

**QEII / DALHOUSIE SCHOOL  
OF HEALTH SCIENCES**  
*STUDY SKILLS MANUAL*

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*Adapted from: Counselling Services  
Mohawk College*

## INTRODUCTION

Learning and practising effective study skills is essential to success in education. Reading this manual is the first of several steps you will need in order to ensure your success.

As you read, you may discover that you are already using some of the study skills and methods described here. Other study skills discussed will be new to you, or may contradict some of your old study habits. These skills will require persistent application and practice before they can become habits. The rewards will make the effort worthwhile.

What will the rewards be?

- Success in university
- Grades with which you are pleased
- Positive feelings about yourself, your abilities, and your achievements
- Guilt-free, non-study times

Now, add to this list the rewards **you** want to earn:

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- 
- 

You may find that there are enough suggestions in this manual to teach you all the skills you need. Others will want to do more reading, or learn specific study skills. There are books available in the library to assist you.

It is often easier to learn new skills if there is someone coaching us. Teachers, advisors, and counsellors are willing to help you learn study skills and to encourage you to persist in developing good study habits. Ask them for help.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

### GOAL OF TIME PLANNING:

- To gain time.

Studying is important, but it is **not** your whole life.

Time management means planning for **living**, not merely for **studying**.

### REWARDS OF TIME PLANNING

1. Earn the right to guilt-free non-study times: times for exercise, relaxation, and fun.
2. Eliminate the self-conflict and confusion of deciding whether or not to study.
3. Doing assignments becomes easier.

### STEPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Keep a diary of your daily activities for one week. Find out where all the time is going. (Use the sample below.)

TIME		TIME USED	ACTIVITY	SUGGESTED CHANGES
Start	End			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be as specific as possible</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• every night <u>OR</u> at the end of the week, study your diary and record here what changes would make better use of time.</li></ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for study times, include subject, task, and how much was done.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• review these decisions as you follow the next steps.</li></ul>

2. Draw up a master schedule for the entire term. (Appendix A)

- a)
  - η Account for all fixed activities.
  - η Record all scheduled class times.
  - η Add all other regular activities - part-time job, commuting time, sports, meetings, etc.
  - η Include sleeping, eating, housekeeping chores.
- b) The blank spaces indicate blocks of time available. You will know at a glance the blocks of time free to be scheduled.

3. Make a weekly to do list.

Using the sample below, list academic tasks to be done during the week. Use the Term Schedule ( Appendix A) as a reference to make this list.

COURSE	ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	ESTIMATED TIME	ACTUAL TIME
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• record as you do the tasks.</li> </ul>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this will improve your ability to estimate time accurately.</li> </ul>

List other tasks/activities planned for the week.

If you have listed more tasks than you can accomplish in the time available:

- a) Prioritize the items on your list. That is, assign each task a letter: “A” for high value, “B” for medium, “C” for low. Plan to do the “A” priority items first (even if the “C” items are easier or more attractive).
- b) Study your list to see if some items can be eliminated, or done in less time. Is it possible to lower your standards in some areas, e.g., housework, grooming? Ask yourself: Is this really that important? Is this the best use of the time I have available?

4. Make a weekly schedule. (Appendix B)

Using due dates and estimated times as control factors, checking master schedule for free times, schedule the tasks.

- a) Plan to do the same thing at the same time and same place each day. (You will develop a habit, which makes the work easier, and eliminates conflict).
- b) Keep your schedule flexible. Unexpected things do come up. Remember that if you used planned study time for an unexpected activity, you need to make up the time during some free time.
- c) Leave some time unplanned. This allows room for unexpected tasks and events that come up during the week.
- d) Plan for a balanced life. Allow for regular and sufficient sleeping, eating, exercise, relaxation, and fun.
- e) Determine your most efficient study hours, e.g., morning, afternoon, evening. (Everyone has their own). Use them for the most demanding study tasks, for working on the courses you find most difficult.
- f) Plan for breaks from studying. Breaks keep you at peak efficiency, e.g., after a 40 - 50 minute study period, take a 10-minute rest break. After three 50-minute periods, plan a one hour break. (A good time to do some exercises, jogging, yoga, housework, laundry).
- g) Study contrasting subjects consecutively, in order to prevent learning in one to interfere with learning the next, e.g., if you need to study psychology, sociology, and biology during one evening, study biology between the other two subjects.
- h) Use the “Swiss Cheese” method:  
  
Break a difficult, seemingly impossible large task into a series of small short-timed activities. Breaking the large “chunk” into manageable “bites” is the first small task. Then plan to do one “bite” at a time. Soon the impossible is manageable!
- i) Be realistic. If your first schedule is heroic and unrealistic, you’ll quickly give up and return to your ineffective unplanned ways.
- j) Give the schedule a chance. Make and stick to your schedules for at least a month, then decide whether or not schedules are useful for you.

5. Make a “To Do Today” list.

Every evening before leaving your desk make tomorrow’s “to do today” list. Record when each task will be done. Carry your plan with you. Stick to it!

6. Discuss your student plans with “significant others”, (i.e., parent, friend, spouse) in your life. Are they committed to the plan, too? Will they help you stick to it?

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
<b>Steps for time management:</b>	
1.	Keep a diary.
2.	Make a master schedule.
3.	Make a weekly “to do” list.
4.	Make a weekly schedule.
5.	Make a “to do today” list.
6.	Follow your plan.

## **PREPARING TO STUDY**

### **MINIMIZE EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS**

Find the best place for you to study, and make a habit of always studying there. Use Appendix C to do a Study Area Analysis.

1. The place must be quiet.
2. Heating, lighting, and ventilation should be appropriate.
3. Sit comfortably but not too comfortably.
4. Desk space must be adequate, and at the right height.
5. Your study place should be equipped with what you need - text, dictionary, paper, pens, etc., but free of distracting clutter.
6. Use your study place only for studying. Eat snacks, talk to others, write letters, read novels and magazines elsewhere.
7. When taking a break from studying, leave your study place.

### **FREE YOURSELF OF DISTURBANCES**

1. Research shows that background music lowers study efficiency, (more for some people than for others).
2. Tell family and friends you are not to be disturbed during study times.
3. Arrange not to get phone calls during study periods.
4. If it is difficult to arrange disturbance-free study-times at home, consider using university or public libraries instead.



## **MINIMIZE INTERNAL DISTRACTIONS**

Internal distractions are more difficult to control, and are often a greater deterrent to effective learning than are physical ones. Only you can really know whether or not you are concentrating. Unless you want to concentrate on the material you are learning, and intend to understand and remember it, you will have very little control over the distractions within yourself.

Even when your intention to learn is strong, internal distractions can be a problem. The following suggestions have helped many students. They may also help you.

1. Plan to begin your study time in a tension-free state-of-mind.  
What is your best way to relax, to release the tensions accumulated during school hours? Do you listen to music, watch a soap opera, jog, do yoga, take a cat-nap, cook, or tell a friend/spouse/parent about your day? Determine your best way to reduce tension, and make it a regular part of your daily routine.
2. Make sure you have everything you need before you begin studying.  
Then refuse to leave your desk until break time.
3. Set realistic goals. If you've been hardly studying at all, don't plan to study six hours per night all of a sudden. Plan goals you can achieve. Set yourself up to succeed, not to fail.
4. Eliminate indecision. Conflicts such as "What should I study?" "Will I or won't I?" waste time and energy, and create a negative attitude towards studying. Plan ahead, and then stick to your schedule.
5. Make a reminder list. When "things to do" pop into your head, write them down. Deal with them when you've finished studying. Refuse to think of them while studying.
6. Do something about negative feelings towards a subject. Such feelings interfere with your studies. Discuss the course with your instructor. Tell them what is bothering you. If that is too difficult a solution, begin by talking it over with a friend or counsellor. If you have difficulty "getting down to" a certain subject or task, try handling it in small steps. Begin by spending 20 minutes on it, then 30, then 40, etc., rewarding yourself at each step.

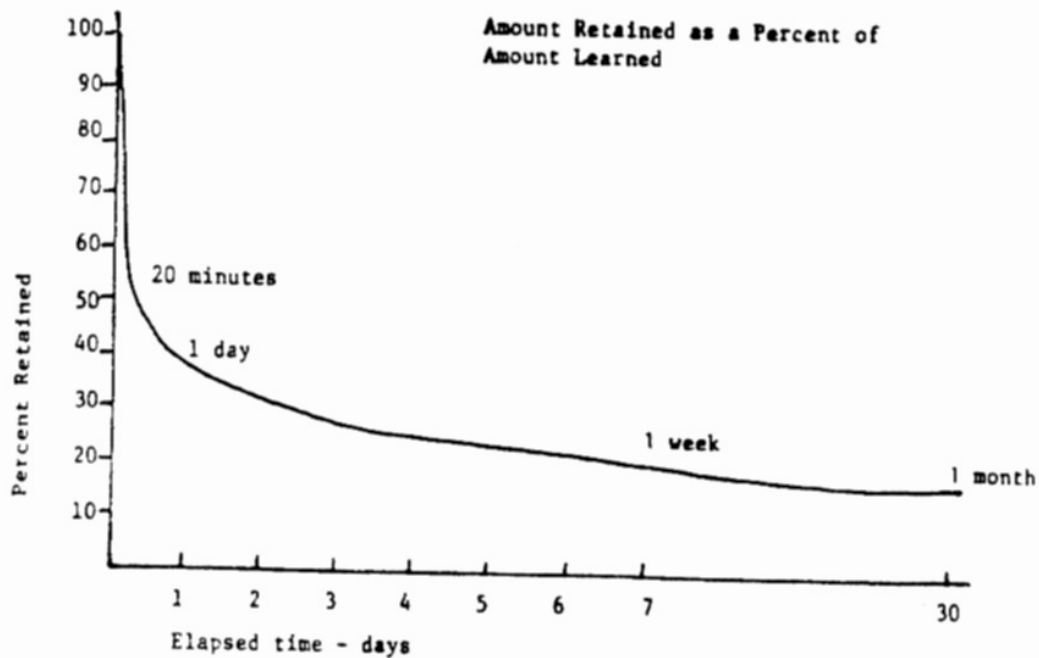
7. Day-dreaming is a chronic time-waster. It can become a strong habit, so stop yourself at the earliest possible moment. Decide on a method for dealing with it, e.g., (a) Say “STOP” out loud to end a non-study thought every time one intrudes. (b) Take a piece of paper and give yourself a check mark every time you think a non-study thought. Challenge yourself to reduce the number of checks during each successive study period.
8. Decide to ignore external noises such as phones ringing, doors opening, someone walking by, etc. With practice, you will learn not to notice them. Don’t allow yourself to become irritated by them, the irritation is a bigger distracter than the disturbances themselves are. Try imagining that your mind is a sound-proof room completely filled with thoughts of the subject you’re working on.
9. Thinking or worrying about personal problems distracts from studying. Positive action must be taken. Try to eliminate them from your mind while studying - writing them down helps some people do this. Then, decide on a plan of action, and follow it. If you can’t solve a problem yourself, ask for help from friends, parents, spouses, teachers, counsellors. (See Appendices D & E).
10. Always study with a pencil in hand. A pencil helps to keep learning active and is your best defence against internal distractions.

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
1.	Study in a place conducive to studying.
2.	Arrange not to be disturbed.
3.	Take charge of minimizing internal distraction.

## REMEMBERING WHAT YOU LEARN (AND PREPARING FOR EXAMS)

### FACTS ABOUT REMEMBERING

1. The moment learning ends, forgetting begins.
2. The greatest amount of forgetting is caused by interference - what we learn today weakens the memory of what we learned yesterday.
3. If we don't use what we learn, we forget it.
4. The most rapid forgetting occurs during the first day after learning ended.



Not very encouraging, is it? Don't give up, by using the following methods you can remember what you learn.

## WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

1. Purposefully intend to remember what you are learning. Whenever you sit down to read, to listen to a lecture, or to discuss something, consciously intend to remember it.
2. Be interested in what you are learning. If you're not naturally interested, create an artificial active interest in the topic.

The following may help:

Talk to others about the subject, they may enthuse you. Use grades, being able to answer in class, "earning" your next break, as motivators. "Brainwash" yourself into believing the content is terribly exciting and vitally important. The more you learn about a course, the more interesting it usually becomes. Success breeds interest. Try fantasizing you have an exam on the content tomorrow.

3. Be selective. You can't remember everything. Decide on the main points and ideas. Organize them in your own words. Intend to remember them.
4. Get it right the first time. Once something has been mislearned, it's much harder to learn the right version. If you're not sure about something, ask about it as soon as possible. Then remember the correct information.
5. Always work for understanding. You can't remember what you don't understand. Put the ideas in your own words - if you can't, you don't understand it.
6. Learn the basic material thoroughly. If you don't remember the basics, understanding and remembering the more complex ideas that build on the basics becomes impossible.
7. Organize the material you want to remember. Facts and ideas grouped into meaningful categories are much easier to remember than a list of unrelated items. Make diagrams and charts of the material.
8. The more you learn, the more you are able to learn. The mind looks for related learnings that the new learnings can "hang" on to. Help your mind by consciously associating your new learnings with those of yesterday, last week, last year.

## WHEN TO REVIEW

Review - often, at the times that give you the best value for your time. (The more often you rehearse material, the longer you will remember it). Research shows that scheduling reviews as suggested here, gives you the best value for your time.

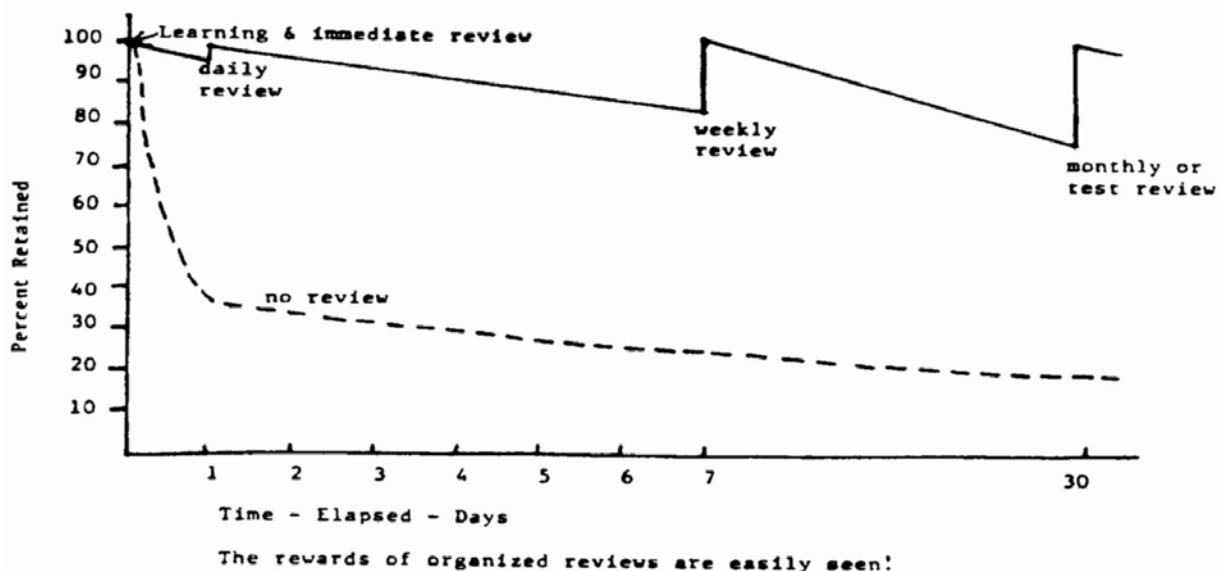
First review - Immediately after the material is received. When reading, recite what you've just read, immediately after reading it, in your own words. Go over your lecture notes as soon as possible after the class. Add things you missed, recite the main points.

Second review - later on the same day before beginning preparation for the next class. Look over your notes. Rehearse the main points in your own words. Make sure your notes are complete and organized. If you don't understand something, note the problem, and decide how to get the solution (ask a teacher, tutor, another student, etc.) Add the plan to tomorrow's "to do today" list.

As soon as possible after getting the answer, review it. Otherwise, you'll quickly forget your newly-learned solution to the problem. You've just wasted your time, and your tutor's.

Third review - at regular times, every week, review all the content covered in each course during the week.

Fourth review - before a test, or once a month, whichever comes first. This is the time to consolidate and organize all the material into a meaningful whole. Your remembering curve will now look like this:



A note on cramming:

Effective cramming is an intensive review of material already learned and previously reviewed.

Since it usually occurs just before a deadline (exam tomorrow or the next day) you are concerned. There is no need to create an artificial interest to get motivated.

Because cramming usually is done the “day before,” you are tested on the content before the most rapid forgetting can occur.

Cramming, which is a rapid first exposure to brand new content, is ineffective for these reasons:

- You don't have time to learn thoroughly.
- You probably are panicking - with good reason - so it's hard to concentrate.
- Most of what you do learn will be forgotten in a day. If your long-term goals (career, exams at end of year) require that you remember what you're learning, cramming is a waste of time. A lot of “going blank” on exams is a result of this kind of cramming.

Good cramming, i.e., a final intensive review is helpful, unless:

- you hate doing it
- you perform poorly under pressure
- you tire easily

So don't do it. Plan for a spaced-out final review in your weekly time plan instead.

If you do cram, make sure you get sufficient sleep. “All-nighters” lead to “freezing” on exams, and increase interference of new learning with old.

## WAYS TO REVIEW

1. Survey the content to be reviewed. Get an overview of how this content fits into the whole course, of how the various main points hang together.
2. Read each section slowly. Underline key words and phrases.
3. Rehearse the material. Use as many approaches as possible:
  - a) Recite the main points, then the sub-points. Then check yourself for accuracy.
  - b) Write cue words - recite supporting information while you write.
  - c) Recite the cue words, think-visualize the details.
  - d) Make up possible exam questions, then answer them - write only the bare essentials, recite the answer.

Don't rewrite your notes - it takes too long. Writing is the slowest form of rehearsal - use it, but wisely:

- a) Make a master plan that organizes all the content on one page. Do it from memory. Talk and visualize supporting data as you write.
- b) Make cue cards of important words, formula, etc., that you can use for rapid self-quizzing.
- c) Make "waste paper basket" notes - scribbled words, diagrams, charts, that help you to organize your talking-visualizing.

Reading is used in review only to refresh your memory and to check for accuracy. Just looking at your notes over and over doesn't mean you'll recall them. Usually you end up falling asleep or daydreaming.

Talking is fast, you have to use your own words, it's easy to recognize when your mind begins to wander. (You can talk under your breath if you're in a library).

Thinking-visualizing is even faster than talking - but be strict, concentrate.

4. Vary your approach to the material every time you review it.
  - a) Exam questions rarely follow the sequence of your notes. Don't get into a rut by reviewing the content in only one order. The more ways you combine and relate the items during review, the fewer surprises there are on exams.
  - b) Think of practical examples of what you are learning, of problems you can solve by applying the theories and principles. (That's how exams are made).

5. Arranging quiz - discussion sessions with one or two students is excellent. To make these work:

- a) Be prepared - each student is responsible for knowing the content prior to the quiz session.
- b) Be strict - no social talk is allowed during study time. Leave that for breaks.
- c) Take turns asking and answering questions. "Teachers" learn as much as "students."
- d) Do not substitute group study for mastering the content yourself. It is one approach to reviewing: don't use it alone.

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
<b>Ways to improve your memory:</b>	
1.	Intend to remember
2.	Create an interest
3.	Be selective
4.	Get it right the first time
5.	Work for understanding
6.	Learn the basics thoroughly
7.	Organize the material
8.	Associate new learnings with old
<b>When to review:</b>	
1.	Immediately after the material is received
2.	Later the same day
3.	Regularly, once a week
4.	Before a test
<b>Ways to review:</b>	
1.	Survey material
2.	Read carefully - underline
3.	Rehearse material - writing, talking, thinking-visualizing - make a master plan, cue cards, wastebasket notes
4.	Vary your approach with each review
5.	use quiz groups wisely



## READING TO LEARN

### ALL EFFECTIVE READING IS THINKING

#### READING TEXTBOOK MATERIAL

1. Prepare your mind for the subject.
  - Think of how this section relates to the whole.
  - Review yesterday's lecture or reading notes from the same subject.
  - Intend to remember what you read, to be interested in it, to understand it.
2. Survey the material to be read.
  - a) Become familiar with the book, and the course manual (if you have one.) Note the table of contents, index, bibliography, introductions, summaries, review pages, etc.
  - b) Survey the section to be read. Relate it to other chapters. How does it fit into the unit? Skim through the chapter; read the headings, introductory paragraph, summaries; look at the pictures, charts, and graphs; get a "birds eye view." Push yourself to skip read. don't try to understand everything.
3. Develop questions about the material:
  - a) Ask yourself, what do I already know about the subject? (Use past learning, and the survey you've just done.)
  - b) Turn chapter headings and sub-headings into questions.
  - c) Use questions at end of textbook or the objectives from your course manual.
  - d) Ask yourself; what do I need to learn from this material? (Be selective.)
4. Read the material slowly, looking for answers to the questions you've just developed. Mentally answer the question.

5. Reread, checking that your mental answer included the main points. Now underline. Always finish reading before marking, as you only want to underline the important words.

- a) Be very selective. If you've underlined forty percent of a page, you've underlined too much.
- b) Be swift, decide what's important quickly.
- c) Be neat, you want to be able to read your text again, and with pleasure.
- d) Be systematic, develop your own set of symbols for marking what's important, related ideas, parts of an argument, etc.
- e) Make notes in the margins of your texts - questions, thoughts, etc.

6. Now make notes in your own words. Do not copy, or write whole sentences and paragraphs.

- a) Jot down important points. Use charts and diagrams to organize your notes.
- b) Reference your notes with page numbers of the text, especially if you're answering objectives that require you to hunt for the answer in different sections of the text, or to draw on a number of books. You'll never spend time "hunting" again. The page number is your "security blanket" if brief notes leave you feeling anxious. You can quickly look up more details if you need them.
- c) As much as possible, do not reread while making notes. Force yourself to remember what you learned in the previous steps.
- d) If your textbook reading is preparation for a class on the same material and the class tends to follow the same organizational structure, use one of the following formats:

•	Reading Notes	Lecture Notes
page no.	- main points	
•	- sub-points	
•	- details	

•	Reading Notes
page no.	- main points
	- sub-points
	- details
	Leave blank for lecture notes
•	Reading Notes
•	etc.

- e) If the class doesn't follow the order of your notes, plan on using separate sheets of paper for the lectures. Still leave room in your reading notes for additions after class.

7. Review the material immediately after completing the above steps.
  - a) Look over the material again, focusing on the underlined key words.
  - b) Answer your questions in your own words, without looking at your notes.
  - c) Ask yourself, do I understand the basic ideas? If not, read the material slowly again. It may take several readings and rehearsals before you fully grasp the material you're learning.
  - d) If some material is still unclear, make a note of your questions.
    - Plan to get the answer in class.
    - Or decide who you will talk to.
    - Put these plans on your "to do" list.

### **READING HABITS THAT LESSEN READING EFFICIENCY**

1. Single-word fixations, i.e., reading by words, rather than by ideas.
2. Subvocalization, i.e., saying what you read under your breath, moving your lips while you read. This means you can't read faster than you talk, which isn't very fast.
3. Regression, i.e., going back to reread what you just read.
4. Inattentiveness, i.e., reading without thinking of what you're reading.

Become aware of what your reading habits are. If you do any of the above, consciously force yourself to stop and change.

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
<b>Steps for reading to learn:</b>	
1.	Prepare mind - think
2.	Survey the material
3.	Develop questions
4.	Read
5.	Recite answers - underline key words
6.	Make brief notes, in your own words
7.	Review immediately
8.	Note what is not yet understood
Step 2 through 7 are known as the <b>SQ4R</b> method:	
	<b>SURVEY</b> <b>QUESTION</b> <b>READ</b> <b>RECITE</b> <b>(W) RITE</b> <b>REVIEW</b>

## **USING CLASSROOM TIME TO LEARN**

Learning from class requires good listening skills. Learning in each class requires knowing what the course requirements are (Appendices F & G).

### **TO BE A GOOD LISTENER**

#### **Prepare for class:**

1. Be familiar with content to be covered. (See section on Reading to Learn).
2. Review notes from the last class, and your reading notes, just before class. Note questions you have about the material.
3. Prepare yourself mentally. (Review section on minimizing internal distractions now.)
4. Accept the teacher's style and manner. Refuse to be distracted, or irritated, by his/her accent, clothes, etc.

#### **Listening is an active process, not a passive one.**

1. Listen as if you had to respond to each thing the lecturer says.
2. Your mind works faster than anyone can speak. Use the time to question what was just said, to anticipate the next point.
3. Look for the main ideas, separate them from sub-points, examples, jokes, etc.
4. Relate what is being said to what you already know.
5. Look for explanations to parts that were confusing when you prepared for class.
6. Sit towards the front of the room - active listening is much easier there.

#### **Take notes in class.**

1. Taking notes requires that you think. It makes active listening much easier (the pencil technique again.)
2. Notes give you concise outlines for review, they tell you what the teacher has stressed, they give you information you couldn't find elsewhere.

#### **How to take notes.**

1. List main ideas in point-form. List supporting ideas and facts in point form.
2. Notes should be brief and clear. Don't try to record the whole lecture.
3. Use your own words to summarize what the speaker says.
4. Develop your own consistent shorthand style.
5. Record diagrams, etc., that the teacher puts on the board.
6. Be on the lookout for clues like "three important points," "to summarize," etc.
7. Write legibly. Rewriting notes is almost always a waste of time.
8. Learn each teacher's lecture style. Then adjust your note-taking format to the style.

**Review your notes as soon as possible after class.**

1. Edit your notes - fill in blanks you left, add details you didn't have time to write, underline and mark the notes so they are organized.
2. Review your class notes and your reading notes on the same content.
  - a) Make sure your notes include all the important facts, and are clear.
  - b) Rehearse the information (See Remembering What You Learn.)
  - c) Note any questions you still have on the content. Decide where to get the answers. Put the plan on your "to do" list.

If you are uncertain as to whether or not you have adequate notes, compare them to those of another student (a successful one), or ask your teacher to look at them.

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
<b>Steps to learning in class:</b>	
1.	Prepare for class.
2.	Be an active listener.
3.	Take clear, concise notes.
4.	Review your notes after class.

## **HOW TO WRITE EXAMS**

### **FINAL PREPARATION**

#### ***Intellectual Preparation***

By practising the reading, classroom, and review techniques described in this manual, you have guaranteed being intellectually prepared for any exam.

#### ***Physical Preparation***

Get adequate sleep before an exam. If you are tired, all that excellent preparation will be partially wasted. Have an adequate breakfast. Make time to get adequate exercise, even if it is exam week.

#### ***Emotional Preparation***

You don't need to panic. Remember, you've been preparing for tests since the first day of class.

Believe in yourself.

Think positively. If you've been following the steps in the manual, you know the material; you will do well. And remember, no exam is a matter of life or death - if you think it is, arrange to talk to someone about it.

#### ***The morning of an exam***

Get up early enough so you have time to shower, exercise, eat breakfast, get to school without hurrying. Don't rush the morning of an exam. Look over summary cue cards to refresh your memory - don't do this, if it makes you panic.

When you get to school, avoid your classmates who are busy quizzing each other. You won't learn anything, but you'll probably pick up their anxiety.

### **IN THE EXAM ROOM**

Arrive early enough to pick a seat you like, away from anything you find distracting. Friends are often distracters during exams. Sit away from them.

Are you tense? Some tenseness is a help - it makes you more alert, and helps you to think faster. Too much is a handicap.

## **FOR ALL EXAMS**

1. Listen to all directions carefully.
2. Use your time wisely.
  - Read all instructions carefully.
  - Check the entire exam to note the format, to see whether or not you have a choice of questions to answer.
  - Estimate the amount of time to be spent on each section, and on each item.
  - Time yourself on the first few items, and re-check whether you're on schedule two or three times while writing the test. Readjust your speed as needed. Plan to use all the allotted time.
    - If you work too quickly, you rob yourself of time to think.
    - Too slowly, you won't finish the test.
3. Give yourself the opportunity to think.

## **MULTIPLE - CHOICE (AND OTHER OBJECTIVE) EXAMS**

After your survey and when you've budgeted your time, begin with the first item; work through the test in sequence.

For each item:

1. Read the question carefully.
2. Ask "What is the question I'm to answer?"
3. Reread the question, underlining key words and phrases. Read every word.
4. Think of the answer before you look at the alternatives. (Covering them with your non-writing hand is a good "crutch" so you don't cheat while developing this habit.)

When you know how you would respond:

5. Look at each alternative.      Read every word.  
  Is it the same as the answer you thought of?  
  Is it a logically correct answer to the question?
6. Then choose the best answer.

If you are not sure of the answer:

1. “Guess” if there is no penalty for doing so. But guess systematically.
  - a) Eliminate the “definitely wrong” responses.
  - b) Balance the remaining options against each other - how are they the same? different”? Then:
  - c) Choose the best alternative remaining.
  - d) Put a check mark in the margin so you can find it quickly if you have time to return to it.
2. Use information for other items to help you. Similar items, or items on the same topic, may trigger your memory. Is there extra information (formula, definition) in another item which will help you answer this one?
3. Do not use much more than your budgeted amount of time on a difficult item.
4. Now put the item out of your mind. You need your full attention for the next item.

Exam questions are not written to “trick” you. They are intended to let you demonstrate what you know. Don’t look for “hidden” meanings. Do read carefully, critically, alertly. Double-check at each item to ensure you aren’t making clerical errors in transferring your answer to the answer sheet.

When you complete the paper:

- Check that you answered every item.
- Go back to items you marked for re-checking.
- Never change an answer from one “guess” to another one. Your first guess is the best one. Change only if you misread the first time, or if you suddenly remember specific information that slipped your mind before.
- Since you’ve done your best, there is no reason to reread the whole paper. You won’t have the time if you budgeted well. And you’ll only be tempted to change answers. **Don’t!**

### **ESSAY-TYPE (SUBJECTIVE) EXAMS**

1. Take a minute to jot down key words, ideas, or formula that you know you’ll need (on scrap-paper, or the back of the exam sheet.)
2. Read all the instructions and questions.
3. If you have a choice, decide which questions you’ll answer. Beside each question, quickly jot down they key points that come to mind.
4. Budget your time.
5. Start with the easiest question.
6. For each question make a flexible outline. Include introduction, statement of purpose, body, conclusion.



7. Write your answer. Stay within your allotted time for each question.
8. Write something for each question, even if you don't know the whole answer, or are uncertain.
9. Answer in point-form if you run out of time.
10. Write legibly - you won't get marks for what the examiner can't read.
11. Ask yourself, have I answered the question that was asked?
12. Proofread your paper.

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
1.	Take a positive attitude.
2.	Don't rush or panic.
3.	Relax before you begin the exam.
4.	Read all directions carefully.
5.	Budget your time.
6.	Allow yourself to <i>think</i> .
<b>MULTIPLE-CHOICE EXAMS</b>	
For each item:	
1.	Read question (covering answers.)
2.	Think - what is asked?
3.	Reread question - underline.
4.	Think - what is my answer?
5.	Compare each alternative to your answer and the question.
6.	Choose the best answer.
7.	Guess systematically.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN ESSAY EXAMINATIONS

Certain terms are used regularly in essay-type questions. Know what each one means.

TERM	MEANING
COMPARE	Examine qualities or characteristics. Emphasize <u>similarities</u> , although differences may be mentioned.
CONTRAST	Compare by observing <u>differences</u> .
CRITICIZE	Express your <u>own judgement</u> concerning the topic in question. Discuss <u>both</u> pros and cons.
DEFINE	Clearly state the <u>meaning</u> of the word or term. Relate the meaning <u>specifically</u> to the way it is used in the subject area under discussion.
DESCRIBE	Tell the <u>whole</u> story in narrative form.
DISCUSS	This calls for the most <u>complete</u> and <u>detailed</u> answer. Examine and analyse carefully and present both pros and cons.
EVALUATE	This requires making an <u>informed</u> judgement. Your judgement must be shown to be based on <u>knowledge</u> and <u>information</u> about the subject. (Just stating your own ideas is not sufficient.)
EXPLAIN	In explanatory answers you must clarify the cause(s) or reason(s). State the "how and why" of the subject.
ILLUSTRATE	Make clear by giving an <u>example</u> , e.g., a figure, a diagram or a concrete example.
LIST (Enumerate)	Present an itemized series or tabulation. Be <u>concise</u> . Point form is often acceptable.
OUTLINE	This is an <u>organized</u> description. Give a general overview, stating main and supporting ideas. Use headings and sub-headings. Usually in point form. <u>Omit details</u> .

### SUMMARY

Study the terms which appear on the exams you write.

Use the remaining space to ***list and define*** other terms you can think of.

## LEARNING FROM EXAM RESULTS

Your returned exam paper is a valuable learning tool - even if it must be returned at the end of class.

- Use it to analyse your strengths and weaknesses.
- Use it to review the information one more time, while you're going over the exam.
- Note the content areas you need to spend more time on.
- Use it to evaluate in what ways your study habits need to be changed.

Go through this list after every test. Answer each question "yes" or "no". The questions to which you answer "no" are the areas in which you focus your future plans of action.

In deciding whether to answer "yes" or "no", you are advised not to give yourself the benefit of the doubt.

1. Were you reading with understanding when doing homework? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did you understand the basic ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did you relate ideas and principles with each other? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you select and note the main ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you make concise notes from the reading? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did you review at regular times, rather than "cramming" as your only review? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did you use alternative methods when reviewing? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you master the material yourself before using "group study" methods? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you study all of the material thoroughly when it was first assigned? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did you recite the material repeatedly when preparing for the exam? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Did you study in a location where you were free from distractions and interruptions? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Did you set priorities when you organized your time? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Did you make a time plan that was realistic? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Did you follow the time schedule you had made? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Did you identify clearly the purpose of lectures in the course? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Did you take complete lecture notes? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Did you prepare for each class in the course? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Did you clear up questions or problems as they arose? \_\_\_\_\_
19. During the exam, did you read the directions and/or the questions carefully? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Did you take time during the exam to stop and think? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Did you outline your essays before writing? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Did you proofread your essay answers? \_\_\_\_\_
23. Did you refuse to change answers on a multiple-choice exam unless you had a very good reason? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Did you stop and think, then look for the best answers, before looking for wrong answers? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Did you feel anxious because you were placing too much or the wrong kind of significance on the exam? \_\_\_\_\_
26. During the exam, did you give up or feel unable to make decisions? \_\_\_\_\_
27. During the exam, did you spend your time worrying rather than focusing on the actual exam questions? \_\_\_\_\_
28. Did you feel anxious during the exam because you did not know the material to begin with? \_\_\_\_\_

**Items 1 - 5:** If you answered “no” to any one of these, review the “Reading to Learn” section.

**Items 6 - 10:** If you answered “no” to any one of these items, review “Remembering What You Learn”.

**Item 11:** A “no” answer. Review “Preparing to Study.”

**Items 12 - 14:** Any “no” answers. Review “Time Management.”

**Items 15 - 18:** Any “no” answers. Review “Using Classtime to Learn.”

**Items 19 - 24:** Any “no” answers. Review “How to Write Exams.”

The above reviews must lead to a new action plan for success. Put the changes you will make on a special card. Use these new skills until they become habits.

**Items 25 - 28:** If you answered “yes” to these items, and “no” to a number of the other items, you were probably anxious because you had reason to be. Improving your study habits should reduce your anxiety.

If you answered “yes” to these items, and to all others as well, you have learned the habit of being too test-anxious, even though you are well-prepared. This habit is difficult to break alone. It keeps you from demonstrating how much you know. Talk to a counsellor about your anxiety. They want to help you.

If these questions do not help you define your problem areas, stop and think.

List what you think the problem is.

Discuss the situation with a friend, teacher, or counsellor. Maybe they can help you to define where the difficulty lies, and help you decide what to do about it.

## **SIGNS OF A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY STUDENT**

### **A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT**

- is disciplined - “the internal ability to run your life so that you can do what you’re expected to do when you’re expected to do it.”
- is motivated - the drive, determination to do it.
- is aware of his/her abilities and limitations, and works within them.
- has mental flexibility, is willing to learn, to adjust.
- communicates clearly and correctly, in writing and orally.
- knows their teachers, and talks with them frequently.
- reviews frequently and effectively.
- does extra reading.
- sits in the front third of the class.
- attends classes regularly, and participates in them.
- has successful friends.

**MARK IN DUE DATES OF ASSIGNMENTS, TESTS, QUIZZES, ETC.**

**APPENDIX A**

**TERM SCHEDULE**

<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>

**STUDY PLAN**  
**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**APPENDIX B**

HOUR	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
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9:00							
9:30							
10:00							

## STUDY AREA ANALYSIS

## APPENDIX C

List three places where you usually study in the order you use them most:

A) \_\_\_\_\_ B) \_\_\_\_\_ C) \_\_\_\_\_

Now circle the column that applies to each of these places.

T = True; F = False

	<u>Place A</u>		<u>Place B</u>		<u>Place C</u>	
	T	F	T	F	T	F
1. Other people often interrupt me when I study here.						
2. Much of what I can see here reminds me of things that don't have anything to do with studying.	T	F	T	F	T	F
3. I can often hear radio or T.V. when I study here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
4. I can often hear the phone ring when I study here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
5. I think I take too many breaks when I study here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
6. I seem to be especially bothered by distractions here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
7. I usually don't study here at a regular time each week.	T	F	T	F	T	F
8. My breaks tend to be too long when I study here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
9. I tend to start conversations with people when I study here.	T	F	T	F	T	F
10. I spend time on the phone here that I should be using to study.	T	F	T	F	T	F
11. There are many things here that don't have anything to do with study or school work.	T	F	T	F	T	F
12. Temperature conditions here are not very good for studying.	T	F	T	F	T	F
13. Chair, table and lighting arrangements here are not very helpful for studying.	T	F	T	F	T	F
14. When I study here I often am distracted by individuals (e.g., people watching).	T	F	T	F	T	F
15. I don't enjoy studying here.	T	F	T	F	T	F

Now total the circles in each column. The column which has the most "false" circles may be the least distracting place to study. Try to plan your day so that you do as much of your work as you can there.



1. Identify the problem.
2. Analyse the problem:
  - gather as much information as possible
  - based on new information, if necessary, re-identify the problem
3. List possible plans of action (at least four)
  - reason each plan through to its logical conclusion
4. Choose a plan of action by weighing the pros and cons of each plan.
5. Follow the plan of action.
6. Evaluate outcome.
7. If not satisfied, select a new plan of action.



***“There are no simple solutions: Only intelligent choices.”***

**BELIEFS THAT HINDER EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING**

1. Belief that you must be one hundred percent certain before you can make a decision.
2. Belief that you must make a decision by reason only.
3. Belief that changing your mind is a sign of weakness.
4. Belief that feeling undecided, uncertain, or confused is abnormal.
5. Belief that asking for help is a sign of weakness.
6. Belief that good decisions are always made quickly.
7. Belief that there is always one right answer to a problem.
8. Belief that a good decision leaves you feeling totally satisfied.

## Determining Course Requirements

It is important to actively involve yourself in determining the requirements for each course.

Listed below is key information to gain from the instructor as early in the semester as possible:

- Are there course objectives? A course outline?
- Which chapters in the textbook will be covered?
- Will there be quizzes? When?
- Will there be tests? When?
- When are the exams?
- What material will each exam cover?
- What type of questions will be on the exams? Essay? Multiple choice? Short answer? True/False? Fill in the blank?
- What is the best way to prepare for class?
- What other work is required? i.e., essays, book reports, projects, technical or business reports, etc.
- What are the due dates for additional assignments? Evaluation?
- Is there an outline of the most important terms and concepts to be covered in the assignments?

These questions are a starting point. Others will occur to you as you go along.

Some of the above information will be given in class, therefore it is important to listen - your survival in university will depend on it!

If the information is not given during class, make an appointment to see the instructor, and ask tactfully. Do not make the instructor feel they are being cross-examined.

Some information may be given in a handout. If not, be sure to write everything down in a notebook.

**ASSIGNMENT LOG**

**APPENDIX G**

COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUCTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DAY/TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>DATE DUE</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>

<b>GOAL / OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>CHECK POINTS</b>	<b>PROGRESS TO DATE</b>