

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP



Practical Steps. Real Impact. Stronger Leaders.



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INSPIRE OTHERS



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Beginner's Guide to Leadership

Introduction

Leadership is one of the most important skills a person can learn. Whether you are leading a team at work, running a small business, coordinating a community project, or managing your family, leadership influences the way people work together and achieve their goals. Many people believe that leadership is only for managers, CEOs, or famous public figures. In fact, leadership is a skill that can be learned and developed by anyone.

A good leader does not simply give orders, but rather is someone who builds trust, communicates effectively, solves problems, and helps others grow. Leadership isn't about being the loudest person in the room or the most powerful. It is about influence, responsibility, and the ability to lead people toward a common goal.

There has never been a greater need for leadership. Companies change rapidly, technology advances quickly, and teams are often dispersed across cultures and locations. Strong leaders can keep people focused and motivated in uncertain times. They create positive environments where teamwork and creativity flourish.

This e-book is for beginners who want to learn the basics of leadership. Language is simple and practical, so that anyone can apply the lessons in daily life. This guide will take you through real-life examples, practical tips, and strategies to help you become a better leader, step by step.

You don't have to wait years to be a leader. Leadership begins with small things: listening carefully, taking responsibility, helping others, and being a good example. All great leaders started as beginners.

By the time you finish reading this, you will:

- Understand what leadership really means.
- Recognise the qualities of effective leaders.
- Discover the importance of communication for leadership success.
- Find out ways to build trust with people and motivate them to do things.
- Discover how to handle challenges and conflicts.
- Learn about habits that help improve your leadership skills.

Leadership is something you work on every day. It is not something you achieve and then stop cultivating. The goal of leadership is not to be perfect, but to continually learn and improve over time. Leadership is a journey, not a destination you arrive at.

Chapter 1: Understanding Leadership

Leadership is the ability to guide, influence, and support people in reaching a shared goal. It exists in many areas of life, not only in business and politics. Teachers lead students, coaches lead teams, parents lead families, and employees can lead projects even without formal job titles.

One common misunderstanding is that leadership and management are the same thing, but they are actually different.

Managers usually focus on planning, organizing, and making sure work is completed efficiently. Leaders focus more on inspiring, motivating, and guiding people. A manager may ensure tasks are completed on time, while a leader helps people feel motivated to finish those tasks.

Types of Leadership

There are several different leadership styles, and no single style works perfectly in every situation. Effective leaders often adapt to their approach depending on the people, goals, and challenges involved.

1. Democratic Leadership

Democratic leaders promote teamwork and invite others to share their ideas before making decisions. Example: A project leader solicits suggestions from team members before selecting a marketing strategy.

Benefits:

- Encourages creativity
- Builds trust within the team
- Improves collaboration

Challenges:

- Decision-making can be slower because more people are involved.

2. Authoritarian leadership

Decisions are made quickly and clearly laid out by the leader. Example: During a medical emergency, a senior doctor directly instructs the members of staff on what is needed.

Benefits:

- Quick decision-making
- Clear framework

Challenges

- Staff can feel disconnected over time.

3. Servant Leadership

Servant leaders focus on helping others succeed. They really care about the growth and well-being of their team members.

Example: A team leader takes time to train employees and help them develop new skills.

Benefits:

- Builds loyalty
- Creates a positive work environment

Challenges:

- Leaders may sometimes focus so much on others that they neglect their own needs.
- Setting boundaries can be difficult.

4. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders are great at inspiring people to improve, grow and make impactful changes. Example: A company founder motivates employees to create products that make customers' lives better.

Benefits:

- Encourages innovation and creativity
- Inspires people to work toward a shared vision

Challenges:

- Requires strong communication skills and consistent support during change.

Chapter 2: Essential Qualities of a Good Leader

Good leaders share certain qualities that help them guide, support, and inspire others. Most leadership traits are not something people are born with. They are developed through practice, experience, and continuous learning.

1. Integrity

Integrity is about being honest and doing the right thing even when you are not being watched. Trustworthy leaders keep their promises and act fairly.

Real-Life Example: In 2018, Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, discussed in public the concept of ethical leadership and accountability in the development and use of artificial intelligence technologies. The company had established clear policies ensuring that all AI technologies were developed ethically and responsibly, even if those policies could ultimately lead to delays in the profitability and growth of products and services. This philosophy resulted in increased trust among customers, employees, and governments.

Practical Tip: Leaders demonstrate their integrity by prioritizing trust over short-term results. They must be honest, responsible, and driven by principles, not by ease.

2. Confidence

Leaders must have confidence to make decisions and to help lead people through tough times. Confidence is different from arrogance: it means believing in your capacity to learn and grow.

Real-Life Example: Jacinda Ardern was the leader of New Zealand when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. She performed well by making decisions quickly, informing people about what was happening, and staying calm when things were uncertain. Her calm and transparent communication helped people feel informed and reassured during a difficult time.

Another example is Elon Musk at SpaceX. The company experienced several failed rocket launches before eventually succeeding. Instead of giving up, Musk and his team kept striving to improve their technology until they achieved reliable rocket landings.

Practical Tip: Preparation and experience lead to self-confidence. Keep your abilities sharp, learn about new trends. Do not be afraid to make mistakes. Mistakes are part of growth and can help you become more confident over time.

3. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand what other people are thinking or feeling. Leaders who show empathy are often better at building trust, improving teamwork, and creating supportive environments.

Real-Life Example: Satya Nadella is a leader who showed strong empathy. He made sure that Microsoft was a place where people felt heard, by encouraging managers to listen to employees. His leadership contributed to a stronger, supportive, and more collaborative work environment.

Then there is Howard Schultz, another example of an empathetic leader. When he was in charge of Starbucks, he made sure the employees got healthcare and help with education. He believed that when leaders care about employees, employees feel more loyal, motivated, and committed to their work.

In the sports world, Jürgen Klopp became known for supporting his players both professionally and personally while coaching Liverpool F.C. This helped build trust and made the team stronger.

Practical Tip: Show genuine interest in others. Ask how they are and try to put yourself in their shoes before making judgements.

4. Responsibility

Leaders are willing to take ownership of any successes or failures that occur. Instead of blaming others when problems happen, they focus on finding solutions and helping the team improve.

Real-Life Example: In 2019, Tim Cook publicly took responsibility for the slowdown in iPhone sales at Apple and focused on improving products and services rather than blaming employees or customers. His response was accountable and helped maintain public trust in the company.

Another case is Jacinda Ardern. During national crises, she did not shy away from taking responsibility by communicating openly with the citizens and clearly explaining government decisions. Her style of leadership was one of accountability and transparency.

In sports, Pep Guardiola often takes responsibility for major losses, rather than blaming players. This method ensures that the team remains confident and fosters improvement at Manchester City F.C.

Practical Tip: Good leaders focus on solving problems, learn from their mistakes, support their teams, and work together to improve future results.

5. Communication Skills

Effective communication helps prevent confusion, misinformation, and misunderstandings. It also ensures that teams work more effectively.

Effective communication includes:

- Speaking clearly
- Listening carefully
- Giving constructive feedback
- Explaining goals and expectations clearly

Real-Life Example: Everybody knows that Barack Obama is a great speaker. In speeches and public debates, he simplified complex issues and made them understandable, making people feel informed and connected.

At PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi stayed connected with her employees through regular meetings and personal letters. Her transparent and respectful communication style was central to building trust and a strong team within the company.

Steve Jobs had a knack for selling products simply and excitingly. His presentations helped customers and employees understand the company's vision and goals.

Practical Tip: Write down your key points before meetings and presentations. Keep your message simple. Good communication makes people understand the expectations and work together more effectively.

6. Adaptability

The world changes constantly, and effective leaders must be able to adapt to new situations, technologies, and challenges.

Real-Life Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom expanded its services and improved platform security to support millions of people working and studying from home. Its ability to adapt helped the company grow rapidly during a difficult period.

Netflix is another example of adaptability. The company used to send DVDs to people's homes. The people in charge saw that technology was changing and decided to start streaming movies and shows online instead. This was a smart move, helping Netflix become one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world. In the automotive industry, Tesla saw that people were becoming more concerned about the environment and decided to focus on electric vehicles and battery technology. This strategy helped Tesla influence major changes in the car industry all around the world.

These examples all demonstrate that companies need to be able to adapt to changes, rather than resist them, if they want to be successful.

Practical Tip: Adaptable leaders are those who ask questions and keep learning during change. Instead of becoming fearful of new technology or ideas, adaptable leaders see change as a way to seize new opportunities.

Building Leadership Qualities Daily

Leadership development is a slow, consistent process. Small changes can result in huge benefits over the long run.

Daily habits that can contribute to leadership development include:

- Reading leadership and communication-related books.
- Requesting feedback on behavior.
- Exercising patience.
- Reflecting on decisions and actions made.
- Assisting other people in the problem-solving process.

Leadership is not about striving for perfection but about communication and progress.

Chapter 3: Communication and Listening Skills

One of the most potent assets a leader can cultivate is communication skills. The most brilliant plan is useless if it cannot be effectively communicated. Good communication increases credibility and confidence, limits mistakes and misinterpretations, and allows teamwork to flourish.

The Importance of Clear Communication

Leaders need to tell their team about goals, what they expect, and how they're doing. Imagine a team working on a project with no plan. Team members might get confused and do the work twice or miss important dates. This can waste time, lower motivation, and create frustration. Clear communication helps team members understand their tasks, deadlines, and responsibilities. On the other hand, people feel more confident. When leaders communicate clearly, team members know what to do. They can

trust their leaders. Clear communication is really important for a team's success. Leaders must communicate goals clearly to their team. They also need to give feedback that helps team members improve.

Active Listening

A lot of people think that speaking is more important than listening. The truth is, great leaders like Howard Schultz know that listening is just as important as speaking.

When we talk about listening, we mean really listening. This means:

- Paying attention to what the other person is saying.
- Not getting distracted by other things.
- Asking questions to make sure we understand.
- Showing that we get what they are saying.

For example, Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, always made it a point to listen to his employees and customers. He would really listen to what they had to say. This helped Starbucks make things better for its employees and customers. Howard Schultz and his team at Starbucks were able to do this because they listened to the people who mattered, the employees and customers of Starbucks.

Non-Verbal Communication

The way you move your body says a lot about you as a leader. Body language is really important for leadership. People look at how you act. They can tell what kind of leader you are.

Here are some examples of positive non-verbal communication:

- Eye contact
- Friendly facial expressions
- Open posture
- Calm tone of voice

If you have bad body language, it can make people feel uncomfortable even if you do not say anything. Body language can make people feel tense. That is not good for leadership.

Giving Feedback

Giving feedback is a way to help people get better. Leaders who are good at their job give feedback in a way that is helpful. Helpful feedback should be specific and focused on improvement: "I think this part would be better if we added information."

When we give helpful feedback, we should focus on finding solutions to problems instead of saying mean things to people. Constructive feedback focuses on the problem, not the person. It helps people learn and improve without feeling attacked.

Handling Difficult Conversations

Leaders sometimes need to talk about mistakes, conflicts, or when people are not doing a job.

When it comes to conversations, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Stay calm and do not get upset.
- Focus on the facts
- Try not to get emotional.

- Listen to the other person very upset, together to find a way to solve the problem and discover a solution that works for everyone. That is what leaders should do when they have difficult conversations about mistakes, conflicts, or poor performance.

Communication in Remote Teams

The contemporary workplace is more likely than ever to include employees working from remote locations.

When leaders are managing teams at a distance, they need to:

- Schedule regular meetings, but not overload the team.
- Use written communication to avoid misunderstandings.
- Create space for informal conversations.
- Pay attention to team members' well-being.

Practical Communication Exercises

Every conversation is a chance for you to improve your communication skills and become a leader. Some practical exercises to do regularly are the following:

- You should practice summarizing what people say in conversations, as it will help you understand things better.
- Ask questions that make people talk a lot.
- Record yourself when you speak so you can hear how you sound and try to speak clearly.
- Watch people who are good at speaking and giving presentations.
- Read books and other things every day to learn new words.

The more you practice communicating with people, the better you will get at it.

Chapter 4: Building Trust and Motivating Others

Trust is the basis of leadership. Without trust, teams find it hard to work together effectively. People follow leaders they trust because they feel safe, respected, and valued.

How Leaders Build Trust

1. Consistency

Consistent leaders are dependable. Their words align with their actions. If a leader says they will support you but never does, trust is quickly broken.

Employees won't trust a leader who says they'll have their back and then never do.

Real-Life Example: Howard Schultz. He always cared about the employees by offering benefits of healthcare and education to many employees at Starbucks. Time and time again, employees saw leadership support in action, and trust grew within the company.

Practical Tip: Leaders gain trust by consistently acting in the best interest of their teams, not by what they say. Small, reliable actions repeated over time build strong relationships and credibility.

2. Honesty

Trust in leadership can be built through candor. It is appropriate for leaders to be open and honest with followers about key information when feasible.

Real-Life Example: Paul Polman openly talked about sustainability challenges and long-term environmental goals at Unilever. His honesty helped build trust with employees, customers, and investors.

3. Respect

Good leaders think about how everyone feels. They know that the little things they do are important. Simple things can make a difference:

- Saying thank you to the people who work with you.
- Listening to what they have to say.
- Letting them know you see how hard they are trying.
- Treating people fairly so they feel happy and want to work.

Leaders like this make people feel good about themselves and the work they do.

4. Motivating Others

Motivation keeps people on track and productive. The things that motivate people are different.

Some staff appreciate the following:

- Career development
- Cash rewards
- Flexible working hours
- Work with purpose

5. Encouraging Teamwork

Great leaders create environments where teamwork can thrive.

How to encourage teamwork:

- Establish shared goals
- Celebrate success together
- Open discussion invited
- Resolve disputes fairly

Practical Motivation Tips

- Learn about what your team members want to achieve.
- Encourage them to improve their skills.
- Help them balance work and personal life.
- Create team activities that everyone looks forward to.
- Focus on what your team members do well, not only on what they need to improve.

When teams are motivated, they come up with ideas, get more done, and are more committed to the team.

Think of a leader you trust. What do they do that makes you trust them?

Chapter 5: Decision-Making and Problem Solving

Decision-making takes place on an everyday basis among leaders. Some are tiny, but others concern an organization as a whole. Effective decision-making involves analysis, confidence, appreciation and patience.

Steps in Effective Decision-Making

1. Identify the Problem

Try to fully grasp the scenario before taking any action. Ask questions like:

- What is really going on?
- Why is this happening?
- Who is concerned?

2. Gather Information

Gather evidence instead of relying on assumptions.

For example, a manager notices that sales figures are declining. Instead of immediately blaming the staff, the manager checks customer feedback, market conditions, and product quality.

3. Consider Options

Good leaders look at a lot of solutions to problems. They talk to their team members and come up with ideas together whenever they can.

4. Make a Decision

Do not wait long for all the information you need. Sometimes leaders have to make decisions fast using the information they have now.

5. Evaluate Results

When a leader makes a decision and puts it into action, they should look at what happens.

Ask these questions:

- Did the solution to the problem work well for the team?
- What can the leader do to improve the solution at the right time?

Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-solving requires ingenuity and logic.

Real-life Example: When Netflix's physical DVD rental business was on the decline, business leaders chose to transition to an online streaming service. This would go on to revolutionize entertainment as we know it.

Managing Risk

Risk is inherent in any decision. Leaders must be prepared to identify potential problems, develop contingency plans, and weigh risks against rewards.

Practical Exercises

- Review previous decisions and outcomes.
- Work on resolving minor everyday problems.
- Seek guidance from mentors.
- Study business and leadership case histories.

As in most matters, better decision-making develops with experience and self-reflection.

Chapter 6: Handling Conflict and Challenges

Conflict is something that happens when people work together. People will not always agree with each other.

Good leaders do not avoid conflict completely. Instead, they identify problems early and manage them in a fair and constructive way, so that conflict does not get out of hand.

Common causes of conflict include the following:

- Miscommunication
- Differing ideas
- Conflict of interests
- Lack of role clarity
- Personality clashes

Why Conflict Management Matters

The unresolved conflict reduces teamwork, decreases productivity, and increases the pressure.

On the other hand, some conflict can actually be beneficial: it might generate new ideas and improve the work.

Steps to Resolve Conflict

Step 1 (Stay Calm): When things get tough, people can get emotional. Leaders should always stay calm and professional and not let their emotions take over.

Step 2 (Listen to All Sides): Let everyone voice their own thoughts. Don't jump to conclusions.

Step 3 (Focus on Solutions): The goal is not to “win” the argument, but to solve the problem. Focus on the issue, not on the people.

Step 4 (Encourage Respectful Communication): People should talk about problems without saying mean things to each other or getting personal but rather trying to understand other people's perspective.

Step 5 (Follow Up): Once the conflict has been resolved, check whether the solution is working.

Real-life example: When you think of the roles of coaches in sports teams, you would think of coaches mediating conflicts between players of contrasting personalities. When a coach handles these disputes effectively, they are able to create rules, develop teamwork, and direct the team toward the desired outcome.

Handling Failure

All leaders experience setbacks. Failure is not the end of the line for a leader.

Some well-known failures include:

- Walt Disney was fired from a newspaper for “not being creative.”
- Steve Jobs was kicked out of Apple. He later returned and led major innovations at the company. The examples suggest that failure can be an opportunity to learn.

Practical Challenge Handling Tips

- Be flexible in unexpected situations.
- Focus on long-term objectives.
- Learn from errors.
- Cultivate supportive relationships.
- Continue to build on your skills.

Strong leaders are not problem-free people. They are people who keep moving forward against the odds.

Chapter 7: Developing Your Leadership Journey

Leadership is a lifelong process of learning and self-improvement. Even the most experienced leaders are still acquiring new skills.

Setting Leadership Goals

Clear goals help leaders develop.

For example:

- Public speaking improvement
- Learn to resolve conflicts
- Develop self-esteem
- Develop your ability to delegate

Set goals and review progress on a regular basis.

Finding Mentors

Mentors offer guidance, lifelong support, and good advice.

Who can be a mentor?

- A supervisor
- A teacher.
- Coach
- A businessman
- A veteran colleague

Learning from others can speed up leadership development.

Reading and Learning

A lot of leaders make time to read all the time. They know that reading is a way to learn new things. Successful leaders can get knowledge from things like books, podcasts, and online courses. There are some topics that successful leaders like to study, including:

- Communication, because successful leaders need to know how to communicate.
- Psychology, which is the study of how people think and feel.
- Business, because successful leaders need to know how to run a business.
- Teamwork, which is working with other people.
- Time management, which is the way successful leaders make the most of their time, requires them to know how to manage their time well so they can get everything done that they need to do, and that is why time management is so important for successful leaders.

Building Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is about knowing what you're good at and what you need to work on. Some questions to think about:

- What are my best qualities as a leader?
- Which skills do I need to get better at?
- What do other people think about how I behave?
- How do I use my strengths to lead?
- What are some things I do that might be holding me back?
- How can I improve my weaknesses?
- How can I use my strengths more effectively?

Daily Leadership Habits

Small daily habits help you get better in the long run: Arrive prepared every day

- Listen more than you talk
- Keep your work organized
- Show people you appreciate them
- Think about what you did
- Keep learning things

Leadership does not happen overnight. You become a leader by doing the right things every day. Consistent habits help shape leaders over a period of time. Leadership is about doing things right every day.

Conclusion

You know leadership is not just for a select group of powerful people. Anyone truly willing to learn, practice, and grow can become a really effective leader. Throughout this guide, we have looked at the basics of leadership, like good communication, building trust, motivating people, making decisions, and leading, as well as sorting out conflicts. These are not just skills for work; they come in handy everywhere in schools, with your family, in sports, and within your community, too.

A really important lesson about leading others is remembering that people are what truly matter. Great leaders really focus on building strong connections, making sure everyone works well as a team, and achieving success together. They listen carefully, act honestly, and always support others, whether things are going well or hitting a rough patch.

Leadership also demands courage. Leaders often need to make tough choices, face challenges head-on, and keep improving, even when they make mistakes. No one becomes a perfect leader overnight. True growth comes from experience, taking time to think things over, and just sticking with it.

Examples from history, business, and sports demonstrate how effective leadership can spur constructive change. Through empathy and teamwork, executives like Satya Nadella changed the culture of their companies. Businesses that adjusted during emergencies prospered because their executives remained adaptable and solution-focused.

You don't have to run a big business to begin practicing leadership as a novice. You can start right now by:

- Accepting accountability for your deeds
- Developing communication abilities
- Helping people

- Maintaining integrity and dependability
- Acquiring knowledge from errors
- Leading by example

Rather than major events, leadership is frequently developed via small, focused decisions, leading everyday activities. Examples of leadership in action include supporting a teammate, paying close attention to someone's worries, helping others during trying times, and being composed under pressure. Your character is progressively shaped by these little actions, which also have an impact on those around you.

Additionally, novices should realize that being a leader is not about having all the answers. Effective leaders are open to seeking guidance, asking questions, and lifelong learning. In many situations, teamwork and collaboration are more important than individual success. Stronger bonds and more productive teams are frequently created by leaders who maintain their humility and open-mindedness.

Resilience is another crucial component of leadership. Every leader encounters criticism, obstacles, and unforeseen issues. The capacity to grow from these setbacks rather than give up is what sets effective leaders apart from others. Errors should be seen as chances for development and progress rather than as irreversible failures.

Additionally, leadership has a knock-on impact. Positive leadership has the power to boost others' self-esteem, drive, and development. Leaders who treat others fairly and with respect inspire others to follow suit. Workplaces, communities, schools, and even families can all benefit from this.

The modern world is constantly changing due to technology and global shifts, which makes leadership abilities more and more important. Today, organizations require leaders who can support diverse teams, connect across cultural boundaries, solve challenges imaginatively, and adjust to change. Early development of these skills will better prepare beginners for opportunities in the future.

It is crucial to keep in mind that different people may have different leadership philosophies. While some leaders are quiet and composed, others are active and talkative. No single personality type is ideal for leadership. Integrity, accountability, empathy, and a desire to see others succeed are the most important qualities.

To keep working on being a leader, you should think about what you did. At the end of each day or week, ask yourself some questions. For example:

- Did I tell people what I meant in a way that was easy to understand?
- Did I pay attention to what others were saying?
- Did I deal with problems in any way?
- What can I do better with time?

Thinking about these things can help you get better at leading over time. You will grow as a leader by reflecting on your actions. Leadership is about learning and growing. So thinking about what you did is a big part of your leadership journey. As you keep learning, remember that being a leader is something that takes time; it is not something you become overnight. Every tough time you face is a chance for you to learn something.

The world needs leaders who are responsible, respectful, adaptable, and caring. If you keep working on your skills and help other people do well, you can become a leader who really makes a difference in the world.

It does not matter how old you are, where you come from, or what you have done before; you can still become a leader. Being a leader starts when you decide to do things, help other people, and keep getting better. Leadership is a journey. It is all about becoming a better leader every day.

One action, one choice, and one lesson at a time, your leadership journey begins today.

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