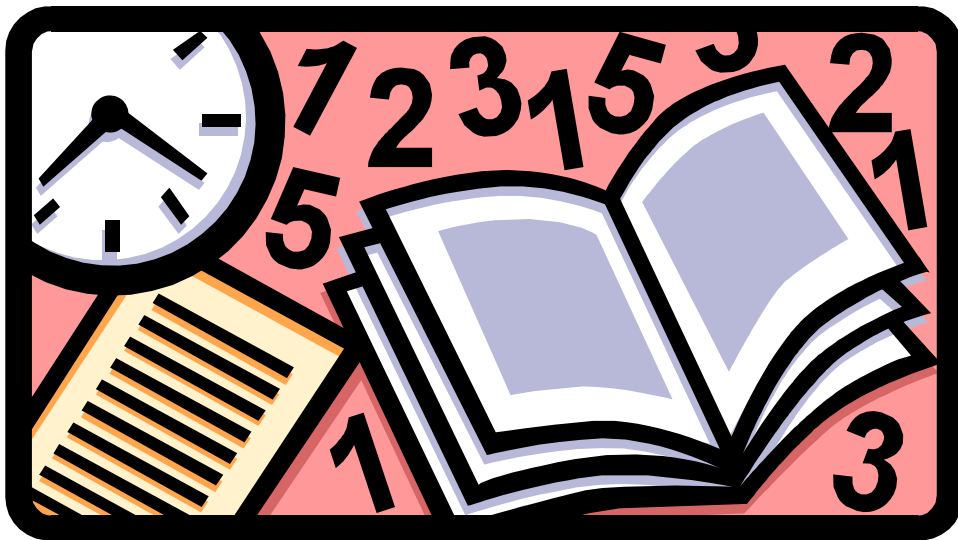


GOOD STUDY HABITS





STUDY SKILLS

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INTRODUCTION

It is a simple fact that many students do not know how to study effectively. Doing homework, while an important part of the learning process, is not studying.

As well, for some people simply reading material to be studied, studying while watching T.V., listening to music, or reclining on the sofa, may not be effective approaches. It is generally believed that nothing should divide the students attention and effort.

Good study skills will not by themselves guarantee success in high school. However, the benefits of adopting and using good study habits are clear and concrete. Let's look at these benefits more closely:

1. Better grades.
2. Your time spent more efficiently.
3. A better promise of success in secondary school and in your future career plans.
4. A more positive feeling about yourself, your abilities and your general outlook towards school.

The purpose of the following information is to allow you to achieve the primary goals of effective study and higher grades. By only reading this guide alone is not enough to ensure good study habits, just as reading a book about driving does not make you a good driver. Practice, persistence, and constant application are all necessary.

SOME THEORY

The purpose of studying is to actively attempt to learn what is important and to see how new information fits into material previously learned. Studying should help you to develop learning skills, which will be useful throughout your life.

Many books have been written about how we learn, but knowledge in this area is far from complete. We do know enough to develop some useful ideas about memory and how to reduce what we forget.

We need regular review because we forget. Actually the process of forgetting starts immediately after we have learned something. Most of what we forget (50%) is forgotten within 20 minutes of the time of learning. A further 25% is lost within the next 24 hours. The final 25% of what we forget will be lost over the next month.

From this, can you now see why homework is assigned? Homework is part of the development of step-by-step understanding of material you are asked to learn. Consequently our forgetting process is altered because we re-learn some of the work. By following a systematic study method we should be able to retain more than 80% of what we have learned.

Remember the steps.

1. As soon after the lesson as possible go over the notes. Add anything you have missed and recite the main points. For some this opportunity will not occur until after school; others will be able to utilize study periods.
2. If there is something you cannot understand then ask a teacher, a friend or a tutor; anyone who may have the answer.
3. Each week review all the material studied during the past week.



4. Monthly, or before a test review all the material studied during the month or since the last test.

Attention spans vary from person to person. Next time you study check to see how long you can concentrate on a subject before your mind starts to wander. Usually it is more effective to study for two half hour periods with a five-minute break, than it is to study for one hour straight through. We study better if we engage in active study. The simple act of holding a pen or pencil and making some notes changes study from a passive activity to an active one. As in our shop classes, you are given the opportunity to work on practical projects, which allows you to practice (actively study) the topic covered which helps to re-enforce theory learned.

You can't study if you are thinking about something else, or are worried about something. When you are working on practical projects, safety is a high priority and can also be neglected to the point of serious injury. It is best to put these thoughts out of the way so that you can focus on remembering the facts you want to learn.

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

The proper study environment is important. You will have heard some of these suggestions before. Try them as they do work:

1. Study in a quiet place. For many people this means no radio, stereo or TV, with the exception of, easy classical background music, which has been known to enhance studying.
2. Have a good light properly adjusted to reduce glare.
3. Sit up! Beds are for sleeping, easy chairs and sofas are for relaxing. You are trying to concentrate.
4. The study area should be well ventilated or heated.
5. Ask friends to call during specific times to reduce unnecessary disturbances during study periods.
6. When taking a break, leave the study area.
7. Have everything you need gathered together before you start to study. Then study until break time.
8. Be reasonable in setting your goals. Goals that cannot be realistically achieved will accomplish nothing.
9. Make a study schedule and stick to it rigidly. This will cut down on indecision about what to study next.
10. Daydreaming is a deadly time waster.
11. Ignore external noises and disturbances. If the noises are too loud, find another place to study.
12. If possible, don't study on a full stomach of food, for best results.
13. Keep drinking water handy, as this will also enhance learning ability.

LEARNING FROM A TEXTBOOK

In the introduction we said that sitting reading a textbook may not be an efficient use of study time. However, the text remains an invaluable study aid. In many cases we are asked to read a number of pages in preparation for a lesson, or to read these pages as reinforcement for a lesson already taught. The problem is,



to convert the passive activity of reading into an active learning experience so that we can use the experience to gain knowledge, understanding and consequently a better mark in the subject area.

Begin your reading with a quick survey of the material to be read. Ask yourself how this material fits into the previous lessons and assignments in the subject. Develop questions involving what you think are the main points in the section read. Headings, sub-titles and the introduction to each chapter will often help you choose these questions.

Carefully read the material. Make a summary as you go. Do not copy whole sentences; ideas in point form are just fine. Some people add page numbers as extra reference points in case they want to look back at important facts. While you are summarizing, try to remember what you have learned.

Do not go back and re-read whole sections at this time because this will break your thought pattern.

Compare your summary notes with class notes if the work has already been covered in class. If you are reading ahead of the lesson leave room at the bottom of the summary sheet to add notes or facts learned in class.

Once you have done this, review the material immediately. Go over key expressions and words, ask your questions and see if you can answer them without looking at your summary notes. Do you fully understand the important points? It is much easier to memorize facts that you understand.

After two weeks review the material again, and again before a test or examination. You could find your marks improving steadily. One method of remembering these steps for effective studying is SQ3R.

SQ3R

S - Survey or quick look.

Q - Question yourself about the section.

R - Read the section, summarize as you go.

R - Recite or record what you have learned.

R - Review after summarizing and again in two weeks.

THE RESEARCH ESSAY

As you reach the senior grades, the research essay will play a large and important part in determining your final mark. Since these essays are so important, it is worth looking at the structure and content of a well-written essay.

A properly presented essay will include the following:

- Title (usually on a separate page)
- Preface and acknowledgements (if necessary)
- Table of contents
- Introduction to the essay
- The essay
- Your conclusions



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- Bibliography (all resources used)
- Appendix (if necessary) How to Proceed

Usually, but not always, the subject will be given to you. Be sure that you clearly understand the assignment. Be careful to limit the scope of your essay to deal with the specific topic.

Then proceed to gather information. Facts from teachers, friends, periodicals, texts, libraries will all be useful in preparing yourself for the actual task of writing the essay. Make use of sources of information that are available for research purposes. Some sources are:

- 1) The school library
- 2) The public library
- 3) The public reference library
- 4) Law and medical school libraries
- 5) Industrial-commercial libraries (eg. C.I.L., I.B.M., etc.)
- 6) "Standard works" eg. Encyclopedia Britannica, Colliers Encyclopedia, the New International illustrated Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia of Social Sciences
- 7) Government libraries
- 8) Personal interviews
- 9) Personal experience
- 10) Abstracts (summaries of information found in reports, books, articles or journals)
- 11) Almanacs
- 12) Periodicals
- 13) General yearbooks
- 14) Atlases
- 15) The dictionary (for facts, spelling, common usage)
- 16) Vertical files
- 17) Specialized reference books (eg. Computer Data Handbook)
- 18) Professional organizations (eg. Ont. Medical Assoc.)
- 19) Internet sites

Write out your ideas as you proceed. The order itself is not important since the ideas may be rearranged later. Group related ideas, and then place the groups in a logical sequence. Rearrange each group of ideas so that the sequence within the group is logical and shows continuity of thought.

Your outline should include the following:

- The introduction
- The body of the essay
- The conclusions.



Your essay must be accurate, logical and clear. In addition it is important to use proper essay form, which includes logical sequencing of topics, correct sentence structure and proper grammar usage.

Frequently, proper acknowledgement of sources is forgotten. Each direct quotation as well as indirect quotations must be acknowledged in a footnote. A proper footnote will include:

- 1) The author's name, surname first.
- 2) The title of the book or article underlined.
- 3) The publisher and year of publication.
- 4) The page number.

Here is a sample footnote:

Lieberoff, Allen J., Good Jobs: High Paying Opportunities Working for Yourself or for Others, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1978, 415.

Your bibliography should include all reference texts and articles shown in the same way as described for footnotes except that page numbers are deleted.

Here is a sample reference:

Lederer, Muriel, Blue-Collar Jobs for Women, E . P. Dutton, New York, 1979.

Some suggestions for better essay writing:

- Start as soon as the topic is assigned. Last minute efforts are seldom the best.
- Create an introduction that outlines the nature and scope of your essay.
- Ensure that your conclusions are consistent with your sources or with your data.
- Do not include material unrelated to the topic.
- Do your arguments make sense?
- Check grammar and spelling.
- Check your footnotes.
- Is your bibliography complete?
- Is your essay neat and readable?

Now you can confidently submit your essay!

TAKING NOTES IN CLASS

In the section on learning from a textbook we talked about effective reading and taking notes. How can we extend the same ideas to the notes we take in class?

First of all, don't try to write down everything a teacher says. Even if you used shorthand it would be impossible to record all of the approximately 175 words per minute used during the lecture or lesson. A student who is listening effectively will:



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- Look over the material to be covered in the text before the lesson. Most teachers follow what is in the text using the lesson to highlight or to stress certain points that may not be effectively dealt with in the text.
- Listen for the main points in the lesson and write them down quickly so that you can be listening for the next main point.
- Look for ideas that were not covered in the text and record them.

Taking notes in an efficient and organized manner will also make studying and recall easier. Cognitive, or mind mapping is one way to take notes in a more organized and active method. Since most people are visual learners, a cognitive map might be an easier way for you to quickly assimilate information. After a little practice, you will be able to see how efficient and easier studying and recall is, from your notes. A sample outline included will give you practice.

If you are taking notes effectively you will be actively engaged in listening to the teacher. Try to relate what is being said to previous lessons. Question what is being said and try to anticipate the direction the lesson will take.

To summarize:

- Be prepared
- Listen actively
- Make notes in clear, easily understood points
- Take notes in an organized and efficient manner to allow easy studying and recall (mind mapping)
- Review your class notes that night to reinforce your learning.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY TIME

The proper environment is important for good study. The next essential is a study schedule. Working out a schedule takes some time because it is important that the right amount of study time is given to each subject. Students find that subjects differ in the degree of difficulty experienced. Some will find languages easy but mathematics difficult, some would rather do physics than history, and so on. None of the subjects are easy. Some subjects are obligatory in certain grades; others are required as prerequisites for future years of study. If you have trouble with a subject be sure that sufficient time is allotted to studying it.

Make up a weekly time schedule as follows:

- 1) Rule a blank sheet of paper with seven columns and head each column with a day of the week.
- 2) A time schedule written down the left hand side will vary depending upon the day of the week.

For example, on weekends you may want to study more in the mornings than in the afternoon or evening. You may want to take more evenings off than are shown on the accompanying examples or you may be involved in activities such as sports or part time work after school and unable to start at 4:30. Remember that the example is just that. Adjust your personal schedule from time to time depending on your needs. It is most important to stick to the schedule once it is established.

You will soon take your breaks feeling that you have earned a break instead of worrying about homework you should be doing.



To keep track of assignments, tests, examinations or other tasks due to be completed in the near future, you could use a monthly calendar.

PREPARING FOR TESTS

Many students seem to suffer great anxiety when they write tests or examinations. If you have studied methodically, as we suggest, there is a much greater chance that you will approach a test calmly, confidently and more important, with success.

Let's look at a step-by-step process.

- 1) Memorizing does not take the place of understanding. Start reviewing your work about one week before the test.
- 2) Begin with a notebook review. Your notes should represent a summary of all work taken since the last test. Think about each point in your notes. Connect the points in a logical sequence.
- 3) If you don't understand something, check with your text, teacher or friends.
- 4) Last minute cramming is usually too late.
- 5) Study sessions with friends can be helpful as long as they remain study sessions. Just sitting around talking is a waste of time and effort.
- 6) Have a quick review the morning before the test to catch any missed details.
- 7) By now you should be confident that you are ready.

STUDYING FOR EXAMINATIONS

The few weeks before examinations are especially busy. You must not only meet the requirements of daily homework, study, and term assignments but also begin an in-depth study of all the work taken in the term.

Usually it is best to have a separate study schedule for the three or four weeks prior to exams. Here are some ideas on how to organize your examination study schedule.

- Divide your time according to the number of subjects and the day each subject is written. Allow more time for weaker subjects.
- Mark in dates, times and rooms for each exam. This will help you determine which subject to study first and which to study last.
- Most students find it better to "study in reverse"; that is, study for their last exams first and their first exam last.
- Be flexible, because sometimes teachers will schedule tests a few days before exams. Be prepared to switch your study times if necessary. Many schools do not allow tests just before exams so that the students are free to study as they see fit.

How to study:

- 1) Organize. Know the amount of material to be covered by each exam.



- 2) Prepare a short, point form summary for each subject. These could be put on index cards for easy reference.
- 3) See what you know about each subject by asking yourself questions about the main topics covered during the term.
- 4) If you have maintained a study schedule throughout the term, you should need to complete only your summary of notes and text materials prior to the examination itself.

Subject and the Type Of Examination.

A. For Any Examination:

1. Read and listen to all instructions carefully.
2. Check the exam format. Is there a choice? If so, decide which questions you can answer best.
3. A check on the number of marks given for a question should show how much time should be allocated to each question. Why write pages answering a 2-mark question and not have time to answer a 20-mark question?
4. Plan to use the entire exam period. Pace yourself as you go along. Give yourself the opportunity to think.

B. For Multiple Choice Exams:

1. Read the question carefully so that you understand what is required.
2. Think about the answer before you look at the choices
3. Consider the alternatives. Are they logical?
4. Choose the best answer. When you are unsure of the correct answer:
 - a. Eliminate the answers you know are not correct; then, choose the best answer from those that are left.
 - b. Sometimes information given in one question will trigger the answer in another.

C. For Essay Type Questions:

1. Budget your time carefully.
Do the easiest questions first.
2. On a separate page write down every single fact, formula or idea that you have regarding the question.
3. Write your answer clearly. Bad writing may lose marks because the teacher may not be able to read what has been written.
4. Re-read your answer.
5. If you run out of time, answer the question in point form.
6. Give an answer for each question. Even if you don't know the answer, you may earn a few marks.



SOME SUGGESTIONS REGARDING HOMEWORK

We said earlier that homework was an important part of the step-by-step understanding of the material learned in class that day. Usually homework will consist of questions that will test or reinforce the learning of that day. As you review the lessons given each day you will also join your new knowledge in the subject area with knowledge gained in previous lessons.

Some facts about Homework:

1. It is your responsibility. Do it for your own sake.
2. Most teachers will periodically check homework and often marks are assigned.
3. Keep all material related to a particular subject in one section of a binder. Do not scatter your materials; they may be forgotten or lost later.
4. If there is something you don't understand, ask about it as soon as possible.
5. If you miss a day or an assignment obtain the notes the next day so that there are no gaps in your knowledge. It is your responsibility to complete missed assignments and to catch up on missed work.
6. The requirements for different subjects will often vary widely. Your teachers will let you know about the expectations in each course.

MEMORY AIDS

At the outset, let's agree that memorization alone is not the answer. You should combine understanding with memory so that you will be able to retain the knowledge.

However, from time to time we are required to memorize such things as dates, formulas, definitions, poetry to name a few. An understanding of why any of the above are important will assist in the memorization.

Many of us have visual memories. That is to say we remember pictures better than sounds. Associate several facts with a picture. If you want to remember facts regarding the battle of Queenston Heights, imagine General Brock setting on a Queenston Heights bus in 1812 with his troops being pursued by a busload of American Troops. Other people memorize the first letters of a series of words; thus LAS could stand for Lincoln abolished slavery. Many people develop and use a series of flash cards in point form which nicely summarize the contents of a chapter or a series of lessons. Other people memorize the first letter of important points in order to create a memory aid.

CRAMMING

While we have explained why we should study carefully and methodically for exams and tests, from time to time there will be days on which you will need to cram. If you panic and do not attack the problem systematically, you won't get very far.

1. Study the highlights of the material to be covered. Do the same thing with your notes. Chapter and classroom summaries will be especially important in this case.
2. If you have time remaining, study certain sections more thoroughly so that you have a better understanding of some material that you consider to be of particular importance.



3. Worrying about a great deal of intricate detail will only lead to confusion and failure. Concentrate on the main ideas.

USING READING TIME MORE EFFECTIVELY

Let's examine some ideas, which may help reduce reading time.

1. Some of what we read is not essential to the meaning or to the understanding of what has been said. The ideas are important; don't become too involved with reading words.
2. Look at key words, usually the verbs and nouns. Underline, make notes, and then just scan the descriptive passages.
3. Try to read ideas rather than single words.
4. Don't try to read when your mind is drifting; making notes will help you stay on topic. If you aren't thinking about the material you read, you may as well not read.
5. Some people sub-vocalize (say what they read under their breath). This slows the rate of reading down considerably. You can read much faster than you can talk. Don't talk.
6. Try to avoid having to re-read material for understanding. Read it properly the first time.

Each of your courses has its' own jargon or vocabulary. When a teacher refers to a certain word you are expected to understand the meaning of that word. Unless you do understand, the meaning of entire sections of your course material may be meaningless. For example, can you imagine doing graphs in mathematics without knowing what an "Ordered Pair" represents or in trigonometry without knowing what "sine, cosine, and tangent" represents?

You should start building your subject vocabulary at the beginning of each year and each new topic will include some words that should become part of that vocabulary.

There is a very special vocabulary associated with the writing of essay questions on examinations or in the writing of entire research essay assignments that frequently have a great effect on term marks. Listed below are some of these words and their meanings. Without a good understanding of these meanings your essay or your exam may be off the target and consequently so will your grade.

Terms commonly used in Essay Examinations

Analyze: To separate into parts or basic principles so as to determine the nature of the whole; to explain methodically.

Compare: To describe the similarity or relation between one thing and another.

Contrast: To set two things in opposition so as to show their differences.

Criticize: To judge the merits and faults of; to analyze and evaluate.

Define: To state the precise meaning of; to describe the nature or basic qualities of.

Describe: To give a verbal account of; to tell about in detail; to transmit a mental image or impression of with words; to picture verbally.

Discuss: To speak or write about; to examine by argument or debate.



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Evaluate: To ascertain or fix the value or worth of; to examine and judge; to appraise.

Examine: To inspect or scrutinize in detail; to observe or analyze carefully.

Explain: To make plain or comprehensible; to make one's meaning clear.

Illustrate: To clarify by use of examples, comparisons, or the like.

Outline: To give the main points of; to summarize.

State: To set forth in words; to declare; to express fully or clearly in speech or writing.