



condensed
STUDY SKILLS GUIDE

IMPROVE YOUR STUDY SKILLS AND TEST PERFORMANCE

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been developed to assist you in studying more successfully and efficiently.

If you would like more detailed information on any of the topics covered in this booklet, please contact the Study Skills Advisor at the Academic Support Centre at 475-6618.

For additional copies of this handout, please visit the Academic Support Centre or access the Academic Support Centre website at:

[http://www.confederationc.on.ca/academicsupportcentre/
learningskills/LearningSkillsResources](http://www.confederationc.on.ca/academicsupportcentre/learningskills/LearningSkillsResources)

Key Facts

- Motivation is the number one factor affecting college success: Have clear educational goals, prioritize education (in terms of time, energy, and mental space). Develop good note taking and study skills.
- Remembering information from five to seven courses is difficult and confusing, but regular review and good notes helps you delineate information.

The Brain and Learning

The brain is a complex neural network. Every bit of knowledge is like a path. Each time you remember a fact it is like walking down that path, and it becomes more deeply engrained. Like any path the more paths that connect to it, the easier it is to find or access. When learning, you have to create as many paths and link knowledge in as many ways as possible. Vocalizing, hearing, writing, seeing, and questioning: each of these activities allows your brain to process knowledge in different ways and creates new knowledge paths. When you study holistically, integrating readings, discussions, writing, and analysis, you create a complex network of thoughts that deeply engrain knowledge into your mind, and guarantee your academic success.

7 Tips To Help You Remember

1. Read with motivated interest.
2. Read Selectively – pick out the most important facts.
3. Intention to Remember – strive to understand when you are reading
 - a. Attention: concentrate fully
 - b. Understand each sentence the first time
 - c. Comprehension: re-word the author's ideas
4. Basic Background: knowledge builds on knowledge – try to learn background information.
5. Meaningful Organization: organize information in categories.
6. Recitation: say aloud or re-write information.
7. Interval Learning: take short 5 – 10 minute breaks when your brain is full – e.g. 45 minute study, 10 minute break.

Time Management

Set up a Study Schedule

- Make it reasonable
- Prioritize difficult subjects
- Make study notes as soon as possible
- Budget for fun and reward yourself

Q. Why Create A Study Schedule?

A. Motivation!

- Forces you to stick to difficult subjects
- Promotes regular study and review
- Reduces study pressure
- Promotes balance between life and school

Taking Notes Effectively

General Listening Tips:

1. Record and listen for enumeration (when your instructor gives information as a list).
2. Record examples and important points.
3. Listen for key words like “important,” and “significant.”
4. Ask questions: get terms fully explained.

Cornell System:

1. Use blank or lined 8 ½ x 11” sheets of paper. You may prefer to use only one side of the paper. Mark a 2 – 3 inch margin (this will later be used for key words, terms, and/or subject area/s).
2. Reduce and condense notes: fill in the blanks, make your notes legible, write key ideas, words, or phrases on separate ‘condensed notes’ papers.
3. Recite: cover the right-hand column; define and explain the key terms and phrases from the left column.
4. Reflect on main ideas and facts; link them to textbooks and lectures.
5. Review notes on a weekly basis (either by yourself or during group work).

Studying Tips and Methods:

Enhance Your Studying: Eliminate Distractions

- Visual:** minimize posters, magazines, unrelated notes and papers; must be well-illuminated.
- Auditory:** Quiet space with no noise, or steady low-level noise. Study in the same place.
- Internal:** Avoid indecision, day dreaming; talk your way through personal and academic problems.
- External:** Focused sleeping: when you have finished studying, go to sleep. Avoid discussions with friends, reading a book or magazines, anything that takes your mind off of what you have been studying. Go to sleep focused on what you have studied and it will sink in more effectively.

Studying

Reading = Studying

- Study as if practising to take a test
- Generate questions from notes, texts, old exams – pretend you are the instructor.
 - Benefits:
 1. Will help you focus on important material.
 2. You will be more prepared for exam questions.
 3. You will learn to discriminate between important/unimportant information.

SQ4R Study Method:

1. Survey
2. Question
3. Read
4. Record
5. Recite
6. Review

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 = *Efficient reading of textbooks and high retention rate!*

1. **Surveying:** 80% of words are redundant

- Find the “Chapter Summary” which has all of the important points
- Look for titles, subtitles, and pictures which usually indicate key points

2. **Questioning:** turn all important titles, etc. into questions.

Example Title: “Sublimation”

Question: What is Sublimation? Why and when does it occur?

3. **Read** to answer questions

- Answer your predicted questions
- Learn to read selectively

4. **Record:** Write the answers to questions in short form.

5. **Recite:** Read aloud your questions and answers – see if your answers make sense, test your memory.

6. **Review:** Re-read your notes: quiz yourself on the questions you made.

Predicting Test Questions:

1. Review your lecture notes: Teachers highlight important topics and themes – turn these into questions.
2. Review class textbooks and materials. Look for summaries and chapter questions – turn these into questions.
3. Talk with former and current students about test questions.
4. Work in study groups to ask and compare questions.

Advantages of Study Groups:

1. Encouragement
2. Ask and answer study/test questions
3. Share questions and answers with others (get feedback, find misunderstanding and mistakes, clarify and broaden knowledge).
4. Find new questions
5. Refine answers
6. Practice under test conditions
7. Develop an efficient and effective test preparation process

Practice Testing:

- Regularly review notes
- Write key terms and questions on index cards and answer them
- Writing practice tests helps you relax and build confidence for real-world tests

Test Writing Tips

Rules for Taking Tests:

1. Read all instructions carefully and look for key words. Underline key words.
2. Determine the time limit. Plan your time after looking through the whole test (prioritize your time).
3. Answer easy questions first: this builds confidence.
4. Skip hard questions; this saves time and anxiety and will get your subconscious working (the answer is more likely to be brought to memory).

Essay Questions:

- Read and think about the essay question; outline your answer in point form, and jot down key ideas.
- Outlining stimulates memory. Write ideas as they come to you. This will save you time, and make your answer more organized.
- Look for key approach terms: “Compare and Contrast,” “Define and Describe,” “Illustrate and List.” Be sure to answer the way your instructor asks.
- Use clear examples. Do not generalize. Do not be vague.

Multiple Choice

- Eliminate obviously incorrect answers
- Make sure the question is clear in your mind
- Do not change answers unless you are 100% sure it is wrong

True and False

- Minimize time spent on true and false questions. If the answer is not apparent to you, move on.
- Only change your answer if you are 100% sure
- Look for qualifying words such as “usually,” “much,” and “many.”

Work Hard and Good Luck!

WISHING YOU SUCCESS IN YOUR STUDIES!

If you have any study skills questions or would like more detailed information on any of the topics covered in this booklet, please contact the Academic Support Centre at 475-6618.

REFERENCES

Pauk, Walter. How to Study in College. Houghton Mufflin Co., 1974. Second edition.

Walter, Tim and Sievert, Al. Student Success. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.