

# STUDY SKILLS

## STRATEGIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

Effective time management is just one of many ways to keep from succumbing to stress overload. Here is a list of some other methods of stress management that you might want to experiment with to see what works best for a particular situation.

1. Associate with people whom you enjoy and who support you.
2. Learn and practice relaxation or meditation skills.
3. Engage in a vigorous physical exercise that is convenient and pleasurable. Sometimes it helps to get a friend to exercise with you.
4. Don't let one thing dominate you, such as schoolwork, relationships, jobs, sports, etc.
5. View life as challenges to seek, not obstacles to avoid.
6. Take responsibility for your life and your feelings, but never blame yourself.
7. Maintain a reasonable diet and sane sleep habits.
8. Use alcohol and other drugs wisely; be in control of it, not vice versa.
9. Avoid the use of sleeping pills, tranquilizers, and other drugs to control stress.
10. Protect your personal freedoms and space. Do what you want and feel, but respect the rights of others to tell others what to do, but if they intrude, let them know.
11. Find a time and place each day where you can have complete privacy. Take time off from others and pressures. Short time-outs during the day can help improve efficient functioning the rest of the day.
12. Don't drift along in troublesome and stressful situations or relationships. Take action to change, rather than trying to avoid the problem. Taking chances is the key to emotional well being.
13. Surround yourself with cues from positive thoughts and relaxation.
14. Review your obligations from time to time and make sure they are still good for you. If they are not, let go.
15. Open yourself to new experiences. Try new things, new foods, and new places.
16. When worries begin to build up, talk to someone.

# TEST TAKING SKILLS: EFFECTIVE STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR ESSAY TESTS

## 1. PREDICT QUESTIONS FROM YOUR NOTES.

### • **SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

If your notes list a group of people or things, the kind of essay question to predict is a short answer question. Short answer questions usually include one of the following words: list, name, define, or identify.

### • **TRACE QUESTIONS**

If your notes show the steps in a process of the listing and development of something, you should predict a trace question. Some key words or phrases usually found in trace questions are: "Describe the steps in..", "Outline history or ...", "Trace the events leading up to ...", "Trace the development of..."

### • **COMPARE AND CONTRAST QUESTIONS**

If your notes describe two or more things that have some features, which are similar, and others that are different, predict a "compare and contrast" question.

Words or phrases found in these questions might be: "Compare and contrast...", "Show the similarities and differences...", "Tell how two things are alike and different...", and "Weigh the advantages and disadvantages"

### • **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

If your notes describe the effects of one thing on another, or the significance of a particular event and the role of a specific individual or institution, predict a discussion question.

These questions often begin: "Discuss the significance of ...", "Discuss the role of...", "Discuss the importance of...", "Discuss the relationship between..."

## 2. PRACTICE WRITING ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS YOU PREDICT.

## 3. PLAN YOUR APPROACH TO ANSWERING THE ACTUAL TEST QUESTIONS.

Note points assigned to each question and allot your time accordingly.

If you have a question, go on to the next one and come back to the first one later, if possible.

Make brief, concise notes for each essay question.

## REMEMBERING WHAT YOU READ

### DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

"I just can't seem to remember well enough to pass the test."

**You can remember facts if you need to remember them and if you want to remember them.**

In other words, purpose and your motivation make it possible for you to recall facts. You may not be able to remember your teacher's name, but it is easy to remember the name of the girl you met at the dance last week - or remember certain information, your purpose for remembering stands out sharply. You can't seem to remember facts about geography of a country that doesn't interest you, but facts about the country you are all excited about visiting next summer are easy to remember.

Why? Because you have a *special reason* (purpose) for remembering about that country. You are motivated and that helps you to concentrate harder. Increased concentration, in turn, makes information easier to remember. Your purpose helps you to decide which information to remember, because it directs your attention to what you want to know.

Read the following paragraph only once. Assume that your purpose in reading is to remember as many of the advantages of physical fitness as you can:

Physical fitness increases the efficiency of your lungs and your heart. It helps you to control your weight and it is an aid to you in controlling emotional tension and anxiety. It also helps you to withstand physical fatigue for a longer time.

How many advantages do you remember? Do you think that you will remember information longer when you know what you are looking for? Do you think that you will remember the advantages of physical fitness longer if you are personally concerned about it?

Now that you see how *purpose and motivation* help you to remember, let us consider the processes that increase your ability to remember.

#### • ASSOCIATION

When you associate, you make things you want to remember relate to each other in a way. Once you know what your purpose in reading that is, once you know the information you looking for - you can try to remember this information by fitting it into some general category.

#### • VISUALIZATION

Visualization helps you to create a strong, vivid memory. Try to picture in your mind what you wish to remember. Try to remember a man's name for example, by seeing his face in your mind and associating his name with it. You can remember an important date in history (perhaps a battle or a period meeting or an inaugurating) by picturing the scene in your mind with the date in big letters in front of visualization.

#### • CONCENTRATION

What is concentration? People often say that they can't concentrate or that they will never be able to learn to concentrate better. Quite often it is our way of life that takes away our former ability in this area. Small children are well skilled in concentration. Have you ever seen a youngster so

absorbed playing a game or in just reading or in just daydreaming, or visualizing, that he doesn't hear when his parents call? He is punished for this and soon learns that he shouldn't concentrate so hard on what he is doing that he should gear some of his attention to listening for his parent's (or teacher's) call.

Concentration can be defined as focusing attention on one thing and to one thing only. When you do any exercise, which provides an opportunity for you to do this, it is basically an exercise in concentration. How can you learn to concentrate better? Visualizing will help. Visualizing forces attention to one thing only. If you want to see specific pictures as you read, it will help you to concentrate. Not looking back will also help you to concentrate. When you do not allow yourself to look back, you force yourself to concentrate in order to get the meaning the first time. Making sure of your purpose is a third way to force concentration. When you have a particular purpose, you will concentrate on what you read because, as you read, you ask yourself does this satisfy my purpose?

- **REPETITION**

When you have difficulty remembering textbook information, you should repeat the process for associating, visualizing, and concentration. The first step in remembering as list, for example, is to categorize it (association) and visualize it (thus forcing concentration). Do this once and then repeat the task frequently. The repetition will help burn the information into your memory.

Now, how do you apply *association, visualization, concentration and repetition* to remembering information in textbook chapters?

1. Try to understand the general outline of the chapter. Understanding how the chapter is put together provides a skeleton to which you can associate specific information.
2. Visualize as you read. Try to see pictures.
3. Concentrate as you read. Try to read information one time and then without looking back tell yourself what was said.
4. Repeat what is necessary to burn (details) into your memory

## **REMEMBERING WHAT YOU READ**

**PURPOSE:** have a specific purpose when you read. This will help you to:

**ASSOCIATE:** relate ideas to each other.

**VISUALIZE:** try to see pictures in your mind as you read.

**CONCENTRATE:** have a specific purpose, associating, and visualizing will help you to do this.

**REPEAT:** keep telling your important points and associate details to these points.

## EFFECTIVE LISTENING

### BASICS:

- Desire to become a better listener.
- Stop talking.
- Look at the speaker.
- Leave your emotions behind.
- Get rid of distractions.
- Get the main points.
- Don't argue mentally.
- Listen for what is not said.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Avoid hasty judgments.
- Recognize your own prejudice.

### THE FIVE "R's" OF NOTE TAKING:

Professor Walter Paulk of the Study Center of Cornell University describes five essential aspects of note taking characterized these as the five "R's" of note taking. Here they are:

- **RECORDING:** Get down the main ideas and facts.
- **REDUCING:** To reduce is to summarize. Pick out key terms and concepts. You can make from your notes - students sometimes call "cram sheets". These are sheets that list, usually in outline form, the bare bones of the course. You will use them in reviewing by using the key ideas as cues for reciting the details of what you have in your notes. On each page of notes you take, allow room to write down these cues.
- **RECITING:** Review lecture notes as soon after the lecture as possible. But you will also want to review notes before an exam and from time to time during the semester to keep them fresh in your mind. Do your own words. That way you will know that you understand.
- **REFLECTING:** Something that many students don't grasp is that ideas from college courses are meant to be thought about. It is easy to fall into the trap of reciting ideas by rote. One of the main purposes of a college education is to help you think. Then too, if you reflect about what you are learning, you won't be surprised when ideas turn up on examinations in an unexpected form.
- **REVIEWING:** One of the real secrets of successful studying is knowing when, how, and what to review however you do it, reviewing is essential. Even the accomplished performer-the pianist or the stage performer-knows that a review, no matter how well he or she may know the material, is essential to a professional performance.

## **22 TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

### **STUDY WHEN:**

- Plan two study hours for every hour you spend in a class.
- Study difficult (or boring) subjects first.
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.
- Be aware of your best time of day.
- Use waiting time.
- Use a regular study area.

### **STUDY WHERE:**

- Choose a place that minimizes visual and auditory distractions.
- Use the library or empty classrooms. Get out of a noisy dorm.
- Don't get too comfortable. Sit (or even stand) so that you can remain awake and attentive.
- Find a better place when productivity falls off.

### **YOU AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD:**

- Pay attention to your attention.
- Agree with roommates about study time.
- Avoid noise distractions.
- Notice how others misuse your time.
- Get off the phone.
- Learning to say no.
- Hang a "Do Not Disturb!" sign on your door.
- Ask: "What is one task I can accomplish toward my goal?"
- Ask: "Am I beating myself up? (Lighten up, don't berate self)."
- Ask: "How did I just waste time?"

- Ask: "Would I pay myself for what I'm doing right now?"
- Ask: "Can I do just one more thing?" (Stretch yourself)

## **LISTENING AND NOTE TAKING**

### **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:**

- Sit near the front of the classroom. This helps to create a good impression, eliminate distractions, etc.
- If you are bored during class (occasionally), review previous class notes. At least you'll be doing something, which is helpful and positive.
- Copy down everything on the board. A single word may be a clue to a test item or be useful to you later on.

### **PARTS OF A LECTURE:**

- **INTRODUCTION:** The opening remarks usually have no instructional purpose, yet may set the tone of the session.
- **THESIS:** This is the sentence or the statement that the instructor makes, which gives you the topic for most of the hour.
- **BODY:** This is the largest part of the lecture and demands your most active listening. There are usually six main points to be made with discussion and clarification of each.
- **SUMMARY:** There is a tendency to tune out this part of the lecture, but the good listener realizes that this is a means to check understanding of what the lecture was all about.

### **LISTENING CHECKLIST:**

- **Before listening:**
  - a. Prepare ahead of time-read assigned chapter, re-read notes, etc.
  - b. Think ahead; anticipate what is going to be said.
  - c. Avoid distractions - noisy students, open windows, etc.
  - d. Sit where you can hear and see clearly, preferably toward the front of the classroom.
- **While listening**
  - a. Listen for ways to relate ideas to previous lectures, to the textbook, and to previous experience.
  - b. Listen for what is being said, not how it's being said.
  - c. Do not try to write everything down.
  - d. Be ready to participate.
  - e. Look for clues from the professor that indicate what he/she considers important (vocal, postural visual clues)
- **After listening**
  - a. Review what was said as soon as class is over.
  - b. Seek answers to questions that arise.



**NOTE TAKING SUGGESTIONS:**

- As you listen, categorize the lecture according to its different parts, that is, introduction, body, and summary.
- Try to restate what is being said in your own words.
- It is better to take too many notes than too few.
- Use abbreviations as much as possible to increase your note taking speed.
- Try not to take notes in paragraph form. It is difficult to find important parts when you are studying for an exam. Take notes in lists or "one-liners" as much as possible.
- Mark your notes with checks (v), stars (\*), question marks (?), circling dates and names, etc., to bring attention to important facts.

# LECTURE NOTE TAKING

## NOTE TAKING: WHY TAKE NOTES IN CLASS?

Organized notes will help you identify the core of important ideas in the lectures.

A permanent record will help you to learn and remember later.

The lecture may contain information not available anywhere else. This will be your only chance to learn.

Lecture is where you learn what your instructor thinks is important, and he/she makes up the exams.

Class assignments are usually given in the lecture.

The underlying organization and purpose of the lecture will become clear through note taking.

## TAKING NOTES IN CLASS: A BRIEF SUMMARY

### • BEFORE THE LECTURE BEGINS

Make some preparation for the lecture so that you will be more likely to predict the organization of the lecture.

**CHECK THE COURSE OUTLINE** to see if the lecturer has listed the topic or key ideas in the upcoming lecture. If so, convert this information into questions to be answered in the lecture.

**BEFORE THE LECTURE:** Complete outside reading or reference assignments.

**REVIEW THE TEXT ASSIGNMENT** and any reading notes taken.

**REVIEW NOTES** from the previous lecture.

### • DURING THE LECTURE

a. Have your lecture paper and pencil or pen ready.

b. Write down the title of the lecture, the name of the course and the date.

c. Watch the speaker carefully.

d. Listen carefully to the introduction (if there is one). Hear the lecture. By knowing his outline, you will be better prepared to anticipate what notes you will need to take.

e. Be brief in your note taking. Summarize your notes in your own words, not the instructor's. Remember: your goal is to understand what he/she is saying, not to try to record exactly everything that is said.

f. Try to recognize main ideas by signal words that indicate something important is to follow. Example: "First, Second, Next, Then, Thus, Another important.." etc.

g. Jot down details or examples that support the main ideas. Give special attention to details not covered in the textbook.

h. If there is a summary at the end of the lecture, pay close attention to it. You can use it to check organization of your notes. If your notes seem disorganized, copy down the main points covered in the summary. It will help in revising your notes later.

i. At the end of the lecture, ask questions about points you did not understand.

j. Don't Be in a rush. Be attentive, listen and take notes right up to the very last point at which the instructor dismisses you. If you are gathering your personal belongings when you should be listening - you are bound to miss an important point - perhaps an announcement about the next exam!!!

## • AFTER THE LECTURE

- a. Revise your notes as quickly as possible, preferably immediately after the lecture since at that time you will still remember a good deal of the lecture.
- b. During the first review period after the lecture, coordinate reading and lecture notes.
- c. Review your lecture notes AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK. Also, review the lecture notes before the next lecture.

## TIPS ON TAKING NOTES

- Collect notes for each course in one place, in a separate notebook or section of a notebook.
- Write notes on one side of the page only.
- Use a loose-leaf notebook rather than a notebook with permanent binding. See the pattern of a lecture by spreading out the pages.
- Write name and date of class on the first sheet for each lecture.
- Use 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper for your notes. This size will allow you to indent and see the structure of the notes.
- Do not perform manual activities, which will detract from taking notes. Do not doodle or play with your pen. These activities break eye contact and concentration.
- Enter your notes legibly because it saves time. Make them clear.
- Use abbreviations.
- Box assignments and suggested books so you can identify them quickly.
- Mark ideas, which the lecture emphasizes with an arrow or some special symbol.
- Pay close attention to transitional words, phrases, and sentence, which signal the end of one idea and the beginning of another. Listen for words such as "therefore", "finally", and "furthermore". They usually are an important idea.
- Take down examples and sketches, which the lecturer presents. Indicate examples with "EX".
- Review your notes as soon as possible. Read through the notes and improve the organization if necessary.
- Listening and note taking are SKILLS. The more you practice these techniques, the more skilled you will become. REALLY TRY TO USE AND IMPROVE THESE SKILLS. Soon you will be able to record the fastest lecturer to your satisfaction.

## SIGNAL WORDS

- Your instructor is not going to send up a rocket when she states an important new idea or gives an example, he/she will use signals to telegraph what she is doing. Every good speaker does it, and you should expect to receive signals. For example, she may introduce an example with "for example" as done here.
- Other common signals are:
  - a. These are three reasons why
  - b. First..second..third
  - c. And most important
  - d. A major development
  - e. On the other hand
  - f. For example
  - g. Similarly
  - h. In contrast
  - i. Also
  - j. Further
  - k. As an example
  - l. For instance

- He/she may signal conclusion or summary with:

- a. Therefore
- b. In conclusion
- c. As a result
- d. Finally
- e. In summary
- f. From this we see

- He/she may signal very loud with:

- a. Now this is important
- b. Remember that
- c. The important idea is that
- d. The basic concept

**SIGNALS ARE USUALLY IGNORED BY THOSE OF US WHO DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LISTEN EFFECTIVELY. EXPECT SIGNALS AND BE ALERT WHEN YOU RECEIVE THEM!!!!!!!!!!!!**