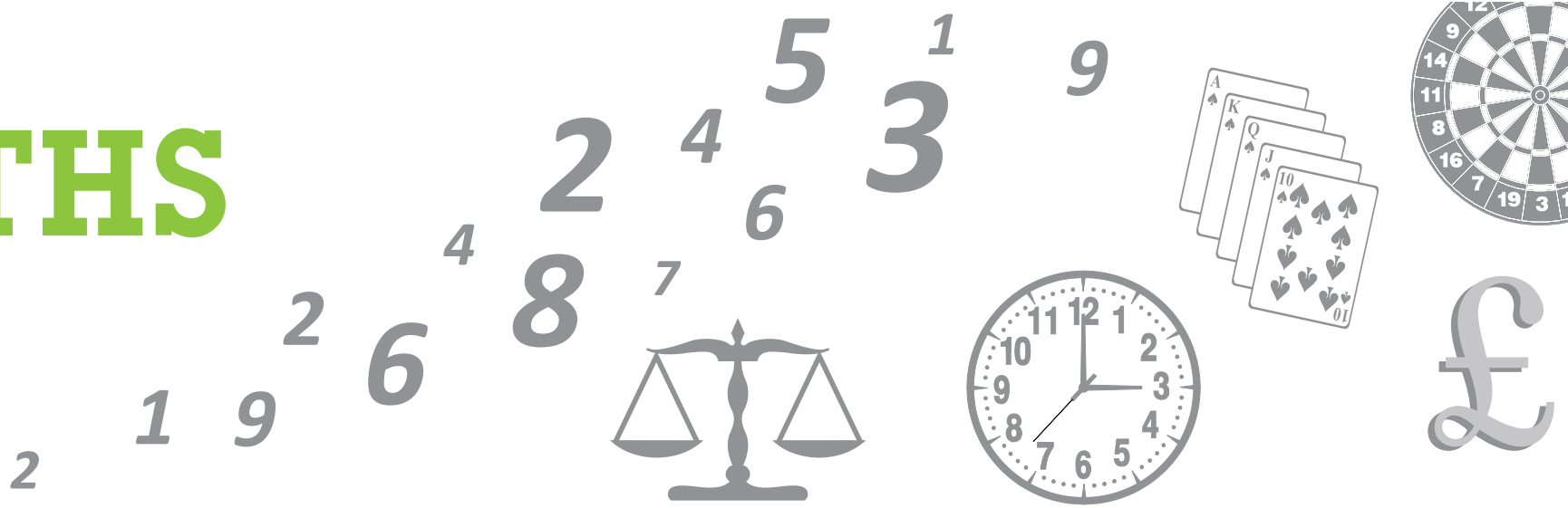


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# Catching confidence in maths

A tool to support adults with maths confidence

National Centre  
for Excellence in the  
Teaching of Mathematics



unionlearn  
with the TUC

niace  
promoting adult learning

# What the statements mean

## Statement

- 1. I can use maths in everyday life**  
Use to build confidence that individuals already use maths (e.g. think of how much maths was used to get to the appointment today).
- 2. Even if I make mistakes in maths, I can still get to the right answer in the end**  
Discuss how learning is about making mistakes, taking risks and 'getting outside your comfort zone'. Get individuals to think of examples of when learning has been uncomfortable but, ultimately, worthwhile.
- 3. I can learn maths**  
Discuss previous experiences of maths learning and how learning as an adult can be a totally different and more positive experience.
- 4. I can use a range of different ways to solve mathematical problems**  
Choose an example and compare the different ways learners approach the same problem. For example, discuss different ways of estimating the time a journey will take.

## Examples from learners

- Maths does not cause me difficulties in everyday activities (e.g. shopping, planning a journey, budgeting and paying bills, finding the best buy, decorating, checking my pay).
- Making mistakes in maths makes you feel stupid.
- Making mistakes in maths is a sign that you are stupid.
- If you make any mistakes doing maths you've failed.
- Making mistakes is part of learning.
- Making mistakes is part of trying to solve problems.
- Being willing to risk mistakes is a sign of maths confidence.
- I can struggle with a bit of maths, but that's it, no more!
- Maths is a mountain that I will never reach the top of!
- I can do some maths if I'm shown how to do it and shown again and, probably, again!
- I can learn any maths that I need to learn.
- I am going to sign up for a maths course because I find the subject so interesting.
- It might take me longer than others but I know I can do the maths I need if I stick with it.
- There's only one right way to do maths.
- If I try different ways to do maths problems I'm bound to make mistakes and that will make me feel bad.
- As long as I get the right answer why does it matter how I got there?
- I know that there are different ways to solve many maths problems.
- I am willing to try different ways to solve maths problems – even if it means making mistakes – to find the best way for me.

5. **Maths can be a fun experience for me**  
Encourage fun with maths and try some of the activities at [www.maths4us.org](http://www.maths4us.org).

■ Can it?

## Useful websites for you and your learners

[www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise)

Factsheets, worksheets, quizzes and games to help with brushing up numeracy skills.

[www.curiousmath.com](http://www.curiousmath.com)

A host of tips and tricks that might form the basis for a numeracy taster session.

[www.maths4us.org](http://www.maths4us.org)

To encourage people to tackle numeracy, take-up numeracy learning and have fun with maths (a joint initiative between NCETM, NIACE and unionlearn).

[www.nctem.org.uk](http://www.nctem.org.uk)

A wealth of resources and tools to help you realise your own – and your learners' – potential.

[www.niace.org.uk/current-work/area/numeracy](http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/area/numeracy)

Information to support more, better and different adult numeracy learning.

[www.unionlearn.org.uk](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk)

Resources for union learning representatives.

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# Catching confidence in maths – guidance notes

## Potential benefits

- The process itself can support individuals in gaining confidence in maths and their ability to learn.
- It can help individuals to identify and track changes in maths confidence and articulate factors supporting these developments.
- It can help individuals to identify learning goals.
- Reflecting on experience and progress can help individuals to heighten their skills and think about their own learning and the processes of learning in a more critical and analytical way.
- Sharing and comparing experiences can help to develop constructive and supportive group dynamics.

## Guidelines for use

- You can use the grid to engage in a dialogue about maths and maths learning. It can be completed one to one or in a group setting.
- Please adapt the grid to best meet the circumstances of your provision. For example, you may wish to merge or change some of the confidence statements or the symbols used to indicate different levels of confidence.

- Explain to individuals the reason for the activity. It explores their level of confidence now and they can return to it later, perhaps after a period of learning.
- Start by agreeing with the individual(s) what the categories ‘not confident’, ‘low in confidence’, ‘confident’ and ‘highly confident’ mean. You may want to use the ‘what the statements mean’ as the basis for an exercise to gain a common understanding.
- Let individuals suggest any additional indicators. For example, they may wish to add another statement of confidence.
- Individuals should place the number of symbols in the boxes that best show how they feel.
- You may find it useful to take a photocopy of each person’s grid so you have your own record.

*Adapted from Catching Confidence – The nature and role of confidence – ways of developing and recording changes in the learning context. NIACE, 2005*

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2

1

9

2

6

4

8

7



2  
8

# Catching confidence in maths – a tool to support adults with maths confidence

**1** Not confident

**2** Low in confidence

**3** Confident

**4** Highly confident

	How you feel now Date:	How you feel after a period of learning Date:
1. I can use maths in everyday life		
2. Even if I make mistakes in maths, I can still get to the right answer in the end		
3. I can learn maths		
4. I can use a range of different ways to solve mathematical problems		
5. Maths can be a fun experience for me		

Name:

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