



MODULE THREE

Studying

Module Outline

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Classroom. Photograph. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/105_1401480/1/105_1401480/cite

Students who learn how to study correctly in high school set themselves up for success in college. Many students come into high school from elementary schools where they never had to do homework or really study for tests and quizzes. There are some tips you can have ready to supply to students who are struggling with studying.

Studying Tips

1. Find the right study place to set the “study mood.”

Anyone will emphasize that certain places are better than others for students when they study; this will vary for each student, but adults can help make suggestions on good study places. Some students focus better in a study room, while others may do best in a library or others in a classroom with a teacher present.

2. Know where to start studying.

A lot of study time is wasted when students are not prepared for their study time. One of the best ways to maximize time is to help students know exactly what needs to be covered during a specific study time. They should be encouraged to make a list to do and note all deadlines, doing most difficult assignments first.

3. Study consistently at the same time each day.

Getting into a habit is one of the easiest ways to get students’ brains ready to focus when it is time to study. Good study habits will have an impact on the amount of time it takes for the student to settle into studying, as it will form a routine. This overall study concept promotes effective use of time.



4. Keep assignments in perspective.

Students should be encouraged to spend more time on assignments that are worth more. Spending a whole study period on an assignment worth five points and minimal weight to the overall grade is time spent poorly. Encourage students to rank their assignments in order of importance. This helps students use their time efficiently.

5. Get involved with the material.

Students who are engaged in their material are those who interact with it by taking notes, highlighting, underlining, drawing diagrams, discussing topics with classmates, and jotting down questions they have. This process helps cement information into the brain and convert material from short to long term memory, which will help them much more in the long run.

6. Organize the information studied.

Students can organize information by drawing pictures, making charts on the material they are studying, reading information aloud, or making outlines. Part of this process is closely related to the prior study tip: students are able to interact with the information being covered and are able to connect with it on a deeper level. However, it also is helpful to sort and organize information, which makes it easier to store in the brain. This tip is particularly effective for visual learners.



Portrait of teenager with books. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2882814/1/154_2882814/cite

7. Use free time to maximize study time.

Free periods, bus rides, and other short time periods between classes or other commitments can be used prepare for class or to do quick reviews before classes.

8. Study with a friend.

Students can quiz each other, compare notes, predict possible test questions, and even consider forming a study group; this will also help to promote and facilitate an academic atmosphere.

9. Communicate!

There are many resources for students to get help. If students have questions, they should feel comfortable and encouraged to ask a teacher if they have questions or concerns about a class or material. They could also talk with a family member or another staff member to get the help they need to be successful.

10. Celebrate achievements!

Whether passing a test or completing a homework assignment, students should learn how to reward themselves for achieving a goal or doing something well. This goes along with the idea of positive reinforcement, which holds that positive rewards can help cement and encourage more good behavior/achievements. Some sample ideas for rewards would be earning a trip to town, a new piece of clothing, a favorite dessert, or even an extra half hour of free time to relax.

*More Resources on Studying Tips:*

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/inside-the-classroom/take-control-of-homework>



Time pocket watch with roman numerals. Photo. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/167_4037761/1/167_4037761/cite

Student Activity: Time Management Applied

This activity allows students to have a visual representation of time and how it is spent.

1. Working separately, ask students “How do you use the time in your day?” They should jot down a list of activities and commitments that take up time in their day like sleep time, study time, free periods, breaks, meals, sports, etc.
2. Give students a blank daily schedule (here is a basic free schedule:
<http://www.studenthandouts.com/01-Web-Pages/Lot-01/Weekly-Hourly-Planner.html>).
3. Have students write in the regular commitments and activities onto their blank schedule.
4. Help students identify what free/empty time they have in their schedules.
5. Have students work in small groups of 2-3 students if possible (alternatively, this can be done solo) to make dedicated study time for daily homework and also for weekly reviews and other studying requirements they may have.
6. Finally, students should look at their schedule and review it to see how feasible it is for them to follow. If it is not, they should brainstorm ways to make their schedule work for them in a better way. If it does work, they should brainstorm ways to remind them to keep and follow their schedule.

Having students discover, create, and manage their own schedule will help them to understand how important and valuable time is as a commodity. This activity will also help prepare them for greater scheduling issues they will face further in life like college and career schedules.



Priorities & Time Management

Prioritizing was briefly mentioned in the study tips section. Students should learn to start with their most difficult assignments in order to use their fresh energy most efficiently. Sometimes, learning to at least take a first step in order to conquer part of an assignment can help set a momentum for students to start getting something done. Students need to understand that they may need to postpone unnecessary activities (i.e. parties, going out with friends, or weekend trips) until their work is done (or priorities are accomplished). Students also need to learn to realize when they are struggling in a particular area, and they also need to be able to identify resources to help them like tutors, staff, expert friends, specialists, study groups, and other sources of help.

There are also important tips that can help students improve their time management skills. Students should review their schedules in order to identify free time that can be used for study sessions, whether short for quick reviews or long time blocks for major content review and in-depth studying. Adults should help students learn the skills necessary to create to do lists and prioritize assignments and study needs. Once students have learned these management skills, they will be more prepared to handle studies and work in the future. Moving from concept to practice, students can help manage their time by setting up a daily/weekly planner in order to manage assignments, and long-term planning charts (monthly, etc.) can help them plan ahead on a larger scale for upcoming tests, major assignments, work deadlines, and other major time commitments. Another skill in time management is the student knowing how to use free time wisely, like using small bits of free time to accomplish more work. By reviewing notes and readings just before class (which is a good time to find any questions that need to be asked to the teacher), and by reviewing lecture notes just after class (the first 24 hours are critical to memory retention), students can maximize their time.



Office with white board. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2884750/1/154_2884750/cite

More Resources on Time Management:

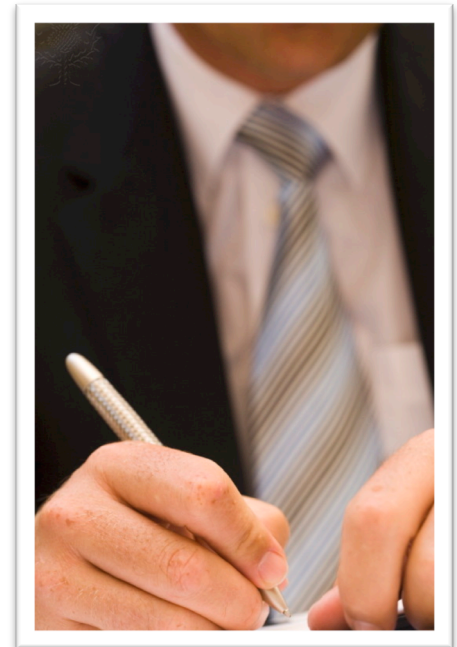
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/219553> (also includes a 3 minute video)

<http://www.studygs.net/timman.htm>



Note Taking

Taking notes is important to learning content covered in classes. Notes involve so much more than the process of just jotting down ideas; there is a science to the art of note taking and learning some of the basics of note taking can make a huge difference in students' success. First, in the art of note-taking, it is important to be prepared for the process. It is always best to suggest that students have a dedicated note taking space (3 ring binder divided by subject area, notebooks for each subject area, etc.) and that they come to class with the appropriate books and tools like pencils, pens, and highlighters. It is equally important for them to be prepared as far as material is concerned; if there is a homework assignment or reading chapter assigned, they should make sure to read/complete the assignments before class so that they are prepared for whatever content is covered that day in class. If they have questions about content or if the teacher points out that a topic is important or will be on a test or quiz, they can indicate in their notes that they need to focus more on that topic.



Business man signing a contract. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/151_2507444/1/151_2507444/cite

Listening in class is an important part of taking good notes, especially since those who listen are those who hear when important material is covered in class. Students should be encouraged to always go into class with a positive attitude about what they will learn; if the topic is boring, they still need focus on paying attention even when they do not feel like it. Each student has their own note-taking system that works for them as an individual. Students may need to spend some time experimenting with different styles if they do not know what will work best for them. Some ideas include:

- Organizing material with one lecture per page with a specific date/lecture number recorded at the top of the page for easier sorting,
- Writing on one side of the paper only to allow for easier studying during exams,
- Leaving blank spaces on each page to allow for adding comments or additional notes later,
- Developing abbreviations or symbols that will allow them to take notes more quickly in class, and
- Writing down words they do not know and ideas they do not understand so that they can ask questions later or look them up.

Students also need to remember to pay attention to content not just words; the big picture will carry them through a subject and help the little details to make better sense. Some things are usually more important to copy down in notes, especially content like details, facts, or explanations, definitions, lists of things, material written on a board or drawings/charts, and information that the teacher specifically repeats or draws attention to. A big part of successful note taking is to always review and edit notes; the first 24



hours is the critical time period in which to review content. Students can help convert short to long-term memory by editing or re-writing sections of their notes that are unclear, confusing, or hard to read; using a different color pen can ensure that their edits are easily distinguishable from the original notes. Students can further interact with the content by noting or highlighting anything they have questions on or need to discuss with the teacher; this will remind them to take action on the notes. Comparing notes with the reading assignment and filling in details that may have been missed will also help students make sure that they remember everything important in the lecture. Some students have greater success when they re-write or type their notes.

There are of course different methods of note-taking: Cornell, outlining, mapping, charting, and sentence. The Cornell method involves a specific page formatting process that gives specific areas for a thorough note-taking process (see resources with a pre-formatted sheet) including general information, cues, and further discussion/thought/question areas. Outlining methods involve outlining the general content of a lecture by using simple dashes or indentations. Mapping helps with comprehension of topics by providing a graphic representation of a lecture; it relates each fact or idea to all of the other facts and ideas in a lecture. Charting is best used for sorting lecture content into columns with specific labels as if a table were being created. The sentence method involves writing each new thought, fact, or topic on a separate line and numbering each new line. Each note-taking method is good for different aspects of memory retention and for different subjects or types of lectures. Students may need to experiment with different types of note taking to discover what works best for them and their classes.

More Resources on Note-Taking:

<http://sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/notetakingsystems.html>

Test Anxiety

Even the best of students experiences moments of anxiety over tests or quizzes that can seriously affect a grade or change scholarships or entry into college. However, some students genuinely struggle with test anxiety, which impacts their scores. Here are some general tips you can share with students to help them reduce test anxiety:

- Before a test date arrives, prepare to approach the exam with confidence.



Anxiety. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/132_1268835/1/132_1268835/cite



Confidence helps diminish levels of anxiety. This is usually difficult to do, but adults can help students re-visit how they think about tests.

- Picture success.

Students should practice seeing their success. Imagining success can help motivate students to study and prepare, which can help make success a reality.

- Practice positive self-talk.

Positive self-talk is a huge way in which students can change their test anxiety to test excitement. Being negative always drags people down and changes the way the mind works; by being positive, students engage their minds and get more motivated to be successful.

Recent studies have shown that students perform better when they tell themselves that they are excited about the upcoming test rather than nervous or anxious. That may sound strange to students who “hate” tests and could not picture themselves as excited to take a test, but the body cannot distinguish between anxiety and excitement in some cases, like tests, where the situation is not clearly on the same level as, say, going to Disney World or eating ice cream. Practicing to be excited about a test may strike some students as odd, but studies are showing that excitement can override anxiety. Aside from mentally preparing, students should prepare themselves by actually studying and learning the material; nothing stops bad anxiety like knowing material and feeling prepared in advance - it leads to feeling successful even before testing arrives. Students should also be as comfortable as possible for exams. If needed, they can ask for extra testing time or a different testing location if other classmates or noises in a room easily distract them. As with trying to remain positive, they should try to avoid people who are negative about upcoming tests and also to avoid those who did not study; focusing on remaining positive about upcoming tests helps students approach the stress of testing in a healthy mental state. Students should also be encouraged to follow a regular program of exercise to help sharpen focusing abilities; they should always get enough sleep so that their brains can function at optimal performance. Taking exams on an empty stomach also tends to increase anxiety and stress; eating fruits and vegetables can help lower stress as well.

During tests, there are several ways students can help cope with anxiety. First, prayer before a test can help calm and focus the mind and prepare students for testing. Students should also read all directions carefully; many mistakes are simply from students reading instructions incorrectly and missing points that they normally would not miss. Before jumping in to the questions, students should also plan out the time they have to take the test; by focusing on large point-value questions first, students can make sure they have enough time to attempt all of the questions so that they do not run out of time. If the mind draws a blank on a question, students should simply skip it and come back to it later rather than becoming frustrated and negative about their own abilities. Also, students should be reminded not to panic when other students finish and leave early; there are no bonus points for finishing early so they should take their time. Once finishing a test, students need to celebrate that they made it through the test successfully in order to add a positive experience to their lives in regards to testing.



More Resources on Test Anxiety:

<http://www.studygs.net/tstprp8.htm>

<http://www.universityherald.com/articles/6457/20131226/viewing-anxiety-as-excitement-can-improve-performance.htm>

How to Get Motivated

Sometimes students just need an adult to get them pushed into gear. As an adult who cares, you can make an impact by using some general ways to get students motivated. The first step to motivating a student is to communicate with them and set some expectations; people naturally tend to do better when there are clearly defined expectations laid out to them. The second step is crucial: people who set goals are able to stay more motivated to meet those goals; by sitting down with a struggling student and helping them brainstorm specific goals that they can accomplish, you are allowing them to take on the responsibility of setting and keeping their own goals. Students tend to focus on what adults say is important; by surrounding students with an environment that says motivation is important, students will start to mimic what it takes to stay motivated and goal-oriented. If their grades begin to slip, show them that grades are important by communicating with them about their current grades and helping them set goals for themselves and then checking in with them along the way. When new goal-setters create goals, the likelihood of failure seems huge; yet when someone takes the time to work with and encourage those same people, goals are much easier to achieve. Next, another way to help keep students motivated is to learn what their learning style (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) is and what typically motivates them; by connecting the two together, the student will hopefully be more engaged in material being covered. Adults can also do a lot by simply learning to offer words or other actions of encouragement to students; remember, encouragement and praise are two different things. Encouragement facilitates further learning and self-improvement while praise focuses students on someone else's opinion of their work. Learning can also be reinforced by making it applicable to the student's own life; this might mean a trip to a museum or a politically charged discussion centered on an inflammatory news article. Either way, students who can relate to content are always more engaged and motivated to keep trying even when a task gets difficult. Finally, students need to be taught that adults are there for them and that problems do not define them. This is a hard concept to learn in high school; some students see a math problem they do not understand and would rather give up than try. However, it is important that they learn in the safe environment of the high school that mistakes happen to everyone and that they should feel confident to try so that they can learn how to succeed.



High school students sitting in classroom. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2886583/1/154_2886583/cite



However, adults are not the only ones who can motivate students. Students need to learn how to motivate themselves during high school in order to equip themselves with the tools they need to stay motivated later in life doing whatever college or career throws at them. In general, making lists and at least accomplishing one small task are all it takes to get the ball of motivation rolling (even five minutes of studying is better than nothing – often five minutes turns into twenty once the mind is moving). If that is not enough, students can “divide and conquer” on tasks especially if a particular task does not have to be completed by the end of that day; splitting one assignment into smaller portions can make it easier to work through tasks. Negativity has no place in motivation; students should be very careful to stay positive in all they do as negative thoughts have a way of dragging people down and discouraging them, which effectively kills motivation. As has been repeated frequently, students who are stuck should ask a friend or teacher for help, as this can get motivation started again; there is nothing like understanding an assignment to get the mind swirling again. Sometimes talking out loud about a concept or assignment can help the mind process and organize information; some people also find that studying while walking laps helps motivate them to keep studying and also helps them to remember what they study better. Also, practicing basic healthy living principals can help keep the mind sharp and focused so that motivation can continue. Finally, students need to get into the habit of rewarding themselves when they are successful; earning rewards helps train the mind that motivation and success bring about good.

What to do when struggling

When students are struggling, they may not know what to do next to get the help they need. It is important to make sure that students know how to reach out for help when they need it. Here are some general ways to reach out for help that you can post for students or review with them near the beginning of the school year or semester. They should talk to the teacher in whose class they are struggling; the teacher is always the most qualified person to give them the help they need. They can also get tutoring, either from their teacher, a classmate, a parent or other adult, or another teacher. If the student has made poor choices in the past but needs ideas on how to start pulling their grades up, they could consider asking the teacher if there are any extra credit assignments or other projects they can complete that can help raise their grade. Any student should have the option to ask for study halls; if they have free periods, those could be spent in a location under the supervision of any staff member. They would just need a supervised and structured space in which to work. If you do have a guidance counselor on staff, they can meet with the student one-on-one and come up with a plan to get the student on the track to success. Of course, any caring adult can also take the time to do this with a student. Success for those who struggle is a steep hill to climb, but with the right support network, students can succeed.



Man's hand raised in classroom. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2900635/1/154_2900635/cite