Université Ibn Tofaïl

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Study Skills Semester 1

Study Skills

Sharpen your Skills and Study Smart

Edition 2021-2022

Abstract

This booklet is divided into sections covering different areas of skills that you will need to develop for being a successful university student: getting and staying organized, being motivated, effective reading, thinking critically, time management, handling stress, problem-solving, note-taking, writing, research and revision.

Professors :

Prof. A. Bekou ; Prof. C. Teimi ; Prof. K. El Aatifi ; Prof. F. Boutabssil ; Prof. A. Zbir ; Prof. R. Naim ; Prof. I. Elbirch

Objectives of the course:

- **Recognise and develop successful college study habits**
- **Distinguish differences between high school and college**
- **Identify reasons for lack of motivation and develop the motivation needed for college success**
- **Develop strategies to handle stress**
- **Distinguish the different learning styles and identify one's best learning style**
- **Develop appropriate time management skills**
- **Identify critical thinking and develop the critical thinking skills needed in college**
- **Recognise the reading, writing and test-taking processes and develop one's reading, writing and test-taking skills**
- **Distinguish the different note-taking systems and develop adequate note-taking skills**
- **Recognise the process of writing the research paper**

Contents :

Know yourself: Tick what applies to you

1. □ I spend too much time studying for what I am learning.

2. □ I usually spend hours cramming the night before an exam.

3. □ If I spend as much time on my social activities as I want to, I don't have enough time left to study, or when I study enough, I don't have time for a social life.

4. □ I usually try to study with the radio and TV turned on.

5. □ I can't sit and study for long periods of time without becoming tired or distracted.

6. □ I go to class, but I usually doodle, daydream, or fall asleep.

7. □ My class notes are sometimes difficult to understand later.

8. □ I usually seem to get the wrong material into my class notes.

9. □ I don't review my class notes periodically throughout the semester in preparation for tests.

10. □ When I get to the end of a chapter, I can't remember what I've just read.

11. □ I don't know how to pick out what is important in the text.

12. □ I can't keep up with my reading assignments, and then I have to cram the night before a test.

13. □ I lose a lot of points on essay tests even when I know the material well.

14. □ I study enough for my test, but when I get there my mind goes blank.

15. □ I often study in a haphazard, disorganized way under the threat of the next test.

16. □ I often find myself getting lost in the details of reading and have trouble identifying the main ideas.

17. □ I rarely change my reading speed in response to the difficulty level of the selection, or my familiarity with the content.

18. □ I often wish that I could read faster.

19. □ When my teachers assign papers, I feel so overwhelmed that I can't get started.

20. □ I usually write my papers the night before they are due.

Adapted from http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/checklis.html

Introduction

The transition from high school to college will affect you emotionally, socially, and academically. The initial exposure to a new environment, academic competitiveness, personal independence, and large campus can be overwhelming. In addition, if you do not enter this university from a superior high school, you may face another adjustment obstacle – lack of adequate study skills.

Keep in mind the fact that students have entered the University from various academic backgrounds and have succeeded here. The successful college student either enters the university with proper study skills or secures them from the many advisors, professors and administrators willing to offer assistance.

In addition to good study skills, a successful college student has four other distinguishing characteristics:

1. A successful student is eager to explore the educational opportunities that will develop his/her career interests.

2. A successful student has an educational goal.

3. A successful student has the ability to be stimulated intellectually and is willing to maintain this as a priority throughout his/her collegiate experience.

4. A successful student has the persistence to do whatever hard, honest effort is necessary to succeed.

It is essential for students to have specific educational goals. You may have general goals at first, but strive to direct them towards your career objectives. Without direction, you will waste a great deal of time and effort. Talk often with university counselors/advisors, faculty members, entrusted classmates, and your parents because they can assist in establishing your goals or to answer questions about your current focus.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with essential study skills which will open the doors to success.

1. Successful college study habits

Did you ever stop to wonder what sets apart the really successful students from the average ones? Why do some students who appear to study all the time just get by, while others who don't appear to put in as much time and effort do well? Is it all related to IQ and genetics or are some other factors involved? The truth is that success in school is not so much determined by sheer intelligence as knowing how to study.

Studying is a skill. Being successful in school requires a high level of study skills. Students must first learn these skills, practice them and develop effective study habits in order to be successful. Very often the study habits and practices developed and used in high school do not work for students in college.

Good study habits include many different skills: **time management, self-discipline, concentration, memorization, organization, and effort.** Desire to succeed is important, too.

Developing effective study habits:

The key to becoming an effective student is learning how to study smarter, not harder. This becomes more and more true as you advance in your education. An hour or two of studying a day is usually sufficient to make it through high school with satisfactory grades, but when college arrives, there aren't enough hours in the day to get all your studying in if you don't know how to study smarter.

While some students are able to breeze through school with minimal effort, this is the exception. The vast majority of successful students achieve their success by developing and applying effective study habits. The following are the top 10 study habits employed by highly successful students. So if you want to become a successful student, don't get discouraged, don't give up, just work to develop each of the study habits below and you'll see your grades go up, your knowledge increase, and your ability to learn and assimilate information improve.

1. Don't attempt to cram all your studying into one session.

Ever find yourself up late at night expending more energy trying to keep your eyelids open than you are studying? If so, it's time for a change. Successful students typically space their work out over shorter periods of time and rarely try to cram all of their studying into just one or two sessions. If you want to become a successful student then you need to learn to be consistent in your studies and to have regular, yet shorter, study periods.

2. Plan when you're going to study.

Successful students schedule specific times throughout the week when they are going to study -- and then they stick with their schedule. Students who study sporadically and whimsically

typically do not perform as well as students who have a set study schedule. Even if you're all caught up with your studies, creating a weekly routine, where you set aside a period of time a few days a week, to review your courses will ensure you develop habits that will enable you to succeed in your education long term.

3. Study at the same time.

Not only is it important that you plan when you're going to study, it's important you create a consistent, daily study routine. When you study at the same time each day and each week, you're studying will become a regular part of your life. You'll be mentally and emotionally more prepared for each study session and each study session will become more productive. If you have to change your schedule from time to time due to unexpected events, that's okay, but get back on your routine as soon as the event has passed.

4. Each study time should have a specific goal.

Simply studying without direction is not effective. You need to know exactly what you need to accomplish during each study session. Before you start studying, set a study session goal that supports your overall academic goal (i.e. memorize 30 vocabulary words in order to ace the vocabulary section on an upcoming Spanish test.)

5. Never procrastinate your planned study session.

It's very easy, and common, to put off your study session because of lack of interest in the subject, because you have other things you need to get done, or just because the assignment is hard. Successful students DO NOT procrastinate studying. If you procrastinate your study session, your studying will become much less effective and you may not get everything accomplished that you need to. Procrastination also leads to rushing, and rushing is the number one cause of errors.

6. Start with the most difficult subject first.

As your most difficult assignment or subject will require the most effort and mental energy, you should start with it first. Once you've completed the most difficult work, it will be much easier to complete the rest of your work. Believe it or not, starting with the most difficult subject will greatly improve the effectiveness of your study sessions, and your academic performance.

7. Always review your notes before starting an assignment.

Obviously, before you can review your notes you must first have notes to review. Always make sure to take good notes in class. Before you start each study session, and before you start a particular assignment, review your notes thoroughly to make sure you know how to complete the assignment correctly. Reviewing your notes before each study session will help you remember important subject matter learned during the day, and make sure your studying is targeted and effective.

8. Make sure you're not distracted while you're studying.

Everyone gets distracted by something. Maybe it's the TV. Or maybe it's your family. Or maybe it's just too quiet. Some people actually study better with a little background noise. When you're distracted while studying you (1) lose your train of thought and (2) are unable to focus -- both of which will lead to very ineffective studying. Before you start studying, find a place where you won't be disturbed or distracted. For some people this is a quiet cubicle in the recesses of the library. For others it is in a common area where there is a little background noise.

9. Use study groups effectively.

Ever heard the phrase "two heads are better than one?" Well this can be especially true when it comes to studying. Working in groups enables you to (1) get help from others when you're struggling to understand a concept, (2) complete assignments more quickly, and (3) teach others, whereby helping both the other students and yourself to internalize the subject matter. However, study groups can become very ineffective if they're not structured and if group members come unprepared. Effective students use study groups effectively.

10. Review your notes, schoolwork and other class materials over the weekend.

Successful students review what they've learned during the week over the weekend. This way they're well prepared to continue learning new concepts that build upon previous coursework and knowledge acquired the previous week.

We're confident that if you develop the habits outlined above, you'll see a major improvement in your academic success.

2. Differences between high school and college

	High School	College
Overview	High school is *mandatory* and usually *free*. Your time is structured by others. You need permission to participate in extracurricular activities. You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities. Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending 6 hours each day, 30 hours a week, in class. Most of your classes are arranged for you. You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate. **Guiding Principle: You will usually be told what to do and corrected if your behavior is out of line.**	College is *voluntary* and usually *expensive.* You manage your own time. You decide on co-curricular activities. You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities. You will face moral and ethical decisions you have never faced before. You often have hours between classes, class times vary and you spend only 12-16 hours each week in class. You arrange your own schedule (Senior year at SUCCESS this will apply). You are responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate. **Guiding Principle: You are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as the consequences.**
Study mode	School year is 36 weeks long, with some classes extending over both semesters, allowing more time to teach material. Classes generally have no more than 35 students. You may study outside class as little as 0-2 hours a week, this may be mostly last-minute test prep. You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough. You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class. **Guiding Principle: You will usually be told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings.**	Academic year is divided into two 15-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams. Classes may number 100 students or more (on campus). You need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. You need to review class notes and text material regularly and attend class regularly. You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class. **Guiding Principle: You are responsible for reading and understanding the assigned material, whether covered in class or not.**
Teachers & Professors	Check your completed homework. Remind you of your incomplete work. Approach you if they believe you need assistance. Are often available for conversation before, during, or after class. Have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students. Provide you with information you missed when you were absent. Present material to help you understand the material in the textbook. Often write information on the board to be copied in your notes. Impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading you through the thinking process. Often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates. Carefully monitor class attendance. **Guiding Principle: High school is a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills.**	May not always check completed homework. May not remind you of incomplete work. Expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance. Expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours. Have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research, not "teaching methods". Expect you to get information missed in class from a classmate. May not follow the textbook and expect you to relate lectures to text. May lecture nonstop, expecting you to take your own notes. Expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics, thinking for yourself and drawing your own connections. Expect you to refer to the course syllabus for assignment due dates. May not formally take attendance, but will take note of your presence. **Guiding Principle: College is a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned.**

	High School	College
Grades	**Tests in High School:** Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material. Makeup tests are often available. Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events. Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts. **Guiding Principle: Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to solve.**	Testing can be infrequent and cumulative, covering large amounts of material, which you need to organize in order to prep for a test. Makeup tests are seldom an option, if they are it is at your request before a test date. Tests are scheduled without regard for outside activities. Review sessions are rarely offered, but if they are you are expected to come prepared with questions. **Guiding Principle: Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.**
Tests	Grades are given for most assigned work. Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low. Extra credit projects are often available to help you raise your grade. Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade. You may graduate as long as you have passed all required courses with a grade of D or higher. **Guiding Principle: "Effort counts." Courses are usually structured to reward a "good-faith effort."**	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work. Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade. Extra credit projects are seldom available and most likely won't raise your grade. Initial tests are usually "wake-up calls" to let you know what is expected, but they may also make up a substantial part of your grade. You may graduate only if your average in classes meet the departmental standard, typically a 2.0 or C average. **Guiding Principle: "Results count." Though "good-faith effort" is important in regard to the professor's willingness to help you *achieve* good results, it will not *substitute* for results in the grading process.**

- **College Requires Greater Independent Learning.** Your high school teachers may have been willing to give you lots of test preparation help. They may have provided prepared study guides or even the exact questions they would ask. Although college instructors also want you to be successful, they don't give students as much study help. Sure, most professors will answer questions about course content and things you don't understand, but they will not provide you with a variety of supplementary learning materials and they certainly will not give you test questions. They expect that you know effective and efficient study strategies and if you don't know how to study for their courses, they expect you to learn how.

- **College Courses Move at a Faster Pace.** If you ask first-year college students about the differences between high school and college, one of their most common responses would be that college courses move much faster than high school classes. What might have taken a year to cover in high school will probably be covered in a semester in college. It is not uncommon for college professors to move through three, four, or more chapters in a week, expecting you to keep up. In addition, topics are generally covered in greater detail.

However, college professors may also expect you to fill in many of the details on your own.

- **College Courses Require You to *Think* Critically.** In your high school classes, perhaps you were required to memorize lots of facts for exams. Perhaps you were discouraged from questioning either your high school textbooks or your high school teacher. But as you proceed through college, you will find yourself in more and more classes where your professor wants you to do more than memorize. You might have to critique an essay on gun control, read and respond to a historian's view of the Vietnamese Conflict, or compare and contrast conflicting scientific theories. All of these tasks require you to think critically.

- **College Classes Have Few Safety Nets.** Usually on the first day of a college class your professor will give you a syllabus. The syllabus outlines the course requirements and also generally tells you how your grade will be determined. Something that will become clear as you read your syllabus is that many of the safety nets that you had in high school, such as extra credit assignment or other bonuses to improve your grade, have all but disappeared. This means your course grade will be determined by the grade you earn on a limited number of tests or papers.

- **College Requires You to Study Longer and More Efficiently.** You will probably find out pretty quickly that both the amount of time you put into studying and the way you study in college will have to change if you want to continue to earn high grades. Many students say that they really didn't have to study in high school. "Studying" was reading over a study guide or going over class notes for about a half-hour. Few students have ever had to read their texts and many begin college never having taken essay exams. It is important to realize that studying in college requires not only more time, but also a variety of study strategies to have at your disposal.

- **College Provides Fewer Chances for Evaluation.** In high school, it may have seemed as though you were always taking tests or writing papers. You were probably tested over small amount of material (only one or two chapters) and you had numerous chances for evaluation. If you did poorly on one test, you could usually make it up on the next one. In college, on the other hand, you will probably have fewer chances to be evaluated. At first, the idea of taking fewer tests per course in a term may seem appealing. But think about the big picture. If you have only three exams, you are going to be held responsible for much more information at one time than you were in high school. What at first seems to be an advantage - fewer tests, homework that goes unchecked, a longer period of time between exams - may actually work against you, unless you know how to stay on top of things.

- **College Gives You Greater Freedom and Greater Responsibility.** In college, no one makes you stay on top of your school work or keeps track of your comings and goings or checks to see that you have done all of your reading and studying before heading out for a night on the town. This freedom comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. It is your responsibility to prioritize the tasks you *have* to do against the things you *want* to do.

- **College Requires You to Be Proactive.** Being proactive means that it's your responsibility to take the initiative in a variety of situations. In high school, either your teachers or your parents may have "insisted" that you get help if you were having problems with a particular course. And you may have followed their advice reluctantly. In college, however, it becomes your responsibility to know the resources that are available on your campus, so that if you do run into difficulties, or need the services of some office, you'll know how to find the information you need or where to go to get assistance. If you are proactive and find out a little about them before you need their services, it will save you time in the long run. However, you don't want to wait until you are in dire need of these resources before seeking them out. Some of these services may include:

- **The Library** - In addition to providing resources, the library is a great place to study, to do research online, or to meet your study group.

o **The Tutoring Center** - Drop-in tutoring is available at no cost to all registered college students who are seeking assistance in select general ed courses, including math and science. Available subjects vary by student demand and tutor availability.

o **The Writing Center** - Drop-in tutoring is available, but appointments are encouraged.

o **The Computer Lab** - This is a computer lab available to registered students.

HOW TO MAKE THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE:

- Take control of your own education: think of yourself as a scholar.
- Get to know your professors; they are your single greatest resource.
- Be assertive. Create your own support systems, and seek help when you realize you may need it.
- Take control of your time. Plan ahead to satisfy academic obligations and make room for everything else.
- Stretch yourself: enroll in at least one course that really challenges you.
- Make thoughtful decisions: don't take a course just to satisfy a requirement, and don't drop any course too quickly.
- Think beyond the moment: set goals for the semester, the year, your college career.

3. Motivation:

A motive is a reason for doing something. Motivation is concerned with the strength and direction of behaviour and the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways. The term 'motivation' can refer variously to the goals individuals have, the ways in which individuals chose their goals and the ways in which others try to change their behaviour. Motivating other people is about getting them to move in the direction you want them to go in order to achieve a result. Motivating yourself is about setting the direction independently and then taking a course of action that will ensure that you get there. Motivation can be described as goal-directed behaviour. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to lead to the attainment of a goal and a valued reward – one that satisfies their needs and wants.

Types of motivation:

The two types of motivation are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation:

- **Intrinsic motivation**

Intrinsic motivation can arise from the self-generated factors that influence people's behaviour. It is not created by external incentives. It can take the form of motivation by the work itself when individuals feel that their work is important, interesting and challenging and provides them with a reasonable degree of autonomy (freedom to act), opportunities to achieve and advance, and scope to use and develop their skills and abilities. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that intrinsic motivation is based on the needs to be competent and self-determining (that is, to have a choice).

Intrinsic motivation can be enhanced by job or role design. According to an early writer on the significance of the motivational impact of job design (Katz, 1964): 'The job itself must provide sufficient variety, sufficient complexity, sufficient challenge and sufficient skill to engage the abilities of the worker.' In their job characteristics model, Hackman and Oldham (1974) emphasized the importance of the core job dimensions as motivators, namely skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.

- **Extrinsic motivation:**

Extrinsic motivation occurs when things are done to or for people to motivate them. These include rewards, such as incentives, increased pay, praise, or promotion; and punishments, such as disciplinary action, withholding pay, or criticism.

Extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect, but will not necessarily last long. The intrinsic motivators, which are concerned with the 'quality of working life' (a phrase and movement that emerged from this concept), are likely to have a deeper and longer-term effect because they are inherent in individuals and their work and not imposed from outside in such forms as incentive pay.

Important tips:

Here are some ways to increase your motivation to study. Which one do you think is very important for you?

1. ***Reward yourself for studying***. For example, after a successful study session, have a treat like a nice big ice cream cone. Go crazy and add some cherries and nuts.
2. ***Study with your friends***. Don‘t make it party time, but you can have fun as you do this.
3. ***Remind yourself of your long-term goals***. Achievement of your goals likely requires educational success. Educational success requires studying.
4. ***Eliminate distractions***. If you are surrounded by things you would rather do than study, you will probably do those things instead of studying.
5. ***Develop interest in what you have to study***. This will make studying more enjoyable.
6. ***Take breaks***. When you feel that you need to take a break, try to stop at a point where it is logical to stop. This will make it easier for you to resume studying after your break.
7. ***Establish a comfortable environment***. You will be more inclined to study if you feel comfortable.
8. ***Establish reasonable goals for a study session***. You probably won‘t get very far if you look at your study session as "mission impossible."
9. ***Use a motivational poster***. Place the poster where you can see it as you study. The poster should include positive words and a picture depicting success. You can buy one or even make your own. You can also read inspirational stories about real people who have achieved success through effort.
10. ***Just do it***. Once you do, you will feel a lot better than if you are worried about getting it done.

Whenever you experience difficulty sitting down to study, follow the suggestions above to motivate you to do what you have to do.

Adapted from http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills-articles/motivating-yourself-to-study.asp

4. Stress Management:

Stress is a fact of life, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid stress, but you can learn to manage it so it doesn’t manage you.

Changes in our lives—such as going to college, getting married, changing jobs, or illness—are frequent sources of stress. Keep in mind that changes that cause stress can also benefit you. Moving away from home to attend college, for example, creates personal-development opportunities—new challenges, friends, and living arrangements. That is why it’s important to know yourself and carefully consider the causes of stress. Learning to do this takes time, and although you cannot avoid stress, the good news is that you can minimize the harmful effects of stress, such as depression or hypertension. The key is to develop an awareness of how you interpret, and react to, circumstances. This awareness will help you develop coping techniques for managing stress.

Defining Stress:

Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and situations in their lives. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. If you view a situation negatively, you will likely feel *distressed*—overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more familiar form of stress. The other form, *eustress*, results from a "positive" view of an event or situation, which is why it is also called "good stress."

Tips for Reducing Stress:

1. ***Learn to plan***. Disorganization can breed stress. Having too many projects going on simultaneously often leads to confusion, forgetfulness, and the sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. When possible, take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed.

2. ***Recognize and accept limits***. Most of us set unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. But in reality, we can never be perfect, so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Set achievable goals for yourself.

3. ***Learn to play***. You need to escape from the pressures of life occasionally and have fun. Find pastimes that are absorbing and enjoyable no matter your level of ability.

4. ***Focus on the positive***. Avoid criticizing others. Learn to praise the things you like in others. Focus upon the good qualities those around you possess. Be sure to give yourself credit and appreciate your own good qualities as well.

5. ***Learn to tolerate and forgive***. Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger. Attempting to really understand the way other people feel can make you more accepting of them. Accept and forgive yourself also.

6. ***Avoid unnecessary competition***. There are plenty competitive situations in life that we can't avoid. Being too concerned with winning in too many areas of life can create excessive tension and anxiety, and make us unnecessarily aggressive.

7. ***Get regular physical exercise***. Check with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You will be more likely to stay with an exercise program if you choose one that you really enjoy rather than one that feels like pure hard work and drudgery.

8. ***Talk out your troubles***. Find a friend, faculty member, counselor, or psychotherapist you can be open with. Expressing your ―bottled up‖ anxieties to a sympathetic ear can be incredibly helpful.

9. ***Change your thinking***. How we feel emotionally often depends on our outlook or philosophy of life, but changing your beliefs is challenging process. There is little practical wisdom in the modern world to guide us through our lives. No one has all the answers, but some answers are available. Talk to mentors, teachers, and licensed counselors.

Adapted from http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/learning_resources/anxiety_stress_management/Stress_Test.doc

5. Learning Styles:

Knowing how you learn best is the first step in developing effective study habits. Every student approaches the task of learning differently. Every student has a unique and personal learning style or a preferred channel through which learning comes more easily.

Ask yourself the following: *Am I more inclined to remember something better when I see it, when I hear it, or when I experience it or do something active with it?*

Depending on how you learned the activity or game, you will have a fair idea of what learning channel – **visual (by sight), auditory (by hearing), or Kinesthetic (by doing)**—you prefer to use.

We all use all three learning channels. In fact, we use all our senses in learning about the world around us, but each of us tends to lean more heavily on one of the three learning channels – visual, auditory, or hands on. You can improve your study habits by developing all three learning channels.

Perhaps the simplest way of describing 'learning styles' is to say that they are different methods of learning or understanding new information, the way a person takes in, understand, expresses and remembers information.

While most of us may have some general idea about how we learn best, often it comes as a surprise when we discover what our predominant learning style is.

Let's take a few moments and explore each of these learning styles in more detail.

Visual learners learn through seeing, so tools like diagrams, flowcharts, pictures and symbols can be key to understanding new concepts. As University style lectures tend to neglect visual components, it may be difficult for you visual learners out there to stay focused during a long lecture. When taking notes in class, something to try is developing a system of symbols to replace the written word. For example, instead of writing out "female" each time in your notes, simply use the standard symbol. Or instead of writing that the results of a particular test were positive, insert a smiley face!

For visual learners, it is often far easily for recall to work with images as oppose to working with words, as you will picture the image in your head while recalling it—far more difficult when trying to recall the word itself!

Other tricks to try for visual learners include spatially rearranging your page—instead of writing across a page horizontally, write in a way that is more descriptive of the relationship being described—for example, write the words out in a circular pattern if that more truly represents the relationship you are describing. Also, it can be useful to colour code your notes, to create more visual stimulation.

Auditory learners learn through listening. As such, attending lectures, tutorials, and group discussions are absolutely essential for these learners (it's also essential for the rest of us, being a read/write learner is no reason to skip lecture!).

If you're an auditory learner, help yourself focus on textbook readings by reading them out loud, so you can hear how the words sound. It can also be really helpful to engage in group discussions about course concepts and topics—create a weekly study group to get together weekly just to talk about the things being discussed in lectures.

Leave lots of extra room on your page when taking notes in lectures, and then return to these notes after you've had a chance to discuss the material in further detail—supplement with the new information you have.

Kinesthetic Learners learn through doing. This is perhaps the most challenging learning style for university students, as there are not always many opportunities to engage in hands on learning in lectures. For this reason, labs and tutorials become even more essential for these learners.

While studying, try to incorporate all of your senses into the experience—the more of this you can do, the higher your recall will be, as you'll have multiple cues. One way to create more useful study notes if you're a kinesthetic learner is to fill your notes with several examples for each concept. Try taking an example from the text, or lecture, or lab, and then try creating your own example. As a general rule, the more personal your created example is, the better your recall will be for that example—and hopefully for the concept it is describing! Also try to make as much use of practice questions and exams as possible.

TO IMPROVE AS A VISUAL LEARNER…

- visualize what you are studying
- use color in your notes (colored pens, highlighters, etc.)
- visualize what the instructor is lecturing about
- draw pictures and diagrams
- use mind maps in your notes
- use picture and graphics to reinforce learning
- learn from videos

TO IMPROVE AS AN AUDITORY LEARNER…

- listen to tapes of recorded assignments
- tape record your own textbook reading
- read out loud
- talk over ideas from class and what you are studying with other students
- participate in class discussions
- listen to audiotapes on the subject

TO IMPROVE AS A HANDS-ON LEARNER…

- stand up and move around while you are studying
- take frequent breaks while studying
- make use of your hands and write things down as you study
- use the computer to reinforce learning
- be physically active ; experiment with objects
- memorize or drill while walking or exercising

6. Time Management:

The key to being a successful student depends largely on how you manage your time. Managing time must become a habit. If you can effectively balance your schedule, productivity undoubtedly will increase. College requires an ample allotment of study time, usually set apart and maintained on your schedule, while allowing time for personal, social, and career related activities.

It can be very helpful to establish a detailed weekly study schedule. This can provide you with an idea of how much time you actually need and will show you how effectively you are using your free time. Your plan must fit your personality and needs. Construct a realistic and flexible schedule, one that can be used for the entire semester.

TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Set Priorities. Realize that academic success requires studying to be your first priority commitment.

- **Know when you study most effectively.** And schedule your study time then.
- **Be Realistic.** Don't set yourself up for failure by telling yourself you can do a 4-hour job in 2 hours. There are only 168 hours in a week. If you schedule 169 hours, you lose before you begin.
- **Study difficult (or boring) subjects first as they** require the most creative energy. Save the subjects you enjoy for later.
- **Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.** Three two-hour sessions are far more productive for most students than one six-hour session. When you do study in long sessions, take a short break every half hour or so. Work on several subjects each day to avoid mental overload.
- **Schedule time to read before class.** Have material fresh in your mind. You will be able to participate in discussions, take better lecture notes, link the lecture to the text material, and determine what topic is more important than another.
- **Schedule time to review and revise your notes after each class**. If you review your notes within 24 hours of attending the lecture, you retain up to 80% more of the info.

- **Allow flexibility in your schedule.** Recognize that unexpected things happen and don't schedule every hour. Give yourself time to get between places, to take a phone call, to stand in line longer than you expected, etc.
- **Reward yourself with breaks**. Stop when you get tired or frustrated. Break every 60-90 minutes. And keep your motivation high by following with something you like to do.
- **Make a To-Do list.** Listing tasks you are willing to do helps you organize your time efficiently.
- **Make a plan for living.** Time management must include physical exercise, social activities, and psychological rest and relaxation. Leave out recreation and exercise and you'll sacrifice concentration, memory and productivity.

Tips for Stopping Procrastination:

• **Get to work right away**. (Do a rough outline, start on the middle if you get stuck in starting or ending)
• **Study everyday** – Make it a routine! Spending time every day on each course will prevent pile up. For some, it works best to simply plan study time like it was another class. It can then be a daily scheduled event that you will do.
• **Use rewards** after study sessions to encourage you to work again the next day. There's no better feeling than accomplishment!

7. Critical Thinking Skills:

Often, a good way to begin the process of thinking critically about a subject is to do some conscious thinking about it before you do any reading or hear any presentations in the subject. Thus, if you are going to study biology or sociology or writing, a good way to begin is by writing down some of the main ideas you already have about biology or sociology or writing itself before you do any reading or listen to lectures. This allows you to be an active listener rather than a passive recipient of information. It helps you to become aware of your assumptions about the subject so that you can assess them more accurately in light of what you will later read and hear.

What is Critical Thinking?

Here are three definitions of critical thinking by leading researchers:
First, Robert Ennis's classic definition:1
"Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do."
Next, Matthew Lipman's definition:2
"Critical thinking is skillful, responsible thinking that is conducive to good judgment because it is sensitive to context, relies on criteria, and is self-correcting."

Finally, in informal presentations, **Richard Paul** uses this definition: 3
"Critical thinking is thinking about your thinking, while you're thinking, in order to make your thinking better."

Each of these is an excellent definition of critical thinking. It pays to read them several times and to stop and reflect on every aspect of each definition. Why did the expert include this word rather than another? Just what are the experts trying to capture with the words they have chosen? What overlap is there in the definitions, and what main differences of emphasis are there?

It may seem hard to believe, but each of these definitions, brief as they are, is the product of a long period of intense pondering about how best to describe critical thinking. Each definition is an attempt to convey in words the essence of an activity, a "thing"—critical thinking.

Before trying to define it, each expert had an intuitive grasp of what critical thinking is, based on years of working with it. This was what the experts tried to capture in the words they chose. So, in reading the experts' definitions and in the discussion ahead, one very important goal to keep in mind is for you to develop a solid intuitive grasp of just what critical thinking is and what it is not.

Three Parts of Critical Thinking:

Full-fledged critical thinking involves three parts. First, critical thinking involves asking questions. It involves asking questions that need to be asked, asking good questions, questions that go to the heart of the matter. Critical thinking involves *noticing* that there are questions that need to be addressed.

Second, critical thinking involves trying to answer those questions by reasoning them out. Reasoning out answers to questions is different from other ways of answering questions. It is different from giving an answer we have always taken for granted but never thought about. It is different from answering impressionistically ("That reminds me of . . ."), or answering simply according to the way we were raised, or answering in accordance with our personality. It is also different from answering by saying the first thing that comes into our mind, and then using all our power of reasoning to defend that answer.

Third, critical thinking involves believing the results of our reasoning. Critical thinking is different from just engaging in a mental exercise. When we think through an issue critically, we internalize the results. We don't give merely verbal agreement: we actually believe the results because we have done our best to reason the issue out and we know that reasoning things out is the best way to get reliable answers. Furthermore, when we think critically through a decision about what to do in a situation, then what follows the reasoning is not just belief, but action: Unless something unforeseen occurs, we end up taking the action we concluded was most reasonable.

Attributes of a critical thinker:

a) asks pertinent questions
b) assesses statements and arguments
c) is able to admit a lack of understanding or information
d) has a sense of curiosity
e) is interested in finding new solutions
f) is able to clearly define a set of criteria for analyzing ideas
g) is willing to examine beliefs, assumptions, and opinions and weigh them against facts
h) listens carefully to others and is able to give feedback
i) sees that critical thinking is a lifelong process of self-assessment
j) suspends judgment until all facts have been gathered and considered
k) looks for evidence to support assumption and beliefs
l) is able to adjust opinions when new facts are found
m) looks for proof
n) examines problems closely
o) is able to reject information that is incorrect or irrelevant

S. Ferrett, S, 1997, Peak Performance

Fact, Opinion and Inference 44

A ***fact*** is a statement that can be proven by direct experience or objective verification. This evidence may be in the form of the testimony of witnesses, agreed-upon observations, the written records of such testimony and observations, or the result of research or investigation. A statement of fact can theoretically be checked for accuracy. **Fact** reports information that can be directly observed or can be verified or checked for accuracy. As for an ***opinion***, it is a statement of belief or judgment that cannot be objectively proven true or false. It eexpresses an evaluation based on a personal judgment or belief which may or may not be verifiable. Opinions usually express the feelings, preferences or biases that a person has about a subject. **Inference**, it is a logical conclusion or a legitimate implication based on factual information. Being able to distinguish between a statement of fact, an opinion or an inference is an important skill to critical thinking. It involves knowing what can be proven directly, what is a legitimate implication derived from the facts, and what is fair to conclude from the historical record. Distinguishing statements of fact, opinion, and is difficult because they are often closely interwoven.

Critical thinking and problem solving:

The Problem

Everyone thinks; it is our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce, make, or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Excellence in thought, however, must be systematically cultivated.

The Result

A well-cultivated critical thinker:

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
- thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

In short, critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and socio-centrism.

Adapted from http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/definingCT.shtml

Obstacles to Critical thinking

a. Mine is better;
b. Resistance to change;
c. The urge to conform;
d. The need to save face;
e. Stereotypes;
f. Faulty common sense; and
g. Oversimplification.

8. Reading and test-taking processes

The reading skills

1. *Reading for gist:*

It involves reading a passage to get a general idea of what it's about, but not worrying about understanding the complete content or every specific idea. For example, students could read a review of a pop stars' latest CD and decide if the reviewer's opinion is generally favorable or unfavorable.

2. *Locating main ideas or identifying the topic sentence*

The idea is to find the main idea in a passage or the sentence in a paragraph which gives the idea of what the paragraph is about. However, many authentic reading materials do not contain a single clearly identifiable topic sentence. So, topic sentence activities often have to use specially-written paragraphs. With authentic and semi-authentic materials, it may be often more appropriate to use skills such as skimming and reading for gist.

3. *Skimming*

Skimming "gives readers the advantage of being able to predict the purpose of the passage, the main topic or message, and possibly some of the developing or supporting ideas" (Brown, 1994).

An example of skimming in real life is when we look through an article to get a general idea of what it's about, before reading it in detail. When skimming, start at the beginning of the chapter and read the section headings. Think how the section headings flow from one to another and how they link with each other. Take note of vocabulary or terms, which may be in bold, or italics print. Read each topic sentence, usually the first sentence under the heading. Read the study questions at the end of the chapter and think, "Which section could I find that answer in? Then go back and read each section.

4. *Summarizing*

Summarizing is an example of integrating skills. Students read a text and identify the main points, then use those main points to write a summary (a much shorter version of the text) containing only the essential information. Summarizing is a complex activity for use with higher level classes.

5. *Scanning*

Scanning is a reading skill in which the reader quickly searches for a particular information in a text. "The purpose of scanning is to extract certain specific information without reading through the whole text" (Brown, 1994). An example of scanning in real life is looking quickly through a train schedule to learn when a specific train.

6. ***Using context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words***

Students read a passage which contains new words and phrases and guess the meaning of the new words and phrases using the contextual clues as their guide.

7. ***Identifying key words***

This is another important reading skill. Students underline the key words in a text, or complete a table with key words from the text such as locations, size, special features and general impressions when reading a text about a description of a house.

8. ***Pronoun reference***

Pronoun reference ask students to identify the meaning of words such as he, she, they, it, this, that, these, those, one and ones. Knowledge of what these cohesive devices refer to is essential for an understanding of what a text is about.

Adapted from http://www.macmillandictionary.com/glossaries/readingskills.htm

A Strategy for Reading Novels

A story is a fictitious tale that is written to entertain, amuse, or instruct the reader. A novel is the same as a story but it is longer and more complex. To understand a story or novel, you need to understand the six elements used by authors when they write a story or novel.

a) ***Characters***

Characters are the first element to look for when reading a story or novel. Characters are most often people but can be animals or even fictionalized beings like those seen in cartoons or movies. The main character plays the biggest role and is often the first character to be introduced. Most often the story is seen through the eyes of the main character. Secondary characters play a smaller supporting role and are introduced throughout the story.

b) ***Setting***

The setting is the second element you should look for when reading a story or novel. The setting is the location where the story takes place. A story may take place in a home, countryside, town, school, or wherever the author chooses to have the action occur. The setting is usually revealed very early in a story.

c) ***Time*** The time when the story takes place is the third element you should look for when reading a story or novel. A story may take place very recently or many years ago. Usually the time when the story takes place is introduced very early in the story.

d) ***Problem***

The problem is the fourth element you should look for in a story or novel. The problem most often grows out of a conflict between the main character and another character in the story. But the problem can also involve a circumstance such as a hurricane, a war, or one of the many obstacles that produce a conflict in life.

a) ***Events***

Events are the fifth element you should look for when reading a story or novel. An event is an attempt at solving the problem in the story. In a story there are usually a number of attempts to solve the problem and these events make up most of the story.

b) ***Solution***

A solution is the sixth and final element in a story or novel. The solution is how the problem is resolved or brought to an end. Most often the solution is revealed near the end of the story. Sometimes the solution is not revealed until the very last page or even the final paragraph of the story.

Recognizing these story elements will help you better understand and enjoy a story, remember the story facts, and appreciate different writing styles used by authors.

Adapted from http://www.how-to-study.com/novels.htm

Mastering the university textbook:

Use the SQ3R Method

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite
- Review

One technique to improve understanding of textbook chapters is to use the SQ3R Method of Reading.

Survey the Chapter

- Read the chapter summary, even before reading the chapter. If the chapter has an introduction – read that too; this kind of orientation will aid you in organizing the information.
- Look over the major section headings.
- Skim questions and key words. Glance at the figures, tables, charts, etc..
- Create a mechanism to remember the information.

Questions

- Look for chapter questions so you can identify main points.
- Turn the chapter headings into questions – this may arouse your curiosity and comprehensiveness.
- Examine how this chapter relates to the book, the world, the course, etc..

Read

- Read each entire chapter, then answer the questions.
- Search for the answers to the questions.

- Highlight or underline the main points that you read. Do this after reading the entire paragraph or section – do not underline as you are reading.
- When appropriate, make notes in the margin of the chapter. This will aid in organizing information.

Recite

- Having read each section, the student should recite the main points, jot them down – then check them over.
- Talk out loud and listen to the answers. You are reciting to remember.

Review

- Go back over your textbook to see if effective highlighting or underlining has taken place.
- Check your memory by reciting out loud the answers to chapter questions – cover your notes, then check to see if your answer is correct.
- Add more notes in the text and margin, if necessary.

These five steps in the **SQ3R** system – **survey, question, read, recite,** and **review** – should result in long term memory – and positive results.

9. Note-Taking Technique

For many students, it is a good exercise to write things down in their own words while working with the academic material or participating in the teaching. Many lecturers expect that students take notes. Some lecturers hand out pieces of paper which contain the main points of the teaching allowing students to, subsequently, add their own notes on these. Other lecturers write on the blackboard, expecting that what is written on the blackboard is written down by the students in one way or another.

There are several kinds of notes with varying purposes.

Some notes are primarily used to save/remember important information, e.g. the notes you take down during class. Another type of notes are the notes you write when you read, which often act as a combination of thinking tools and guides to the important points of the texts. A third type of notes act as a kind of brainstorming technique which may be used to come up with new arguments, structures for or aspects of a research paper.
In the following, different kinds of notes will be discussed.

Class notes

Most students take notes frequently during class, however, many students are not satisfied with their notes. Generally, they experience that they lack time and a general idea of which parts should be noted down and which parts should not. Furthermore, many students find it difficult to concentrate on that which is being taught while trying to take down useful notes. Experience has shown that quite the reverse is true after a bit of training. After a while, you will discover that

your note-taking results in you having more time on your hands and a broader idea of the subject, making it possible for you to focus your attention on the teaching. First, the notes relieve your memory, which allows you to focus on understanding rather than remembering. Second, note-taking maintains your concentration and makes sure that your thoughts aren't led astray.

In other words, it requires concentration to take down notes during class. You must master the art of note-taking while never losing the thread of the teaching. However, concentration increases your learning ability.

Content and language in your class notes

First and foremost, focus on quality rather than quantity when you take down notes: the object is not to take down as many notes as possible, but, on the contrary, to write only things you understand – or don't understand and, therefore, should remember to examine in depth after class.

As regards content, your notes should be short and concise – this facilitates the task immensely! Don't write the lecturer's wording down. You will also learn more by phrasing the core points of the teaching yourself. Invent your own shorthand writing, and mix the language of teaching with your own native language if this makes it easier for you. Replace long phrases with abbreviations and other symbols. Remember to be consistent in your use of "symbols". Otherwise, you may have trouble benefitting from your notes later on.

Examples of abbreviations/shorthand writing:

Ex or *x* for *example*

Def. for *definition*

Ref. for *references*

Aut. for *author*

Pub. for *public*

Examples of symbols:

÷ instead of not
+ instead of and, in addition, well
⇒ instead of leads to, results in
= instead of equals, the same thing as, corresponding to
> instead of larger than, subsequently
~ instead of almost the same thing as, partly corresponding to

Reading notes

When you read on your own, it is a good idea to take down notes as well as comments in the margin of the book while reading. First, the notes help you structure and, therefore, understand the information in the text. Second, notes act as a sort of guide, which makes it easier to find core points at a later date.

However, notes have an adverse tendency of becoming an unintegrated and very comprehensive reproduction of what is written in the book. Consequently, the notes more or less become a summary rather than what they are supposed to be: a guide to what you have read. In other words, be careful when it comes to writing your notes in your own wording. This is best done by putting of the note-taking until you have finished reading the section and have put the book aside.

In order to avoid writing too many notes, you should begin by considering what you are looking for before you start taking down notes. If you wish to learn something about applied economic methods of calculation, then put on your "mathematical reading glasses" and avoid taking down notes on the more socially descriptive and/or historical information. In general, avoid taking down notes of the entire book, but stick to the sections which are relevant to you here and now!

Margin notes and highlighted text are also types of reading notes – the difference being that margin notes are recorded directly into the texts, books, photocopies and the like. The intended use is for you to separate the important parts of the text from the details by means of notes in the margins and by underlining or highlighting. Use different colors and size of highlighters to highlight different types of information and different degrees of importance.

Examples:

- **~** Wavy line under words or concepts you do not understand or find are vague.
- **?** Question mark against large sections which are vague/difficult to understand.
- **___** Bold line under keywords and important concepts.
- **!** Vertical line or exclamation mark in the margin against important sections.
- **||** Double vertical line against sections which are central to the whole text.

However, you should be aware that you will only be able to single out core points of the material that you are reading when you understand it. Consequently, wait until after you have read the chapter in its entirety before you highlight.

A disadvantage of highlighting is that it is not your own wording, and you might fool yourself into believing that you have understood the text, just because you have highlighted it. If it is large portions of the text you highlight/underline or record as being important, it is a good idea to write your own keywords or points against each section. First, this means that you get to process the text instead of just assuming the wording of the author. Second, it becomes easier to recognize and, therefore, locate certain sections. Thus, you create a general perspective of the text and facilitate the task of re-reading/revising the text.

Mind maps

Mind maps are a study-related tool. The aim is to grant a graphic image of how different concepts and different pieces of information are related to a core concept or keyword.

Like notes in general, mind maps is mainly an individually adapted tool, the primary purpose of which is to render a graphical perspective. Begin by writing down the central keyword in the middle of a blank piece of paper. Then add sub-topics by means of lines and keywords – like branches on a tree.

The rest is up to you:

- Write on the lines
- Add symbols or graphs
- Use a lot of color!
- Use short concise words
- Divide the mind map into fields
- Link different fields by means of arrows

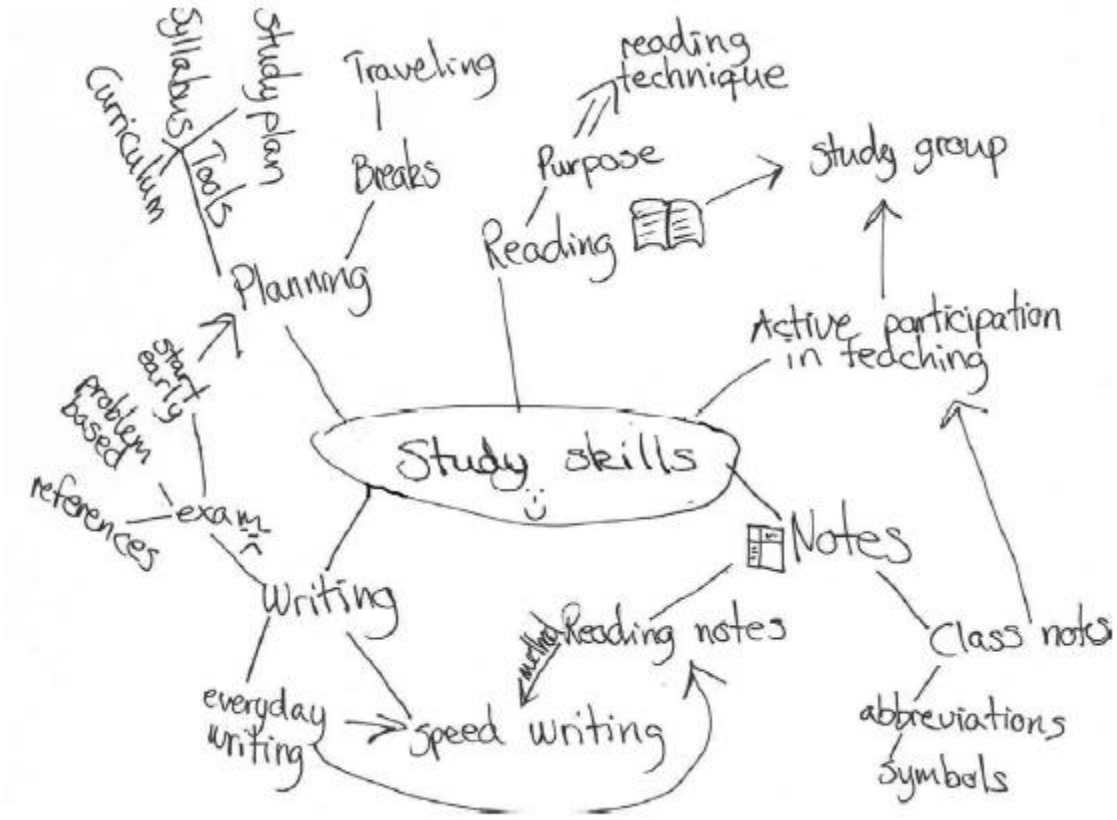
The above is only meant to act as an example. As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter where or how you place the individual keywords as long as you leave plenty of room for new keywords. You may either collect all your thoughts on a single large mind map (on A3-paper) or organize the ideas on several mind maps. You decide the rules for your mind map(s).

Finally, you will end up with a sheet of paper with a structured image of the knowledge and the thoughts you have on the given concept or keyword, i.e. a map of your knowledge.

The advantage of using mind maps is that you visualize the connections between a central keyword and associated concepts/information. Mind maps are very useful creative tools and allow you to find new connections and get an idea of the broader perspective.

You may also use mind maps as a traditional note-taking technique at lectures or when you read syllabus books. Furthermore, an increasing number of lecturers use mind maps as lecture notes – and hand them out during class.

An example of a small mind map



The Test-Taking Process:

1. Test Anxiety

a. How to Keep Calm during Tests

1. ***Prepare well in advance***. Keep up every day if you can, but don't judge yourself harshly if you don't. Avoid last-minute cramming. Don't go without sleep the night before.

2. ***Know the time and place of the test and what you need to bring***. Be on time, neither too early nor too late, with blue books or supplies. Don't rush.

3. ***Don't talk about the test with classmates immediately beforehand***, especially if you know this sort of thing raises your anxiety level.

4. ***Read over the test and plan your approach***. Ascertain point values per part, time limits for each section, which question you'll start with to boost your confidence, etc.

5. ***Don't hesitate to ask for clarification*** from the professor, teaching assistant, or proctor if you have questions about instructions, procedure, etc.

6. ***Be clear about your job***. A test is a thinking task, and your job during an exam is to think as clearly as possible based on what you currently know. Focus on your job (the thinking process) and practice letting go of what you don‘t control (the grading). Approach the test determined to think to the best of your ability, but also accept the limits of what you currently know as a beginner.

7. ***Reduce anxiety with activity***. If your mind goes blank and you can't think of anything to write, go on to another question or another part of the test. On an essay question, jot down anything you can recall on scratch paper to stimulate your memory and get your mind working.

8. ***Relax yourself physically*** during the test, especially if you notice that you are not thinking well or your muscles are tight. Pause, put your test down, and take several slow, deep breaths. Tense and release your muscles. Do this in particular if you notice that you are worrying excessively about one problem, not reading carefully, and unable to recall information you know.

9. ***Pay attention to the test, not to others***. Don't waste time wondering how other people are doing.

Adapted from www.utexas.edu/student/utlc

b. Tips on Reducing Test-Taking Anxiety

Test anxiety is when a student excessively worried about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and can cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other symptoms. The following are tips on reducing test taking anxiety :

© Fall 2007 Erguig, Let’s Do it Right! A Study Skills Course Book 84

- Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- Space out your studying over a few days or weeks. Continually review class material. Don't wait until the night before the test and try to learn everything.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
- Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.
- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Show up to class early so that you won't have to worry about being late.
- Stay relaxed: if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- Read the directions slowly and carefully.
- If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher/invigilator to explain it to you.
- Skim through the test so as to have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so that you won't worry about forgetting them.
- Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.

- Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.
- If you don't know a question skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time), and remember that you don't have to always get every question right to do well on the test.
- Focus on the question at hand; don't let your mind wander on other things.
- If you're still experiencing extreme test anxiety after following these tips, seek help from your school counsellor.

Adapted from http://www.testtakingtips.com/test/index.htm

c. Are you "Test Anxious"? A Test-Anxiety Quiz

a. Are you aware of being really nervous on a test, maybe so nervous that you don't do your best and you lose points, even though you know you've studied well and are prepared?

b. Does your stomach ever get tight or upset before or during a test? Hands cold and sweaty? Headaches? Do you have trouble sleeping the night before a test?

c. Do you ever find your mind racing, or dull or "muddy," so that you can't think clearly while taking a test?

d. Do you ever forget material you studied and learned, maybe only to remember it again later after the test is over?

e. Do you "overanalyze" questions, see too many possibilities, choose the complex answer and overlook—and miss—the simpler, correct one?

f. Do you make many careless errors on tests?

Adapted from
http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/learning_resources/anxiety_stress_management/How_to_Keep_Calm_During_Tests.doc

10. The Process of writing a research paper:

The following steps will help you write a research paper, starting with nothing but an assignment or prompt and ending up with a well-crafted essay. The steps are:

Step 1: Get familiar with the assignment
Step 2: Pick a topic
Step 3: Research
Step 4: Organize research
Step 5: Form a thesis
Step 6: Create an outline
Step 7: Write
Step 8: Edit for content
Step 9: Edit for grammar
Step 10: Re-read and submit your paper
Step 1: Get Familiar with the Assignment

This may sound obvious, but it's very important to understand what your teacher or professor is asking for before you start writing your research paper. Many students skip this step, and then wonder why they receive a low grade on a paper they worked hard on or were excited about. It's often because they didn't read the instructions.

Spend time going over the assignment. Look at everything your instructor has provided you with. Carefully read the writing assignment, prompts, grading rubric, or any other materials you've received. It might even be helpful to highlight and take notes on the assignment. Take time to understand exactly what you are being asked to write and how you will be graded on it. And if you aren't sure, ask! Ask your teacher for clarification before you even pick a topic. That way, you will be sure you are on the right track.

Step 2: Pick a Topic

Once you understand what you're being asked to write in your research paper, it's time to decide what to write about. This can be daunting, but don't get too bent out of shape. It can be very helpful to write about something you're interested in or passionate about, but don't worry about choosing the perfect topic. In many cases, a controversial topic can be ideal, so that you can exercise your ability to objectively explain differing positions, and even defend one if the assignment calls for that.

Use the guidelines given by your instructor to help pick your paper topic. If you have a topic that you love, but you're having trouble fitting it into the guidelines, choose another topic. It will be easier on you in the long run to write about a topic that fits the assignment. It's important to be engaged in the topic you're writing about it, but you don't have to love it. It's also good to realize that you can use this research writing assignment as an opportunity to learn about

something new. You will be somewhat of an expert in the topic by the end of this process, but you don't have to know everything right now.

Step 3: Research

This step is pretty flexible; different people will research for a paper in different ways. However, it's important to stay focused and move pretty quickly. After all, you still have to write your research paper.

Several key things to remember as you research are: 1) **skim**, 2) **find reliable resources**, and 3) **don't ignore information.**

First off, skimming. You don't have to read in-full everything ever written about your topic. In fact, you probably can't. Get comfortable reading through things quickly. Learn how to identify key points and arguments without getting bogged down and reading every word.

Next, find reliable resources. Although this may run contrary to what you've been told, you can use Wikipedia to write a research paper. But, you cannot use that as a final source. You can use general sources like Wikipedia to get familiar with a topic, find keywords that can further drive your research, and quickly understand large amounts of information. But, for the information you use in your paper, you have to find reliable resources.

Take what you have learned from a Google search or Wikipedia article and dig deeper. Check out the sources on the article, use keywords from your internet search to search an academic database, or ask an expert whether or not what you learned is valid and if it is, where you can find a reliable source stating the same thing. So, just to be clear: you can use Wikipedia as a starting point in your research, but you should not cite Wikipedia as one of the primary sources for your research paper.

Finally, don't ignore information. You can find an article that says anything you want it to say. Did researchers recently discover that octopus DNA is made of alien DNA from outer space? Are the spires on the Cinderella Castle at Disney World removable in case of a hurricane? Did a cook attempt to assassinate George Washington by feeding him poisoned tomatoes? You can find articles testifying that all three of the previous claims are true; however, when you dig deeper, it's clear that they're not. Just because you find one article stating that something is true, that does not necessarily mean it is a proven fact that you can use in your research.

Work to understand all of the different viewpoints and schools of thought on your topic. This can be done by reading a variety of articles, reading a book or article that gives an overview of the topic and incorporates different points of view, or talking to an expert who can explain the topic in depth.

Step 4: Organize Your Research

So you have all of this information, now what to do with it? Step four is all about getting organized. Like research, different people have different preferences here. It can also depend on

your assignment. Some sort of bibliography (literally "book writing," this is a list of the books, articles, and other sources you have used in your research) is helpful when it comes to organizing your research.

If your teacher requires you to turn in a bibliography with your research paper (think back to step #1; you ought to already know exactly what the assignment is by now!), create a bibliography that meets the requirements for the paper. If you are just making one just for yourself, think about how you would like to organize your research. It might make sense to bookmark resources on your web browser or make a digital bibliography that allows you to link the resources you found. You might prefer a printed list of your resources or you might want to write down all you have learned that is relevant to your project on notecards or sticky notes and organize your research paper on a table or the floor.

Step 5: Form a Thesis

Now that you understand what you've been asked to do, have chosen a topic that fits the assignment, and have researched and organized that research, you're ready to articulate your own opinion, argument, or assertion. Even if you aren't arguing for or against anything, your paper needs a thesis. A thesis is a short statement that you — as researcher and author — put forward for the readers of your paper as what you are trying to explain or prove.

Step 6: Create an Outline

Like a bibliography, the way that you create your outline may depend on your assignment. If your teacher asked you to turn in an outline, be sure to make an outline that follows the example, guidelines, or requirements you have been given. If you aren't required to write an outline, it can still be a helpful tool as you build your research paper.

Creating an outline is really about structuring your paper. Don't be too formulaic, but it can be helpful to follow patterns and guides. In high school you might have written three- or five-paragraph essays, and it's okay to use those same patterns for a college research paper, but be sure that whatever format you choose makes sense for your paper. If you have two main points in your thesis, three or five main sections might not work for your research paper. If the assignment asks you to introduce a topic, explain different opinions on the topic, and then choose and explain your opinion, then your paper probably needs three main sections, one for each of those objectives.

As you create an outline, think critically about what you are trying to explain or communicate in your research paper and what structure allows you to do that in a clear, organized way. It usually makes sense to have an introduction and conclusion, but what goes between will vary based on the contents of your essay.

The outlining stage of producing your argument is a great time to think about bad forms of argumentation you should avoid. If you aren't familiar with logical fallacies, take some time to review the most common fallacies; your grade could depend on it!

Step 7: Write

And then, finally, it's time to actually write your paper. You might feel like you should have started writing sooner, but, rest assured: the work you have done up to this point is important. It will help you create a strong, clear, interesting research paper.

As you write, don't be a perfectionist. Don't worry about finding the perfect words, using the perfect grammar, or crafting the perfect title. There is time to perfect your research paper as you edit. Right now, you just need to write.

It might be helpful to look over your research before you start writing, but don't write directly from your research. If you're looking back and forth between your resources and your paper as you begin writing, it's easy to copy ideas without really creating your own work. You have done a lot of work already, so trust that and work from memory as you write your research paper. It's okay to look up a specific quote or statistic, but in general your ideas should be your own at this point.

Working from your own ideas will help you avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the uncredited use of someone else's words or ideas, whether you meant to use them without credit or not. This sounds scary, but it doesn't have to be. If you follow the steps outlined in this guide, you can be confident that you've created your own essay that builds on the ideas, writing, and work of others, without stealing, copying, or plagiarising.

If you quote something word-for-word, you need to cite your source. Use quotation marks and mention the source of the quote. You will also need to include more information about the quote on a Works Cited or References page. If you paraphrase, that is, you don't use the exact words, but do use someone's idea, it's still important to give credit. You don't need quotation marks here, but it is important to mention where the idea comes from.

If something is a common fact (generally accepted if you can find the fact stated, without credit, in three or more credible sources), you don't need to mention where the idea comes from. For example, Bill Gates is a billionaire who founded Microsoft. That is a common fact; you can find it stated in numerous trustworthy sources. But if your paper is about the why behind Bill Gates' wealth, fame, and success, then you're going to need to credit and cite specific quotes and statistics, as well as theories about why the Microsoft billionaire is so successful.

Step 8: Edit for Content

Now that you've got a paper written, take a moment to congratulate yourself. You have done a lot of work to get to this point! And then, get back to work. You still need to edit your paper before it's ready to turn in. Remember how you weren't supposed to worry about being perfect? You still don't need to worry, but it is time to make your paper as perfect as you possibly can.

Start by editing for content. This means thinking about structure, organization, wording, and length. You carefully organized your paper when you created an outline. Now that you have written your paper, does that organization still make sense? If so, great. If not, what do you need to move around? Look carefully at how you've worded your sentences. Did you communicate what you meant to get across? Can you make your paper clearer or easier to understand? This is also a good point to think back to Step 1. Does your paper include everything the assignment asked for? If not, where can you include the missing pieces?

If your paper is too long or too short, now is the time to cut it down or build it up to an acceptable length. Don't just delete your conclusion because your paper is too long. Don't waste your time playing with the font size and margins to try to make your essay longer. Be careful and thoughtful about these edits. If you need to take something out, what makes sense to cut and how can you re-organize your paper so that it maintains a strong structure? If you need to lengthen your paper, don't just randomly add words or repeat things you have already said. Think about where you could expand or what you can add that fits in with the rest of your paper, further develops the ideas you are presenting, or adds valuable information to your research paper.

Once you have made all the changes you think necessary, read back through your paper again to be sure it all makes sense. Especially when working on a computer, it is easy to leave or delete a word, sentence, or paragraph that you didn't mean to. If you are tired of looking at your research paper, give it to a friend, mentor, or teacher and ask them to take a look at your paper and let you know what they think of the content.

Step 9: Edit for Grammar

It is also important to edit for grammar. This might seem daunting, but there are lots of tools and resources that can help. Check out resources like Grammarly or Strunk and White's Elements of Style if you're unsure of what to do with commas, semicolons, or run-on sentences.

Like editing for content, editing for grammar might take a few run-throughs. If you need to take a break, that's fine. It can even help you come back to your paper feeling more focused, which is key to catching and fixing mistakes.

Step 10: Re-read and Submit your Research Paper

Once you've finished Steps 1–9, it's definitely time to take a break. Give your paper a day or two (or an hour or two, if you are running short on time) and give it a final read-through. It can be helpful to print a copy of your paper and read a hard-copy if you have only read through it on a screen thus far. You might notice mistakes or formatting issues that your eyes missed while reading on your computer. Once you have read your research paper for a final time and double checked that your paper does everything the assignment is asking for, it is time to submit.

Be sure to follow any instructions you have been given about turning in your research paper. Also give yourself time to troubleshoot if things go wrong. If you try to print your paper five minutes before class starts, what are you going to do if your printer is out of toner? If you are

supposed to submit your paper online at midnight and the wifi is down when you login to submit your assignment at 11:58 PM, even though that is unfortunate, it is still something you could have avoided by logging on with enough time to solve any problems that arise before the deadline. Your teacher will appreciate and respect your preparedness, and it will likely impact your grades positively.

Don't be afraid to reach out to your instructor for help, but be reasonable and responsible about it. If you log on the day before and see that the place where you are supposed to turn in your assignment is locked or unavailable, send your teacher an email so that they can help you submit your paper before it is due. Just don't expect them to help you in the middle of the night, on a weekend, or minutes before an assignment is due. Some instructors might, but you are just lucky at that point. If you prepare and give yourself time to turn in an assignment, you don't have to count on getting lucky about whether or not your professor is sitting at their computer and available to help you at the very moment you email them.

Summary

We have looked at learning and considered when, where and how to study; some authors call this SHAPE: style, habit, attitude, preference, and experience. The trouble is that we may stay with unsuccessful study habits even when they do not work, just because they are that – a habit or a preference. None of the good practice in this booklet will mean anything unless and until you put the ideas into practice, until you push through your discomfort and learn new, successful practices.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chaffee, John. (1999). ***The thinker's guide to college success***. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 2nd edition.

Deci, E L and Ryan, R M (1985). **Intrinsic Motivation and Self-determination in Human Behaviour**, Plenum, New York

Devine, T.G. (1987). ***Teaching Study Skills***. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Hackman, J R and Oldham, G R (1974). ***Motivation through the design of work: test of a theory, Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance***, 16 (2), pp 250–79

Katz, D (1964). ***The motivational basis of organizational behaviour, Behavioural Science***, 9, pp 131–36

Jensen, Eric. (1989). ***Student success secrets***. NY: Barron's Educational Series. 3rd edition.

Nist, Sherrie L. & Jodi Patrick Holschuh. (2003). ***College success strategies***. NY: Pearson Education.