

HOW2 LEARN

(LSD4)

**STUDENT COUNSELLING, CAREER
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

Summerstrand Campus (North) Tel: 041 504 3222

2nd Avenue Campus Tel: 041 504 3854

Summerstrand Campus (South) Tel: 041 504 2511

Vista Campus Tel: 041 408 3106

George Campus Tel: 044 801 5051

- No two people learn the same way.
- Everyone is different and for some students, studying and being motivated to learn comes naturally. If you are reading this pamphlet, it's likely that you are not one of them, but don't despair, there's hope. We all learn differently and over time you will find study techniques and strategies that suit you.
- This guide is designed to help you develop effective study skills. **It is not a magic formula for success - studying any material requires work!** However, by using the techniques described in this guide, and by applying yourself, you can gain a valuable edge in understanding material and ultimately learning. Be prepared to experiment with different ways to approach note-taking, planning assignments and other study skills.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR STUDIES

When, where and how you study will all depend on your lifestyle, but you need to PLAN. Here are a few tips to get you going:

- Keep your work organised – have a system for dealing with the paperwork, so you don't waste time looking for course material.
- Keep an eye on assignment cut-off dates.
- Make realistic plans! Don't waste time constantly redoing a plan at the expense of studying.
- Try to keep in a routine with your studies. 3 hours every day is better than no study at all.
- If you fall behind, try not to panic! Sit down, review what you haven't studied and plan how to tackle the work.
- If you have problems knowing what to study, or if you get behind, talk to your lecturer.

Before you even begin to read about the learning techniques, complete the following survey on study attitudes

and organisational strategies to get a picture of your current learning habits.

SURVEY OF STUDY SKILLS

R = Rarely; S = Sometimes; F = Frequently;

A = Almost Always

Study Attitudes and Organisational Strategies	R	S	F	A
1. When you begin to study do you know exactly what and how much you intend to learn?	0	1	2	3
2. Do you find yourself in a cycle of worrying about what you are not doing which, in turn, makes it difficult for you to get anything done?	3	2	1	0
3. Is the main purpose for studying to learn something of value rather than to just get it done?	0	1	2	3
4. Do you put off studying subjects that you do not like or find boring or difficult?	3	2	1	0
5. Do you develop a consistent study routine?	0	1	2	3
6. Do daydreams or distractions keep you from completing what you intend to study?	3	2	1	0
7. Do you refer to your course outlines or syllabus to guide you regarding what you need to know?	0	1	2	3
8. Are your study plans determined mainly by your moods and by what you feel like studying that day?	3	2	1	0
9. Do you choose to study in a place that is likely to be free from interruptions, distractions and noise?	0	1	2	3
10. Do you like to have the TV or radio on when you study?	3	2	1	0

Add up your score: _____

Count up the total number of points and enter your score in the table below.

My Score	Range	
	26 – 30	You are on the right track – Keep it up!
	20 – 25	Risky
	0 – 19	Dangerous

Now you have a rough idea of your study attitudes and organisational strategies. Look at those items where you scored 1 or 0. Set some goals in terms of increasing your score on these items. Here are some general techniques that will help you to produce good results. We will focus on the following:

Concentration while reading
Preparation for studying textbooks
Use of SQ4R study technique

- **Concentration while reading**

- **Read in the same place**

If you have a place set aside specifically for reading and studying, you can concentrate more easily when you sit down to work.

- **Take care of physical comfort**

Read at a time of day when you are most alert. Make sure your reading environment is the right temperature. Be aware of reading when you have eaten a lot or are hungry. This can impact on your concentration.

- **Minimize distractions**

Your study area should be free of external distractions such as people, noise and sights which interfere with your ability to concentrate. For example, some people

work best in silence while others need background music. Find a place to study that works for you.

➤ **Set specific reading goals**

Setting specific goals motivates you to use your time efficiently and complete the task. To set specific goals, use the chapter headings as a guide for where to break the chapter into sections.

➤ **Take regular breaks**

Take breaks regularly, approximately every 45–60 minutes. If you read when you are tired, you are less likely to understand and retain the information.

➤ **Keep a distraction list**

You might find your mind wanders when you read. When you notice you are not concentrating, note this on a sheet of paper. You'll find that as you monitor your level of concentration, you will be able to concentrate for longer periods of time and notice more quickly when your concentration begins to waiver. (Refer to pamphlet SS3: *How2 improve your concentration.*)

● **Preparation for studying textbooks**

In many of your courses you are required to read a textbook. The textbook is an important source of learning and frequently you are tested on its contents. Important factors to consider with regard to textbook reading are:

➤ **Review the course outline**

Spend time at the beginning of the semester to become familiar with the course outline to give you a good idea as to what is important and what your learning and your note-taking should focus on. The course outline may contain valuable information on:

- the nature of the course objectives
- the main topics that will be covered
- the class schedule to be followed during the semester

- the dates of major assignments and tests
- the assessment weighting plan
- the kinds of exam questions to expect

➤ **Determine the relationship between classes and the textbook**

In some courses, the textbook is the primary source of information and class time is used to clarify and apply new concepts. In other courses, material covered in class is more important than the textbook. Knowing the importance of the textbook helps you to determine how you should approach it when you read.

➤ **Identify the kind of test/exam questions**

Early in the semester determine if you need to prepare for multiple-choice, short answer or essay type exams. Find out whether you will be examined on your ability to recall information or apply it, analyze or integrate (put together) data, solve problems or evaluate the worth of ideas. Ask your lecturer for a sample of questions which might be used in the exam. Check on the student portal or at the library for previous exam papers.

➤ **Preview the textbook**

Before you begin to read a textbook for the first time, preview (scan) it. Briefly look through the book to become familiar with its organization and its component parts: Introduction, Table of contents, the text chapters and the glossary.

● **Use of the SQ4R study technique**

SQ4R is a useful strategy for fully absorbing written information. This learning technique is suitable for learning subjects.

For tips on how to approach subjects that require understanding and practical application (see pamphlet SS5: *How2 improve your memory technique*).

The acronym SQ4R stands for the six sequential techniques you should use to study. **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecord, **R**ecite and **R**eview. It helps to create a good mental framework of a subject. By using SQ4R to actively read a document, you get the maximum benefit from your reading time.

SURVEY	
<p>SURVEY the chapter: gather the information necessary to focus and formulate goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title, headings and subheadings • Captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps • Introductory and concluding paragraphs • Summary
QUESTION	
<p>QUESTION while you are surveying: help your mind engage and concentrate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the title, headings, and/or subheadings into questions. • Read questions at the end of the chapters or after each subheading. • Ask yourself, “What did my lecturer say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?” • Ask yourself, “What do I already know about this subject?” <p>Note: If it is helpful to you, write out these questions for consideration.</p>
READ	
<p>When you begin to READ: fill in the information around the mental structures you’ve been building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for the key point in each paragraph. • Search actively for answers to the questions you have set. • Is this information of primary or secondary importance? • Re-read (several times if necessary) in order to gain a thorough understanding of the material.

RECORD	
RECORD (refer to pamphlet SS5 – How to improve your memory).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your own system to note the primary points – highlight, underline, write in the margins or on a separate pages/s, make summary notes/mind maps. • DO NOT copy directly from the text – put it in your own words.
RECITE	
RECITE after you've read a section: this can be done orally or in writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without looking at the book, recite the key points for this section or WRITE DOWN the key points that you can remember. • Self-testing after each small section will greatly improve your retention. In addition, test your recall of all of the sections together. • Use the method of recitation which best suits your particular learning style but remember, the more senses you use the more likely you are to remember what you read.
REVIEW	
REVIEW is an ongoing process: refine your mental organisation and begin building long-term memory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you recalled the key points correctly. If not, try again. Review work regularly, not just prior to the exams, to keep yourself familiar with the subject matter.

REFERENCES

Keeping your momentum going. Available online at:
http://www.open.ac.uk/learning/induction/undergr...keeping_your_momentum_going.ht

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http://www.mtroyal.ab.ca/learningskills/study_studying.shtml

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