

Notes on STUDY HABITS

Part I. Study Habits

Who Needs Them?

You do! Students work with deadlines to assignments. No matter how a person may like or dislike a subject or class they devote a certain amount time and energy to it by exam time and the end of the semester. This work must be done regardless of parties, football games, boyfriends and girlfriends, McDonald's or other employment. We all can't make our urges for vacations the school calendar. We all can't afford to work at our own speed. School is your job, and failure to maintain good work habits is likely to result in being fired (dropped) from school. Eating meals at "mealtime" is a habit. You don't think much about it, or worry about forgetting it--you just do it. If studying were like that, you would not have trouble meeting deadlines and being all prepared for exams. That's what a study habit is, and you can develop one if it is important enough in your scheme of value.

Why are you going to school in the first place...why are you here?.. Is the hunger that studying could satisfy? Good grades? A good job later? Personal fulfillment? Or acceptance at college or graduate school? Once you've decided to form a study habit, use your reasons as fuel to keep it together when your willpower weakens. The only way to form a study habit is to study, study, study in the face of temptations until it's as unquestionable as eating lunch at noontime. With a reason to study...a goal to work for...to pull strength from, you can develop the habit.

Techniques for Forming the Habit

If you don't have the strength to resist temptation, or if your goals aren't clear enough for you to draw strength from, you can use a reward System of studying. If you smoke cigarettes, allow yourself one cigarette tomorrow for every 15 minutes of studying you do today. If you can afford the time, make Saturdays and Sundays "free" days, when you can smoke regardless of study time. Make your interests and vices work for you:

- 2 hours = 1 phone call
- 3 hours = 1 hour of TV
- 4 hours = 1 Big Mac
- 6 hours = 1 weekend movie

Use your imagination. As long as you're strict with yourself by taking only what you've earned, you'll be developing a study habit. Your family and friends also need to know of and be willing to accept your goals and help achieve them. If they control reward systems (car, TV, leisure funds, etc agreements should be made with them that reinforce your efforts to develop the habit.

Part II. How To Study

Most of the things you'll learn in life won't come from books or the classroom. You're getting older and learning to be more responsible to yourself, and this responsibility gives you the chance to learn about yourself, the world, and your place in the world in so many ways. This is growing, and it's good. No one expects you to sleep with your books or to blindly accept a teacher's views just because "he's a teacher and he must know what he's talkin' about." If you'll take the time for some learning from every available source that attracts you, you'll sit down to study being confident, and feeling good. You'll be a better student for it. You'll be a fuller person too.

Where to Study

The experts agree on some specific conditions that aid students in studying more effectively. These are:

- 1) Study in the same place all the time; you'll learn to associate that place with working: walk in, and you'll feel like it's time to get down to some serious business.
- 2) The room temperature should be between 65 and 70 degrees.
- 3) There should be good air circulation.
- 4) Of course, good lighting is necessary.
- 5) Sit upright (don't lie down on a couch); if you're too relaxed, you mind will be too slow.
- 6) Keep your desktop clear of materials that you aren't using at the moment. They'll distract you.
- 7) People walking around and talking will get in the way of your concentration.
- 8) Experts disagree about whether you may play music or not while studying, so your guess is as good as theirs.

Schedules for Study

You get more out of a lecture, lab or discussion when you've done the reading and other assignments before the class meets. Scheduling your time, and following your schedule, ensures this. Use a strict schedule when the work is piled-up; use a less rigid one when there's not so much to do, but use a schedule whatever your situation is. Otherwise, you'll be cramming and losing sleep around exam time.

Don't kid yourself. Even in the unlikely event that you schedule a 10-12 hour study day, the odds are you won't follow through - and you shouldn't. The body isn't built that way. Study is hard work. Your eyes and mind become tired and you become inefficient. If you are in a bind and must cram for days at a time, it generally means that you have put things off too long.

How Much Time Is Needed?

University course work is based on an "old format of 3 hours of work per week for each credit. For lecture/discussion courses this time is allotted with 2 hours of outside work for each class hour. In laboratory courses each hour of class may generate 0 to 1 hours of homework. Using this guideline, a 15 credit course load results in a 45 hour work week for the average student. Homework can range from 30 to 15 ($\frac{2}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$) hours of that load. But this is only a guideline. There are many deviations from the norm. It is really up to you to determine what the real load for any semester will be for you and plan accordingly.

Scheduling study time begins with the selection of the class schedule. A schedule that permits study time immediately prior to and following a class is the most productive. In such a schedule, the class work reinforces the reading and the homework reinforces the class discussion. Studies show that most of what is forgotten is lost from memory in the first 24 to 48 hours after exposure.

When you sit down to study, have a set amount of work to do in that sitting. Then you can gauge yourself as you work, know approximately when you'll be free, and determine how long you can break for. Don't plan on doing more than 1 1/2 hours of work at one sitting, though; you'll do more efficient studying if you let your mind rest occasionally with friends, TV or peace and quiet in between study periods. If you can't afford the time to take a break, at least mix-up the order of the subjects you study and the type of work you do so that you won't be doing the same type of work for too long. Don't study sociology and psychology back-to-back, or you'll tire quickly: you'll learn fresh subject-matter better than material that you're bored with.

Plan on using most of your free time in between a day's classes to do some form of studying. Your best investment would be to review notes from that day's classes already attended (time to think about the material instead of writing notes), and to review past class notes from those classes yet to come (to be oriented for effective listening and understanding during the upcoming classes).

Making It All Meaningful

When the year begins, make sure that the teachers give good pictures of what their courses will be about (you may have to ask questions to get the picture) and what their courses have to do with life in general. Understanding this will help fit the bits of information presented in the course into large, more meaningful pictures. If material means something to you, you'll learn it more easily and enjoy it.

Self-Testing Techniques

1) Make up illustrations on the material you've studied. Think of examples from your experiences that show you understand a concept. If you truly understand it, this will be no problem. And your own examples are easier to remember at exam time.

2) While reviewing for an exam, talk to someone (or yourself) about the topic you've been studying. Bull sessions with friends are fine. If you can make clear arguments and explanations, and intellectually discuss the topic, you're in good shape. In bull sessions, you'll pick up some stray information you might have missed, along with new approaches to the topic. Also, other people may be able to catch you in mistakes before you thoroughly learn those mistakes as facts. Get together with other students taking your course: it's relaxing to know that there are other people in your position.

3) When you study some courses such as languages, flash cards are helpful. Don't buy pre-printed ones: use file cards to make your own. A foreign word on one side and its English translation on the other side, an equation on one side and a list of its applications on the other side; flash cards give you the opportunity to drill yourself repeatedly, memorizing in the way that some course work demands.

4) Write a brief outline of a chapter or lecture, and see how well you can fill in some key words, concepts and examples that relate to your outlined headings. This presents the topic as a large picture, and you try to put the pieces of the picture in their proper places.

Part III. Class notes

Note-Taking

In most classes, especially lectures, information is given that won't be found in your textbooks. Therefore, it's your responsibility to record that information for future reference and study. Use abbreviations, initials, short phrases and other symbols to represent important ideas that seem worth remembering, or that may pop-up on an exam. Time is better spent listening to the lecture than on writing long, neat, grammatically correct sentences. People who write elaborate notes often miss other important information presented in class because they were too busy writing or searching for dangling participles. Careful listening is a most important skill.

Relate the lecture material to the reading material. When the text and the lecturer disagree, ask questions so that you understand the disagreement and can prepare a strategy for handling that subject in future assignments or exams.

Assembling the Pieces

While the class is still fresh in your mind (preferably the same day as the class), you may want to re-write your notes. This not only serves as a review of the material, but it also is an opportunity to elaborate on the scanty details you've recorded. Now write complete sentences that follow logical trains of thought. Include any diagrams or graphs that may help you to better understand the material. Also include examples, illustrations, and practical implications (those given in class or your own) which may make the subject-matter clearer and more meaningful to you. Material that is personally meaningful is easily understood

and remembered later. Use your own words when rewriting the notes, but be careful not to distort the original meanings while doing so.

Your Notebook

Your rewritten notes from a class can be kept in a single notebook so that they'll be handy for review and reference. If you miss a class, leave a few blank pages so that you can later fill in the material in its proper sequence. You can get missing notes from a classmate or your teacher. A note-taking service (for a fee) is available for some courses.

Using Your Notes

The best notes aren't any good unless you use them:

- 1) Review each day's notes the same day that you take them: keep them fresh in your mind.
- 2) Before each class, while you sit and wait, review the notes from that class's previous meeting to orient you for the upcoming class: then you'll take more relevant notes.
- 3) Do a weekly review of each week's notes at the end of that week, along with a review of that week's text readings.
- 4) Periodically, and a few days before an exam, review your notes for that exam, along with the text readings.

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All this may sound like a lot of reviewing...a lot of time and a lot of work. But, compared to all of the last-minute cramming and sweating you'd otherwise be doing, it's not really so bad.

Part IV. How to Improve Your Reading Skills

Reading is the most important learning skill one can acquire for success and enjoyment throughout life. It is an integral part of our personal and working lives. Consider how much time everyday is spent reading newspapers, letters, books, menus, directions or signs. Eighty-five per cent of college work, for example, involves reading. The better you read, the more you will succeed in study or work and enjoy the time you spend with books.

Reading is basically the understanding of words and the association between them. To improve your reading skills you must increase your ability to see and understand the grouping of words, or ideas, at a speed and in a manner that is comfortable for you. To be a good

reader, concentrate on what you are doing and learn to use your eyes to the best of your ability. Move them at a rate that allows your brain to absorb the main ideas printed on a page. Bad readers are usually distracted and read each word without grasping the relationship between them. This causes them to retrace or reread the material.

Most people do not perfect their reading after the fifth grade. High school or college students are often bad readers. They overlook the need to continually use and improve good reading habits. Remember your eyes, like fingers for the piano or legs for skiing, must be trained to be skillful.

If you would like to improve your reading skills these seven steps can help:

- 1) Evaluate your reading habits.
- 2) Provide the right atmosphere.
- 3) Use your eyes efficiently.
- 4) Continue to broaden your vocabulary.
- 5) Adapt your speed so you understand the material.
- 6) Practice on a regular basis.
- 7) Enrich your life with good books.

Evaluate Your Reading Habits

Analyze your present reading habits so that you know where to improve your skills:

Do you use your lips, throat or mind to vocalize" words?

You are still using the childhood habit of sounding out each word. This slows you down.

Do strange words constantly stop your progress?

Your vocabulary needs improving.

Do you read every single word?

You should span phrases or thought units instead of individual words.

Do you go back over what you have

You are not paying attention. Concentration means good comprehension.

Do you always read at the same speed?

Speed should vary depend on the material and your purpose for reading, e.g., fiction, newspapers, textbooks.

Has your reading speed and comprehension remained static for a number of years?

Skillful reading is an art and needs continual practice. The more you read, the more you will enjoy and remember.

Provide the Right Atmosphere

Your approach to reading, whether it is for pleasure, information or study, will influence your ability to do it well. Learn to enjoy it in an atmosphere conducive to reading.

Choose an area where you can read with a minimum of interruption. This should include proper light, a pencil for marking highlights in books or taking notes and a dictionary near at hand.

Location and posture can influence your attitude. Sitting up in a good chair will make you more alert. Reading in bed is usually not the place to concentrate since it is an area associated with relaxation and sleep.

Average readers should hold a book about fifteen inches away from their eyes. It should be held on a slant for optimum viewing.

The sounds of radio, television or music are distracting. You can understand and remember better when your full attention is given to the process of reading.

Use Your Eyes Efficiently

It is the eyes that see printed words and transmit them to the brain. Understand how they work and give them the opportunity to perform well. Eyes perceive words only when they stop moving or make what is called a "fixation" It is during this pause that the brain records what the eyes have seen. Depending upon your "eye span" you will perceive one, two or more words in each fixation. The average college student, for example, has a span of 1.1 words and makes 4 fixations per second.

Vocalizing words impedes reading progress. Poor readers are inclined to whisper, use their lips, enunciate silently in their throat or visualize the words in their minds. If you have any of these bad habits, they should be broken because they slow down understanding. Learn to move your eyes continually forward at a pace that allows your brain to understand the meaning of the printed matter.

Train your eyes to increase their span by taking in more than one word at a time. You can make your eyes fix on related words, phrases, or short lines in one brief stop. This sentence, for example, should be read in five fixations: "The cost of oil/has risen/because of/limited national resources/ and increased imports."

Don't allow your eyes to go back over words. Think about what you are seeing and keep going at a speed that is fast enough to remember at the end what you read at the beginning. Faster reading, with no retracing, helps comprehension. This does not, of course, mean you cannot review what you have just read.

Many people need glasses to read well. Blurred words, continual eye fatigue or itching and stinging eyes might mean you need glasses. If you think your eyes need correction, have them examined by an eye doctor. If glasses are prescribed, do not hesitate to buy and wear them. Make sure they are always free of dirt and scratches.

Continue To Broaden Your Vocabulary

The person with a good grasp of words is usually a good reader and a good student. Words are the basis of human communication and enable people to convey their thoughts and emotions to each others. This is why the first word uttered by a child generates such joy and pride in the parent. It is proof positive that this little being has the ability to communicate as a human.

Vocabulary should grow as you mature. At every grade level and stage of life, it is necessary to increase the number and understanding of words. Get to know their structure, that they are composed of roots, prefixes and suffixes, each with its own meaning.

Knowing the origin of words helps in understanding new ones. Most English words derive from Latin or Greek. This is why some knowledge of these languages is helpful. If you know the derivation of a word's parts then you will be able to analyze its meaning, e.g. biography, a written account of a person's life, comes from two Greek words: *bios* meaning life and *graphein* meaning write.

Always hare a dictionary nearby whether you are reading for pleasure or for work. When you are reading textbooks or technical books, familiarize yourself with the glossary that is sometimes printed in the back to define special words. Use it whenever necessary.

Maintain a list of new words you see or hear. Be on the lookout for ones you don't know. Jot them down, look them up, and then make a point of using them in writing or speaking at least twice as soon as you can. At the end of a month review your list and see if you remember their meanings and how to use them. It can be a private game that is fun and rewarding.

Adapt Your Speed So You Understand The Material

A good reader must learn to balance speed with accuracy. Don't expect to read everything at the same rate. Like a well-tuned car, your eyes must adapt to the terrain. Above all, you must understand and remember what you are reading.

Read with a purpose, be aware of what you are reading and why. Your speed should be adjusted to the type of material. Don't expect to whiz through a chapter of biology at the same rate as a chapter of a novel.

Scanning material first can be helpful in nearly all types of reading. Get in the habit of surveying headlines, chapter headings and subheads first. Look for the main ideas. Next you will want to know the important details that support them. Read carefully the first and last paragraphs which should state the most important facts and conclusions. You should read the straight material in between at a faster rate that allows you to understand the matter in as much depth as you want. Just remember to keep your eyes moving forward.

If you are reading for enjoyment you can skim more easily over the lines, paragraphs and pages. It is not important that you take in every word or sentence in depth. As in most writing, each paragraph usually has one main idea supported by details in which you may or may not be interested. Try to span as many words as possible with a continuous rhythm of eye movements or fixations.

When you read a newspaper or magazine, or non-fiction, you want to grasp the highlights and some details. This kind of reading is for general information. It differs from your leisure reading because the material is more serious, not as light or as easy to comprehend as fiction. But it still might not be necessary to take in every word or every sentence completely.

Studying requires close reading because you still need to remember more details to support the main ideas. Read each chapter for the important concepts and as many details as necessary to comprehend the material. Underline major points and make margin notes to highlight your observations. After you have finished reading, question yourself, review the summary if there is one, and then look back to see if you have understood the material.

Graphic material can help reading comprehension. Do not overlook the importance of tables, maps, graphs, drawings and photographs which are included to reinforce your understanding of the text.

Practice on A Regular Basis

Like any skill, reading requires practice. In order to develop the habit of good reading you must train your eyes and mind to perform well together. You don't have to take a speed-reading course. The rewards will be most worthwhile if you take the time and persevere.

Set aside 15 to 30 minutes every day to practice reading, such as a pianist, typist or golfer should. Start off your exercises with light material, such as Reader's Digest, that has uniform page length and short articles. Your objective is to read with understanding at your best speed.

There are established norms against which you may test yourself. The speeds generally accepted for average readers are: easy or light material, 250-350 words per minute (wpm); medium to difficult material, 200-250 wpm; and difficult material, 100-150 wpm.

Time yourself exactly for two pages with a clock that has a second hand. Calculate the minutes and seconds and divide the time into the number of words on the page. This will tell you what your current reading speed is in words per minute. You can get the average number of words on a page by taking the average per line and multiplying it by the number of lines, omitting headings. Using the previous page as an example, compute the number of words on a page. The average number of words per line is 11, with 40 lines of type, totaling 440 words on the page. If you read it in 1 minute and 45 seconds (105 seconds) you read 4 words a second, or 240 words per minute.

Ask yourself questions on the material and review it to see if you are correct. If you miss important details, your speed is probably too fast for your present reading ability. Don't get discouraged, just keep practicing.

Read 3 or 4 articles each day for two or three weeks. Use the same length and type of material each day. Push yourself but use discretion, making sure you check your comprehension of the material. Record your speed faithfully each time so you can check your progress.

Then switch to something more difficult in vocabulary, style and content. Do this for two more weeks, questioning yourself and recording your time. After a total of six weeks you should have increased your reading ability considerably.

Try to get your speed on easy material to about 300 words per minute. Once you have reached this level you will know you can do as well as the average good reader.

Maintain the habit by reading at least a half hour a day. You will be enriched by keeping up with newspapers, magazines and books. You will also enjoy reading more as your proficiency increases.

Part V. How to Get the Most Out Of Your Textbooks

A textbook, properly used, is invaluable to you in any course. It adds to the knowledge you gain in class as well as prepares you for successful classroom work, it can and should serve as a permanent resource book after the course itself has been completed. The following six steps have proved to be very helpful in using textbooks, and they can be applied to any assignment.

- 1) Survey the entire book.
- 2) Read for the main ideas.
- 3) Question yourself as you need.
- 4) Underline and take notes.
- 5) Use study guides.
- 6) Review systematically.

Survey the Entire Book

Don't start right in reading your textbook from page one. First, make a quick survey of the entire book to get an idea of what your text is all about.

Look Through the Entire Book

See how it is put together. Note the chapter headings and subheadings, any reference reading suggestions, quizzes, dates, discussion questions, graphs, pictures, diagrams, summaries or other aids which the author has put in to help you understand and remember the text.

Read the Preface

Here the author usually will tell you the main purpose in writing the book, his/her outlook and approach to the material.

Scan the Table of Contents

This will show you how the book is organized and how much material is covered. Keep looking back at the table of contents after you have read certain chapters to remind yourself of the author's entire plan.

Look Over the Last Chapter or Final Few Pages of the Book

The author will often summarize the main points made in the separate chapters.

Survey Each Chapter

Before you read an assigned chapter, make a rapid preview of the material. Look for any head notes or summaries that may be included. They give valuable clues to the main ideas the author wants to emphasize, and also serve as a handy outline. Take special note of chapter headings and subheadings. The way they are arranged will often tell you which are the main topics and which are the less important ones.

Read for me Main Ideas

Your reading should have a primary purpose to find out what the author's main ideas are in any chapter. Keep asking, as if you are talking to the author, just what is he trying to get across. Don't worry about the details. By concentrating on the main ideas, you will find the details much easier to remember.

Read Your Assignment before the Class Discursion

If you read the assignment beforehand and then join in the classroom discursion, you will clarify ideas and gain confidence in your own ability. If you wait until the professor and other students discuss a topic before you read it, you will lose faith in yourself as an independent reader. When you put your ideas into words, the material you have read will become more meaningful and will be remembered much longer. Cramming for examinations will be unnecessary.

Coordinate Class Notes with Reading

Tie-in your reading with your class or lecture notes. If you keep full, clear and accurate notes, you will find the ideas and concepts you got from your textbook reading will become much clearer. Moreover, a well kept lecture notebook can become as important a part of your permanent collection for future reference as your textbook.

Summarize Whatever You Have Read

After finishing a page, restate the main ideas in your mind and then glance back to see if you are correct. Before closing the text, repeat the major points of the material just read. See if you can jot down the central ideas in the section completed. If you can, most of the supporting details will return to you rather easily. When you resume your reading the next day, your brief review will serve as an encouragement to begin the next assignment. By noting the major points of your reading, you will find preparation for an exam a relatively simple matter.

Question Yourself as You Read

When you read the text material, imagine you are having a discussion with the author. Keep asking him questions about the statements being made and ideas presented. See whether he is giving answers that satisfy you.

What is the meaning of the title of the chapter, what are the meanings of the headings and subheadings, what do the important words mean in their context, what do the tables, diagrams or graphs try to demonstrate, what do the concluding remarks mean?

If it is literature you are reading, what is the meaning of the title, from what point of view is the author writing, what is the setting, the historical period, the tone, mood and style? Is symbolism being used to convey a message?

Why did the author choose to develop ideas in this particular order; why did he spend so much time on certain points?

How would you rate the effectiveness of the author's style of presentation? Does he use humor, exaggeration, irony, satire? Are many examples used? Are the graphs and pictures appropriate and easy to understand?

For whom is the author writing? If he is writing a history text, is he trying to influence the reader's point of view? If he is dealing with psychology, does he belong to a special school of thought and does this attitude shape his ideas?

When was the book written? Have new developments rendered the author's opinion out of date?

Ask questions in class. Bring specific inquiries raised by your reading to class and pose them to the professor and to other students. Make certain you are an active participant and that your reading plays an active part in your classroom work.

Underline And Take Notes

Mark your text freely and underline key statements. Bracket key phrases and put light check marks around significant points. After you have read a few paragraphs, return to your markings and underline the phrases and sentences that seem most important. Be careful to select only the main ideas. If you underline well, you will have a clear picture of the most important material when you review.

Writing in the margins can also be helpful. Challenge the author directly in the margins of the text. Ask questions, disagree, change statements, and rephrase concepts in your own language. By actively engaging the author's ideas, you will read more alertly and remember what you have read.

Note taking is an individual matter and each student will have to decide what the best technique is for them. There is no question that to make learning active, and to retain what you have read, you must take notes. These notes will be very useful at a later time, reminding you of your immediate reaction to specific passage in the textbook and reviving information you have forgotten.

A journal or reading log can be useful. After you have read a section or a chapter, record your thoughts so you will have a personal and active encounter with the textbook. You may want to keep an informal reading log, Jotting down perceptions or expressing yourself creatively. You may want to be more formal and synopsise whole chapters in a brief paragraph. In any event, the transfer of your thoughts to paper will be of great help in reviewing and in writing essays or term papers later on.

Study guides, outlines and supplements which accompany many texts are extremely helpful. These guides often give synopses of the material and raise provocative questions that make you see far more deeply into the textbook itself. Use the best study guides and supplements available and refer to them as you read. Return to them when you review for an exam.

Text supplements that are mentioned in the author's suggested additional readings or bibliography should be consulted. Often a point that seems obscure in your text can be clarified by a special study of the subject.

Part VI. How to Prepare Successfully For Examinations

The key to both success and enjoyment in college lies in your ability to use time wisely. In order to have fun while getting the most of these years, you need to establish a pattern of good study habits and skills. Such habits and skills will help you get the necessary work done as the months and years go by, and you will handle exams with a minimum of stress and a maximum of achievement.

Authorities in education generally agree that successful preparation for an examination starts in the beginning of each term and continues throughout. Six overall steps are suggested:

- 1) Make a term study plan.
- 2) Use good review techniques.
- 3) Develop a confident attitude.
- 4) Organize pre-exam hours.
- 5) Pace the exam carefully.
- 6) Reassess your grades and work.

Ideas related to the study plan have been given earlier in this article.

Use Good Review Techniques

If you have applied yourself during the term then preparing for exams is largely a question of review. The time needed is not as extensive as some students think provided you have been working consistently. Review for weekly quizzes should take no more than 15 minutes, a mid-term hour exam 2 or 3 hours, and a final examination 5 to 8 hours.

Your preparation for a final should be carefully scheduled into the two weeks prior to exam day. Organize a schedule that does not interfere with your regular study for on-going classes. Beware of racing your motor. Make sure you still allow time for rest and relaxation, with no longer than 1 or 1 1/2 hours of review at one time. Your mind needs breaks.

Plan your review systematically and consistently. Go from main idea to main idea, using the textbook chapter headings or your instructor's term outline as a guide. Go from chapter notes to chapter notes or from class notes to class notes, recalling the important headings and ideas in each. If certain points are difficult for you to remember, then reread the textbook. Otherwise stick with your notes. Don't plan to learn something for the first time.

Making summary notes is often helpful, depending on the amount of material to be reviewed. In 4 to 8 pages you can outline the main points of your detailed class and text chapter notes. Headings with indented numbered points under them make relationships more obvious. This procedure will also help reinforce the major ideas and important details.

Summary notes can also serve as a self-test toward the end of your preparation for exams. Put a sheet over each page and slowly uncover the first heading -- see if you remember the main points under it. As you go, ask yourself what, when, etc.

Try to predict the exam questions. Be alert throughout the term to the emphasis instructors put on certain topics, aspects or ideas. They often give clues to points that are important or particularly need review.

Ask your professor what he recommends for pre-examination work. Use his comments as a guide but don't try to outguess him.

Group reviewing can be helpful. But it shouldn't take the place of working on your own. Limit discussions of significant points and possible test questions to 30 or 40 minutes, with no more than 4 or 5 people.

Avoid cramming. If you have followed a regular schedule of study and review, you should not have to cram the last day. Remember, forgetting takes place more rapidly right after learning. If you have to cram, be selective. Don't attempt an exhaustive review.

The Other Things To Do

- 1) Every teacher has favorite areas in the subject he teaches. Watch him carefully in class to determine his fancies. You can wisely spend your time mastering those areas.
- 2) Find out in advance how straightforward the exam will be. Some teachers still use trick questions, so for your own safety, ask the teacher. If he admits to using them, explain to him that his course isn't entitled show to be a clever test-taker. Hopefully, he'll see the light.
- 3) If the exam will be the essay type, pay close attention to major concepts, key experiments and established arguments in your studies. If the exam is multiple choice, concentrate on key words (definitions) and more minute concepts.
- 4) Before any exam, find out what type of test it will be, what topics it will cover, and what the grading policy will be. This is all important information.
- 5) Days before the exam start to relax. At any time in preparation for the exam that you start to get nervous, RELAX. You'll work better relaxed, and retain more relaxed. Don't bring on unnecessary tension by trying to guess how hard the test will be. Don't be concerned if others seem to know more about the subject than you do. Five minutes before exam-time is too late to learn a worthwhile amount about the subject, and any last minute cramming will be overall damaging to your relaxation. With relaxation comes clear thinking and easy access to what's in your mind.
- 6) But if you feel some fear, don't make things worse by fearing that fear: a small amount of tension helps to keep you awake, alert, and functioning effectively during an exam. Remember, the average student passes. If you're having difficulty, the odds are that other people are having difficulty too. They are going to make it -- so will you.
- 7) Life can be broken down into areas such as societal behavior-, physical makeups, past history, etc. Each subject in school is part of life and all subjects are somehow related to each other. This is to your advantage when you take an exam. You can use what you've learned from people you've known, trips you've taken, books you've read, past and present courses, and just general living. If you only stop to think during an exam, you can raise your test score just because you've been alive for a while.
- 8) Don't go into the exam tired or just having finished a large meal -- you can't afford to fall asleep (even with your eyes open) in a hot stuffy room. Get a good nights sleep before the exam and save heavy eating (or drinking) for afterwards.
- 9) Be sure you have all the supplies you need before leaving for the exams.

- 10) Plan a schedule so that you arrive early and have a choice of seats with good lighting, etc. Remember: a snow storm is not an excuse for missing **or arriving late for an** exam. Many professors follow the rule that the only good reason for missing an exam is a death in the family -- your death!

Pace the Exam Carefully

When the exam begins, listen to the instructions and then start reading through the entire test. Organize your thoughts.

Budget time for each question. They might be equal in sorting, so answer the easy ones first. Remember to number the answers to match the questions. RELAX.

Think carefully about one question at a time. Your first sentence should be clear and contain some, if not all, of the main points in your answer. The instructor wants a focus on the question and direct answers.

Answer the questions that are easy for you first. Do it quickly (don't spend time there just because it's comfortable) but not without some caution.

Jot down key words as guides for your writing. Indenting paragraphs, numbering points under them, or making a rough diagram or outline can be helpful to you and the person correcting.

Write legibly or else the instructor will not be able to read easily and your mark will suffer.

Short form or objective questions demonstrate your ability to recognize detail and your judgment in choosing among alternatives. Attention must be given to key words like all, none, never, might, or should. Fill in the easy ones first and mark the spaces clearly. Avoid leaving blanks, an answer might be correct even though you are not sure. An omission will probably count against you. In multiple choice, cross out what you think is wrong and think about what is left. Be sure to completely erase if you change an answer.

Essay questions test your ability to express yourself, to interpret and to organize material. The instructor never expects one question, or even an entire exam, to be a demonstration of all you know. Important cue words will give you the key as to what or how much the instructor wants you to write. The ones most frequently used are: analyze, compare, contrast, criticize, define, describe, discuss, elaborate, enumerate, evaluate, explain, illustrate, interpret, justify, list, outline, prove, relate, review, state, summarize, trace. Each one of these terms calls for some specific type of material, so think about their meanings in advance.

Finish each question as well as you can and then go on to the next,

Leaving some room at the bottom for possible additions. When answering essay questions in exam **books some** students find it helpful to use only the right-hand pages, leaving the left page for additional remarks or highlights.

Make answers as concise and clear as possible. Do not waste time with long-winded or repetitious sentences.

Guess (as long as guessing isn't penalized: some teachers may subtract the number of wrong answers from the number of right answers. In that case don't guess. Find out the grading policy before you take any exam).

If you have time, reread everything carefully after you have answered all the questions. You might have left out a key word or remember some other points. But don't make changes unless you detect a definite error. Your first answer is best unless you absolutely know otherwise. Don't play answer roulette with multiple choice guesses.

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