

Study skills and techniques

Source: Learner Career Guide Grades 9-12 (www.etdpseta.org.za)

Choosing a career goes hand in hand with developing the skills to study and choosing the techniques which work for you. Choosing a career involves choosing the correct high school subject combinations. This is because the subject combination you choose in Grade 10 affects all your career plans.

It is these subjects in your chosen subject combinations that you need to further develop the study skills and techniques for in order to obtain the required grades (passing requirements) for your career subjects. There is no one best way of acquiring the study skills and techniques. There are different ways and it depends on which one suits YOU the best based on your reading and study habits.

Two examples of such study skills and techniques are presented here:

Source: http://educationportal.com/articles/High_School_Study_Tips_Three_Steps_to_Better_Grades.html

1 THREE STEPS TO BETTER GRADES!

Getting good grades in high school isn't just important for getting into college - what you learn now will form the foundation for the rest of your life, including your academic and professional careers. Read on for three key tips to help you study better and improve your grades.

1.1 STEP 1: GET INTO THE RIGHT MIND-SET

How you approach your studies has everything to do with how well you perform: If you're motivated and engaged you'll do far better than if you're simply going through the motions. So how do you find the 'right' mind-set?

Set realistic goals

Trying to overachieve can set you up for frustration and failure, but underachieving won't help you improve your grades. Identify goals that will be challenging but attainable, then stick to them. A few ideas for academic goals include finishing every reading assignment before class, pursuing extra credit assignments or keeping your grade point average above a certain level.

1.1.1 Get motivated

You have to want to do your best in order to succeed in school. This may be easy for the classes you love, but all of us have subjects that we find challenging or just plain boring.

Find ways to motivate yourself, whether it's an immediate reward like a social study break or a long term reward like buying that special something you've been eyeing. You can also enlist your parents to offer you rewards for achieving your academic goals.

1.1.2 Stay committed

Even the best of students get discouraged in school sometimes. Don't let a few difficult assignments or failed exams get you down - just identify what you still need to learn and forge on. Keeping those rewards in mind will help!

1.2 STEP 2: STAY ORGANISED

The secret to every straight-A student's success is organisation, but this doesn't come naturally to most people. Below are a few ways in which you can organise your academic life.

1.2.1 Manage your time

Get a physical or digital calendar (your computer probably comes with one) and use it to track your class schedule and important deadlines and organise your time. Make sure to allot time for studying and homework each day, which will help you complete all your assignments and still have time for chores, extra-curricular activities and socialising.

1.2.2 Reduce clutter

Keeping your study space neat will help you concentrate and make it easier to find important textbooks and notes. This also applies to your notebooks and binders: organise your notes by class and date in a system that you find intuitive and efficient.

1.3 STEP 3: DEVELOP GOOD STUDY HABITS

Not only will the study habits you develop now improve your high school grades, they will carry you into college and beyond. Follow these basic tips and watch your work improve:

- ☐ Go to class regularly and on time.
- ☐ Review your readings and notes from the previous class before each session.
- ☐ Complete your assignments with enough time to review them before you turn them in.
- ☐ Tackle large projects like research papers in manageable increments.

2 LEARNING TO STUDY

So if education is so important, why isn't it a subject in school?

In our first school we learned things without having to think about it too much – in a way you were being prepared for work in a senior school. To cut a long story short you were gaining skills that would be useful. In later grades the process continued but became more difficult – you had to start thinking for yourselves more and more.

When it comes to studying in high school, you will be expected to think for yourself almost all the time – your teachers will help you all the way but YOU will have to take control of your own learning. Strangely enough, very few schools teach you HOW to learn!

This guide has been designed to do just that. It should help you work out sensible solutions to any problems you may come across as you work towards the qualifications you will need. Remember, everyone is different – no one approach will prove successful for everyone. Each unit of this guide has been tried and tested – use the information to find out what is best for YOU.

Working out priorities

Source: <http://academictips.org/studyskills/working-out-priorities/>

Priorities can be divided up into:

- ☐ URGENT–must be done now.
- ☐ IMPORTANT–must be done soon.
- ☐ UNIMPORTANT–must be done eventually.

There is, of course, a lot of overlap so you might also list the things you have to do only in order of importance –the top one or two becoming urgent. Keep a diary and a pencil handy to record things as they crop up. You could also use a card index, or even a computerised database, whatever you feel you can work with.

If you find that more than two items are urgent, then you are a victim of bad planning – do it better next time!!

MOST OF ALL BE FLEXIBLE – LEARN TO FIT THINGS IN and BE EQUIPPED–DIARY, TIMETABLES, CARD INDEX, ETC.

Another way of setting priorities is to use the 4D system:

- ☐ DUMP anything that does not need to be done at all.
- ☐ DELAY what you can't dump.
- ☐ DESIGNATE a time for what you can't delay...and then.
- ☐ DO IT!

Improving your learning ability

"You cannot teach a man or woman anything; you can only help them to find it within themselves."
Galileo

"Just as eating again ones will is injurious to the health, so study without a liking for it spoils the memory, and it retains nothing it takes in." Leonardo Da Vinci

The only way to make study work for you is to avoid **BOREDOM** – the worst enemy of learning. From a very early age we vary what we do to stop ourselves getting bored. We look for new tasks and seek new ways to do things. Sometimes even this fails and we fall into the boredom trap. We cannot be bothered to find ways to cure our boredom because we are too bored. Over time we develop a concentration-span – the time between starting a task to the time we find our minds wandering. This is because your brain deals with information in a very special way.

The best way to learn is to limit study periods to the length of our concentration-span. This gives the brain the best chance to store what we are studying in long-term memory.

2.1 DETERMINING YOUR CONCENTRATION-SPAN

- ☐ Go to your study area and get settled.
- ☐ Read a large section of the textbook belonging to your least favourite subject, preferably from part of the book which has not been covered before. Note the time you start.
- ☐ Make an effort to LEARN and RECALL the information you read.
- ☐ Note the time at which you find your mind beginning to wander, no matter how little. This will be your minimum concentration-span.
- ☐ Repeat the task with your favourite subject. This will be your maximum concentration-span.

You will probably find that your concentration span varies between ten and twenty minutes depending on the subject, how you feel, the amount of rest you have taken, and your eating habits. Now that you know what your own brain can cope with you can sort out your reading and revision to suit this.

NEVER study beyond your concentration-span. You may still be reading but your brain will be losing most of the information it takes in. This makes it pointless to go on.

2.1.1 Maximising Recall

After studying for the time you found was best, you must then take a rest for about five minutes. Do something else not connected with your work. Listen to music, have a snack, refresh yourself – but don't stop thinking about what you were reading. This may be an unusual thing to do in the middle of a study session, but your brain needs that time to sort out the information in your short-term memory. At the end of the rest period, the information you were reading will be much clearer than it was to begin with. Short-term memory lasts between 12 to 48 hours. If you stopped at this point you would be able to recall only about 1020% of the information you read. To get the information into long-term memory you must **REVIEW**.

2.2 REVIEWING YOUR CHOSEN STUDY TOPIC

After your five-minute rest, read the same information again. Concentrate only on those points that are most important. Then take another five-minute break and re-read once more, fitting all the bits of information together. Both of these reviews would be made even better by note-taking in whatever way you find easy and helpful. Make sure that the notes you make are well organised!

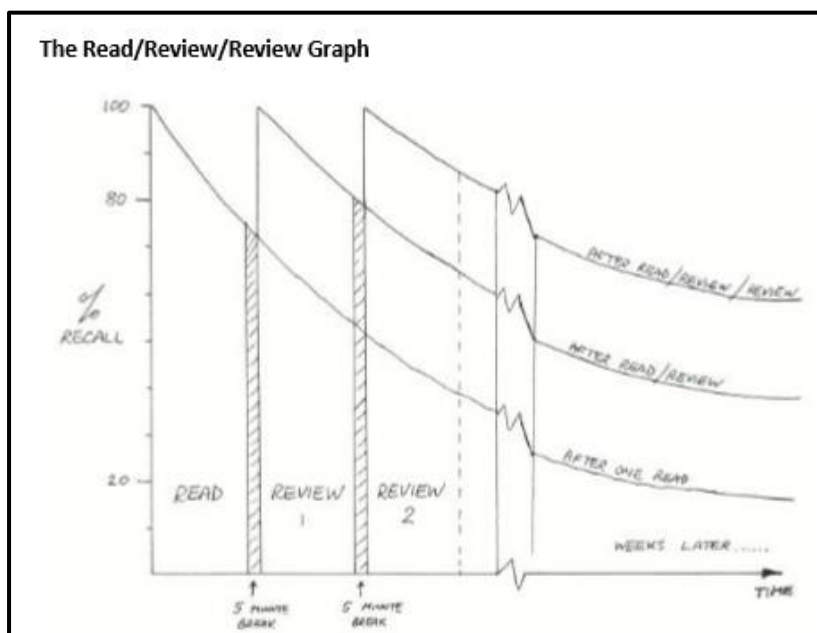
ONE WEEK and **TWO WEEKS** later review the topic again using your notes. By now you should have found that there has been a huge improvement in your ability to remember, understand and use that information. Finally, you must **REVISE**. This is simply a way of drawing loose ends together with the same study method but this time using your notes only.

2.3 IMPROVING YOUR MEMORY

Study is like building a jigsaw puzzle:

- ❑ Lay out the pieces
- ❑ Sort out the edges
- ❑ Build inwards towards the most difficult parts
- ❑ Put in the final pieces
- ❑ Stand back and appreciate!

The Read/Review/Review Graph



In learning, the pieces of knowledge you have can be swapped between several jigsaws in your mind—but there is no pattern which you can follow. By making patterns yourself all the pieces fall into place. Soon, that wonderful feeling of excitement hits you when you look down and see how the jigsaw fits together. If you make patterns within your work then several pieces can be missing from the middle, but by looking at their neighbours a guess can be made as to what the missing pieces should be. In other words – you do not have to know everything!

2.4 BETTER READING (THE “Q-S-R” TECHNIQUE)

- ☐ Q: QUICKLY read the page or chapter you wish to study.
- ☐ S: SCAN each page at a time noting key words or sections as you read through fairly quickly.
- ☐ R: READ the page or chapter carefully and thoughtfully, making more notes as you go if you like. Concentrate on the key words or sections you highlighted, using them as trigger points for recall.

2.5 NOTE TAKING

The purpose of notes is not to copy out great chunks of information from books. They should only act as a trigger to help you remember what you have read. Keywords are more easily remembered than long sentences!

Notes should be short, to the point, well-organised and easily read. The exact style is up to you and you only. One tried and tested method is Serial Note Taking.

Serial Notetaking Method

This is a simple note-making style and is best for making notes during lessons. Don’t write everything you hear or read but select out the most important points. Concentrate only on those pointers that will help you recall the lesson content. Improve upon them later when time allows. Use lots of headings, subheadings, numbered points, “bullets”, etc.

For example:

1. Heading
 - a. Sub-Heading1
 - i. Note1.1
 - ii. Note1.2
 1. Sub-note1
 2. Sub-note2