

IN CLASSROOM

Taking Notes

BASICS

- Clear, concise notes are more effective than long, complicated notes
- Instead of using a spiral, use a loose-leaf notebook divided into class sections
- Make all notes on loose-leaf paper; in an upper corner, title and date each sheet as it is used
- Rewrite and combine your old study and lecture notes into a new single set of notes or outline; use them as a replacement for your old notes in the loose-leaf binder

LECTURE NOTES

- Sit near the front of the class to avoid distractions
- **Be a good listener** - focus and concentrate on the main points of the lecture; get them down on paper; you'll put them into your

own words later along with your study notes; pay attention to the instructors' clues to what they consider important

- If there is something you don't understand, **ASK!**
- For fast classroom access to key information on major topics, use **QuickStudy®** products, if available
- Immediately after a lecture, without looking at your notes, try to recall on a separate paper as much as you can about what you have heard and learned; then, review your actual lecture notes to confirm and/or supplement your memory
- During your next study session, quickly recall again on paper what you learned; then, review and reorganize your lecture notes in your own words
- **Repeat the recall process** several times over several days to commit the new information to memory!

Your listening skills, note taking and ability to manage your sessions will help determine your success in college!

Dealing with Professors & Tough Classes

- **MEET WITH YOUR** professors during their posted office hours
- **TALK TO OTHER STUDENTS** to find out the real scoop—which professors to avoid, etc.
- **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK** other students and professors for copies of old exams; the questions may change, but the style usually remains the same
- **MAKE SURE YOUR PROFESSOR KNOWS YOUR NAME:** Putting a face with a name will be a big help, especially if your grade is borderline
- **PROBLEMS WITH FACULTY** should be handled honestly and calmly; always try to remedy conflicts directly with faculty members first; if the problem remains unresolved, seek advice from your academic advisor, a student

support services staff member, or your student handbook for the next step

- **STUDENT INTERVENTION RESOURCES**
 - Department Chair
 - Dean of the College
 - Chancellor or Vice President of Academic Affairs
 - Ombudsman
 - Student Government Attorney
- **WHAT IRRITATES PROFESSORS AND INSTRUCTORS?**
 - Sleeping in class
 - Not going to class
 - Irresponsibility
 - Failure to read the syllabus
 - Excuses
 - Failure to meet deadlines

STUDY STRATEGIES

Time Management

- **LEARN TO SAY NO!** Balance social time and study time
- **DO NOT STUDY FOR MORE THAN TWO HOURS AT A TIME**
- **TRY TO STUDY DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS**
- **USE TWO SCHEDULES**
 - Using your class schedules as a guide, block out specific times each day for study and all other activities
 - Create a semester schedule showing midterms, finals, due dates, and other important events: Weekly, review both schedules and allow more study time as needed; a good schedule keeps you from wandering off course
- **PRIORITIZE:** List what you need to study each day; prioritize and set times for each item and stick to it
- **USE THE 30-3-2 SCHEDULE**
 - Study for 30 minutes
 - Take a three-minute break; let the break be a time to think about other things
 - Upon returning, take an extra two minutes to mentally review what you have just read and do a quick preview of what is coming up next

Study, Study, Study!

STUDY - BREAK - REVIEW - PREVIEW - STUDY

- **ATTEND** as many academic support activities and workshops as possible
- **STUDY!** This may be a case of stating the obvious, but you would be surprised how many students don't bother
- **STUDYING WITH SOOTHING MUSIC** in the background (contrary to popular opinion) can enhance your concentration
- Studying in a soft chair or on a cushy bed may not be the best strategy
 - Active learning may require walking around the room or sitting on the edge of the chair
- **STUDY SPACE:** Your regular study space should be as quiet and comfortable as possible, and large enough to have easy access to everything you need for studying (text and **QuickStudy®**, paper, pencils, rulers, etc.)
 - Libraries, study lounges, or private rooms are ideal
 - Get rid of clutter; clear the desk or table of all materials not related to the current project
- **TUTORING IS NOT A BAD THING!** Get help early, before the academic damage is irreversible; many schools offer free tutoring in a variety of subjects
- Study groups are great, but in general, studying alone is more effective

Goal Setting

- Set realistic goals within a specific time-frame (in writing)
- Goals should be specific and clear
- Determine the purpose of your goals and their achievement benefits; write them down next to your goal
- Set specific strategies for accomplishing each goal (in writing)
- Set target dates for self-evaluation
- Periodically visualize your goal, as well as your strategies for accomplishing the goal
- List potential obstacles to attaining the goal
- List strategies for overcoming obstacles
- Follow through on all strategies

THEMES & REPORTS

Reducing Writing Anxiety

- **GET A CALENDAR OR ACADEMIC PLANNER**
 - Follow tips in Time Management on page 1
 - First, write down the due date of the paper; next, count backwards: How many days will you need to write, edit, re-write, revise, take notes, research, read, select, and narrow the topic?
 - Now you know what day you will need to begin the paper
- **BE SURE YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOUR INSTRUCTOR EXPECTS**
- **DON'T BE AFRAID TO EXPRESS A UNIQUE OPINION:** The key is to document and support your ideas in an organized and cogent manner
- **WHEN PROOFREADING TEXT,** start at the end of your paper; read one sentence at a time and work your way to the beginning; by reading from end to beginning, the pattern is broken and you will find more errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- **DO NOT RELY ON SPELLCHECK:** Remember "principle" and "principal" are both correct spellings; other biggies—"to" and "too," "it's" and "its"
- **PLAGIARISM MEANS TAKING ANOTHER PERSON'S WORDS OR IDEAS AS YOUR OWN:** Be careful to always cite your source whether you quote directly or paraphrase; remember, if it's not common knowledge or your original idea, you must cite the source

Library Tips

- **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL YOUR FIRST RESEARCH PAPER/PROJECT TO SCOPE OUT THE CAMPUS LIBRARY**
 - Many libraries offer tours for freshmen
 - Determine the library's resources, as well as its limitations, as early as possible
 - Learn now to use library computers and card catalogs to find books by subject or author
 - Practice using every machine in the library (i.e., microfiche, CD Roms, etc.)
 - Use the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for magazine articles; encyclopedias for general information on most known topics; almanacs for facts, lists, charts and tables; atlases for maps, etc.; ask the librarian for instructions
 - If you use the Internet, be sure to cite your research properly
- **KNOW COPIER RULES AND PROCEDURES IN ADVANCE**
 - Where are copiers located?
 - Does the copier require cash or some sort of copy card?
- **CHECK OUT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY LIBRARIES** They may house the one obscure article or book you need to earn that "A"

Writing the Paper

- Make/use index cards (put the topic at the top of each card), notes, bibliographies, summaries, reports and reviews as part of your preparation process to organize your materials
- **PREPARE A WRITTEN OUTLINE**
 - Don't make the mistake of trying to keep everything in your head
 - Make your outline in the form of main headings or ideas with sub-headings fleshing out the flow of the paper; this will establish the paper's content and conclusion
- **WRITE THE PAPER**
 - Use the outline as a guide and stick to it
 - Write in your own natural style
 - **Reread, rewrite, revise and edit until the paper says exactly what you want to say, the way you want to say it**
 - Use correct punctuation and grammar, and run spellcheck
 - Cite all sources, including Internet searches

EXAM STRATEGIES

Preparation

- Learn the exam format: e.g. objective (true/false or multiple choice) or subjective (essay)
- Review course outline, notes and **QuickStudy** products
- Review previous tests; check at departmental office
- Summarize highlights on single sheet

MEMORY DUMP

At the beginning of the test, write down on a piece of paper everything you remember—formulas, facts, names, etc.; scan the test questions; then do a second memory dump and begin the test

Objective Exams

- Scan the exam to determine types of questions
- Always read and follow directions!
- Determine the exam's scoring rules and use them to your advantage; if wrong answers are penalized, don't guess unless you can reduce the choices to two
- Answer easy questions first
- Mark difficult questions and return to them later
- **True/False Questions:**
 - Pick out key words or those on which the meaning of a statement hinges
 - If any clause in a statement is false, the statement is false
- **Multiple-choice questions** are essentially true/false questions arranged in groups
 - Usually only one alternative is totally correct
 - Eliminate obvious false choices
 - Of the remainder, pick the alternative that answers most fully all aspects of the question

Essay Exams

- **Planning your time when answering essay questions is more important than in objective type tests!**
- **Read through the entire examination first**
 - Get a feel for the questions you are expected to answer
 - If the exam allows you to choose from a number of questions, be sure to number your answers exactly to match the questions
- **Follow directions carefully:**
 - Pay attention to the key words in the question: Words such as "list," "describe," "compare and contrast," and "outline" require different types of answers
 - **Don't "write around" the question, but answer it directly and concisely**
- **Outlining**
 - After scanning the list of questions, choose those about which you know most
 - On scrap paper, quickly prepare an outline of important ideas and facts to be included in your response
 - Your opening statement summarizes what you are going to write; the following sentence should support your opening statement
 - Your conclusion should show how your body text supported your opening statement
- **It is absolutely essential that your ideas can be read and understood:** Print neatly and use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling



READING SKILLS

Skimming & Scanning

- **WHEN TO USE**
 - To determine main idea
 - To locate facts quickly
 - To answer test items
 - To answer chapter questions
- **HOW TO SKIM & SCAN:**
 - Fix intent for reading (or facts sought) clearly in your mind
 - Scan table of contents, chapter headings and subheadings
 - Quickly move eyes over reading material, focusing upon page headings and subheadings, discarding information that is obviously not related to reading intent
 - Skimming should be twice as fast as average reading speed
 - Selectively omit portions of reading material
 - Locate as quickly as possible the key or topic sentence of each paragraph (usually, but not always, the first sentence)
 - Practice skimming and scanning to locate information; repeated practice will increase speed
 - Read the last paragraph carefully for summary information
 - Carefully review tables, charts and side boxes

The SQ3R+Reading Method

- **SURVEY**
 - Preview the assignment/material to be studied by scanning the text quickly to discover the central concept
 - From your preview, formulate an **overall picture** and the purpose of what you're going to study
- **QUESTION**
 - What you need to learn in terms of **what, why, how, when, who and/or where, to support the central concept**
 - Write these questions in the margins of your textbook or at the top of your lecture or study notes
- **READ**
 - Read specifically to answer the questions
 - Most paragraphs contain one or more main ideas in support of a concept; locate and highlight them with a marker; make notes in the margins, summarizing key points; pay special attention to **bolded or italicized type** and to tables, **graphs and illustrations** which may explain an idea more thoroughly than text
- **RECALL**
 - **Pause** periodically (every 15 minutes or so) to **recall** in your own words a summary of **the important ideas you have read**; write on notepaper as much as you can recall about what you have read and learned!
 - Each mini-review is a knowledge builder and memory reinforcer
- **REVIEW**
 - Did you answer your questions, understand the new material and accomplish your goal?
 - **Reread** difficult parts; work a few more problems



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- **MAKE YOURSELF AWARE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, ESPECIALLY** if you are in a new town; be aware of support services
 - Religious institutions
 - Support groups
 - Counseling centers
- **REALIZE THAT YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE TOTAL COMMUNITY**
 - Do some volunteer work each semester: It's a great way to build your resume and gain practical experience, plus it feels good!

QuickStudy BRAIN POWER

Can you remember?

- **MEMORIZE FROM GENERAL TO SPECIFIC:** Study the big picture, then learn the details
- **CRAMMING DOES NOT WORK!** Cramming for an exam only commits the information to your short-term memory
- **FOUR BASIC REASONS WE FORGET PIECES OF INFORMATION:**
 - Don't use the information
 - Confuse it with other information
 - Decide the information does not match what you already believe
 - Never really learned the information in the first place
- **KEYS TO REMEMBERING:**
 - **Be interested:** Pay attention; consciously choose to remember; establish a **need** to remember.
 - **Visualize:** Picture in your mind what you wish to remember
 - **Relate:** Relate and form associations between the new ideas and information you wish to remember and information, ideas, persons, things, etc., **that you already know**
- **Repeat:** Even though something is initially learned, it will more than likely be forgotten if not **over learned**; be sure to repeat information in your own words
- **KEY IDEAS:**
 - **Highlight** them in your textbooks and outlines
 - Give extra attention to **bolded words or phrases**
 - Make up acronyms or mnemonics to recall (i.e. **GIGO = Garbage In; Garbage Out**) or (**Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally = Parentheses first, then Exponents, then Multiplication, Division, Addition and Subtraction**)
- **MAPPING**
 - Make a mental image of your notes, outlines, **color-coded QuickStudy®** guides, etc. and where facts are located on them in relation to other topics; these images (fact maps) and their data can often be recalled during tests

Critical Thinking Skills

- **Learn to evaluate everything you see, read, or hear; decide for yourself what to believe**
- **Critical thinking is important in order to:**
 - Enhance common sense
 - Filter emotion
 - Categorize experiences
 - Select references
 - Understand the "experts"
 - Sort fact from opinion
 - Learn to express yourself in a cogent and interesting manner
- **Critical thinkers are:**
 - Able to resist manipulation
 - Able to overcome confusion
 - Able to perceive connections between subjects and events
 - Able to base judgments on evidence and facts
 - Able to realize that the "truth" is never simple; grey or foggy areas always exist



MONEY MATTERS

Financial Aid

- **START EARLY AND BE PERSISTENT:** The money will not just come to you
- **CONSIDER EVERY POSSIBLE SOURCE OF educational funding and money leads**
 - Your school's financial aid office
 - The Admissions office and recruiters
 - Your academic college
 - Your church
 - Clubs and groups your parents belong to
 - Local civic and special interest organizations
 - Professionals already working in your major field
 - Scholarship resource books
 - Other students
 - Honor societies, sororities, fraternities, etc.
- **FILL OUT ALL FORMS COMPLETELY AND NEATLY:** Include all required documentation
- **PAY ATTENTION TO PAYMENT DEADLINES:** Sometimes only a few days can cost you big dollars
- **RESPOND QUICKLY** to all requests for additional information and documentation
- **STICK WITH IT!** Sometimes the process is slow and frustrating
- **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE A FINANCIAL AID OFFICER AT YOUR INSTITUTION:** Discuss the difference between grants, scholarships, subsidized loans, unsubsidized loans, etc.; find out what type of aid you are eligible for and what type of aid you can live with later; **remember**, all loans must be repaid
- **IF YOU ARE AWARDED FINANCIAL AID,** be sure you know the requirements that must be met in order to keep your award (i.e. GPA, work status, etc.)

Survival Tips

- Realize from the onset that tuition does not include any other expenses
- **SHOP EARLY IN ORDER TO HAVE THE BEST SELECTION OF USED BOOKS**
- You will be bombarded with credit card offers; be careful: using plastic now may cost you a car or mortgage later
- **GET A CHECKING ACCOUNT** and learn how to **keep your account in balance**; most banks have customer service representatives who can assist you
- **SET A REALISTIC BUDGET AND STICK WITH IT:** Remember to include allowances for variable expenses such as clothing (new purchases and cleaning), transportation, personal care items, leisure activities and an emergency fund

Finding a Job

- It's never too early to contact your school's Career Development Center
- **STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OFFICES** usually list more than one thousand part-time jobs for students; employers who contact the school know that students will answer their ad; these employers usually do not squabble about your class schedule
- **ALWAYS GO TO AN INTERVIEW DRESSED PROFESSIONALLY**
- **DON'T CHEW GUM AT AN INTERVIEW**
- **DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED** if your first job is not in your major field
- **ALWAYS BE ON TIME FOR APPOINTMENTS:** Be sure to call well in advance if you need to cancel
- **BE SURE TO FOLLOW ALL INSTRUCTIONS** (i.e., Don't call a potential employer if the ad says fax a resume)
- **ALWAYS PRESENT A RESUME**—no matter how brief

Tips for College Planning

The SAT

- You should take the SAT for the first time no later than the beginning of your **junior** year; it is best to take the SAT early so that you can take it again if you aren't satisfied with your score
- The SAT is only one among many factors used by admissions officers to determine your suitability as a student
- There are many materials and classes to help you prepare for the SAT. **QuickStudy®** offers effective, concise study guides for both the verbal and mathematics sections of the test

Planning & Preparing Your College Applications

- The sooner you begin to plan for college, the better—as soon as you begin to think about going to college, **request catalogs** and **applications** from every school you might be interested in, even if the materials for the semester you plan to apply for aren't yet available; these are essential in evaluating your choices, and you can always request new ones when you apply
- Create a **file** for everything related to college, and keep it organized; make a list of everything you need to send and the deadlines by which it must be sent
- Keep your parents informed about your applications; you will need to plan with them to work out financing; and with the anxiety so often involved in these decisions, you'll need them for emotional support as well

Recommendations

- Many colleges require one or more letters of recommendation; if possible, solicit recommendations from **teachers** long before they are due
- Although you should select those teachers who know you best, it is a good idea to give them a copy of your transcripts and a list of your activities; this will help them write positive letters that refer to your specific accomplishments
- Rarely is it a good idea to send more recommendations than a school requests, especially if all the letters tell the same story; **diversify** your recommendations across as wide a range of subjects as possible—this will show potential schools how versatile you are, both academically and socially

SOURCES FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers
- Coaches
- Guidance counselor
- Pastor
- Extracurricular activities coordinators
- Music instructor
- Job supervisor
- Volunteer organization
- Boy/Girl Scout leader

College Admissions

ACADEMICS

- Take the most rigorous classes available at your high school; not only are these classes usually weighted in your favor in computing your GPA, but admissions officers like to see applicants who **challenge** themselves academically
- Put forth the effort to earn the best grades that you can—this should be your first priority; if offered at your school, take as many **Advanced Placement** or **International Baccalaureate** classes as possible; not only can these classes lead to college credit, but also signify on your transcript that you are just the kind of student colleges are looking for
- If your school district permits it, you might want to consider **dual enrollment** at a local university or community college; this will show your eagerness to learn and willingness to undertake a challenge; it also can help you get a better idea of what you want out of college, and the credits you earn will usually transfer

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Competitive colleges are sometimes reluctant to admit students who had no extracurricular

The Personal Statement

- Most colleges require a **personal essay** as part of their application; while the question posed might be worded differently among applications, they all basically want you to explain why you are suited to attend their school
- The best way to handle multiple applications is to begin by writing a **general** personal statement expressing who you are and why you desire to continue your education; then, customize your essay for each school to which you are applying
- It is important to have others close to you read your personal statement before you include it with your application; not only are they more likely to find any spelling or grammatical errors, but they can help you refine the focus of the essay; share your statement with teachers, counselors, friends, family—the more feedback you get the better statement you can produce
- Don't use your personal statement to explain any **deficiencies** in grades or test scores; don't make excuses for not being that imaginary ideal student; if there were any specific circumstances you feel detracted from your academic performance, or if you were the subject of any disciplinary action by your high school, compose a concise explanation and enclose it on a separate piece of paper; have a teacher or guidance counselor look it over first

Making the Choice

- The hardest part of the process can come after you have received acceptance to multiple colleges; deciding which choice is best is a complicated decision and is rarely made without help; be sure to involve your **parents** in the decision-making process so that you can know how much financial support you have available; stay informed at school and in the community about scholarships for which you might qualify
- Many students dream of going to a particular—university; unfortunately, most must compromise; still, for most students, there are abundant institutions that would make a good match; if you have determined that the only schools that have accepted you are not a match, don't panic—there are many alternatives; consider asking schools that rejected you about **probational enrollment**; or spend a year working, attending a local community college, and filling out applications to schools you haven't considered; military enlistment is the answer for many who can't quite afford to attend the school of their choice
- Another option is to enroll at an institution other than the preferred one for a year or two, and then transfer; it is becoming increasingly common for students to complete degree programs in this manner

activities in high school; it is best to be involved in a handful of activities in which you are **genuinely interested**, so that you can speak or write about them with enthusiasm

- Extracurricular activities with an **academic focus** are generally best (e.g. science fair, debate team, language club, math team); being involved in your school's **student government** is another activity that will look good on your applications.
- Engagement in **athletics** can also help you earn admission to the college of your choice. Even if you lack the ability or interest for recruitment for college teams, participation in sports shows the admissions staff another facet of your personality. Being athletic can make you more well-rounded and staying in shape will improve your mental focus.
- **Volunteer work** looks good on applications. While it is intrinsically good to volunteer to help others, it can also improve your chances for admission. Some schools **require** students to volunteer in order to graduate. If you have been involved in any such activities, be sure to indicate so on your application.