

STUDY SMARTER, NOT LONGER

Good study skills and habits can help you to use your time more effectively and efficiently. It is a myth that the good student is born with some superior intelligence or intellectual ability. Achieving students put in considerable study time and concentration into their academic work. The key is studying "smarter, not longer." Study skills and habits are learned; sometimes through formal training, but more often, through trial and error. It is not unusual to acquire some habits that are poor or inadequate. Use the study habits check list. It may help you to pin point the areas you need to work on.

The following suggestions have been taken from a number of resources, but they are just tips which means that they are only small bits of a vast amount of information available to help you.

For your own benefit, you may wish to take the 2-credit hour College Survival Skills course--EXL 105, check out study skills books in the LRC, or sign up for some mini-workshops for study skills.

LET'S GET ORGANIZED

TIME

Plan for study time. How do you spend the hours in your day? There are 168 hours in a week. So much is needed for the essentials of sleeping, eating, traveling time, classes, job survival need. No one has found a way to put 28 hours into a 24-hour day, so don't overschedule. A good guideline is two hours study time for each credit hour you are taking. Remember, you don't find time to study; you must make time. Even 15 minutes spent in quick review can be helpful. For the most effectiveness, try to schedule study periods of uninterrupted 1 or 2 hour blocks. But at the end of an hour, take a 10-minute break. Give your mind a chance to absorb the material. Walk around, change the scenery.

Prepare a calendar for the quarter. Your class syllabus is a help here. Mark all important dates for assignments in your different classes. This may prevent some overload at mid-term and at the end of the quarter. It will also give you a visual picture of what needs to be done and when. The calendar can also be an aid in estimating and allocating study time. Some subjects may require more time one week than another. It may also help you to avoid slighting a subject because you don't like it or find it difficult. That may be the subject for which you will need to spend the most time.

It is better to study a subject 1/2 hour to 1 hour every day than try to study 3 hours straight every 3 or 4 days. The weekends are good for working on research projects which require a lot of time or novels, plays, histories, etc., which require some continuity to comprehend the theme or message.

ENVIRONMENT

Select an area in a quiet place and reserve it especially for your studying. While some individuals like to have a radio or TV playing, these can be distractions and require extra effort and energy to block out for concentration.

If there is a lot of confusion at home, try to plan study time in the LRC at Sinclair. Beware of the cafeteria. It is too easy to socialize.

STUDY TOOLS

In your study area, keep all necessary books and papers handy. Included should be a good dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus. Other items you may want to keep on hand are: note paper, scratch paper, pens pencils, hi-liter pens, etc. This is your work place, so keep those items that will help you do a better job.

A GOOD BEGINNING

ATTITUDE

Look at going to school as you would work on a job. If you are taking over 12 credit hours, that is like a 40-hour work week.

Approach study with confidence and belief that you will get a lot accomplished. Your motivation is a part of the confidence you have in yourself to succeed. Get involved in the subject matter. The more interest you put into a course, the more interesting it becomes.

When do you operate best? Are you a morning or night person? Not everyone operates on the same biological clock. What is your best time?

Prepare yourself to study by taking several minutes to relax. If you know Yoga or other relaxation exercises, they are helpful. Allow yourself several minutes to think about your favorite peaceful scene and try diaphragmatic breathing. Relax and put your mind in a receptive frame for new material, ideas, and concepts.

Now you are ready to devote yourself exclusively to study and concentration. Work intensely and do not permit your mind to wander. Put yourself in control.

GETTING STARTED

For each study period, set an objective. What do you expect to accomplish in this period, such as: read and outline 1-2-3 chapters; work so many problems correctly; read and be able to explain in your own words...Don't set unreasonable goals but do demand work from yourself! Remember **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN LEARNING!**

Review your class notes. Was there anything in the lecture that you should follow up in the text. Be sure to check the syllabus. Do you understand the learning objectives for the class? Are there objectives listed for each chapter? Your studying should be done with these in mind. **DIRECT YOUR LEARNING.**

Every subject area has its special vocabulary. Sometimes there is a glossary provided in the back of the textbook. Become familiar with these terms to help improve your understanding of the subject. Some students find that keeping a notebook of these words and definitions is very useful.

READING

Most of your studying will involve reading and will require a different approach than pleasure reading. For many subjects the reading required is not so technical but voluminous. In these cases, reading faster is essential. Try reading for ideas with less concentration on words. Use selectivity by screening for nouns, pronouns, and verbs which give meaning. Read these words but just see the rest of the words in a sentence.

Another method which is especially useful for textbooks is SQ3R. If used consistently, it can increase your reading skill, comprehension, and effectiveness of study time. Numerous "How to Study" booklets have complete explanation of this method, but following is a simplified explanation.

"S" is for survey which helps to control your reading attention. It can give you an idea of the material, content, whether it relates to anything you already know, length of material to be read and time needed, purpose and direction.

"Q" is for question. Looking for answers can help focus attention on the subject, give purpose and direction to reading, and keep the mind from wandering.

R-1 is for reading of material.

R-2 is for reciting, going over what you read by orally summarizing or making notes.

R-3 is for reviewing immediately after reading a chapter, periodically, and a final before an exam.

HOW TO USE SQ3R

Use the survey technique as a beginning for the course. This involves reading preface and introduction, which will give you an idea of the author's purpose and how the text is to be used. Looking over the table of contents can give you a picture of the text; also note the visual aids--pictures, graphs, charts, marginal notes, and sub headings. If the book has a glossary, look over the terms. This may save time looking up words in the dictionary. Most books contain reference lists. These can provide you a resource for additional reading.

If there are summaries at the end of chapters, reading them quickly can give you a quick overview and direction of the course.

STUDY PERIOD

When reading the text for an assignment for class work, use the 5 steps in SQ3R. Survey a chapter in a similar manner used to get an overview of the book.

Chapter Title -- What it says or means.

Heading -- Organization of material, key phrases, basic content.

Sub Headings -- Important points under topic.

Summary -- The main points covered in the chapter.

Captions -- Under pictures, charts, graphs, illustrations. These are visual aids to support concepts in material.

Bibliography or Reference List -- Can provide additional information about chapter content.

QUESTIONS

Questions help you focus attention on the material and give direction. Looking for the answers to questions helps to keep the mind from wandering and provides an objective for what you want to know. This can speed up the study process.

Your survey reading should suggest some natural questions using headings and sub headings. If the author has questions at the end of the chapter, be sure to read them. These can clue you into important points in the chapter to remember.

R1--READ

If you have used S and Q tips, the actual reading should be easier with better comprehension. Read to answer the questions you had or the questions at the end of the chapter. Read all the extra items--illustrations, graphs, maps; these can support clarify, or add meaning to the subject.

Pay close attention to underlined, italicized, or bold-printed words or phrases. This is a special way of calling attention to a significant point. These can also be items on a quiz or a test.

R2--RECITE

This step involves going over what you have just read either orally, summarizing, making notes, and underlining. Your judgment is necessary as reciting should not be after only a paragraph or two, but should not wait until the completion of an extremely long section. This is the time to pencil special notes in the margins. If you underline or hi-lite, use selectivity in marking only key ideas or terms.

The recitation step reinforces what you have just read. For the most effectiveness, underline or mark only after you have read and understood the section.

R3--REVIEW

In the final step, the SQ3R formula is combined with review. Survey all you have read to see how much you remember. Use your notes, underlining or hi-liting as a recall of key points and ideas. The most effective use of the review procedure is in three steps:

1. Upon completion of a chapter, immediately make a short review of total chapters, notes, markings. This puts the whole chapter together into a complete picture.
2. Periodically, after several chapters and/or several weeks' time, review again to get a sense of the progression of the subject.
3. Review again before taking an exam on the subject.