

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STUDY HABITS



Mayland Community College
S.O.A.R. Program
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GET THE STUDY HABIT

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.

In this module you will discover your areas of strength and identify your weaknesses pertaining to studying. You will learn about your preferred learning channel, tips to organize your studies, and ways to help you remember what you study. The skills you will learn about in this module can be applied in other areas of your life as well: your job, your career, or any activity that requires thought, planning, information processing, and self-discipline.

You'll find that once you develop effective study habits, the job of studying and learning will become easier. Instead of working harder, you'll be working smarter.

Exercise: Discover your approach to studying. Circle the responses that apply to you.

- | | | | |
|--|----------|-------|-------------------------|
| 1. My study habits are... | good | fair | poor |
| 2. For every hour in class, I study... | a little | 1 hr. | 2 hrs. more than 2 hrs. |
| 3. I have an organized plan and schedule for study... | true | false | |
| 4. I have a quiet place in which I study... | true | false | |
| 5. I usually approach studying with a positive attitude. | true | false | |

In what ways could you improve your study habits? _____

YOUR LEARNING PREFERENCE

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 hands on (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 has a tendency 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.

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



WHEN TO STUDY

Daily reviews:

Study begins on the first day of class. Successful students read and review notes before each class to recall information from the previous class and to warm up for learning. *Review your notes immediately after each class to reinforce learning or within a 24-hour period for best recall.* Repeated exposure to the material will store it in your long-term memory.

Studying one hour immediately after a class will do more good in developing an understanding of the material as several hours a few days later. Studies show that as much as 80 % of material learned in class is forgotten within 24 hours if there is no review.

Weekly reviews:

At the end of the week go over your notes for the week. This refreshes your memory and promotes better recall of the material. Repetition is the key to remembering. The more times you look at the material, the stronger you make the neural (brain) pathways that lead to the material. This makes recall much easier.

Pre-exam reviews:

These reviews are longer, from 3 - 5 hours. Break your study sessions into one-hour blocks with ten-minute breaks in between. Get up, stretch, get a drink, and move around during your break. The more active you are, the more effective your study time will be. A tired body only makes a tired mind.

Peak Study Times:

Study when you are at your peak, when you are more awake and alert and able to absorb new information. If you are a morning person, your best study time is in the morning. If you are an evening person, study at night. If you cannot find time to study at your peak time, try to study when you are feeling relatively awake and alert.

Bonus Study Time:

Whenever you have extra time, study. Write notes on 3x5 cards and have them with you. Whenever you have free time, such as when waiting for appointments, study your notes. Study in your car by tape recording your notes and listening to them while driving to school. Study whenever you find yourself having an unexpected break, a free hour, a canceled class, etc. Don't forget that weekend evenings can also be used for studying.

Exercise: Fill in the blanks with the first thought that comes to mind.

1. I find it easiest to study when _____.
2. If a subject is really hard, I tend to _____.
3. The subject I most like to study is _____.
4. The subject I least like to study is _____.

STATE YOUR INTENTION...

Why are you studying and what do you intend to gain from it? Ask yourself this question every time you sit down to study. Half-hearted or distracted studying is a waste of time. Relate studying to your life goals. If your life and future depended on how well or how much you studied, would it make sense to do it well? If you cannot see the point in studying, it will only make it boring and tedious.

Think about your goals. Ask yourself, "Is this what I really want to be doing?" "What do I hope to gain from this?" You have to put meaning into your studies in order for them to be meaningful to you.

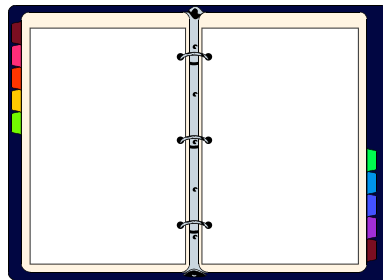


Organize Your Time...

Plan your study time. Leave enough time for each of your subjects and more time for difficult subjects. Most college classes require about **six hours of study per week or two hours of study for every hour in class.** If you are a slow reader or have other study problems, you may need to plan more time.

Prioritize your time and put off other activities to allow for adequate study time. You may find it necessary to postpone or eliminate certain activities in order to fulfill your goals as a student.

Keep a weekly and monthly schedule planner in which to record due dates of assignments, tests, papers, field trips, etc. Transfer important dates from your syllabus to your weekly/monthly planner.



Schedule study times daily in your planner. Be sure to plan extra time for long study sessions before tests. Schedule time for weekly reviews of all your notes from the beginning of class to the present.

Scheduling long-term assignments

Some assignments will span a week, a month or even a semester. You are likely to leave these important assignments to the last minute if you don't schedule time for them in your daily schedule. Get started on these early, by allotting time for them each day in your daily planner.

Scheduling for student with jobs

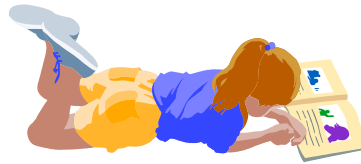
If you have a full or part-time job, you probably have less time to study than non-working students. You must use your time very carefully. Your daily schedule should include a list of things to do, in order of priority. To be successful, you must have a sense of urgency about referring to your list and studying whenever an opportunity presents itself. Cross off tasks as you complete them, including your

study tasks. Take advantage of spare moments when you can study while waiting for a class to begin, when stuck in traffic, or while waiting for a doctor's appointment. The easiest way to do this is to convert your notes to 3x5 or 5x8 cards that you can carry with you, or record your notes on a cassette. Some students make it a habit to listen to recorded notes while driving to and from school or work.

Organize Your Study Area...

Keep notes and handouts from class in a **3-ring binder**. This is useful because you can add pages to it, copy notes that were missed from other students, and add handouts from class in the proper sections. You can also put index tabs marking different topics in your note binder.

Study in an area that is set up for serious study. Have your tools for study: **notebooks, textbooks, pens, pencils, computer, dictionary, thesaurus, etc.** Be sure the area is well-lit, free from noise and distractions, and not too comfortable. Control for interruptions like phones ringing, doors opening and closing, and people coming and going. Try to study in the same place everyday.



Studying with children underfoot...

For anyone who has tried to study with children around, the task is usually frustrating and sometimes impossible, depending on the age of the children. These tips, taken from the book, **On Becoming a Master Student**, are worth trying:

- Plan tasks for your children while you study: silly putty, blocks, coloring books and other toys can engage your child's interest while you study.
- Childproof a room to study and fill it with toys. Make it a place where children can roam with minimal supervision.
- Allow for interruptions. Schedule the kinds of study activities, like reviewing flash cards, that can be interrupted.
- Use television creatively, selecting videos or educational programs. Have your child use headphones so you can concentrate.
- Make studying a game by getting your children to help by holding study cards and talking to them about what you are studying.
- Ask for cooperation and reward them when they respect your study time.
- Attend to your child's needs first by spending time with them prior to studying.
- Plan study breaks with your children or reward them with time together after you finish studying.

- Develop a routine and keep to a schedule, giving rewards for keeping the schedule.
- Ask other adults to help you with childcare at times when you must study alone, or find community activities such as day care services.
- Find a playmate for your child while you study.

Despite your efforts to study at home when children are present, you may find that your best and most productive study time is at school, in the quiet, private atmosphere of the library.

Exercise: Answer the following questions.

Libraries are generally ideal study locations. Why?

The Student Commons is not the best place to study. Why?

HOW TO STUDY

Reading and Studying Textbooks:

As soon as you buy your textbook for a class, give yourself a head start before going to class. Read the Table of Contents, prefaces, introduction, and any other up-front material in the book. Leaf through the book and see what it contains. Read the captions, read chapter titles, and go to the back of the book to see if there is a glossary, an index, answers to quizzes given throughout the text, etc. Get familiar with your book. Treat it like a tool you want to use with proficiency.

When you are ready to begin reading a chapter, don't just plunge into your reading. Here is a sure-fire way to get the most out of your reading:

First, preview the chapter. Look at headings, subheadings, topic sentences, **boldfaced** and *italicized* words, pictures, diagrams, graphs, summaries, and review questions at the end.

Second, ask yourself questions about the subheadings.

Third, read a section of the chapter (one subheading at a time). Put the book down and ask yourself what you just read. Did you understand what it was about? Could you answer questions about it? Could you explain it to someone else? Continue reading and stopping to think about what you just read. Ask yourself questions.

Fourth, don't skip any part of the chapter. Read the sidelines, the captions under photos, definitions, and any additional information the author has included. It's all there to help you learn.

Fifth, don't be afraid to mark your text – use different colored highlighters for particularly important parts, but don't defeat the purpose of highlighting by overdoing it.

Sixth, outline the chapter: When you have read the chapter through, go back and take notes. Define terms, draw diagrams, and explain things in your own words. Make up memory tricks to help you remember new terms. For example, if you are studying the part of the brain called the “hippocampus” you may use a memory trick of association, picturing a “hippo” with a good memory, since the hippocampus deals with memory formation.

Seventh, draw arrows or other symbols to direct you to important details or definitions. If a word appears that you do not know, look it up and write the definition in the margin. Underline key points.

The following method of reading, called **the SQ3R Method**, was developed to help people read faster and study better. It is similar to the information you just read, with some added details.

SQ3R Method of Reading

SURVEY ----- QUESTION ----- READ ----- RECITE ----- REVIEW

Survey:

This step takes only a few minutes. Go through the chapter quickly. Glance at the chapter title, the introduction, headings, and summary paragraphs, if any. Notice any pictures, diagrams, graphs, tables, etc. Read any bold print.

Previewing your text gives you some background about topics you may have never encountered before. You pick up general information. You know where to find information. You gain a better idea of how the information is organized and presented. It opens up a place in your brain where the new information will be stored. It saves time by reducing the amount of time it takes to read the chapter.

Another advantage is that it creates an interest in what is coming up. It motivates you to read less interesting material to get to the “good stuff.”

Question:

Before you begin reading a section, turn the heading into a question. For example, if the heading is **Basic Causes of Stress**, your question would be "**What are the basic causes of stress?**" This arouses your curiosity and increases your comprehension. It also brings to mind information you already know. The questions you ask help make important points stand out as you read. This forces you to think about what you are reading.

Read:

Read the material under the heading with the purpose of getting the answer to your question. Read with concentration. Identify the main ideas and highlight or underline them. Read sections at a time and stop to ask questions. Jot down notes and ask yourself what you just read. If you can answer your question, read on. If not, look it over again.

A good practice for more difficult reading is to do an outline of chapter in your notes. By leaving extra space you can fill in details during the class lecture. Make note of new vocabulary and write definitions in your notes.

Recite:

This step requires that you recite **out loud** the answer to the question you asked prior to reading a section of the text. Say it in your own words. If you find you cannot answer your question, go back and look for the answer, then try again. This way you will know if you have understood the material.

Besides answering your questions, look away from the book and try to state in your own words what the reading is about.

You may jot down brief notes about what you read. When you are done, go back and make an outline of the chapter.

Review:

After you have read the entire chapter, look over the notes you made to familiarize yourself with the important information. Check your memory by reciting the main points out loud. Then review the main points in your notes, making sure you understand them. Add to your notes from the text, if necessary. Always do a review of the chapter after completing your reading. Then do quick reviews **before and after** each class. Do longer, more in-depth reviews before exams.

Don't wait until exam time to review your textbook. Review once a week all the readings from that week. Be sure you can summarize the key points. Write them down to further reinforce learning.

Finally, make up test questions from what you have read. Be sure to write them

down and answer them.

ADVANTAGES OF THE SQ3R METHOD

The **SQ3R Method** of reading sets the stage for interacting with your text material. As you go through the five steps you are gaining information, formulating questions, thinking about what you are reading, and trying to find answers to your questions. You are also reciting information out loud. All of these steps require the use of your **auditory, visual and kinesthetic senses**. When more senses are involved, more effective learning takes place.

SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR READING TEXTBOOKS:

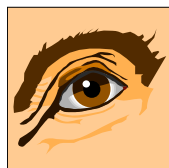
- Know what to read by following your syllabus or list of assignments. Never fall behind, but always stay ahead in your reading.
- Divide chapters into readable chunks. Reading ten pages at a time will seem manageable compared to reading forty pages.
- Always preview the chapter before you read.
- If your text has any practice tests, do them. Pay particular attention to the essay questions. If you can answer them, you will have a good grasp of the information in the chapter.

MOVING FROM SHORT-TERM TO LONG-TERM MEMORY

The key to remembering what you study is to move information from the temporary short-term memory to the long-term memory. These next tips will help you do this. They are simple and fun to use and the results you will get will be amazing.

Visualize

Try to see what you are reading. Get a feel for the subject. Make it come alive for you. If you read about insects, try to feel them wiggle in your hand and imagine sounds they might make. The more senses you use, the stronger you make the neural pathways in your brain and the better you remember the information.

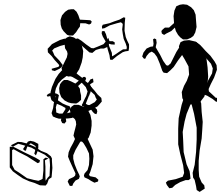


Highlight

Highlight, mark, underline, and *deface* your text! Make it a tool to work with. Write questions and comments in the margins. Even though you may not be able to resell it, consider the benefits you'll get using your text as a study tool.

Talk About It

Talk about what you're reading. Share the information with others. This helps to reinforce learning and proves whether or not you understand the information. Talk about what you are studying. The best place to do this is in a study group where you can discuss the material, quiz each other, and share information.



Review

Review, review and review again! Go over notes, outlines and the text. Read the highlighted parts out loud. Develop a habit of regular review to move information from your short-term to your long-term memory.

USE YOUR NOTES

If note-taking is a weak area for you, review the study skills module on Note-Taking. The following tips are also helpful:

Add to your notes. Supplement the notes you took in class with extra material from the text and handouts. Always leave plenty of extra space in your notes for this.

Define terms heard in class. When you hear unfamiliar words in class, write them in your notes as best you can, then look them up later, getting the correct spelling and definition in your notes.

Clean up or rewrite your notes. If notes are too scribbled or difficult to read, copy them again.

Summarize your notes at the end of each topic or chapter.



CREATE REVIEW TOOLS

Review tools will help make studying more interesting and effective. Design your own tools or work with a group or study partner to develop them. Following are some suggestions for study tools:

Concept maps - create a visual diagram of your notes with the central topic at the top middle of the paper and the remaining concepts branching off from the central point.

Study checklists - make a list of all the topics you are going to study and check off as you go along.

3X5 CARDS

These are excellent review tools for many reasons. They consolidate information in a format that is easy to read, they are small and easy to carry, and they allow for review during free times without requiring that you take out books and notes. A main topic or question is written on one side, the details, facts, or answer to the question are written on the back (see example).

Sample 3x5 card

side 1

**The Nine Steps to
Muscle Reading**

side 2

**1. Preview 2. Outline 3. Question
4. Read 5. Underline 6. Answer
7. Recite 8. Review 9. Review Again**

Use Memory Tricks

Mnemonic devices or memory tricks help you remember factual information like names, dates, formulas, or other information that requires rote memorization. Some sample mnemonic devices are:

Rhymes:

"In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue."

"Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November..."

Creative Sentences:

"My very eager mother just served us nine potatoes." (the planets in order from the sun)

Acronyms:

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)

ROY G BIV (the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet)

IPMAT (stages of cell division: interphase, prophase, metaphase, anaphase and telephase)

EGBDF - every good boy does fine (lines of the treble clef)

Exercise:

What memory tricks do you use? Describe one of them below:

*****Refer to the module, *Memory, Mnemonics, and More* for further information.**

JOIN A STUDY GROUP

A good study group can be one of the most effective means of studying. It helps to combine the efforts of different minds, increase your storehouse of information, learn new study techniques, and allows you to share notes and information. It reinforces learning through discussion, questioning, repetition, and reinforcement.

If you can't find a study group, organize one. Set rules, limit the size of the group, and make it an effective study session, not a social gathering. Study groups require the same organization and time management as private study sessions.

A quick review....

Now that you have completed this module, do the following review to test your knowledge of study skills.

Answer True (T) or False (F):

1. ____ It is best to study notes from a lecture class immediately after class.
2. ____ All assignments should be broken up into half-hour study sessions.
3. ____ Using all 3 learning channels maximizes your learning potential.
4. ____ When you have children, it is usually best to study at home.
5. ____ Scheduling your study time in a daily planner is a waste of time.
6. ____ Creating associations is a good way to remember new material.
7. ____ The SQ3R method is used only for difficult to read material.
8. ____ Most students enter college knowing how to study.
9. ____ Studying is a learned skill that requires practice.
10. ____ You can maximize your study time by joining a study group.

Above all, practice what you have learned in this module and develop your study skills. For more information on this topic, refer to the other modules on note-taking, reading, and memory techniques.



Module Evaluation: Developing Effective Study Habits

Name _____ Date _____

Please answer the following questions:

- 1. What did you find most helpful about the study tips explained in this module?**

- 2. What further questions do you have about developing effective study habits as a result of completing this module?**

- 3. Please rate how helpful you found this module to be. Place an “X” above the number of your choice.)**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Helpful Very Helpful

**PLEASE RETURN THIS EVALUATION FORM WHEN YOU MEET WITH
YOUR SOAR COUNSELOR TO REVIEW THIS MODULE.**