

Lesson 3

Study Habits That Work for You



Key Words

allocate
aural (auditory)
compare
contrast
efficient
enumerate
inference
interpret
justify
paraphrase
prove

What You Will Learn to Do

- Develop personal study and test-taking strategies

Linked Core Abilities

- Build your capacity for lifelong learning
- Apply critical thinking techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Relate personal learning preferences to study habits
- Identify effective study skill strategies
- Identify test preparation strategies
- Distinguish among various note-taking tips and strategies
- Define the key words contained in the lesson

Introduction

The idea of studying can cause anxiety in some students. Becoming a good student does not happen automatically or overnight, and it requires time and patience. Studying is a process that is learned through trial and error. You have to discover a strategy that works for you and adapt it for different learning situations. The most important thing you can do is to make studying a priority.

This lesson guides you through various studying strategies. You learn about time management, how to take good notes, and much more.

Study Skills

The word *studying*, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.1, includes homework assignments along with writing papers, and seeking information to prepare presentations. To write a paper you must perform research, arrive at critical judgments, and put your thoughts into coherent sentences and logical paragraphs. To prepare for a presentation, you perform the same tasks, but are then required to stand and present orally before others.

Good study skills support

- **Being efficient.** You are probably busy and you want to get as much out of your study time as possible. You need to study as much material as possible in the amount of time that you have.

Key Note Term

efficient – productive of desired effects; especially: productive without waste



Figure 3.3.1: A student studying for an upcoming test.

Courtesy of Larry Lawfer.

- **Being effective.** You want good results for the amount of time that you spend. You want to take good notes and commit them to memory so you do not have to study those notes again.
- **Taking tests.** The more that you learn the first time when you study, the less you need to do before the test.
- **Demonstrating the basics.** You can produce good written assignments and presentations.

Other skills can be included, such as identifying resources, taking good notes, and researching information. These skills support your personal goals and your desire to increase your general knowledge. As an active learner, you do not just use study techniques for homework. If you identify a topic of interest or a career goal not included in your school subjects, you can pursue it. If you want to know about the early attempts of women pilots, a biography on your favorite musician, or how to make ice cream, you can find the information.

Study skills include the following:

- **Comprehending (understanding what you read)**
- **Thinking critically and objectively**
- **Thinking creatively and subjectively**
- **Identifying patterns**
- **Using reference materials**
- **Identifying resources**
- **Using time wisely**
- **Selecting strategies**

Developing an Effective Study Strategy

A strategy is a plan of action for attaining a goal. The word *strategy* implies a plan. Develop a strategy to use these study skills for homework and schoolwork. Your strategy reflects what you think works for you. If you think a study suggestion will not work for you, try to think what would. For example, is it easier for you to study alone or with a group? After you have decided to study, keep the following hints in mind:

- **Choose a quiet place where you can study.**
- **Study at one particular time each day. Do not change the time that you study.**
- **Avoid noise and distractions.**
- **Ask friends and family to support your efforts while you are studying.**
- **Learn to say no to distractions: the phone, friends, chores, and TV.**
- **Hang a “Do Not Disturb” sign on your door.**
- **Allow sufficient time for sleep.**

- **Schedule 50-minute blocks of study.**
- **Schedule as much study time as possible during daylight hours.**
- **Clear your mind of all thoughts when you are trying to remember something.**
- **Give yourself a break; include some leisure time.**

Personal Learning Preferences

You need to find the reading, writing, and study approaches that fit your schedule, your learning style, and your learning needs. The strategy factors and recommendations are probably things all students can agree on, but where, how, and when you study involves your personal preferences.

Productive studying occurs when you have everything you need when you begin. Being prepared is a signal to your mind that you are ready to study seriously and accomplish your objectives.

SQ3R—A Reading/Study System

You often read textbooks in the same way you read books for entertainment; you read without stopping from the first page to the last page of the chapter. This works when you are reading novels, but it is not likely to help you understand and retain what you read in your textbooks. Survey/Question/Read/Recite/Review (SQ3R) provides a different study system for reading textbooks that will increase your understanding and retention of what you read.

The steps for SQ3R are as follows:

- **Survey.** Before you read a chapter, do a quick reading to get an overview. Look at the headings, chapters, and setup of material.
- **Question.** Establish the purpose of your reading. Ask yourself: Why am I reading this? What am I looking for? When your mind is actively searching for answers to questions, it becomes engaged in learning.
- **Read.** A slow, thorough reading aimed at understanding the content will help find answers to the questions you first raised.
- **Recite.** Reciting material as you go, exercising your **aural** ability to learn, retrains your mind to concentrate and learn as it reads. **Paraphrase** what you have read into your own words.
- **Review.** Reviewing is an ongoing process. Check the accuracy of your recall with the text you have read.

No study technique is guaranteed 100 percent of the time. It is important to decide when to use each study technique. Different study strategies work best in different situations.

Time Management

Some students seem to study well without trying. How is it that some students easily manage their study time while others cram hopelessly at the last minute? The answer is simple: People who manage their time wisely will plan well ahead.

Key Note Terms

aural (auditory) – of or relating to the ear or to the sense of hearing; of, relating to, or experienced through hearing

paraphrase – a restatement of a text, passage, or work giving the meaning in another form

Writing down your plan of study makes your responsibilities less overwhelming. Use the following as an example of your plan.

Manage Your Time

To effectively manage your time, you should

- Monitor your time and set priorities on your assignments.
- Reflect on how you spend your time.
- Be aware of when you are wasting your time.
- Use “dead time” wisely (time between classes, waiting for a bus, riding the bus, and so on).
- Identify your most productive time.

Keep a “To-Do” List

A to-do list can help you organize the hours in your day and enable you to accomplish everything you need to get done.

- Write down tasks that you have to do, as shown in Figure 3.3.2.
- Decide priorities—what to do at the moment, what to schedule later, what someone else can do.
- Check off items you have done to give yourself a sense of completion.
- Know that the satisfaction of “crossing off” the completed task can yield a sense of accomplishment and reward.

Use a Planner Calendar (Daily/Weekly/Long-Term Planner)

There are several excellent reasons to use a planner calendar, such as the following:

Figure 3.3.2: Example of a to-do list.

Reprinted from *Health Skills for Wellness*. Third Edition by B. E. (Buzz) Pruitt, Kathy Teer Crumpler, and Deborah Prothrow-Stith (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

Things to Do Today	
Find out driver's ed. schedule	A
Finish Math assignment	A
Take trash out	A
Help Matt rebuild bicycle	B
Watch TV	C
Clean room	B

- Use a planner so you can always plan ahead.
- Enter dates for course quizzes, exams, important papers, project deadlines, holidays, breaks, and study days.
- Write down assignments, appointments, classes, errands, and meetings.
- Always check the next day's schedule (go to sleep knowing you are prepared for tomorrow).
- Review course work each week.

Checkup

Every few days, give your study plan a checkup.

- Ensure you are taking the best advantage of your time.
- Ensure you are studying when you planned to study.
- Determine if there are areas where you can use your time more efficiently.

Post your calendar and study plans in your study area. Chart your progress, check off finished tasks, and give yourself a periodic studying checkup.

Making the Most of Class Time

Attending classes takes a large part of your day. Here are a few hints to help you get the most out of the time that you spend in class.

- **Be prompt.** Always be on time for class. When you're late, it shows a lack of interest and can be disruptive to other students.
- **Be prepared.** Do your homework and review your notes before class to prepare to ask questions. Prepare for discussion courses before class.
- **Ask your questions about the last assignment before the teacher starts the new class.**
- **Attend with attention.** Avoid distractions, concentrate as the instructor covers the content, and listen before writing.
- **Take notes.**
- **Be sure you understand homework assignments before leaving the class.**
- **Schedule time to go over the classroom material after class.**

Listening

Preparation before class makes listening in class easier. Know what to expect so that you will know what to listen for. Good listening skills are an important part of your life. If you listen well, you will improve your study, speaking, and writing skills. Effective listening enables you to comprehend information and then process it to formulate new ideas and to make sound decisions—essential characteristics that are necessary for communicating properly.

Note Taking

Good reading and listening skills are the basis for effective note taking. Developing good note-taking skills takes lots of practice and experimenting until you find a style that you like.

Concentrate in class to get the most out of note taking. When you need to clarify a point, ask questions. Be specific. Leave blanks for words, phrases, or ideas that you missed and fill in the gaps later. If the teacher emphasizes or writes a special point on the blackboard, put it in your notes. Always record the teacher's examples.

Pay as much attention to note taking in the last few minutes of class as you would during the beginning and middle of the class. Reading assignments before class, being alert in class, and reviewing your notes after class will help you to perfect your personal note-taking style.

Note-Taking Hints

Learning good note-taking techniques is an invaluable skill that can help you in school as well as in business meetings later in your life. Here are a few hints that can help you find a comfortable method:

- **Do not try to write down every word that the speaker says.**
- **Condense the information.**
- **Listen for key phrases and transitions such as**
 - “the four causes were”
 - “to sum up”
 - “therefore”
 - “in conclusion”
 - “in summary”
 - “this is important”
 - “remember”
 - “memorize”
 - “you should know”
- **Listen for information that the speaker repeats; it is probably important.**
- **Words such as “because,” “in addition,” and “later” are normally keys to relationships that the speaker is presenting.**
- **If you miss something, ask the speaker to repeat it.**

Test-Taking Techniques

Two essentials for test taking are knowledge and attitude. You are in control of these two essential factors.

Knowledge means that you are prepared. As an active learner, you are most likely knowledgeable about the topics on which you will be tested. You are studying all the time to gain that knowledge about the changing topics as you advance in your studies.

Attitude can help you control your feelings prior to an exam. You are calm and cool. Your attitude can help you do well on a test. Work on your attitude before going into the test.

You also need knowledge about another area—test-taking techniques. After you are knowledgeable about these techniques, you don't have to study them again.

You should include the following in your test taking techniques:

- **Have a strategy for taking the entire test.**
- **Recognize characteristics of specific question types and directions.**

You either know the material or you don't. Being nervous won't improve your performance. Being nervous can cause you to forget the material and lower your grade. When you are tense and anxious, you drain energy away from your test performance. Tell yourself that you will do well. Repeat positive statements to yourself.

Some sample positive statements follow:

- **I can keep my cool because I studied. I'll put that information together in inspired new ways that help me shine.**
- **Tests are challenges, but I can do it.**
- **I can keep calm and think logically.**
- **I planned my work so I didn't have to cram.**
- **I'll stay calm and let my memory work.**
- **I think extremely well during tests.**

Preparing for Tests

The best preparation for taking tests is to keep up with assignments. Complete all study assignments when they are assigned, and take notes in class and while studying. Keep a copy of all previous study materials and all graded work.

Review your class notes each day. At the end of each week, review all reading assignments.

The expression *a picture is worth a thousand words* means that visual pictures impress the memory better than verbal thoughts. For example, students who routinely visualize what they read in books perform better on tests.

When a test is announced or anticipated, identify the material that will be covered in the test. For best test-taking results, you should create a study plan for yourself. Determine what review material you have and how much time you have to study

Key Note Term

allocate – to apportion for a specific purpose or to particular persons or things

for the test; then make a schedule for yourself. Divide the study material into small, easily completed chunks. For example, during one study period, review your class notes. In the next study session, review your homework, as shown in Figure 3.3.3.

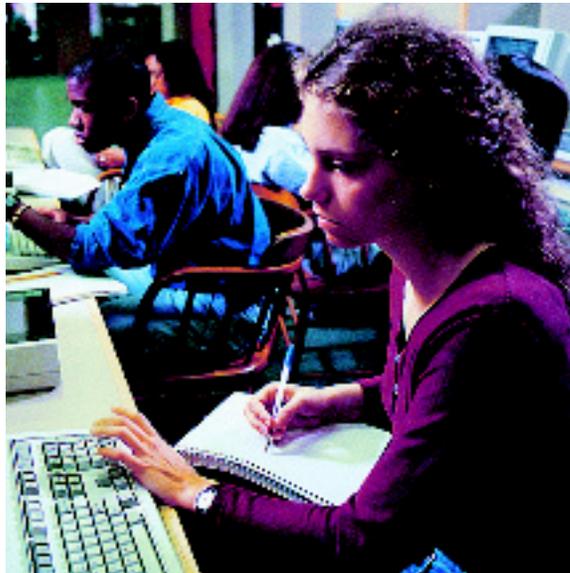
Divide your study time to help you overcome any fears you may be experiencing. Familiarize yourself with test question styles and directions. Keep calm and cool; think positively. And **allocate** your time carefully.

On the day of the test, follow these tips to help you achieve your best results.

- **Arrive early.**
- **Take your seat and breathe deeply.**
- **Let go of negative feelings about the test.**
- **Pace the test by looking over the entire test and allotting your time, or look over as much of the test as you are allowed to see at one time.**
- **Read the test directions slowly and carefully before you answer the first question. Reread the directions if necessary.**
- **Pick the parts of the test that you know and do those first. Answer the easiest questions first. Don't spend a lot of time on the questions you need to figure out.**
- **Keep an eye on the time. Assess how much time you have to finish unanswered questions.**
- **Look for answers to the hard questions in other parts of the test.**
- **When you are unsure of the correct answer, try to eliminate the obvious wrong choices.**
- **Review your test answers before you turn them in.**

Figure 3.3.3: This student is using her computer to study for a test.

Courtesy of Superstock.



Taking the Test

Tests are composed of two main components: the directions or directives and the test questions. You just learned that you should review the test directions to help you answer questions correctly and that you should answer the easiest questions first. The following material will introduce you to several different question directives, followed by some helpful information regarding test question formats.

Directives

The following is a list of test directives and definitions. Test directives tell you how to answer questions.

- **Compare.** Examine qualities or characteristics to discover resemblances. Compare is usually stated as “compare with.” You are to emphasize similarities, although differences may be mentioned.
- **Contrast.** Stress dissimilarities or differences of things, qualities, events, or problems.
- **Criticize.** Express your judgment on correctness or merit. Discuss the limitations and good points or contributions of the plan or work in question.
- **Define.** Definitions call for concise, clear meanings. You must keep in mind the class to which a thing belongs and whatever differentiates the particular object from all others in the class.
- **Describe.** In a descriptive answer, you should recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in narrative form.
- **Diagram.** If you are asked to diagram, present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally, you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.
- **Discuss.** This word directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations both for and against the problem or topic involved. This type of question calls for a complete and detailed answer. As you discuss, you may compare, contrast, define, and describe.
- **Enumerate.** This word specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions, recount one by one the points required.
- **Evaluate.** This word specifies a careful appraisal of the problem, stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.
- **Explain.** In explanatory answers, you must clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer, state “how or why,” reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. Make plain the conditions that laid the foundation for the topic.
- **Illustrate.** This word requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, or concrete example.
- **Inference.** When asked to infer, you are required to make a determination of a given problem based on the proposition, statement, or judgment considered as true within another problem.
- **Interpret.** An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, solve, or comment on the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

Key Note Terms

compare – a test directive that requires you to examine qualities or characteristics to discover resemblances; usually stated as “compare with;” similarities are usually emphasized although differences can also be mentioned

contrast – a test directive that stresses dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events, and problems

enumerate – a test directive that specifies a list or outline form of reply; in such questions, recount one by one the points required

inference – a test directive; when asked to infer, you are required to make a determination of a given problem based on the proposition, statement, or judgment considered as true within another problem

interpret – a test directive; you are expected to translate, solve, or comment on the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem

Key Note Terms

justify – a test directive where you are instructed to justify your answer; you must prove or show your grounds for decisions; in such an answer, present evidence in convincing form

prove – a test directive with questions that demand confirmation or verification; establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing evidence or by logical reasoning

- **Justify.** When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show your grounds for decisions. In such an answer, present evidence in a convincing form.
- **List.** To list is to enumerate. You are expected in such questions to present an itemized series or tabulation. Such answers should always be given in concise form.
- **Outline.** An outline answer is an organized description. Give the main points and essential details. Omit minor details. Present the information in a systematic arrangement.
- **Prove.** A question that requires proof is one that demands confirmation or verification. Establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing evidence or by logical reasoning.
- **Relate.** If you are asked to relate or show the relationship, emphasize the connections and associations in descriptive form.
- **Review.** A review specifies a critical examination. Analyze and comment briefly in an organized sequence on the major points of the problem.
- **State.** In questions directing you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called on to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form. Omit details and illustrations or examples.
- **Summarize.** To summarize, give in condensed form the main points or facts of the problem or topic. Omit all details, illustrations, and elaboration.
- **Trace.** To trace, give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or deduction.

Question Formats

Tests are used to determine how much you know about a given subject. The questions are used to elicit response and come in many forms. Typically, questions can be objective or subjective in nature. Objective questions, such as multiple choice and binary choice, test your ability to recall, compare, or contrast information and to choose the right answer among several choices. The subjective question, such as an essay question, demands the same information recall but asks that you use critical thinking strategies to answer the question and then organize, write, and revise a written response.

This section covers five question formats:

- **Multiple choice**
- **Binary choice**
- **Short answer**
- **Essay**
- **Reading comprehension**

Each question format is described with tips for answering the question format.

Multiple Choice

Multiple-choice questions are the most popular format. Typically, you are given four possible answer choices and are asked to select the best answer or most appropriate response.

Read the question carefully and determine if you are to select one correct response or select several correct responses.

An answer choice of “All of the above” is typically one of the answers. If more than one choice is correct, “All of the above” is probably correct as well.

If you don’t know the answer immediately, try to eliminate obviously incorrect answer choices. Also, you can check to see if any other question has the answer to your question or a clue as to the correct response.

Binary Choice

Binary-choice questions are really multiple-choice questions with only two choices. Typical answer choices for this question format are the True/False, Yes/No, and Agree/Disagree.

Pay attention to qualifiers and negatives. Qualifiers like “never,” “always,” “none,” and “only” usually indicate a false statement. They require the question statement be 100 percent correct to be true. Qualifiers like “sometimes,” “often,” “generally,” and “frequently” usually indicate a true statement.

Negative words such as “can’t” and “no” can be confusing. Try to evaluate the statement without the negative word.

Short Answer

Short answer or fill-in-the-blank questions require you to know (recall) the answer; binary-choice and multiple-choice questions test your ability to recognize and select the correct choice among several possible choices.

Look for grammatical clues within the question to help you determine the correct answer. If you can think of several correct answers, let your teacher know and you may be rewarded with a clue as to the answer he or she is looking for.

Essay

Remember that the essay is a subjective question that demands information recall and also asks you to use critical thinking strategies to answer the question. You must then organize, write, and revise a written response.

Start by identifying how much time you can devote to answering the question. Jot down key words or ideas so you can retrieve them later when writing your essay.

Begin with a strong sentence that clearly states your essay’s main theme. Follow that with the key points that you will discuss. Expand on your key points by writing a paragraph for each point.

Reading Comprehension

In reading comprehension questions, you read a short paragraph and answer questions about it. Comprehension is especially critical during test taking. You must read and interpret correctly the test directions, the questions, and the answers. Questions can relate to the reading’s main theme. Questions may also ask for general or specific information about the reading material.

You will find it helpful to read the questions before you read the text.

Conclusion

Remember to divide your study time; keep calm and cool; and think positively. Becoming a good student does not happen automatically or overnight. It requires time and patience. Studying is a process that is learned through trial and error. You have to discover a strategy that works for you and adapt it for different learning situations. Most importantly, make studying a priority.

By understanding test-taking techniques, keeping a positive attitude, overcoming your fears, and following the tips for answering different questions formats found in this lesson, you will improve your test-taking ability.

This ends Chapter 3, “Study Skills.” The next chapter looks at the importance of developing good communication skills. You will learn how to communicate effectively so you can get your message across with no misunderstanding.

Lesson Review

1. Which ten hints for studying will work for you? Which won't? Why?
2. List the study skills you might want to improve for yourself.
3. What would you add to your to-do list today?
4. Define the term *paraphrase*.