

# **Effective Study Skills Are About More Than Understanding**

Effective study skills must be practiced in order for you to improve. It is not enough to simply "think about" studying; you have to actually do it, and in the process use information from what you do to get better. This is the central idea of this page. All that follows depends on this single concept. There is a saying that goes like this: "Practice doesn't make perfect; perfect practice makes perfect." If you want to be an achiever, take this saying to heart.

## **The Process of Studying**

### **How To Use Your Time**

Time is the most valuable resource a student has. It is also one of the most wasted resources. The schedule you develop should guide you in how to allocate the available time in the most productive manner. Sticking to your schedule can be tough. Don't dribble away valuable time. Avoiding study is the easiest thing in the world. It's up to you to follow the schedule you prepared. A good deal of your success in high school or college depends on this simple truth.

### **Where To Study**

You can study anywhere. Obviously, some places are better than others. Libraries, study lounges or private rooms are best. Above all, the place you choose to study should not be distracting. Distractions can build up, and the first thing you know, you're out of time and out of luck. Make choosing a good physical environment a part of your study habits.

## **Strategies**

### **Thinking Skills**

Everybody has thinking skills, but few use them effectively. Effective thinking skills cannot be studied, but must be built up over a period of time. Good thinkers see possibilities where others see only dead-ends. If you're not a good thinker, start now by developing habits that make you ask yourself questions as you read. Talk to other students who you feel are good thinkers. Ask them what it is they do when they think critically or creatively. Oftentimes, you can pick up valuable insights to help you become a better thinker.

### **The SQ3R Method**

The SQ3R method has been a proven way to sharpen study skills. SQ3R stands for *Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review*. Take a moment now and write SQ3R down. It is a good slogan to commit to memory to carry out an effective study strategy.

**Survey** - get the best overall picture of what you're going to study BEFORE you study it in any detail. It's like looking at a road map before going on a trip. If you don't know the territory, studying a map is the best way to begin.

**Question** - ask questions for learning. The important things to learn are usually answers to questions. Questions should lead to emphasis on the what, why, how, when, who and where of study content. Ask yourself questions as you read or study. As you answer them, you will help to make sense of the material and remember it more easily because the process will make an impression on you. Those things that make impressions are more meaningful, and therefore more easily remembered. Don't be afraid to write your questions in the margins of textbooks, on lecture notes, or wherever it makes sense.

**Read** - Reading is NOT running your eyes over a textbook. When you read, read actively. Read to answer questions you have asked yourself or questions the instructor or author has asked. Always be alert to bold or italicized print. The authors intend that this material receive special emphasis. Also, when you read, be sure to read everything, including tables, graphs and illustrations. Oftentimes tables, graphs and illustrations can convey an idea more powerfully than written text.

**Recite** - When you recite, you stop reading periodically to recall what you have read. Try to recall main headings, important ideas of concepts presented in bold or italicized type, and what graphs, charts or illustrations indicate. Try to develop an overall concept of what you have read in your own words and thoughts. Try to connect things you have just read to things you already know. When you do this periodically, the chances are you will remember much more and be able to recall material for papers, essays and objective tests.

**Review** - A review is a survey of what you have covered. It is a review of what you are supposed to accomplish, not what you are going to do. Rereading is an important part of the review process. Reread with the idea that you are measuring what you have gained from the process. During review, it's a good time to go over notes you have taken to help clarify points you may have missed or don't understand. The best time to review is when you have just finished studying something. Don't wait until just before an examination to begin the review process. Before an examination, do a final review. If you manage your time, the final review can be thought of as a "fine-tuning" of your knowledge of the material. Thousands of high school and college students have followed the SQ3R steps to achieve higher grades with less stress.

## **Reading**

A primary means by which you acquire information is through reading. In college you're expected to do much more reading than in high school. Don't assume just because you've "read" the assignments that is the end of it. You must learn to read with a purpose. In studying, you may read the same assignment three or four times, each time with a different purpose. You must know before you begin reading what your purpose is, and read accordingly.

## **Getting The Main Idea**

Getting the main idea in reading is central to effective studying. You must learn what the author's central idea is, and understand it in your own way. Every paragraph contains a main idea. Main ideas are perfect for outlining textbooks. Make it a habit to find the main idea in each paragraph you read.

## **Extracting Important Details**

Extracting important details means that you locate in your reading the basis for main ideas. There is usually one important detail associated with every main idea. The more important details you can identify, the easier it will be to review for examinations because you have made a link between an idea and information that supports it. The more links you can make between details and ideas, as well as ideas themselves, the more powerful will be the efforts of your study.

\*Study Skills – information derived from <http://www.adprima.com/studyout.htm>  
updated from Notre Dame University of Maryland website