

Notice. Test. Practice. Adapt.

A practical learning loop with the Feynman teach-back method

Know how you learn so you can teach yourself what you do not yet know. Learning means finding what is true, trying an approach, making the skill usable, and changing course when the evidence calls for it.

01 NOTICE

What is actually happening?

Observe before judging. Name what works and locate the exact point of confusion.

Example: I have the chords, but the rhythm does not match.

02 TEST

What can I try?

Try a small experiment. Listen again, isolate a part, sketch it, ask, or check a source.

Example: Loop four bars and compare the rhythm.

03 PRACTICE

Can I make it work myself?

Repeat and apply the idea until you can do it without copying a demonstration.

Example: Rebuild those bars without following the tutorial.

04 ADAPT

What should I change based on what I learned?

Use the result as evidence. Change the method or redefine the problem, then notice again.

Example: Try a slower section or a different listening approach.

THE FEYNMAN TEACH-BACK

Can you explain it clearly, without hiding behind jargon?

Who was Richard Feynman? Richard Feynman (1918–1988) was a theoretical physicist and Caltech professor. He shared the 1965 Nobel Prize in Physics for work on quantum electrodynamics, which explains interactions between light and charged particles. He was known for teaching difficult ideas clearly. These steps are a modern teach-back routine inspired by his approach, not a method he published verbatim.

1. Choose one idea

Pick a specific concept: tempo mapping, signal flow, or song structure.

3. Find what is missing

Notice where you skip steps or cannot explain why.

2. Explain it simply

Teach it in your own words. Try without looking at notes.

4. Return and re-explain

Check a reliable source, test the idea, and try again.

CLASS QUESTION

“Where did you already do this during the Beatles recreation without realizing you were doing it? Or on some other project?”

Name a moment when you noticed a problem, tested an idea, practiced it, and adapted. Then teach someone one thing you learned in plain language.

Feynman background: Caltech | feynmanlectures.caltech.edu