Managing the day-to-day activities and looking at some ways of goal setting and breaking down larger tasks into more manageable tasks
- Managing competing priorities

DEMONSTRATE YOUR SKILLS TO:

- Identify patterns of behaviour that impact less than positively on your current time management practices
- Apply a framework to identify and set priorities
- Explore several planning tips and techniques to better manage your tasks, appointments and longer-term goals
- Apply these processes using time management tools
- Reconsider your filing and referencing practices to improve your ability to access and cross-reference important information

THERE IS ENOUGH TIME

Have you ever felt or thought that there is too little time and too much to do is a common condition for many of us.

Everyday demands or chores seem to engulf the day, leaving little time to pursue those things you enjoy. Remember you do have choices as to how you spend your time. Balancing what you need to do with what you want to do can lead to happiness and success.

Many of us complain, “There just isn’t enough time in the day!” The truth is that we have enough time to do what is important in our lives.

You can always make time for the people you value and for the activities worth doing. All you need do is become a master of how you use your time.

Turning time-management skills into habits does take time. There are several valuable techniques for managing your time and your life.

Strictly speaking, we cannot really manage time—we can only manage ourselves. As we acquire new skills in time management, we gain control over our lives.

A key to managing yourself is to know who you are and where you are going.



THE VALUE OF TIME

- To realize the value of one year, ask a student who failed his final year exam
- To realize the value of one month, ask the mother who gave birth to a premature child
- To realize the value of one week, ask an editor
- To realize the value of one day, ask a journalist
- To realize the value of one hour, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet
- To realize the value of one minute, ask the person who just missed the train
- To realize the value of one second, ask the person who just avoided an accident
- To realize the value of one millisecond, ask the person who won silver at the Olympics

— Author unknown

"There are two rules for achieving anything.

*Rule number 1: Get started.
Rule number 2: Keep going."*

— Howard Hunt

We all have 24 hours in a day yet there are some people who utilize their allocation of time effectively and efficiently whilst others are not so effective and efficient with the same time allocation.

Determining the time of day you have the most energy will improve your effectiveness for accomplishing important tasks, as well as what your life goals are and what steps you need to take to accomplish them.

Consider this: In any one year = 134 of those days include:

- 104 days (52 weekends) per year
= 1664 awake hours
- 10 days public holidays
= 160 awake hours
- 20 days annual leave
= 320 awake hours

After subtracting this from the total awake hours,

you have 365 = remaining 231 which equates to 3,696 awake hours

SETTING AND PLANNING PRIORITIES

Setting priorities according to a scale of urgent and important is a valuable method of "setting priorities" and getting the right things done. You will need a clear overview of your jobs and goals to distinguish issues and activities as urgent and important.

What drives us to believe that something is more important than another is related to our value system. Values are ideas or beliefs that we hold to be true and desirable for us as individuals. They set our direction for action. These values are then reflected in personal and organizational goals and priorities. Being able to recognize our beliefs give us further understanding into setting of our priorities.

George and Cole (1992, p 564) Knowing what is important means that you can be proactive in setting out to do the most important things. Ineffective supervisors and ineffective time managers, on the other hand, are often reactive – they attend to whatever happens in the moment, whatever makes the loudest or strongest attempts to gain their attention. Supervisors who are reactive are not in control; they are being controlled by outside events.

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

Professionals in the pool and spa industry face unique time management challenges:

- Seasonal demand fluctuations
- Supplier delays impacting maintenance schedules
- Emergency maintenance requests disrupting daily plans

Here are tips for effective time management:

- Schedule routine maintenance visits during off-peak times
- Batch similar tasks, such as water testing across multiple sites
- Use software tools to track client histories and appointment schedules
- Plan for contingencies, like equipment failures or weather disruptions
- Schedule self-care to avoid burnout



PLANNING TOOLS FOR POOLS AND SPAS

Choose tools such as digital calendars, task management apps, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems can streamline daily operations.

These are easy to use and offer task prioritization and reminders. Also can integrate with supplier and equipment databases.

CREATING EFFECTIVE HABITS

Changing time management habits takes effort.

Begin by:

- Identify time-wasting behaviours
- Replace these habits with more efficient practices (e.g., digital checklists instead of paper notes)
- Commit to regular planning sessions

SIMPLIFYING YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

A cluttered workspace leads to wasted time searching for information or tools. Maintain a well-organized workshop with clear labelling and logical storage systems for chemicals, tools, and equipment manuals.

Daily Planning Tips

- Take 15 minutes before the end of each day to plan for the next.
- Always plan in pencil.
- Learn the difference between urgent and important
- Leave time for spontaneity and interruptions.
- Don't plan every minute of every day.
- Schedule in personal/self-business time.
- Add 25% to your estimated time for each activity.
- Cluster like activities.
- Commit time for each activity, including time for maintenance and social events.
- Re-schedule activities you have no chance of completing today.
- Keep track of delegations and due dates.



SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

- Sense of direction
- Set clear goals
- Understanding and assess your current state
- Courage – take calculated risks
- Commitment – stay committed to goals
- Esteem – build self-confidence
- Set time frames – prioritize deadlines
- Slay your dragons – overcome procrastination

REFLECT ON YOUR TIME USAGE

- Draw a pie chart representing how you spent your time yesterday.
- Include activities such as work, family matters, hobbies, television, and other personal tasks.



MANAGING TIME GUZZLERS

Evaluate the following interruptions and check those affecting your productivity:

- Shifting priorities
- Telephone interruptions
- Overcommitting
- Meetings
- Lack of clear priorities
- Drop-in visitors
- Managing emails
- Ineffective delegation
- Disorganization
- Procrastination

PLANNING TOOLS

- Use a daily task list for planning.
- Software like Microsoft Outlook or job management apps can help.

CONSIDER

- Time management is about control
- Effective time management ensures satisfied clients
- Less stress
- Increased profitable business

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING TIME

Time management is essential for productivity, yet many professionals struggle with daily disruptions. Below are key challenges and strategies to overcome them.

1. Managing E-mail

Napoleon opened his mail only once each month...

Today, email overload is a significant time drain. The constant influx of messages can lead to distraction, inefficiency, and stress. Best practices for managing email include:

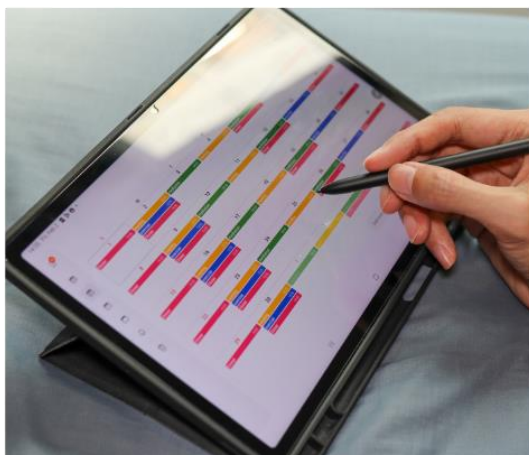
- **Batch processing:** Set designated times for checking emails rather than responding immediately.
- **Inbox organization:** Use folders, filters, and rules to prioritize messages.
- **The two-minute rule:** If an email takes less than two minutes to respond to, handle it immediately; otherwise, schedule time for it.
- **Unsubscribe and declutter:** Reduce unnecessary subscriptions and newsletters.

2. Managing Interruptions

We are interrupted on average, 73 times each day and it takes an average of 8 minutes to get back on track.

Constant interruptions can drastically reduce productivity. Managing them effectively includes:

- **Setting boundaries:** Establish “focus hours” where interruptions are minimized.
- **Using ‘Do Not Disturb’ modes:** Silence notifications and set expectations with colleagues about response times.
- **Training others:** Teach team members to assess urgency before interrupting.
- **Creating a priority system:** Schedule deep work at times when interruptions are least likely.



3. Managing Telephone Calls

It takes an average of 2.7 calls to speak to a person directly...

Unplanned phone calls can consume valuable time. To streamline telephone communication:

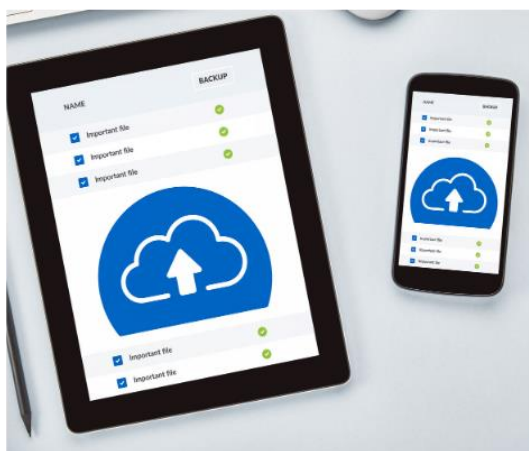
- **Use voicemail effectively:** Have a clear, concise voicemail greeting directing callers to email for urgent matters.
- **Schedule calls in advance:** Whenever possible, plan calls rather than answering them on demand.
- **Batch phone communications:** Allocate specific times to return calls instead of taking them throughout the day.
- **Use digital alternatives:** Leverage text messages, voice memos, or emails for quick responses.

4. Managing Paperwork

Research has shown that people spend an average of 4-6 hours per week searching for paper that is within arm's reach.

Paper clutter can lead to lost documents, missed deadlines, and wasted time. To manage paperwork effectively:

- **Go digital:** Convert physical documents into electronic files for easy searchability.
- **Implement a filing system:** Organize files logically with clear labels.
- **Declutter regularly:** Discard unnecessary documents and maintain only essential files.
- **Use cloud storage:** Platforms like Google Drive and Dropbox ensure documents are always accessible.



5. Managing Meetings

We spend an average of 14-16 hours a week in meetings, with 66% of people leaving meetings feeling they were a waste of time...

Meetings can be productivity killers if not well-structured. To make meetings more effective:

- **Set clear objectives:** Define the purpose and desired outcomes before scheduling.
- **Create an agenda:** Share an outline beforehand to keep discussions on track.
- **Time limit meetings:** Keep meetings concise, ideally 30-45 minutes.
- **Use technology:** Virtual meetings can save travel time and allow for efficient collaboration.
- **Eliminate unnecessary meetings:** If an email or quick update suffices, skip the meeting.



6. Procrastination

Procrastination affects productivity and increases stress. To overcome it:

- **Break tasks into smaller steps:** Large projects can feel overwhelming, so tackle them in parts.
- **Use deadlines strategically:** Set personal deadlines earlier than official ones.
- **Apply the '5-minute rule':** Commit to working on a task for just five minutes; often, this is enough to gain momentum.
- **Identify time wasters:** Recognize and eliminate distractions that lead to procrastination.
- **Use accountability:** Share goals with a colleague or mentor to stay on track.

MY DAILY PLANNER

A structured daily plan can help you manage time more effectively, reduce stress, and increase productivity. Using a Daily Achievement Task List will enable you to prioritize and track your tasks efficiently. Whether using electronic tools like Microsoft Outlook or a paper-based planner, the same principles apply.

RULES FOR SELECTING A PLANNER

Choose a planner that:

- ✓ **Requires minimal effort and complexity** – Your planner should be simple yet effective.
- ✓ **Serves your work needs** – It should help you stay organized and on top of your tasks.
- ✓ **Enhances your capabilities** – A good planner should make time management easier, not harder.



CHANGING OUR WORKING HABITS

Our daily habits shape our productivity. Just like how we develop routines in driving or home organization, our work habits determine our effectiveness. Changing habits requires awareness, consistency, and small steps towards improvement.

DAILY PLANNING TIPS

- **Take 15 minutes before the end of each day to plan for the next** – This ensures you start the next day with clarity.
- **Plan in pencil** – Flexibility is key; things may change.
- **Differentiate between urgent and important** – Focus on high-impact tasks rather than just responding to urgent matters.
- **Leave room for spontaneity and interruptions** – Over-scheduling can lead to frustration.
- **Don't plan every minute** – Ensure there's buffer time for unexpected tasks.
- **Schedule personal time** – Include breaks and self-care activities.
- **Add 25% to estimated time for each activity** – Tasks often take longer than expected.
- **Cluster similar activities** – Group related tasks to increase efficiency.
- **Allocate time for each activity, including admin and social interactions** – A balanced schedule is key.
- **Re-schedule unfinished tasks** – Adjust without guilt, but stay accountable.
- **Track delegations and due dates** – Monitor tasks assigned to others.
- **Reflection** – At the end of the day, assess whether you've maintained a balanced schedule, including exercise, relaxation, and social engagement.



GETTING ORGANIZED AT THE OFFICE

Effective time management also means managing your workspace efficiently. Consider:

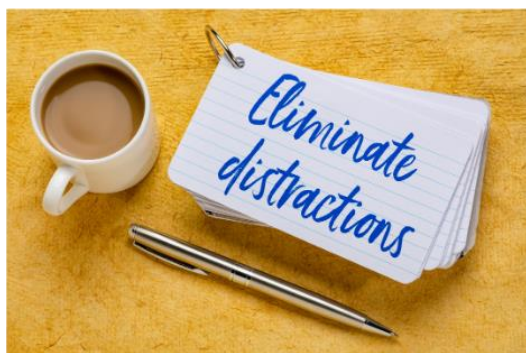
- **File arrangement and e-mail storage** – Is your filing system easy to navigate?
- **Paperwork and emails** – Are you hoarding unnecessary documents?
- **Cross-referencing with your Daily Achievement Task List** – Ensure your physical and digital files align with your planning system.



- **Use the call clock** – Limit the time spent on calls to stay on track.
- **Match tasks to energy levels** – Work on complex tasks when you're most alert.
- **Prioritize time with family and friends** – These moments matter as much as work.
- **Schedule personal recharge time** – Identify activities that energize you.
- **Leverage peak work times** – Align important tasks with your most productive hours.
- **Refine systems continuously** – Simplify, delegate, and streamline.
- **Adopt healthy habits** – Drink water, eat well, and get moving.

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

- **Know when to stop fine-tuning** – Strive for excellence, not perfection.
- **Reward yourself for task completion** – Small incentives keep motivation high.
- **Prepare for the next day the night before** – Set up essential materials and tasks.
- **Take a proper lunch break** – It enhances focus and productivity.



- **Implement a daily "quality hour"** – A distraction-free block of time for deep work.
- **Control interruptions** – Stand when dealing with unplanned visitors to keep interactions brief.
- **Create a 'Not-To-Do' list** – Avoid time-wasting activities and distractions.
- **Use committed time wisely** – Make calls while commuting, plan while waiting.
- **Learn to say "no"** – Guard your time against unnecessary obligations.
- **Manage distractions intentionally** – Keep focused on both short- and long-term goals.
- **Be strategic in meetings** – Set clear objectives and time limits.
- **Prioritize, compartmentalize, and maximize productivity** – Work smarter, not harder.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. FORMULA

S – Sense of direction – Set clear goals.

U – Understanding – Assess your current state and required changes.

C – Courage – Take calculated risks and learn from the outcomes.

C – Commitment – Stay dedicated to your objectives and support network.

E – Esteem – Respect yourself and uplift those around you.

S – Set time frames – Execution without timing is ineffective.

S – Slay your dragons – Remove barriers and limiting beliefs.

R.A.F.T. FOR PLANNING

The RAFT strategy is a structured approach used for planning and organizing tasks, often applied in writing, problem-solving, or project management. It stands for:

R – Role: Who is responsible for the task or planning?

A – Audience: Who is affected by or benefits from the plan?

F – Format: What structure or tool will be used for planning (e.g., checklist, schedule, digital planner)?

T – Topic: What is the specific goal, project, or focus of the plan?

HOW RAFT HELPS IN PLANNING

- 1. Clarifies Responsibilities –** Identifies who needs to complete tasks.
- 2. Defines Stakeholders –** Ensures all relevant parties are considered.
- 3. Structures the Process –** Organizes the plan using a clear format.
- 4. Focuses on Goals –** Keeps the planning aligned with objectives.

THE 5 P'S FOR PLANNING

The 5 P's of Planning is a structured approach to effective planning, ensuring that goals are clearly defined and executed efficiently.

The 5 P's stand for:

1. Purpose – Why are you planning?

- Define the objective of the plan.
- Clarify what needs to be achieved and why it matters.
- Align the plan with short-term and long-term goals.



2. Process – How will you achieve it?

- Identify the steps required to accomplish the goal.
- Outline resources, tools, and strategies needed.
- Establish a timeline and milestones to track progress.

3. People – Who is involved?

- Determine roles and responsibilities for each team member.
- Identify stakeholders, decision-makers, and contributors.
- Ensure clear communication and collaboration strategies.

4. Productivity – What actions will drive results?

- Prioritize high-impact tasks and avoid time-wasting activities.
- Use effective time management techniques.
- Set performance metrics to measure progress and efficiency.

5. Profit (or Progress) – What is the outcome or benefit?

- Assess the expected results and benefits of the plan.
- Evaluate whether the plan will lead to financial gains, efficiency, or personal growth.
- Review and refine the plan to ensure continuous improvement and success.

THE 5 P'S: PRIOR PLANNING PREVENTS POOR PERFORMANCE

The 5 P's of Planning—Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance—is a principle that emphasizes the importance of preparation to ensure success and efficiency in any task or project.

It highlights that lack of planning often leads to wasted time, mistakes, and inefficiencies.

How each "P" applies to time management, business, and personal productivity:

1. Prior

Start early and be proactive.

- Planning should begin before a task or project starts, allowing ample time to prepare.



- Being reactive rather than proactive can lead to rushed decisions and stress.
- Identifying potential risks and obstacles in advance helps you mitigate them before they become issues.
- Example: A business launching a new product should start planning months in advance, not weeks before the release date.

Key Takeaway: The earlier you start planning, the more control you have over outcomes.

2. Planning

Develop a structured approach to success.

- A solid plan creates a roadmap for completing tasks efficiently.
- Helps in setting goals, defining priorities, and allocating resources effectively.
- Good planning includes clear objectives, action steps, and contingency strategies.

Your ticket to employment

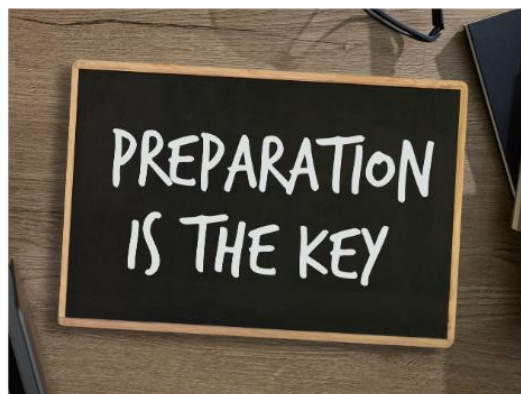
- Example: A student who plans study sessions for an exam will perform better than one who crams at the last minute.

Key Takeaway: A well-structured plan eliminates confusion, improves focus, and increases productivity.

3. Prevents

Anticipate and eliminate problems before they arise.

- Planning helps identify challenges in advance and develop strategies to overcome them.
- Reduces stress, last-minute panic, and unnecessary errors.
- Saves time, money, and resources by avoiding mistakes that require correction.
- Example: A project manager who anticipates potential delays in a construction project can schedule extra time to prevent missing deadlines.



Key Takeaway: Thoughtful preparation helps prevent costly mistakes and inefficiencies.

4. Poor

Without planning, expect inefficiencies and setbacks.

- Poor planning leads to missed deadlines, increased costs, and stress.
- Tasks take longer to complete due to lack of direction.
- Resources and effort are often wasted on rework and fixing preventable issues.
- Example: A company launching a marketing campaign without proper research might target the wrong audience, leading to poor results.

Key Takeaway: Without planning, productivity drops, and goals become harder to achieve.



5. Performance

Good planning leads to successful execution and results.

- Planning ensures tasks are completed efficiently and effectively.
- Helps teams and individuals work smarter, not harder.
- Leads to higher quality work, better decision-making, and increased confidence.
- Example: An athlete who follows a structured training plan will perform better than one who trains randomly.

Key Takeaway: Strategic planning enhances performance and leads to success in any area of life or business.

Final Thoughts: Why the 5 P's Matter

- Helps in goal-setting and time management.
- Reduces last-minute stress and errors.
- Improves focus, efficiency, and productivity.
- Leads to better decision-making and success.

By applying "Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance," individuals and organizations can stay ahead, avoid unnecessary setbacks, and achieve their goals with confidence.



NEXT STEPS

Now that you have finished reading this Learner Guide, follow these steps to continue your learning:

Complete Your Action Plan

Refer to your journal and document your key takeaways.

Outline how you will apply this knowledge in practice.

Prepare for the Knowledge Exam

Review the exam section to understand the format and expectations.

Ensure you have covered all key concepts before attempting the exam.

Complete the Practical Exam Tasks

Refer to the practical exam section for task instructions.

Follow the guidelines to demonstrate your skills effectively.

If you have any questions, refer back to the manual or seek assistance from your trainer.