

How to Take Notes, Study, and Test Effectively

College Success Workshops

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Study Strategies

How to Study Effectively

- Create favorable conditions
- Generate a positive attitude
- Develop good techniques

Favorable Conditions

- Location – can you concentrate?
 - Are there distractions?
 - Music? TV? Street noise?
- Create a Schedule
 - Study at specific times each week
 - Arrange hard subjects when fresh, etc.

Positive Attitude

- Clarify goals – how does this fit?
- Find a way to make subject meaningful.
- Ask questions. Be an active learner.
- Reward yourself after each study period – breaks, food, walks, music, phone, etc.

Good Techniques

- SQR3
 - **S**urvey (Skim) the section. Look for key words, figures and summaries.
 - **Q**uestions – for each major topic
 - **R**ead – and answer questions
 - **R**ecite the main points.
 - **R**eview. Create 1 page summary sheet.

Additional techniques

- Use repetition to increase remembering. Flash cards.
- Review summary sheets and chapters weekly.
- Create associations, analogies, metaphors, and summaries.

Deal with Problem Areas

- **Procrastination**

- Start quickly. Take the first step.

- **Concentration**

- Remove distractions. Talk about the subject with yourself. Questions. Imagine talking with the author.

- **Boredom**

- Switch subject matter. Be more active

Note-taking Strategies

Notetaking – the Cornell Method

- Divide the paper into 2 columns
 - Right column for notes
 - Left column for “recall” (key phrases)
- Record – lecture content in right column
- Reduce – move key words/phrases to left column after lecture

The Cornell Method

- Recite the information using these key words
- Reflect – relate material to own experiences, add own thoughts
- Review – use left column throughout the term

Note-taking Tips

- Create your own abbreviations:
 - b/c (because), w/ (with), w/o (without), ex (example), diff (difference)
- Ask questions or to repeat something
- Prepare for class (familiar material)
- Stay till the end (catch summaries)

Note-taking Tips

- Photocopy notes; then exchange and compare with friend
- Leave empty space to fill in gaps later
- Ask instructor for details after class
- Tape record (with permission)

Note-taking Tips

- Use an outline format. Topic on one line and supporting details below.
- Sit near the front of the room
- Write legibly. Date your notes. Keep notes for one class together.
- Review each day and at end of week.

Testing Strategies

Learning about Forgetting

- We forget about 95% of what we are exposed to
- 53% of that forgetting happens within 20 minutes of first exposure
- Solution – multiple exposures
- Better than last minute “cramming” (see 7 Day study plan)

Seven Day Study Plan

- Day 1 – organize notes, materials, & text book
- Day 2 – Review lecture
- Day 3 – Review text
- Day 4 – Review lecture & text
- Day 5 – Review lecture
- Day 6 – Review text
- Day 7 – Review everything

Taking Tests

- Take care of yourself
 - Sleep, hygiene & healthy breakfast
 - Positive attitude & relaxation
 - Arrive a few minutes early
 - Sit away from doors, windows, or other distractions (& others' stress)
- Think of a reward for yourself after the exam is over

Taking Tests

- Scan whole test – check point values and budget time accordingly
- Read the directions *twice*
- Think of exam as opportunity to show the professor what you know

Taking Tests

- Answer the easy questions first
- Then move to the more difficult
- Essays –
 - Write an outline, summary or notes in margin or on the back
 - State main idea forcefully
 - Back it up with supporting detail

Taking Tests

- Write as neatly as possible
- Check the clock to stay on track
- Relax – remember to breathe
- Test anxiety – an exaggerated sense of personal threat (“fight or flight”)
- Poor performance on a task does not indicate personal worth

Taking Tests

- True - False questions
 - Look for qualifiers or negatives
 - Check each part of the statement
 - Think “true”, and guess when you must
- Matching questions
 - Start with item you are sure of, then move to items you are less certain of, then guess

Taking Tests

- Short answer
 - Answer only what is asked
 - Keep answer short & to the point
 - If you have difficulty retrieving some aspects of answer, show what you know
 - If you forget proper terminology, show what you know in your own words

Taking Tests

- Multiple Choice
 - Be sure it is “best” answer, not “all correct” answers (or “answer that doesn’t belong”)
 - Read all the choices
 - Cross out those that don’t fit (decoys)
 - Stick to the subject of the course
 - Watch for negatives and extreme words, such as “only”, “always” or “most”.

Taking Tests

- “All of the above” questions
 - Look for two or more correct choices
- Numbers – if you don’t know, cross out highest and lowest and guess in middle
- Choose between two look alike choices, crossing out other options
- Longer choices are often correct

Sample Questions

- The almost perfect walls of granite boulders surrounding some lakes in Iowa were formed by:
 - American Indians
 - Prehistoric men
 - Huge meteors
 - Thick ice

Sample Questions

- Because of its lack of lumber, Syria has many “beehive” homes built of:
 - Metal
 - Concrete
 - Marble
 - Mud brick

Sample Questions

- Which materials are NOT used in making saddles?
 - Linen, canvas, serge
 - Rubber and cork
 - Wood and leather
 - Iron and steel

Sample Questions

- The author suggests that the desert:
 - Climate is unpredictable
 - Heat is always unbearable
 - Is totally empty of rain
 - Earthquakes pose constant danger

Sample Questions

- Which of the following cities are European capitals?
 - Paris
 - Stockholm
 - London
 - All of the above

Sample Questions

- The “Great Pyramid” originally stood how many feet high?
 - 281 feet
 - 381 feet
 - 481 feet
 - 981 feet

Sample Questions

- The author considers himself an authority on:
 - Touring the Middle East
 - Middle East rug dealers
 - Middle East rug bargains
 - Behavior patterns of tourists

Sample Questions

- Why are the climates of Europe generally warmer than North America's, when they are both about the same latitude?
 - There are fewer mountains in Europe
 - The waters surrounding Europe moderate the climate, helping to keep the winters warmer and the summers cooler
 - There are fewer trees in Europe

Test Anxiety

- Most students experience some level of anxiety during an exam.
- A small amount can actually sharpen mental alertness and enhance performance.
- Too much anxiety can interfere with exam performance.

Test Anxiety

- What causes test anxiety?
 - Lack of preparation
 - Cramming the night before the exam
 - Poor time management
 - Failure to organize text information
 - Poor study habits

Test Anxiety

- What causes test anxiety?
 - Worrying about the following:
 - Past performance on exams
 - How friends and other students are doing
 - The negative consequences of failure (often exaggerated)
 - “All-or-nothing” thinking
 - Losing perspective
 - It’s only a test – there will be others

Physical Signs of Test Anxiety

- Any or all of the following:
 - Perspiration
 - Sweaty palms
 - Headache
 - Upset stomach
 - Rapid heartbeat
 - Tense muscles

Effects of Test Anxiety

- Nervousness:
 - Difficulty reading and understanding the questions on the exam
 - Difficulty organizing your thoughts
 - Difficulty retrieving key words and concepts when answering essay questions
 - Doing poorly on an exam even though you know the material

Effects of Test Anxiety

- Mental blocking:
 - Going blank on questions
 - Remembering the correct answers as soon as the exam is over

How to Reduce Test Anxiety

- Study and know the material well enough that you can recall it even under stress
- Practice good time management and avoid laziness, procrastination and day dreaming
- Avoid cramming the night before exams
- Build confidence during the semester

How to Reduce Test Anxiety

- Learn to concentrate on the material by:
 - Generating key questions from your textbook and your notes
 - Focus on key words, concepts & examples
 - Make charts & outlines to organize information in notes & textbooks

Relaxation Techniques

- Take a couple of long deep breaths (not quick shallow ones) to relax the body and reduce stress
 - Count to five as you breath in and out
- Focus your mind on your breath or some object
- Tense and then relax muscles throughout the body

Relaxation Techniques

- If allowed, go get a drink or go to the bathroom
- If allowed, eat something
- Break your pencil lead – then go sharpen it
- Notice any negative or panicky self-statements; offer reassurance (it's OK)

After the Test

- During the exam, think of the post-exam reward you have promised yourself
- Whether you did well or not, follow through on the post-exam reward
- Try not to dwell on any mistakes you might have made
- Just relax for a little while