

PDSAs

What is it and how can it help me?

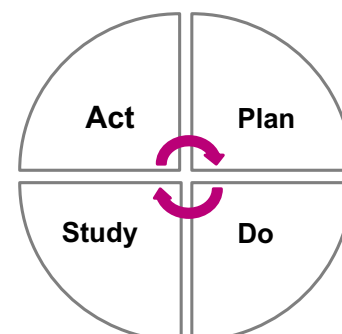
Once a team has set an aim and developed measures to determine whether a change leads to an improvement, the next step is to test a change in the real work setting. The four stages of the PDSA cycle are:

Plan: the change to be tested or implemented

Do: carry out the test or change

Study: data before and after the change and reflect on it

Act: plan the next change cycle or full implementation



When does it work best?

You may not get the results you expect when making changes to your processes, so it is safer, and more effective to test out improvements on a small scale before implementing them across the board. Using PDSA cycles enables you to test out changes before wholesale implementation and gives stakeholders the opportunity to see if the proposed change will work. Using the PDSA cycle involves testing new change ideas on a small scale. For example, trying out a new way to make appointments for one consultant or one clinic.

Steps in the PDSA cycle

Plan:

Plan the test or observation, including a plan for collecting data:

- State the objective of the test
- Make predictions about what will happen and why
- Develop a plan to test the change (Who? What? When? Where? What data needs to be collected?)

Do:

Try out the test on a small scale:

- Carry out the test
- Document problems and any unexpected outcomes
- Begin analysis of the data

Study:

Review the data and study the results:

- Complete the analysis of the data
- Compare the data to your predictions
- Summarise and reflect on what was learned

Act:

Refine the change, based on what was learned from the test:

- Determine what modifications should be made
- Prepare a plan for the next test

Why test change before implementing?

- Learn and adapt
- Increase degree of belief
- Build a common understanding
- Evaluate costs and side effects
- Reduce total lead time of full implementation
- Test ideas under different conditions

Tips

Test on a really small scale. For example, start with one patient or one clinician at one afternoon clinic. Test the proposed change with people who believe in the improvement. Don't try to convert people into accepting the change at this stage.