

A Student's Survival Guide




How we Learn?

Do you have an individual learning preferences or styles that you like to use when you study? There are a number of different theories that suggest that we each tend to adopt a particular approach or style when we study.

It is now widely accepted that your ability to learn can be improved by

- analysing how you do things
- being willing to try new things
- recognising what works best for you.

The best way to learn in class is the same way you learned to walk, talk and eat, by using all your senses, linking what you learn with what you already know and last of all practice:

LOOK		words pictures diagrams
LISTEN		tape record yourself talk to yourself talk to friends
TOUCH		writing finger tracing highlighting key words drawing doing (past papers)
LINK		new information to old learning
REPEAT		practice makes perfect

Of course it is not always that easy. During this booklet we will look at some of the problems and suggest some



possible ideas to help.

A Good Place to Study.

You need a good study place to be prepared to study. You should be able to answer YES to all of the following questions:

1. Is my Study Place available to me whenever I need it?

2. Is my Study Place free from interruptions?

3. Is my Study Place free from distractions?

4. Does my Study Place contain all the study materials I need?



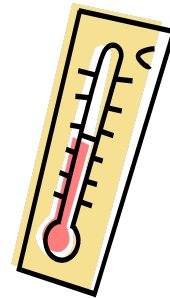
5. Does my Study Space contain a large enough desk or table?

6. Does my Study Place have enough storage space?

7. Does my Study Place have a comfortable chair?

8. Does my Study Place have enough light?

9. Does my Study Place have a comfortable temperature?



Having a good Study Place is important for good studying.



Procrastination

Procrastination is putting off or avoiding doing something that must be done. Procrastination can result in guilty feelings about not doing a task when it should be done. It can also cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done. Excessive procrastination can cause poor performance if the task is completed without sufficient time to do it well.

There are many reasons why students procrastinate. Here are the most common reasons:

- Perfectionism.
- Fear of Failure.
- Confusion.
- Difficulty of task.
- Relevance of task.
- Poor Motivation.
- Difficulty Concentrating.
- Task Unpleasantness.
- Difficulty Prioritising.

How Do I Know if I Procrastinate?

You procrastinate if you agree with five or more of the following statements:

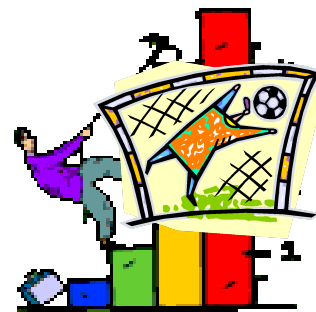


- I often put off starting a task I find difficult
- I often give up on a task as soon as I start to find it difficult.
- I often have difficulty getting started on a task.
- I often try to do so many tasks at once that I cannot do any of them.
- I often put off a task in which I have little or no interest.
- I often try to come up with reasons to do something else.
- I often ignore a task when I am not certain about how to start it or complete it.
- I often start a task but stop before completing it.
- I often find myself thinking that if I ignore a task, it will go away.
- I often cannot decide which of a number of tasks I should complete first.
- I often find my mind wandering to things other than the task on which I am trying to work.



What Can I Do About Excessive Procrastination?

- Motivate yourself to work on a task with thoughts such as "There is no time like the present," or "Nobody's perfect."
- Prioritize the tasks you have to do.
- Commit yourself to completing a task once started.
- Reward yourself whenever you complete a task.
- Break large tasks into small manageable parts.
- Work on tasks as part of a study group.
- Get help from teachers and friends when you find a task difficult.
- Make a plan of the tasks you have to do and stick to it.
- Eliminate distractions that interfere with working on tasks.
- Take breaks when working on a task so that you do not wear down.
- Work on difficult and/or unpleasant tasks first.
- Work on a task you find easier after you complete a difficult task.
- Find a good place to work on tasks.
- Above all, think positively and get going!



Setting Goals

A goal is something you want to achieve. A short-term goal is something you want to achieve soon. Examples of short-term goals are finishing your homework and doing well on tomorrow's test. A long-term goal is something you want to achieve at some later date. Examples of long-term goals are passing your Standard Grades.

THE THREE W'S OF GOALS

Each goal you set should state **WHAT** you will do and **WHEN** you will do it. Implied in each goal you set is your **WILL** (determination) to do it.

Your goals should be:

1. Within your skills and abilities.



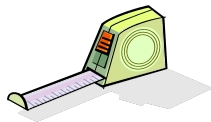
2. Realistic.

3.



Flexible.

4. Measurable.



5. Within your control.



Many times your parents, teachers will set goals with you. Be accepting when they do. These are people who know what is important for you and are very concerned with your success. They can also help you accomplish the goals they set.



Making Notes.

There are 3 situations in which you have to take notes:

(1) From a teacher. (2) From a book. (3) From a video.

Here are some handy hints and tips:

- (1) Write key words.
- (2) Miss out small words.
- (3) Use abbreviations
- (4) Borrow notes from a friend or a teacher.
- (5) Use text talk.
- (6) Use different layout: mindmaps, revision cards, flow charts.
- (7) Use colour, drawings pr diagrams.
- (8) Keep on top of your notes.
- (9) Store your notes in a file. One file per subject.

Once you have a set of notes you then have to learn the information on them.



Mind maps

Mind maps help you to generate ideas and make associations. They can also act as a powerful memory aid in an examination because they are visual.

The main principles are

- note down points in a spray pattern, starting from the centre and working outwards
- keep your points brief - use key words, authors, theories or processes
- use lines to show connections between things
- be prepared to re-work the map until you are happy with the organisation
- include colour, symbols and pictures to make it more memorable.

Learning posters

You may find that, rather than reducing notes to small summary cards, you prefer to produce large posters detailing key points on particular topics. Use flip-chart paper or stick several pieces of A4 together. Use pattern, colour, diagrams and drawings in your posters and display them in parts of your home where you might have an opportunity to gaze at them for a few minutes now and then and absorb the information. One student we know put them around the bathroom!



If you have a strong visual memory then lively posters really help the remembering process.



Index cards

Summaries or notes on index cards are particularly handy as you can carry them with you and review them in odd moments or for testing yourself - perhaps on a train or bus, or while waiting in a queue in the supermarket.

Summarise your topic in a few words. Using your own words means you process the information, which improves your understanding and your memory. Keep the notes brief to act as prompts.

Or you can draw diagrams, pictures, mini-mindmaps.

Organise your notes in new ways on the cards - perhaps providing an overview of a topic on one, and then notes around sub-topics on others. Try using colour as an aid to memory.

You can pin cards up on the wall in your room to help you learn.



Memory and Learning.

Once you have learned something then you need to remember it. There are a number of different ways of remembering

Here are four ways of remembering:

- by looking at **where** things are or **what** they remind you of
- by making up **simple** nonsense **sayings** — called mnemonics
- by the **shape** and **position** of things
- by the **place** of something in a **sequence**.

Something to think about

Different people use different methods for remembering. Depending on what it is you have to remember, you will find that some methods work better for some tasks than others. The best way to remember things is to practise using several different methods.

Something to talk about

Talk to your friends about how they remember things and see if you can share tips with each other. For example, how do they remember the names of people? One way would be by trying to use the name at least three or four times in a conversation. What other ways can you find?

Useful Websites.

Learning and Teaching Scotland:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/studyskills/index.asp>

BBC study skills website

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11_16/site/study_skills.shtml

BBC revision website

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/bitesize/standard/>