

**Discussion Activity**

**Knowing how: suggested class activity**

*To students:* Identify one thing that you know how to do that can be demonstrated in under two minutes and could possibly be taught in not much more (taught at least to a recognizable level). The skills should be something easy and enjoyable to bring into class: juggling, playing a simple melody on a recorder, singing a short song in another language, a dance step, a shortcut in a mathematical problem, a handy method of organizing time, a trick of manipulating photographs on a laptop computer, whistling, a card trick, a way of putting on a cultural garment, a culturally appropriate way of giving greetings or conducting a ceremony that is unfamiliar to most in the class, and so on. (It’s possible that two or three students might want to work together to demonstrate some kinds of skills.) When you have thought of something that you could demonstrate and teach, write down your proposal and hand it in to your teacher.

*To the teacher:* Take in the proposals in advance of the class in which you will do the activity. With your awareness of how much class time is available, select three or four of the proposals to be put into action and give the students advance warning to prepare to demonstrate and teach the skills. Depending on the nature of the skill, it could be taught either to one or two other individuals in front of the class or to the entire class. Ideally, your selection will showcase skills of quite different sorts.

On the day you have scheduled this, arrange the classroom for the demonstrations – and enjoy the results. When the students have finished and been applauded, it is time to move into discussion provoked by the skills demonstrated. You will probably want to run through the other proposals as well so that all of the possible skills can come into the discussion.

Is knowing how to do something essentially different from knowing information?

How are skills learned? To what extent does the learning depend on the kind of skill? What different ways of teaching and learning can you identify for the skills demonstrated in your class?

To what extent is the skill the thing that can be demonstrated? To what extent is it also the understanding on the part of the person possessing the skill? In knowing how to do something, is there often an experiential understanding, or an attitude, or an emotional component involved?

Can you state precisely in language what your skill is? Is it “to run fast”, “play hard”, or “make an excellent cup of tea”? Or is there a dimension of the skill that is difficult to put into language?

Of the skills demonstrated in class and the others proposed, what ones seem to fit into a larger body of knowledge? Do they contribute to areas of knowledge or social skills, or skills for public competition?

What skills are you learning in your IB subjects? In what ways do you have to demonstrate them to get credit for your courses? In what ways do you expect to apply them in the future after your IB studies?