

STUDY SKILLS

PHILOSOPHY:

We live once - enjoying the whole life and in the process hopefully helping others to do likewise.

This involves:

- ◆ some immediate gratification of needs.
- ◆ some delayed gratification of needs.
- ◆ maximizing the enjoyment which comes from accomplishment for its own sake (a combination of (1) and (2) above), and
- ◆ minimizing the number and degree of "painful" experiences.

People function at their best when they are actively absorbed in a task and when the level of relaxation/tension is suited to the demands of the task. Freedom from distractions, whether internal or external, and a sense of being in control, are fundamentally important.

We trust that what follows is consistent with the foregoing statements and that the information provided will assist you to study effectively and to enjoy the experience.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Time Mastery

You need to know now much time you have available for study, recreation, work (if employed part time), household or other chores, and unexpected events. This is essential to give you a sense of being in control, or, if you are one of those people for whom things which are "out of sight and therefore out of mind", to bring you back to sometimes harsh reality!

The other side of the time picture is to know how much you have to do. That is, what must be done, and what time is available for it. For most of us, this interaction of time and demands on time is too complicated to work out in our heads.

So, some written schedule(s) are highly desirable. Examples are attached as appendices to this paper.

1. We suggest that you complete a weekly schedule, hour by hour, utilizing the following priorities.
2. Mark in your class times. For most students, regular attendance is necessary.

3. Write in times when you know you will have to be doing household chores, transporting yourself, and other necessities.
4. Treat yourself! Now schedule times for such exercise and recreation as is important for your health, furtherance of special interests, socialization and recreation. That's your time, enjoy it without guilt and try not to let anything interfere with it.
5. Schedule time for reading and review.
6. Consult your class outlines, and schedule time for assignments.
7. Schedule at least four hours a week for the unexpected; the accounting assignment that hasn't worked out, the visit to Aunt Susie, Joe's house warming party, the extra long chapter in the biology text or the midterm examination.

When you have done all this, your schedule should be full. If it isn't, consider where you should add an hour or two. If it is too full, if demands exceed hours, see where you need pare down the allocated time.

Here are some further tips. First, consider your own bodily rhythms. When are you most alert and effective? Utilize those times for studying the most difficult subjects. Second, assess how long you can study without a break. Many people cannot maintain concentration on some subject matters for very long at all. Don't be afraid to take brief breaks to exercise, shower, relax, or take out the garbage. Third, know how much you have to accomplish in the time period allocated - e.g. , "I can give these twenty pages 1½ hours".

What can make scheduling difficult? The answer, of course, is the variability which can occur on a week by week basis in the demands made upon you. The most conspicuous of these are ordinarily a cluster of midterm examinations and/or a number of term papers coming due at one time. What can you do?

First, be aware that your schedule for a given week may have to be modified periodically from what is your ordinary routine. Second, keep up with your work, even get a little ahead, when hard times are approaching. Third, start your term papers early and just give them the time which you have allocated! Reading for a term paper is not like reading a text. Look for the main thesis, give some sections of books and articles the "once over lightly" treatment, read intensively and take notes when the material impinges directly on your topic.

Space

As time is a consideration, so is space. You will study more effectively if there is a space you can use which is associated with study more than it is to your beguiling guitar, your hobby or to emotionally loaded events. If possible, it should be a place you leave when you pursue other activities. We differ a lot in our selection of suitable environments, however. Learn from experience what is right for you. Leave the music on quietly if it relaxes and doesn't distract you.

Pay some attention to your posture when you study. Tension soreness is a distraction you can do without. On the other hand, except for reading intrinsically interesting novels, the well padded chair or bed is not the best thing either. You need to be active to study effectively and conveniently positioned to make notes, reach for a dictionary, etc. Sitting at desk, on a chair which is of the proper height, is usually best.

Memory

The commonest complaint is the one that goes "I understood it when I read (or heard) it but then it was gone". Sure. Short term memory needs to be converted to long term memory. Active participation (attention) and repetition are the keys. It helps too to be able to see where the parts fit into the general picture.

Peruse the attachment to this paper which is entitled S.Q.3R - survey, question, read, recite and review. You will notice that it describes a method of attending actively, forces you into considerable repetition, and makes you look to see how the different aspects relate to one another.

Is this method time consuming? Yes, initially, but it saves you much reviewing time later because you have learned better to begin with. It is a method to utilize when memorizing is important. We will suggest one modification to the S.Q.3R outline. That is, where it tells you to think of questions before you read, and which may not be easy, try this question. "What is there in this paragraph which merits underlining?" That question helps you to keep your mind on the task, it forces you to go back over the material again (because you have not underlined the first time), and it leads you to ask "why is this important, how does it relate"?

Writing out new terms, vocabulary and formulae, and/or saying them out loud, facilitates memory. Review them on the bus. Some students carry cards with terms, etc., to be committed to memory on one side and the definitions on the other.

Rewriting your notes while you still remember a lecture is another good idea, and one which greatly facilitates review. Check the text, or ask the instructor, if your notes are inadequate at any point.

Term Papers

Literature is available in the bookstore which describes how to write term papers. Also, two of the appendices to this paper deal with that topic. There is one tip we would like to add. Always be quite explicit in letting the reader know whose ideas you are using e.g., (as one method} "according to Jones (1964). However, Green {1980} disagrees, saying... Because of... I conclude that...

Writing Examinations

Many students feel that they are quite well prepared but cannot reflect that preparation in terms of a good performance on an examination. There are many reasons for this.

First, it is more difficult to recall and organize material than it is to grasp it at the time you are hearing it or reading it. Assess your knowledge by practicing on examinations used in previous years if these are available.

Second, some students wade into an examination like a person who has been dropped with a machete into a jungle and who starts slashing about in all directions! Relax, read the questions very carefully before you do any writing. Start with the easiest or the ones you have expected and have rehearsed.

Third, some students, when answering essay type questions, don't take the time to organize their answers. Time spent in articulating the apt topic sentence is very well spent. It saves time, because you need to write less. And what you say makes much more sense.

Fourth, some students write an acceptable answer - and then ruin it with some ill-thought-out addition when they are trying to make use of the last five minutes before papers are turned in. Don't do that. Add or revise by all means, but only after sober reflection and not in panic.

Examination Tension

Some students report "freezing" in examinations, "forgetting everything" and/or becoming so tense their handwriting becomes nearly illegible. If this happens to you, come and see us. We will teach you some commonly employed countermeasures to anxiety and talk to you about the meanings you may have learned to attach to test-type situations.

ONE LAST COMMENT

Some students study to educate-themselves, with examinations and degrees quite secondary considerations. Other students are so much orientated toward the end products of grades and degrees that they lose sight of the essential educational purpose. Because we examine (society expects us to fulfill the role of certifying degrees of accomplishment), we tend to foster the latter attitude. Try to effect some compromise. Keep in mind that learning is an end in itself, and one which one can enjoy both in the process and in the general enrichment of life which it provides.

THE SQ3R METHOD

A. Surveying provides a general picture of what will later be studied in detail.

First, survey the whole book:

1. read preface, foreword, and other materials addressed to the reader.
2. study the table of contents.
3. leaf through the book:
 - (a) read summaries.
 - (b) glance at headings and topic sentences.

Before reading each chapter, survey it:

1. read over the headings.
2. reread the summary.

B. Questions help learning by giving it a purpose.

Keep asking your own questions:

1. at first, write them down.
2. later do it mentally, after it becomes an ingrained habit.

Use questions asked by the author:

1. in the textbook.
2. in a student's workbook, if there is one.

C. To read most effectively, you should do the following:

Read actively, not passively, asking yourself periodically what you have learned.

Note especially important terms.

Read everything, including tables, graphs, and other illustrative materials.

D. Recitation is a well-established aid to learning.

It should be done while reading a book in order to remember what is read. Amount of recitation depends on kind of material:

1. up to 90 or 95 percent of study for memorizing disconnected, not too meaningful material such as rules, items, laws, or formulas.
2. as little as 20 or 30 percent for well organized story-like material such as literature, history, or philosophy.
3. Recitation should be done as follows:
 - a. section by section in reading book.
 - b. in general, immediately after first learning.

E. Reviewing consists of the steps above and the following:

1. Especially resurveying the headings and summaries.
2. Rereading, but primarily to check yourself on how well you can recite.
3. It should be done at these times:
 - a. immediately after studying something, when it should be fairly brief and consist mainly of recitation.
 - b. once or twice in between the first and final review, when it should emphasize rereading.
 - c. intensively in a final review in preparation for an examination, when it should emphasize recitation.

VERBS USED TO STATE ESSAY AND EXAMINATION TOPICS

A. VERBS ASKING FOR EVERYTHING:

1. Comment: To explain, illustrate, or criticize the meaning or significance of a subject.
2. Describe: To give either a detailed or a graphic account of subject.
3. Discuss: To investigate a subject by argument, going into its pros and cons. Be complete; give details.

4. Review: To survey and examine critically a Subject; either summary, analysis, or criticism.
5. State: To describe in precise terms a subject or to reproduce a definition exactly. May present main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations or examples.

B. VERBS ASKING FOR MAIN IDEAS:

1. Analyze: To break the subject up into the main ideas which compose it.
2. Enumerate: To present a list of the main ideas composing the whole of the subject.
3. List: Same as enumerate.
4. Tabulate: To organize the main ideas into a scheme of headings such as a table of contents, but sometimes to form into a table in the sense of the table of your speed reading progress.
5. Trace: To follow the development or history of your subject from the point of its' origin.
6. Summarize: To make a brief, concise account of the main ideas of a theme, main ideas, supporting subordinate ideas.
7. Outline: Organize a description under main and subordinate points, omitting minor details, and stressing arrangement of classification of things.

C. VERBS ASKING FOR CERTAIN SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OR CERTAIN LIMITED FACTS:

1. Compare: To show the similarities and differences of two or more subjects. Stress similarities.
2. Contrast: To show the differences of two or more subjects.
3. Define: To give clear, concise and authoritative meaning of a word by fitting it into a general category and then distinguishing it from closely related subjects; sometimes developed by examples and illustrations.
4. Demonstrate: To prove or explain by use of examples.
5. Diagram: To describe with graphs, sketches, label, etc.
6. Explain: To account for by clearly stating and interpreting the details around a thing to make clear its character, causes, results, implication etc.

7. Formulate: To define in the form of a systematic statement.
8. Illustrate: To clarify by giving examples, comparisons, analogies or by giving figures or diagrams.
9. Prove: To demonstrate validity by test, argument or evidence.
10. Relate: To establish the connection between one thing and another e.g. how one causes another, is like another, etc.

D. VERBS ASKING FOR YOUR SUPPORTED OPINION:

1. Choose: Generally, make a choice between one of several interpretations, explanations, etc.
2. Criticize: Give your judgement on the merit of a theory or opinion or on the truth of factors. Give the results of your analysis of these factors, discussing their limitations and good points; criticize doesn't necessarily mean "attack angrily."
3. Evaluate: To appraise or estimate the worth, value, usefulness, truth, beauty, goodness, etc. of something – to some extent on the basis of personal opinion. Cite both advantages and limitations.
4. Interpret: To expound the meaning of something, to make it clear and explicit and to evaluate it in terms of your own knowledge and belief.
5. Justify: To give good ground for your decisions or conclusion (sometimes, your instructor's decisions or conclusions).
6. Select: See choose.

Note: The above definitions are general. The context of the instructions will make them more specific. When in doubt, ask your instructor precisely what he/she means.

THE PREPARATION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Getting Started

Term papers are assigned so that you may have scholarly and intensive training in the collection, organization and presentation of data. You should approach them then, not as a boring chore, but as a pleasant learning experience.

Much of the time, essay topics will be assigned to you. But if a choice is allowed, observe the following in selecting a title. It should: (a) be of genuine interest to you. (b) not be trite, trivial or commonplace. (c) not be too broad and unwieldy to be covered within the time and space limits which you have.

If you want to make sure you are fulfilling the requirements, mastering useful skills, that you are enjoying a feeling of positive accomplishment instead of frustration, and that you are meeting the deadlines, you need an early start and an effective plan.

Here are the stages required to be taken, with suggested timing.

- ✓ Start - day assignment is given
- ✓ Research - completed by end of second week
- ✓ Outline - completed by end of third week
- ✓ Rough Draft - completed two weeks before due date
- ✓ Final Draft - completed one week before due date

Researching the Topic

These are three main things to do in researching the topic. The first is done first, while the second and third are done concurrently. Times will vary with total time available.

Analyzing the topic

It is imperative that the topic as stated either by the professor or by you, be analyzed and parameters established. Use the sheet "Verbs used to state essay and examination questions" to check definitions of terms. If you are not sure of parameters, ask your professor.

Building a Bibliography

Having decided exactly what is required on the essay, you can now decide what kinds of information you need and where you are most likely to find it.

Good general leads for most topics are:

- the library card catalogue.
- periodical indexes.
- General: e.g., Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
- Special: e.g., The Education Index, the Zoological Record, Psychological Abstracts, etc.
- Newspaper: The New York Times Index.
- Book Indexes: e.g., The Oxford Companion to English Literature.
- Library Guides: e.g., Using Books and Libraries.
- Prepared Bibliographies:
- National Lists - Cumulative Book Indexes
- Bibliographies in Texts
- Bibliographies in Journals
- Lists at end of the subject index, card catalogue

You should consider also the period of time to be covered by your search. Are recent developments of such importance that a book published five years ago would be out of date?

If you are in doubt, don't flounder: ask a librarian to help you get started. He/she will be pleased to do so.

Whenever you find a reference that seems to have a bearing on your topic, record it on a card, noting the following:

- name of author
- name of book or article
- name of publisher or periodical
- date and place of publication
- page reference
- call number

Extracting and Compiling Information

Your purpose is to get as much information and understanding of your topic as you can in the time available. Therefore, you should:

- not browse.
- pre-read all references.
- read where required, and make notes on pertinent information; notes may be:
 - organizational patterns
 - sentence summaries
 - diagrams, etc.
- Check the bibliography at the end of the book or article and make a card on any references that seem apt. Most researchers find it most convenient to keep their notes on separate items either on separate loose-leaf sheets or on 4x6 cards. Use a system that allows items to be rearranged as required by your organization.

Organizing the Outline

By the time you have done most-of your-research, you will probably have decided which pattern the development of your topic will take. Some of these are:

1. Chronological: In which developments are recounted in a time sequence.
2. Comparative: In which you compare and contrast, point by point, two theories, two states, etc.
3. Topical: In which the ideas are categorized by main idea, secondary idea, etc.
4. Problem – Solution: In which the problem is stated, then various solutions given.
5. Opinion – Reason: In which a statement of opinion is given, followed by reasons and evidence in its support.

Remember that in every essay, some Or all of the 5WHI items must apply. Remember 5WHI? Who, What, Where, When, Why, How and Implications or "So What"?

In any event, when you have decided on the developmental pattern, make some main headings for your outline and try to deal your note cards or loose-leaf sheets into appropriate piles. From these you can make up secondary and tertiary headings and relate all your points into a unified whole.

Don't worry if you find you have to do a lot of shuffling. When you do this you are thinking about the material, and should come up with a better outline.

Writing the Rough Draft

If you have prepared a good outline, writing the paper will be easy. Do the first draft at one sitting, and keep in mind all the things you have learned in English, i.e., have an introduction, main body and conclusion, use straight-forward construction, avoid flowery language, etc.

When you have completed the first draft put it in a drawer to cool for a couple of days. Then edit it carefully and prepare it for the final draft.

Final Draft

Pay particular attention to any instructions the professor has given you about the preparation of written assignments. If he wants it written in purple ink on brown paper, do it, even though these colours do not go with your complexion. Failing specific advice, use the format shown below. If possible, double spaced, or if not, write legibly and on one side of the paper only. Use 8 x 11" sheets.

1. Title page. Includes the title of your paper, your name and registration number, the name of the course and the date.
2. Table of Contents
3. The body of the discussion.
4. Bibliography: This should list in alphabetical order the reference materials you have used in the preparation of the paper. Do not list references you examined but did not take material from. Unless otherwise directed, use the format shown in the "Undergraduate Style Sheet" put out by the English and History Departments, for your bibliography.

Finally, when it is finished, a week before the due date, put it away to cool again. Then a couple of nights before it is due, bring it out and read it critically, looking for errors in punctuation and usage, and too-frequently used pet words. Make the corrections and turn it in.

The Marked and Returned Paper

Here is your chance to really learn something. Analyze the instructor's marks and remarks, and record this somewhere so it can be used in the preparation of future essays. Again, if you are not clear about his comments, go and see your professor. Don't argue about marks, but do ask for clarification of comments.

ANALYSIS OF WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

For week of _____

COURSE	WORK TO BE DONE	DUE BY	ESTIMATED TIME

LONG TERM ASSIGNMENTS

SUBJECT	WORK TO BE DONE	DUE BY	ESTIMATED TIME

TERM CALENDAR

DAY/TIME	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
8:30							
9:30							
10:30							
11:30							
12:30							
1:30							
2:30							
3:30							
4:30							
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6:30							
7:30							
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