

CPLC  
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Junior High Skills and Study Skills

**DRAFT**

[cplearning@gmail.com](mailto:cplearning@gmail.com)  
[eac913@yahoo.com](mailto:eac913@yahoo.com)

# Seventh Grade Skills

## Part 1: Study Skills

**Day 1:** Time Management and the weekly calendar pages 3-8

**Day 2:** Time Management: Creating a Study Schedule – Weekly Calendars and To Do Lists

**Day 3:** Procrastination – Activity page 17

Ask students to bring in a favorite novel or book that interests them.

**Day 4:** Reading Techniques

Rapid Reading – page 19

**Day 5:** Week in review – go over the activities of the week. Assess student knowledge through a guided discussion.

**Day 6:** Concept Mapping – Discuss and practice – do a concept map together and then have students make up their own. You can copy page 21 – or just have students use binder paper

Choose either science or social science and make sure students bring that text to class for Day 7

**Day 7:** Teaching Reading Systems: SQ3R Instruction and Practice

**Day 8:** Teaching Reading Systems: KWL Instruction and Practice

**Day 9:** The Cornell Note-Taking System – page 27

**Day 10:** Exam Strategies – pages 28-33

**Day 11:** Five Day Study Plan

**Day 12:** Stress Management – page 38-43

**Day 13:** Understanding Academic Anxiety

**Day 14:** Avoiding Procrastination and Concentration

## Part II: The Action Plan

## Part III: Skills for Adolescents

## Part IV: Service Learning Project

## Simple and Effective Time Management

### 1. Get the big picture: The Semester Calendar

It is imperative that students understand the big picture. Explain the importance of planning ahead.

- Have students bring all of their class outlines and syllabi to Skills
- Explain to students that using a semester calendar will give them an overview of the semester.
- Have students fill in all of the significant dates and due dates. These would includes: papers, exams, presentations, organization meetings...everything.

## **Follow these time management guidelines:**

**Plan a schedule of balanced activities.** College life has many aspects that are very important to success. Some have fixed time requirements and some are flexible. Some of the most common that you must consider are: Fixed: eating, organization, classes, work, church Flexible: sleeping, recreation, study, relaxation, socializing

**Study at a regular time and in a regular place.** Establishing habits of study is extremely important. Knowing what you are going to study and when saves a lot of time in making decisions and retracing your steps to get necessary materials, etc.. Avoid generalizations in your schedule such as "study". Commit yourself more definitely to "study history" or "study chemistry" at certain regular hours.

**Study as soon after lecture class as possible.** One hour spent soon after class will do as much as several hours a few days later. Review lecture notes while they are still fresh in your mind. Start assignments while your memory of the assignment is still accurate.

**Use odd hours during the day for studying.** Scattered 1-2 hour free periods between classes are easily wasted. Planning and establishing habits of using them for studying for the class just finished will result in free time for recreation at other times in the week.

**Limit your blocks of study time to no more than 2 hours on any one course at a time.** After 1 1/2 to 2 hours of study you begin to tire rapidly and your ability to concentrate decreases rapidly. Taking a break and then studying another course will provide the change necessary to keep up your efficiency.

**Provide for spaced review.** That is, a regular weekly period when you will review the work in each of your courses and be sure you are up to date. This review should be cumulative, covering briefly all the work done thus far in the semester.

**List according to priorities.** By putting first things first, you are sure to get the most important things done on time.

**Eat well-balanced meals and get regular exercise.** Take time for good meals and exercise. Healthy eating and exercise can dramatically improve your concentration, mood, and increase your energy level.

**Double your time estimates.** Most people tend to underestimate how much time a particular activity / assignment will take. A good rule of thumb is to estimate how much time you realistically think something will take and then double it. More often than not, this doubled estimate is accurate.

## Time Management Tips For High School Students From College Board

### It's 10 P.M.—Do You Know Where Your Homework Is?

Does it seem like there's never enough time in the day to get everything done? Feel like you're always running late? Here are some tips for taking control of your time and organizing your life.

#### **1. Make a "To Do" List Every Day.**

Put things that are most important at the top and do them first. If it's easier, use a planner to track all of your tasks. And don't forget to reward yourself for your accomplishments.

#### **2. Use Spare Minutes Wisely.**

Get some reading done on the bus ride home from school, for example, and you'll kill two birds with one stone.

#### **3. It's Okay to Say "No."**

If your boss asks you to work on a Thursday night and you have a final exam the next morning, realize that it's okay to say no. Keep your short- and long-term priorities in mind.

#### **4. Find the Right Time.**

You'll work more efficiently if you figure out when you do your best work. For example, if your brain handles math better in the afternoon, don't wait to do it until late at night.

#### **5. Review Your Notes Every Day.**

You'll reinforce what you've learned, so you need less time to study. You'll also be ready if your teacher calls on you or gives a pop quiz.

#### **6. Get a Good Night's Sleep.**

Running on empty makes the day seem longer and your tasks seem more difficult.

#### **7. Communicate Your Schedule to Others.**

If phone calls are proving to be a distraction, tell your friends that you take social calls from 7-8 p.m. It may sound silly, but it helps.

#### **8. Become a Taskmaster.**

Figure out how much free time you have each week. Give yourself a time budget and plan your activities accordingly.

#### **9. Don't Waste Time Agonizing.**

Have you ever wasted an entire evening by worrying about something that you're supposed to be doing? Was it worth it? Instead of agonizing and procrastinating, just do it.

#### **10. Keep Things in Perspective.**

Setting goals that are unrealistic sets you up for failure. While it's good to set high goals for yourself, be sure not to overdo it. Set goals that are difficult yet reachable.

Consider these tips, but personalize your habits so that they suit you. If you set priorities that fit your lifestyle, you'll have a better chance of achieving your goals.

## Other Tips...

- Establish a regular time and place for study. This will save you time in the long run because you will have "programed" your mind that "this is the time and place that I study."
- If you have a study hall during school. USE IT !!
- Use daylight hours to study whenever possible. For most people for every hour of study done in daylight hours, it will take them one and a half hours to do the same task at night.
- Keep a date book and write down all class assignment.
- Take breaks. Don't schedule marathon study session. Several short 50 minutes sessions are better than one long session.
- By using flash cards or summary sheets, you can use odd times to study--while you're waiting for class to start or for a friend to pick you up.
- If possible, schedule study time with a partner.\*Choose your partner wisely however. Make sure you study, not socialize. If you schedule this just like you would soccer practice, or music lesson, it becomes routine.
- Schedule the most difficult tasks for times when you are alert. (Algebra may be hard enough when you're fresh. When you're tired, it will be impossible!)
- Make a daily checklist. Set priorities. Do the most important tasks first.

# The Little Picture

## The Weekly Calendar

Talk about the attention to details and the importance of time management.

Have students determine how many hours each class takes in student and preparation time. Have students list each class they are taking and estimate how many hours you need to devote each week. A good rule of thumb is to allow for 1 hour outside of class for every one hour spent in class.

Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	

## The Little Picture – Student Page

### The Weekly Calendar

A weekly study and prep planning calendar is essential.

Determine how many hours each class will take in study and prep time. A good rule of thumb is to allow for 1 hour outside of class for every one hour spent in class.

Fill in available time until you have accounted for all of the hours you estimate for each class. Keep in mind the principals of time management and create a weekly schedule for yourself.

Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	
Class		Hours/Week	

## Guidelines for Creating a Study Schedule

**Plan a schedule of balanced activities.** College life has many aspects which are very important to success. Some have fixed time requirements and some are flexible. Some of the most common which you must consider are:

Fixed: eating, organization, classes, work, spirituality

Flexible: sleeping, recreation, study, relaxation, socializing

**Study at a regular time and in a regular place.** Establishing habits of study is extremely important. Knowing what you are going to study and when saves a lot of time in making decisions and retracing your steps to get necessary materials, etc.. Avoid generalizations in your schedule such as "study". Commit yourself more definitely to "study history" or "study chemistry" at certain regular hours.

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**Provide for spaced review.** That is, a regular weekly period when you will review the work in each of your courses and be sure you are up to date. This review should be cumulative, covering briefly all the work done thus far in the semester.

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**Eat well-balanced meals and get regular exercise.** Take time for good meals and exercise. Healthy eating and exercise can dramatically improve your concentration, mood, and increase your energy level.

**Double your time estimates.** Most people tend to underestimate how much time a particular activity / assignment will take. A good rule of thumb is to estimate how much time you realistically think something will take and then double it. More often than not, this doubled estimate is accurate.

## WEEKLY CALENDAR

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SAT.	SUNDAY
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
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8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							



## Create a To-Do List

A lot of students use a to-do list to organize their work. Many of these lists, however, do not increase productivity or decrease procrastination. There are three very important things that separate effective to-do lists from ineffective ones: making a new list every day, prioritizing the items on the list, and breaking items down into small pieces.

1. On the next page, write down everything you would like to accomplish tomorrow. This includes class readings, work on papers or problem sets, chores, errands, phone-calls, exercising, etc...

2. Now look at each item and, **if it feels too big to start, try to break it down into smaller pieces.** For example, don't write down "study for exam" or "write research paper." These items are huge and require many hours to complete – and we often put them off because we don't know where to start. Instead, break the studying down into "review chapters 2-5," "review chapters 6-10," "do six practice problems," etc... and the research paper into "spend 1 hour collecting articles at the library," "write an outline," "write introduction," etc... These items are much smaller, easier to start, and more likely to get done.

3. Next, **prioritize** this list by placing one of the following letters next to each item:

**A** - Highest priority. Getting these items done tomorrow is very important.

**B** - Medium priority. You would really like to finish / accomplish these things, but they can wait if you run out of time.

**C** – Lowest priority. Getting these items done tomorrow is not very important.

4. Now think about when you will have blocks of time to devote to each of these items, making sure you take care of the 'A' items first and the 'C' items last.

**Do this exercise daily:** it is an effective way of managing your time.



## **What to do if to-do lists are not your style**

Ask some people about managing time and a dreaded image appears in their minds. They see a person with a 50-item to-do list clutching a calendar that's chock full of appointments. They imagine a robot that values cold efficiency, compulsively accounts for every minute, and is too rushed to develop actual relationships. Often this image is what's behind the comment, "Yeah, there are some good ideas in those time management books, but I'll never get around to using them. Too much work."

The stereotypes about time management present us with a kernel of truth. Sometimes people who pride themselves on efficiency are merely busy. In their rush to check items off their to-do lists, they might be fussing over things that don't need doing - tasks that create little or no value in the first place. If this is one of your fears, relax. The point of managing time is not to load ourselves down with extra obligations. Instead, the aim is to get the important things done and still be human. An effective time manager is the person who's productive and relaxed at the same time.

Personal style enters the picture too. Many time management suggestions appeal to "left-brained" people - those who thrive on making lists, scheduling events, and handling the details first. They may not work for people who like to see wholes and think visually. There are as many different styles for managing time as there are people. The trick is to discover what suits you.

Do give the strategies a fair trial. Some may work for you with a few modifications. Instead of writing a conventional to-do list, for instance, you can plot your day on a mind map. Or write to-do's one per 3x5 card, in any order that tasks occur to you. Later you can edit, sort, and rank those cards, choosing which ones to act on.

Strictly speaking, time cannot be managed. Time is a mystery, an abstract concept that cannot be captured in words. The minutes, hours, days, and years march on whether we manage anything or not. What we can do is manage ourselves in respect to time. A few basic principles can do that as well as a truckload of cold-blooded techniques.

Among those principles are the following.

### **Know your values**

Begin managing time from a bigger picture. Instead of thinking in minutes or hours, view your life as a whole. Consider what that expanse of time is all about. Write a short mission statement for your life - a paragraph that describes your values and the kind of life you want to lead. Periodically during the day, stop to ask if what you're doing is contributing to that life.

### **Do Less**

Managing time is as much about dropping worthless activities as adding new ones. The idea is to weed out activities that deliver little reward. One tool for purging your schedule is a "not-to-do" list. On this list include the notorious time-wasters in your life tasks that are just as well left undone. Examples are activities motivated only by obligation, such as compulsively keeping up with the latest fashions or television shows. Decide right now to eliminate activities with a low payoff. When you add a new activity of your schedule, consider dropping a current one.

### **Slow Down**

Sometimes it's useful to hurry, such as when you're late for a meeting or about to miss a bus. At other times, haste is a choice that serves no real purpose. If you're speeding through the day like a launched missile, consider what would happen if you got to your next destination a little later than planned. Gaining a few minutes might not be worth the added strain.

### **Remember People**

Few people on their deathbeds ever say, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office." They're more likely to say, "I wish I'd spent more time with my family and friends." The pace of daily life can lead us to neglect the people we cherish.

Efficiency is a concept that applies to things - not people. When it comes to relationships, we can often benefit from loosening up our schedules.

We can allow extra time for spontaneous visits, free-ranging conversation, and conflict resolution.

### **Focus on Outcomes**

You might feel guilty if you spend two hours napping or watching soap operas. But if you're regularly meeting your goals and leading a

fulfilled life, there's probably no harm done. When managing time, it's the overall goal of personal effectiveness that counts - more than the means we use to get there. There are many methods for planning your time. Some people prefer a written action plan that carefully details each step leading to a long-range goal. Others just note the "due date" for accomplishing the goal and assess their progress as the date approaches. Either strategy can work. Visualizing the desired outcome can be as important as a detailed action plan. Here's an experiment. Write a list of your goals for the next six months. Then create a vivid mental picture of yourself attaining them. Do this several times in the next few weeks. File the list away, making a note on the calendar to review it in six months. At that time, note how many of your goals you have actually accomplished.

### **Handle it Now!**

A backlog of unfinished tasks can result from postponing decisions or procrastinating. An alternative is to handle the task or decision immediately - to answer that letter now or make that phone call as soon as it occurs to you. You can also save time by graciously saying no to projects that you don't want to take on. Saying "I'll think about doing that and get back to you later" may only mean that you'll take more time to say no later.

### **Buy Less**

Before you purchase an item, ask how much time and money it will take to locate, assemble, use, repair, and maintain. You might be able to free up hours by doing without. If the product comes with a 400-page manual or 20 hours of training, beware. Remember that inexpensive, "low-tech" tools can actually save time. Keeping track of your appointments and to-do lists on a computer might actually take more time than using a pencil, paper, and the old-fashioned appointment book. Before rushing to the store to add another possession to your life, see if you can use or adapt something you already own.

### **Forget About Time**

Schedule "down time" every day - a period when you're accountable to no one and have nothing to accomplish. This is time to do nothing, free of guilt. Even a few minutes spent this way can yield

a sense of renewal. Also, experiment with decreasing your awareness of time. Leave your watch off for a few hours each day. Spend time in an area that's free of clocks. Notice how often you glance at your watch and make a conscious effort to do that less. If you still want some sense of time then use alternatives to the almighty, unforgiving clock. Measure your day with a sundial, hourglass, or egg timer. Or synchronize your activities with the rhythms of nature - for example, rising at dawn and going to bed at sundown. You can also plan activities to harmonize with the rhythms of your body.

Schedule your most demanding tasks for the times when you're normally most alert. Eat when you're hungry, not according to the clock. Scrap schedules when it's appropriate. Sometimes the vest-laid plans are best laid to rest.

In summary, take time to retreat from time. Create a sanctuary, a haven, a safe place in your life that's free from any hint of schedules, lists, or accomplishments. One of the most effective ways to manage time is periodically to forget about it.

Ellis, D. (1998). *Becoming a Master Student*. Houghton Mifflin: Boston.

# Overcoming Procrastination

## **1. Take a hard look in the mirror.**

Procrastination cannot be changed unless you are able and willing to be honest with yourself about the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which cause it.

## **2. Assess your level of motivation to change.**

Overcoming procrastination takes work and is not always easy. If you aren't motivated to change your current study habits, learning time management and other antiprocrastination techniques won't be helpful. Think about what your goals are for being in college and what it will take for you to reach them (e.g., an additional 10 hours of study each week.) Do you have the motivation to do this extra work?

## **3. Set small goals for yourself.**

Large goals will most likely lead to quick failure and frustration on your part. Setting small, achievable goals and holding yourself accountable for reaching them is the best way to change your study habits and overcome procrastination. A few small changes can quickly lead to large changes as you experience the rewards of reducing procrastination.

## **4. Once small goals are achieved, think about setting larger goals.**

Goal-setting now becomes an ongoing process of setting goals, analyzing success and failure, and using this learning to set new goals. If you find yourself failing to reach your goals, try scaling them down. If you feel like you can't scale them down any further, reflect on your level of motivation.

## **5. Don't get derailed by setbacks.**

The process of overcoming procrastination WILL involve relapses. Since it is impossible to avoid a failure or two, the key is bouncing back and pushing forward. When you do relapse, take time to reflect on the reasons for it and use that insight to improve your next goal-setting session.

Adapted from: Hirsch, G. (1995). *Counseling Students in Academic Difficulty: A Training Manual*.

## Procrastination Activity

List study activities:

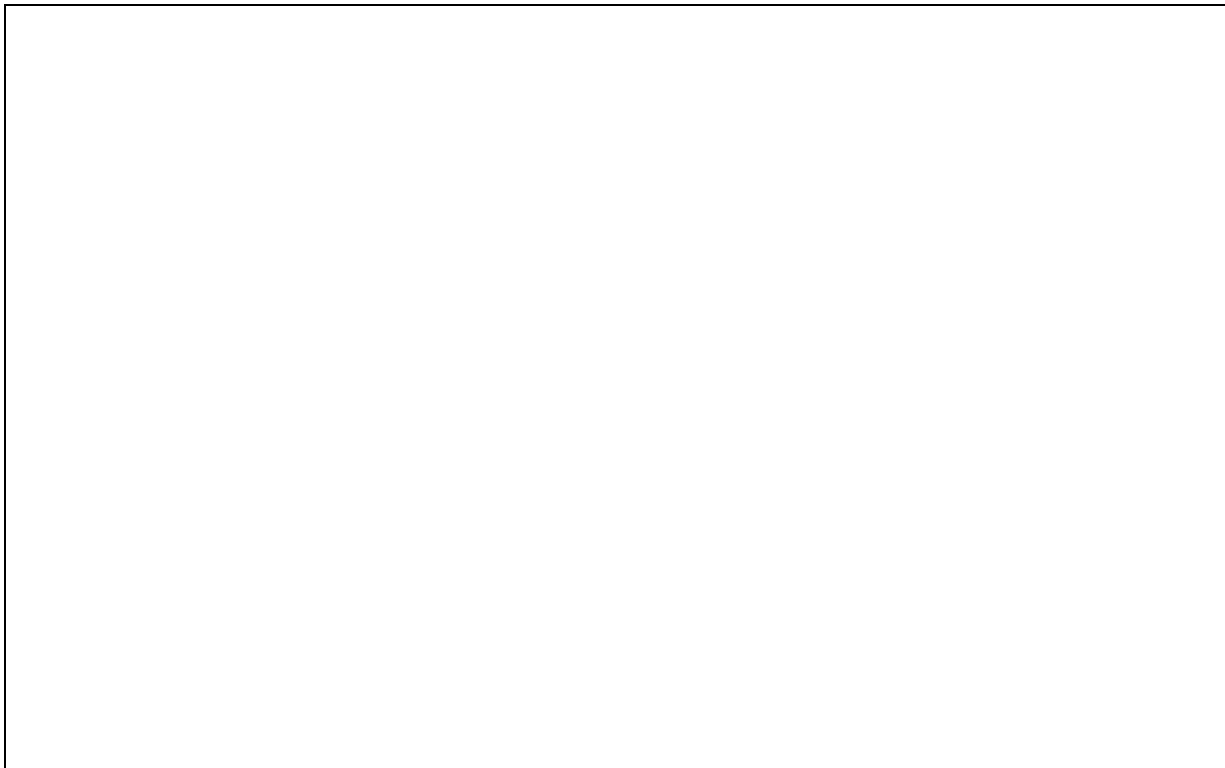
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Set three small goals to achieve one of the study activities you listed in number one:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write a paragraph on how you are going to achieve these small goals.

Visualize...then draw a picture of you achieving these goals:



## Rapid Reading

The goal of any rapid reading training should be to gain greater control over the rate at which one reads. The chart below presents realistic rate goals that vary according to the reader's purpose.

DEPTH	EXAMPLE	PURPOSE	SPEED RANGE	COMP. GOALS
Deepest: complex or dense	Technical text, poetry, legal brief, problem solutions	Thorough mastery. No background in subject.	to 300 wpm	90% +
Normal: expository, supplemental	Textbook, novel, monograph	Basic general comprehension and recall	300-600 wpm	70%
Light: general interest	Newspapers, catalogues	Enjoyment	500 + wpm	None
No depth: skimming	Optional course text, library references	Overview, alternate perspective, preview	600 + wpm	Selective, to 50%
No depth: scanning	Index, telephone book	Locating Information	Fastest	Specifics to 100%

How fast you read should depend upon your comprehension goal. The *less detail* you need to remember, the *faster* you should read. Conversely, the *more detail* you need to remember, the *slower* you should read.

## Increasing Your Reading Speed – In Class Practice Sheet

### Alarm Clock Reading

Choose an easy, interesting, relatively familiar subject matter for this exercise. You do not want to be fighting your own boredom at the same time that you are trying to increase your reading speed. The simpler paperback novels based on a theme in which you are intensely interested and written in a fast-moving style lend themselves well to the development of rapid reading skills.

1. Select a novel or book of easy non-fiction. Keep the book for this purpose only.
2. Set an alarm clock or timer to go off after 15 minutes of reading.
3. Read the book as rapidly as possible until the alarm rings. Try to get the same feeling of speed you have when under class time-pressure.
4. When the alarm rings, note the number of pages you have read. For example, 5 1/4, 7 1/2, etc. Do not count the words. Now close the book.
5. Paraphrase out loud the material you have read. You will be much more conscious of the fact that you did not remember very well if you paraphrase out loud. Remember, speed without recall of what you read is useless.
6. At the next reading, strive for more rapid reading. In order to break the habit of slow, plodding reading on easy material, you must press yourself into reading at an "uncomfortable rate" at the outset. As long as comfortable rates are maintained, no gain in speed is achieved.
7. Allow your eyes to sweep rapidly along each line of print, but do not pause to reflect until a whole section has been completed.
8. Do this exercise every day – sporadic and infrequent exercises will have little value. Keep your record up to date so you can see your progress. Try to read a few more lines each time.

## Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is used to organize related information in a visual manner. Study maps clearly and concisely demonstrate hierarchical relationships among the topic, main ideas, and supporting details or pertinent course material.

Mapping is a way of picturing course content that enhances retrievability of the information on a test. Maps are useful because they reduce large amounts of information.

Mapping helps you to learn actively. The maps are highly individualized, representing information in a unique and personal way. Structuring the map allows you to see interrelationships in the information.

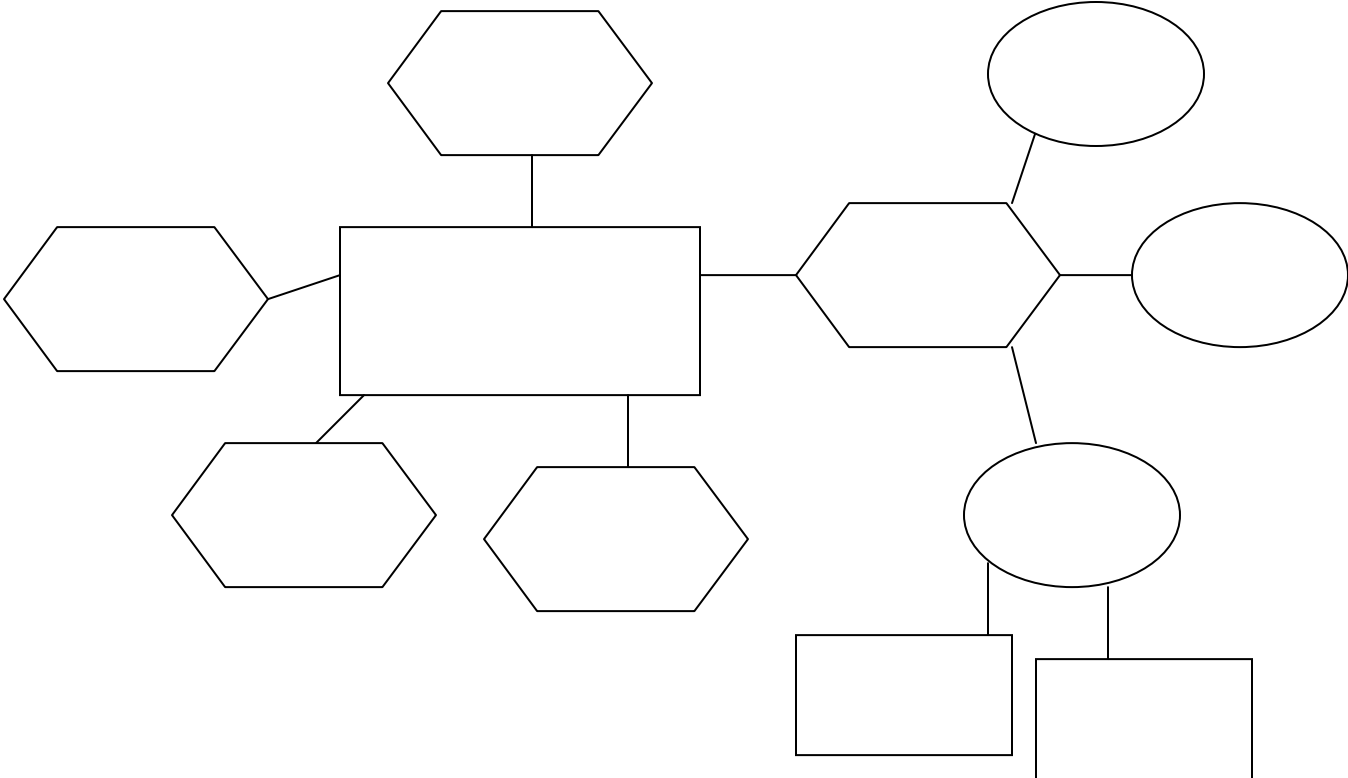
### **When to map:**

- a. When a course can be organized by topics or concepts.
- b. When knowing a structure, system, operation process, or sequence of events is integral to understanding course material.
- c. When summarizing, outlining, or otherwise reducing content for an exam.

### **How to map:**

1. Select a topic/concept on the basis of significance to the course.
2. Decide on how to categorize the information: Does something take place over time? Can an idea be broken down neatly into constituent parts? Is there a hierarchical relationship among the elements of the topic or concept?
3. Write each main idea, major heading, or term on a separate, small slip of paper or index card. Divide these into piles under major divisions.
4. Move the card or papers around until the map is accurate and you have decided the appropriate position for each card. You may find yourself adding or discarding cards.
5. If steps 3 and 4 are too burdensome, simply concept as you go along.

Sample Concept Mapping



# Textbook Reading Systems

## 1. SQ3R

The SQ3R is a systematic method designed for studying a textbook. Developed by Francis P. Robinson, a psychologist from Ohio State University, the SQ3R is an effective reading system which has been successfully used by many students.

**SURVEY:** Glance over the headings in the chapter to see the few big points that will be developed. Also read the final summary paragraph if the chapter has one. This survey should not take more than a minute or two and will show the main ideas around which the discussion will cluster. This will help you organize the ideas as you read them later.

**QUESTION:** Now begin to work. Turn the first heading into a question. This will give you a specific purpose for reading the material and thereby increase comprehension. It will bring to mind information already known, thus helping you to understand that section more quickly. The question will also make important points stand out at the same time that explanatory detail is recognized as such.

**READ:** Read to answer that question, i.e. to the end of the first headed section. This is not a passive plodding along each line, but an active search for the answer.

**RECITE:** Having read the first section, look away from the book and try to recite the answer to your question **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**. If you can do this you know what is in the book; if not then glance over the section again. Repeat these first 4 steps for each section.

**REVIEW:** When the lesson has been read through in this way, look over your notes to get a birds-eye view of the points and their relationship and check your memory of the content by reciting the major subpoints under each heading. This checking of memory can be done by covering up the notes and trying to recall the main points. Then expose each major point and try to recall the subpoints listed under it.

## 2. The P2R System

**PREVIEW:** Begin by reading the introduction or, if there is none, the first couple of paragraphs. Next, page through the book and read the headings. Glance at any charts, graphs, diagrams, or pictures. Finally, read the last paragraph or two. The goal of this step is to get an overview of the material and develop a sense of the progression of ideas.

**READ:** Now mark ten pages of reading and read the material, taking notes or highlighting important information. The number of pages you read can be adapted to the particular book you are reading.

**REVIEW:** After reading ten pages, review the information. You can do this in a number of ways:

- 1) summarize, in your own words, the author's main points;
- 2) write down three or four sentences summarizing what you've read;
- 3) close the book and recite the key information under each heading;
- 4) quiz yourself on questions or problems at the end of the chapter;
- 5) create questions you may see on the exam about this material and answer them.

## 3. The S-RUN System

**SURVEY:** First, survey the chapter. Read the title and the introduction, as well as all headings, charts, diagrams, and graphs.

**READ:** Now read the section.

**UNDERLINE:** Underline material that explains the section's heading.

**NOTETAKING:** After completing the previous steps, take notes on the material.

Summarize the main points of the section.

## The KWL Reading System

KWL is intended to be an exercise for a study group or class that can guide you in reading and understanding a text. You can adapt it to working alone, but discussions definitely help.

It is composed of only three stages that reflect a worksheet of three columns with the three letters

What we <b>K</b> now	what we <b>W</b> ant to know	and what we <b>L</b> earned

### **K** stands for **Know**

This first stage may surprise you: Think first about, then list, what you now about the topic. This advanced organizer provides you with a background to the new material, building a scaffold to support it. Think of it as a pre-reading inventory.

- Brainstorm!  
Before looking at the text, think of keywords, terms, or phrases about the topic, either in your class or a study group.
- Record these in the *K* column of your chart until you cannot think of more.
- Engage your group in a discussion about what you wrote in the *K* column.
- Organize the entries into general categories.

## **W** stands for **Will** or **Want**

The second stage is to list a series of questions of what you want to know more of the subject, based upon what you listed in **K**.

- Preview the text's table of contents, headings, pictures, charts etc.  
Discuss what you want to learn
- List some thoughts on what you want, or expect to learn, generally or specifically.  
Think in terms of what you will learn, or what do you want to learn about this.
- Turn all sentences into questions before writing them down.  
They will help you focus your attention during reading.
- List the questions by importance.

## **L** stands for **Learned**

The final stage is to answer your questions, as well as to list what new information you have learned. Either while reading or after you have finished.

- List out what you learn as you read, either by section, or after the whole work, whichever is comfortable for you.
- Check it against the **W** column, what you wanted to learn
- Create symbols to indicate main ideas, surprising ideas, questionable ideas, and those you don't understand!

## Expand this exercise beyond K W L:

### Add an H!

Stands for **HOW** you can learn more.

- Pose new questions about the topic
- How can I learn more or answer questions not answered in my worksheet  
These include other sources of information, including:  
organizations, experts, tutors, websites, librarians, etc.

### What's missing?

Another strategy is to answer the questions that form the basis of good journalism: Who What When Where Why and How (**5 W's and an H**)

Who are the main characters?

What does the author say happened?

Where did the action occur?

When did it happen or what is the span of time?

Why did this happen?

How did it happen?

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.  
I send them over land and sea,  
I send them east and west;  
But after they have worked for me,  
I give them all a rest.*

Adapted from: VanBlerkom, D.L. (1994). College study skills: becoming a strategic learner.

## The Cornell Note-Taking System

<p><b>Cue Column</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Note-taking Column</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Record:</b> During the lecture, use the note-taking column to record the lecture using telegraphic sentences.</li><li>2. <b>Questions:</b> As soon after class as possible, formulate questions based on the notes in the right-hand column. Writing questions helps to clarify meanings, reveal relationships, establish continuity, and strengthen memory. Also, the writing of questions sets up a perfect stage for exam-studying later.</li><li>3. <b>Recite:</b> Cover the note-taking column with a sheet of paper. Then, looking at the questions or cue-words in the question and cue column only, say aloud, in your own words, the answers to the questions, facts, or ideas indicated by the cue-words.</li><li>4. <b>Reflect:</b> Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions, for example: "What's the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? What's beyond them?"</li><li>5. <b>Review:</b> Spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing all your previous notes. If you do, you'll retain a great deal for current use, as well as, for the exam.</li></ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">After class, use this space at the bottom of each page to summarize the notes on that page.</p>	

## Exam Strategies: How to Tackle Exam Questions

### I. Quantitative questions

1. Understand the problem: Determine what you are supposed to find, what you need to find it, and what is the unknown. Consider whether drawing a sketch will help. Also – note each part of the question. Not answering each part is an easy way to lose points.
2. Find a way to solve for what is unknown: Write down all that is given or known. Draw a sketch, when appropriate, to show relations. Use good notation, with each symbol standing for only one thing or equal things. Be sure the notation is consistent with that used in formulas with which you are accustomed. Write down all relevant formulas.
3. Carry out the procedure you have devised: For numerical problems, estimate an answer first. This will help you to check your work later. Neat, careful work keeps you from making mistakes, and allows you to find them when you do make them. Additionally, when the instructor can see your work clearly, he or she may give you partial credit for what you do know, even if your ultimate answer is incorrect.
4. Check your Answers: This requires the same quality of thought originally used to solve the problem. Is your answer what you thought it would be in your original estimate? Is it a quantity that makes sense? Did you use all your data? Is your answer in the correct units? If your answer does not seem reasonable, rework the problem.

## II. Multiple choice

1. Read the stem: First, read the stem and make sure you understand what it is getting at. Look out for double negatives or other twists in wording before you consider the answer.
2. Try to come up with the correct answer: *Before* you look at the answer choices, try to come up with the correct answer. This will help you to rule out choices that are similar to the correct answer. Now read and consider each option carefully.
3. Look for clues in the stem: Look for clues in the stem that suggest the correct answer or rule out any choices. For example, if the stem indicates that the answer is plural you can rule out any answers that are singular. The basic rule is: the correct answer must make sense grammatically with the stem. Options which fail this test can be ruled out.
4. Cross off any options you know are incorrect: As you rule out options cross them off with your pen. This will help you focus on the remaining choices and eliminates the chance of returning to an item and selecting an option you had already eliminated.
5. Come back to items you were unsure of: Put a mark next to any questions you are unsure of. If you complete the entire exam with time to spare, review these questions - you will often get clues (or even answers) from other questions.

### III. Essay questions

It is important to realize that answering an essay question correctly requires mastery of your material. That means attending all lectures, reading all assignments, taking thoughtful notes and reviewing and reciting what you've written down.

1. Manage your time: Figure out roughly how much time you can spend on each essay to complete the test. Stick as close to your time plan as you can, but don't become overly anxious or rigid about doing so. Always start with the easiest questions.
2. Read directions and questions carefully: Exam directions often contain specific instructions for answering the questions. As you read the questions, write down words or phrases that come to mind in the margin. These may help you organize your answer.
3. Consider how to organize your essay: Carefully organize your essay, using a recognizable pattern. The decreasing – importance pattern starts off with the broadest and most important information and then gradually narrows in scope. In a descriptive or chronological essay move systematically from one end of what you're describing to the other. If the question asks you to compare and contrast, make sure you shift back predictably between the things you're comparing and contrasting.
4. Write an outline: Once you understand the question, write an outline for your answer. This will help you make sure your essay addresses each part of the question and has a clear structure. This will also help your professor see what you were thinking.
5. Get to the point right away: Time plays a key role in essay questions. Be sure to get right to the point, even skip writing an introduction. It is best to put your answer in the beginning, followed by supporting evidence or illustrations.
6. Support your opinions with solid evidence: The well-written essay usually contains the answer in the first sentence. The bulk of your essay should be devoted to the evidence that supports your answer. Support all general opinions with logical or factual evidence, and avoid including personal opinions unless asked to do so.
7. End with a summary: Summarize your essay in a final sentence or two. This will tie your points together.

## Words to Watch for in Essay Questions

The following words are commonly found in essay test questions. Understanding them is essential to success on such questions. If you want to do well on essay tests, then study this page thoroughly. Know these words backward and forward. To heighten your awareness of them, underline the words when you see them in a test question.

**Discuss:** Consider and debate or argue about the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict. Compare and contrast.

**Enumerate:** List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

**Evaluate:** Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

**Explain:** Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reason for an event.

**Illustrate:** Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

**Interpret:** Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

**Outline:** Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean to write a Roman Numeral/Letter outline.)

**Prove:** Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the text.)

**State:** Explain precisely.

**Relate:** Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

**Summarize:** Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

**Trace:** Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.

**Define:** Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

**Describe:** Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities and parts.

**Analyze:** Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

**Contrast:** Show differences. Set in opposition.

**Compare:** Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

**Criticize:** Make judgments. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves

If any of these terms are still unclear to you, go to an unabridged dictionary. Thorough knowledge of these words helps you give the teacher what he/she is requesting.

## Multiple Choice Tests

In taking multiple choice tests, you want to keep in mind the basics of test taking: read the directions first and carefully, read each question carefully, and have a systematic approach to the whole exam. There are also some very specific strategies for approaching multiple choice questions.

**1. Cope with Qualifiers** Qualifiers are words that alter a statement. Words like *always, most, equal, good, and bad*. In a multiple choice test, qualifiers can make an option on a test question be a correct option or an incorrect option. For example, the following 2 statements are nearly identical:

It *often* rains in Seattle.  
It *always* rains in Seattle.

The first statement is true, while the word “always” in the second statement makes it false. Keep careful track of qualifiers by circling one that appears in a test question or in the answer options.

To beat qualifiers you need to know the qualifier families:

- All, most, some, none (no)
- Always , usually, sometimes, never
- Great, much, little, no
- More, equal, less
- Good, bad
- Is, is not

Whenever one qualifier from a family is used in an answer option, substitute each of the others for it in turn. Then you can tell which of the qualifiers fits best. If the best qualifier is the one in the answer option, then the option is true, if the best qualifier is another one from the family, then the answer option is false.

**2. Notice Negatives** Negatives can be words like *no, not, none* and *never*, or they can be prefixes like *il-*, as in *illogical*, *un-*, as in *uninterested*, *im-* as in *impatient*. Notice negatives because they can reverse the meaning of a sentence.

For example, in this answer option, the prefix *in-* in *indistinguishable* causes the statement to be false: Because it is a liquid at room temperature, mercury is indistinguishable from other metals.

Each negative reverses the meaning of a sentence. With two negatives, the question’s meaning should be the same as it was without.

For example, the first statement below has no negatives. It is obviously true. The second statement has two negatives. Since each negative reverses the meaning of the sentence, it is also true, but it is harder to identify as true.

It is logical to assume that Thomas Edison's fame was due to his many practical inventions. It is illogical to assume that Thomas Edison's fame was not due to his many practical inventions.

When you find negatives in a question, circle them. Try to gain the meaning of the question or statement without the negative. This will help you determine if the answer option is true or false.

**3. Choose the Best Response** Many options in a multiple choice answer may have some truth to them. You want to identify the *best* response from the *good* responses. If you have eliminated other answer options and have narrowed it down to two, and both seem true, try to pick the answer option that is in some way better than one that is just good.

Be sure to reread the stem (or question) over when selecting the *best* answer.

**4. Use Grammatical Clues** Although questions follow different format, all must follow the rules of grammar. You can eliminate answer options that do not make sense grammatically even if they contain correct information.

Consider this example:

The people of Iceland

- a. a country located just outside the Arctic Circle
- b. are the world's most avid readers
- c. claim to be descendents of the Aztecs
- d. the capital, Reykjavik, where arms talks have been held

Answer option (a) is missing the verb, and answer option (d) has no connection to "the people of Iceland." These options can be eliminated, even though both are true, and you are left with options (b) and (c).

### **5. Mark Only "Sure Things" First, Make 3 "Passes" Through the Test**

Go through the test first and answer all the questions for which the answers come easily. For the questions that seem more difficult, mark the qualifiers and negatives, and eliminate as many options as you can. This will give you a head start for your second pass. You may come across another question that gives you a clue to the one that stumped you. On your second pass spend extra time to figure out the "best" of the rest of the answer options. On your third pass, take an educated guess at the ones that are still elusive because any answer is better than no answer.

Adapted from Pauk, Walter, How to Study in College.

# The Five Day Study Plan

**Start Early:** More than any other technique, the key to performing well on exams is starting early and using short, frequent study sessions. The human brain learns academic material faster and better on an exam if done in brief blocks of time spread out over longer periods of time, rather than in a few lengthy sessions.

For example, you will perform better on an exam if you spend one hour studying each day for 20 days than if you spend 10 hours studying each day for two days before an exam.

**On Cramming:** If you have to cram, try to focus on remembering the information you do know rather than trying to teach yourself new information. You will typically not remember what you tried to learn the night before the exam, anyway, so it is best to make sure you REALLY know some part of the information for the test. If you do have a few days, try to spread the studying out so you are not doing it all in one night.

If you plan ahead, many students have found the Five Day Study Plan gets good results.

## **Keys to the Five Day Plan:**

1. You space out your learning over a period of 5 days.
  2. During each day, you prepare a new chapter or chunk of information, then review previous material.
  3. Divide material so you can work on it in chunks.
  4. Use active learning strategies (writing and reciting) to study the material
  5. Use self-testing techniques to monitor your learning
- Eight to ten hours of studying may be required to get an A or a B on an exam. This is just a general guideline. You may need to allot more or less time depending on the difficulty of the class.

# How to Make a Five Day Plan

1. Break the material into chunks. If it can be divided by chapter, use that. If not, make up your own chunks based on the structure of the material.
2. Plan to spend about 2 hours studying on each of the five days.
3. You work on the material in 2 ways: You prepare, and you review.

Example of the Time Frame for the Five Day Plan:

Tuesday		
Prepare	1 <sup>st</sup> chunk	2 hours
Wednesday		
Prepare	2 <sup>nd</sup> chunk	2 hours
Review	1 <sup>st</sup> chunk	30 minutes
Thursday		
Prepare	3 <sup>rd</sup> chunk	1-1/2 hours
Review	2 <sup>nd</sup> chunk	30 minutes
Review	1 <sup>st</sup> chunk	15 minutes
Friday		
Prepare	4 <sup>th</sup> chunk	1 hour
Review	3 <sup>rd</sup> chunk	0 minutes
Review	2 <sup>nd</sup> chunk	15 minutes
Review	1 <sup>st</sup> chunk	10 minutes
Sunday		
Review	4 <sup>th</sup> chunk	30 minutes
Review	3 <sup>rd</sup> chunk	20 minutes
Review	2 <sup>nd</sup> chunk	10 minutes
Review	1 <sup>st</sup> chunk	10 minutes
Self-Test		1 hour

## Examples of Preparation Strategies and Review Strategies

### Preparation Strategies

Develop study sheets  
Develop concept maps  
Make word cards  
Make question cards  
Make formula cards  
Make problem cards  
Make self-tests  
Do study guides  
Re-mark text material  
Make a list of 20 topics that would be on the exam  
Define the list of 20  
Do problem Outline  
Summarize material  
Chart related material  
List steps in the process  
Predict essay questions  
Plan essay answers  
Write essay answers  
Answer questions at the end of the chapter  
Prepare material for study group

### Review Strategies

Recite study sheets  
Replicate concept maps  
Recite word cards  
Recite question cards  
Practice writing formulas  
Work problems  
Take self-tests  
Practice study guide info out loud  
Take notes on re-marked text  
Recite list of 20  
Do "missed" problems  
Recite main points from outline  
Recite notes from recall cues  
Recite out loud  
Re-create chart from memory  
Recite steps from memory  
Answer essay questions  
Practice reciting main points  
Write essay answers from memory  
Recite answers  
Explain material to group members or study partners

## Example 1

### **Saturday 1-1/2 hours**

Prepare Ch. 15

1. Review notes from reading. Reread highlighted features
2. Make cards for cash dividends and dividend dates
3. Make study cards for reasons for Issuing Stock Dividends
4. Make a definition sheet
5. Do all the examples and problems assigned.
6. Review Study Guide

### **Review Ch. 14 1/2 hour**

1. Go over cards for corporation lists
2. Self-test on definitions
3. Review all examples and problems assigned
4. Review Study Guide

## Example 2

### **Sunday**

12:00-1:00 pm (1 hr)

- Review and highlight notes on Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Morgan
- Compile summary sheets from lecture and text notes
- Write questions in the margins of text book

1:15-2:15 pm (1 hr)

- Recite industrial revolution questions and answers 2:30-3:30 pm (1 hr)
- Recite railroad questions and answers

# Stress Management



Stress has nothing to do with  
how many hours you work



And everything to do with how  
you feel during those hours

## The Basics of Stress Management

Read through the following material and identify one or two things to work on this week.

Select things that

- 1) are currently causes of stress in your life
- 2) you have confidence in your ability to change. To start, set small, achievable goals.

Take care of your health and well-being

A. Get enough sleep: Failing to get an adequate amount of sleep builds up over time and impairs your memory, concentration, and decision-making ability. It also makes you more likely to become frustrated and angry at minor difficulties and inconveniences.

Ø Stick to a regular sleep schedule. Waking up early some days and late other days causes stress on your system.

Ø Figure out how many hours of sleep you need each night and make sure you get it. If you wake up to the sound of your alarm clock, instead of waking up by yourself, then you are not getting enough sleep. Most people need 6-9 hours of sleep each night.

B. Eat healthy foods: What and when you eat will affect your mind and body's ability to cope with the stresses of everyday life as a student.

Ø Eat breakfast every day. This will give you the energy you need to get started in the mornings.

Ø Get as many fruits and vegetables as you can and avoid too much fat, sugar, and alcohol (all of which can be detrimental to your mental and physical health).

C. Get regular exercise: Exercise leaves you feeling alert and relaxed. If done regularly, it reduces tension, anxiety, and depression.

Ø Set aside at least 30 minutes 3 times per week to exercise. Find exercises that are enjoyable (or the least objectionable) and make them part of your weekly routine.

## Develop a positive mental attitude

A. Learn to relax: Having a variety of relaxation techniques that you can employ when you're feeling stressed will give you more control over stress and provide relief when you need it most.

Ø Try a deep breathing technique (find a quiet location if possible).

1. Inhale slowly through your nose while silently counting to 3.
2. Hold your breath for the count of three.
3. Exhale slowly through your nose while silently counting to 3.
4. With your breath expelled, count to three.
5. Repeat the cycle several times.

Ø Try progressive muscle relaxation (also in a quiet location if possible).

B. Take greater control over your life: Stressors that would normally be manageable can be overwhelming if you feel little control over them. When facing a stressful situation, consider what aspects you do have some control over.

Ø Use some form of time management and use it regularly. This will give you much more control over what you spend your time and energy on.

Ø Reduce procrastination. Although everyone procrastinates, the more you can overcome this the less stressful your life will be. Letting a major project wait until the last minute is incredibly stressful, but ultimately under your control. Try setting small goals each day.

C. Improve your self-confidence

Ø Every once in a while take a step back and write down all of the things you have accomplished, no matter how small or large they may seem. Getting caught up in past failures will only create more stress as you fear repeating those failures. Thinking about your strengths and accomplishments will boost your self-confidence which will also improve your performance.

Adapted from: Pauk, Walter (1993). How to study in college (5th edition).  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin

## STRESS MANAGEMENT INVENTORY

<b>Personal Development (PD)</b>	<b>Almost Always 99%</b>	<b>Mostly 75%</b>	<b>Sometimes 50%</b>	<b>Seldom 25%</b>	<b>Never 0%</b>
1. I drink less than two cups of caffeinated coffee, tea, energy drinks or cola daily.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I exercise for 20 minutes at least three times a week.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I feel pressured at work, I take a five-minute break to relax.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I eat three well-balanced and nutritious meals daily.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I fall asleep easily.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I avoid eating foods high in sugar.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I avoid eating foods high in salt.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I avoid eating foods high in fat.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have confidence that I can do most things that I set out to do.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I can easily relax.	1	2	3	4	5
12. At least one hour a day is spent doing something fun for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I am feeling down, I talk myself back up and move forward.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Each night before going to bed, I sit quietly, listen to music, and make myself relax.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I sleep straight through the night (except for medical reasons).	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Total all of the numbers you circled</b>	<b>PD Total = _____</b>				

## STRESS MANAGEMENT INVENTORY

<b>Relationships (R)</b>	<b>Almost Always 99%</b>	<b>Mostly 75%</b>	<b>Sometimes 50%</b>	<b>Seldom 25%</b>	<b>Never 0%</b>
1. I participate in a leisure pursuit at least once a week.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When I am bothered by something, I talk it out.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When there is a problem, I sit down and discuss it openly with family members or friends.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I network with friends and acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel comfortable hugging people.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I hug someone close to me at least once a day.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have at least one good laugh daily.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I socialize with a friend(s) at least once a week.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am able to laugh at myself.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When worried or angry about something, I communicate my feelings openly.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When something is bothering me, I confide in a friend.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I openly discuss school related problems with my teacher(s).	1	2	3	4	5
13. I joke and laugh with my peers.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I communicate openly with my peers.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I take time to recreate with my family.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Total all of the numbers you circled.</b>	<b>R Total = _____</b>				

## STRESS MANAGEMENT INVENTORY

Environment (E)	Almost Always 99%	Mostly 75%	Sometimes 50%	Seldom 25%	Never 0%
1. I feel appreciated at home by family members.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I schedule time at least monthly with each family member or friend individually.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I enjoy spending time at home.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am able to balance my time spent with family, friends, and coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I need help, I ask for it.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have realistic expectations of others.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I set achievable goals for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I organize my time effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I can say "no" to coworkers and not feel guilty.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When overwhelmed by my workload, I can comfortably delegate to others.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel appreciated at work by coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
12. At the end of the work day, I feel a sense of accomplishment.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I leave the office, I leave my work concerns behind.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am able to control interruptions at work while performing my job.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I plan ahead to avoid waiting until the last minute to meet deadlines for projects and other assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Total all of the numbers you circled.</b>		<b>E Total = _____</b>			

# Understanding Academic Anxiety

## 1. What is anxiety?

Anxiety is your body's way of telling you that there is something in the environment in need of your attention. It is basically a series of biochemical changes in your brain and body, such as an increase in adrenaline (causing your heart to beat faster) and a decrease in dopamine (a brain chemical that helps to block pain). These changes result in a state of heightened attention to the source of the anxiety. High levels of anxiety cause your body to prepare to fight or run away from the perceived threat -- commonly called the "fight-or-flight response."

## 2. How does anxiety effect academic performance?

Anxiety is not a bad thing. It is true that a high level of anxiety interferes with concentration and memory, which are critical for academic success. Without any anxiety, however, most of us would lack the motivation to study for exams, write papers, or do daily homework (especially in classes we find boring). A moderate amount of anxiety actually helps academic performance by creating motivation. The graph below illustrates the relationship between anxiety and performance.

### Relationship Between Anxiety and Performance

## 3. What can I do to reduce my anxiety?

Academic anxiety has four components – worry, emotionality, task-generated interference, and study skills deficits. The methods of reducing your anxiety depends upon which of these you are experiencing. Read the following descriptions and identify which of these are causing you problems:

**1. Worry:** Thoughts that prevent you from focusing on and successfully completing academic work. For example, predictions of failure, self-degrading thoughts, or preoccupation with the consequences of doing poorly. Some effective techniques for managing this component include: using positive mental imagery, disputing negative and self-defeating thoughts with more productive, realistic thoughts, and self-hypnosis.

**2. Emotionality:** Biological symptoms of anxiety. For example, fast heart-beat, sweaty palms, muscle tension. The most effective strategies for dealing with emotionality are muscle and breathing relaxation exercises.

**3. Task-generated interference:** Behaviors related to the task at hand, but which are unproductive and prevent successful performance.

For example, constantly checking the clock during an exam, or spending a lot of time on a test question you cannot answer. Since these behaviors can take on many forms, the best management technique is to work with a study skills instructor or a counselor to identify the specific behaviors that cause problems and create a plan to reduce or change them.

**4. Study skills deficits:** Problems with your current study methods which create anxiety. For example, last-minute cramming resulting in not knowing answers to test questions or poor note-taking during lecture resulting in confusion about a major assignment. Many students experience the first three components of academic anxiety as a result of study skills deficits. If this is the case, then your grades will not improve unless study skills are addressed. A study skills instructor can help you with this.

#### **4. What if my anxiety level is too low?**

This may seem like a strange question, but if your anxiety level is too low you may be experiencing the same low level of academic performance as a student with an excessively high anxiety level (see the graph on the previous page). If you find yourself falling weeks behind on your homework, spending little or no time preparing for exams, and failing to turn in assignments, while not feeling particularly motivated to change, you may be suffering from too little anxiety. If this is the case, the best strategy is to figure out how your performance on daily coursework is related to the goals you have that you care the most about. One useful method for doing this is seeking career counseling.

## Letting Go of Test Anxiety

If you freeze during tests and flub questions when you know the answers, you might be suffering from test anxiety. A little tension before a test is good. That tingly, butterflies in the stomach feeling you get from extra adrenaline can sharpen your awareness and keep you alert. Sometimes, however, tension is persistent and extreme. It causes loss of sleep, appetite, and sometimes even hair. That kind of tension is damaging. It is a symptom of test anxiety, and it can prevent you from doing your best on exams. Other symptoms include nervousness, fear, dread, irritability, and a sense of hopelessness.

Boredom also can be a symptom of test anxiety. Frequent yawning immediately before a test is a common reaction. Yawning looks like boredom, and it is often a sign of tension. It means oxygen is not getting to the brain because the body is tense. A yawn is one way the body increases its supply of oxygen.

You might experience headaches, an inability to concentrate, or craving for food. For some people, test anxiety makes asthma or high blood pressure worse. During an exam, symptoms can include confusion, panic, mental blocks, fainting, sweaty palms or nausea.

Symptoms after a test can include:

- Mock indifference: "I answered all the multiple choice questions as 'none of the above' because I was bored."
- Guilt: "Why didn't I study more?"
- Anger: "That teacher never wanted me to pass this stupid course anyway."
- Blame: "If only the textbook weren't so dull."
- Depression: "After that test, I don't see any point in staying in school."

Test anxiety has two components, mental and physical. The mental component of stress includes all your thoughts and worries about tests. The physical component includes feelings, sensations, and tension. The following techniques deal with the mental and physical components of stress in any situation, whether it is test anxiety or stage fright.

### Dealing with Thoughts

1. **Yell "Stop!"** When you notice that your thoughts are racing, that your mind is cluttered with worry that your thoughts are spinning out of control, mentally yell, "Stop!" If you're in a situation that allows it, yell it out loud. This action is likely to momentarily

break the cycle of worry. Once you've stopped it for a moment, you can use any one of the following techniques.

2. **Daydream.** When you fill your mind with pleasant thoughts there is no room left for anxiety. When you notice yourself worrying about an upcoming test, substitute your thoughts of doom with visions of something you like to do. Daydream about being with a special friend or walking alone in a special place.

3. **Visualize success.** Most of us live up to our own expectations, good or bad. If you spend a lot of time mentally rehearsing how it will be to fail, you increase your chances for failure. Once you've stopped the cycle of worry, take time to rehearse what it will be like when you succeed. Be specific. Create detailed pictures, actions, and even sounds as part of your visualization.

### 4. Focus your attention on a specific object.

Examine details of a painting, study the branches on a tree, or observe the face of your watch (right down to the tiny scratches in the glass). During an exam, take a few seconds to listen to the sound of the lights in the room. Touch the surface of your desk and notice the texture. Concentrate all your attention on one point. Don't leave room in your mind for anxiety-related thoughts.

5. **Praise yourself.** Talk to yourself in a positive way. Many of us take the first opportunity to say, "Way to go, dummy. You don't even know the answer to the first question on the test." Most of us wouldn't dream of treating a friend that way, yet we do this to ourselves. An alternative is to give yourself some encouragement. Treat yourself as well as you would treat your best friend. Consider telling yourself, "I am very relaxed. I am doing a great job on this test."

6. **Consider the worst.** Rather than trying to stop worrying, consider the very worst thing that could happen.

Take the fear to the limit of absurdity. Imagine the catastrophic problems that might occur if you fail the test. You might say to yourself...

"Well, if I fail this test, I might fail the course, get kicked off of the sports team I am on, have my parents make me live at the bathroom at school..."

Keep going until you see the absurdity of your predictions. After you stop chuckling, you can backtrack to discover a reasonable level of concern.

Your worry about failing the entire course if you fail the test might be justified. At that point ask yourself, "Can I live with that?" Unless you are taking a test in parachute packing and the final question involves demonstrating jumping out of a plane, the answer will almost always be yes. (If the answer is no, use another technique. In fact, use several other techniques). The cold facts are hardly ever as bad as our worst fears. Shine a light on your fears and they become more manageable.

### Dealing with Feelings

1. **Breathe.** You can calm physical sensations within your body by focusing your attention on your breathing. Concentrate on the air going in and out of your lungs. Experience it as it passes through your nose and mouth. Do this for two to five minutes. If you notice that you are taking short, shallow breaths, begin to take longer and deeper breaths. Fill your lungs so that your abdomen rises, then release all the air. Imagine yourself standing on the tip of your nose. Watch the breath pass in and out as if your nose were a huge ventilation shaft for an underground mine.

2. **Scan Your Body.** Simple awareness is an effective technique to reduce the tension in your body. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Focus your attention on the muscles in your feet and notice if they are relaxed. Tell the muscles in your feet that they can relax. Move up to your ankles and repeat the procedure. Next go to your calves and thighs and buttocks, telling each group of muscles to relax. Do the same for your lowerback, diaphragm, chest, upper back, neck, shoulders, jaw, face, upper arms, lower arms, fingers, and scalp.

3. **Tense and Relax.** If you are aware of a particularly tense part of your body or if you discover tension when you're scanning your body, you can release this with the tense relax method. To do this, find a muscle that is tense and make it even more tense. If your shoulders are tense, pull them back, arch your back, and tense your shoulder muscles even more tightly, then relax. The net result

is that you can be aware of the relaxation and allow yourself to relax more. You can use the same process with your legs, arms, abdomen, chest, face, and neck. Clench your fists, tighten your jaw, straighten your legs, and tense your abdomen all at once. Then relax.

4. **Use Guided Imagery.** Relax completely and take a quick fantasy trip. Close your eyes, relax your body, and imagine yourself in a beautiful, peaceful, natural setting. Create as much of the scene as you can. Be specific. Use all your senses. For example, you might imagine yourself at a beach. Hear the surf rolling in and the sea gulls calling to each other. Feel the sun on your face and the cool sand between your toes. Smell the sea breeze. Feel the mist from the surf on your face. Notice the ships on the horizon and the rolling sand dunes.

Some people find that a mountain scene or a lush meadow scene works well. You can take yourself to a place you've never been or recreate an experience out of your past. Find a place that works for you and practice getting there. When you become proficient you can return to it quickly for trips that may last only a few seconds. With practice you can even use this technique while you are taking a test.

5. **Describe it.** Focus your attention on your anxiety. If you are feeling nauseated or if you have a headache, then concentrate on that feeling. Describe it to yourself. Tell yourself how large it is, where it is located in your body, what color it is, what shape it is, what texture it is, how much water it might hold if it had volume, and how heavy it is.

6. **Be with it.** Describe it in detail and don't resist it. If you can completely experience a physical sensation, it will often disappear. People suffering from severe and untreatable pain have used this technique successfully.

7. **Exercise Aerobically.** This is one technique that will not work in the classroom or while you're taking a test. Yet, it is an excellent way to reduce body tension. Do some kind of exercise that will get your heart beating at twice your normal rate and keep it beating at that rate for 15 or 20 minutes. Aerobic exercises include rapid walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling, basketball, or anything that elevates your heart rate and keeps it elevated.

Ellis, D. (1998) *Becoming a Master Student*. Houghton Mifflin: Boston.

## Avoiding Procrastination

**Is your procrastination related to a project? or is it a habit?**

To remedy procrastination:

Begin with one, modest project

Answer these basic questions

Keep the answers before you as you mark your progress:

**What do you want to do?**

- **What is the final objective, the end result?**

It may be obvious, or not

- **What are the major steps to get there?**

Don't get too detailed: think big

- **What have you done so far?**

Acknowledge that you are already part of the way, even if it is through thinking!

The longest journey begins with a first step

**Why do you want to do this?**

- **What is your biggest motivation?**

Do not concern yourself if your motivation is negative!

This is honest and a good beginning.

However, if your motivation is negative,

re-phrase and re-work it until it is phrased positively

- **What other positive results will flow from achieving your goal?**

Identifying these will help you uncover

benefits that you may be avoiding: Dare to dream!

**List out what stands in your way**

- **What is in your power to change?**

- **What resources outside yourself do you need?**

Resources are not all physical (i.e. tools and money),

and include time, people/professionals/elders, even attitude

- **What will happen if you don't progress?**

It won't hurt to scare yourself a little...

## Develop your plan, list

- **Major, realistic steps**  
A project is easier when it is built in stages;  
Start small;  
Add detail and complexity as you achieve and grow
- **How much time each will take**  
A schedule helps you keep a progress chart  
and reinforce that there are way-stations on your path
- **What time of day, week, etc. you dedicate yourself to work. This helps you**  
develop a new habit of working,  
build a good work environment, and  
distance distractions (It is much easier to enjoy your project  
when distractions are set aside.)
- **Rewards you will have at each station**  
and also what you will deny yourself until you arrive at each  
station
- **Build in time for review**  
Find a trusted friend, elder, or expert to help you  
motivate yourself or monitor progress

## Admit to:

- **False starts and mistakes as learning experiences**  
They can be more important than successes,  
and give meaning to "experience"
- **Distractions and escapes**  
Do not deny they exist, but deny their temptation
- **Emotion**  
Admit to frustration when things don't seem to be going right  
Admit that you have had a problem, but also that you are  
doing something about it
- **Fantasy**  
See yourself succeeding

## Finally, if procrastination is a habit of yours:

**Focus on the immediate task and project, and build up from there.  
Each journey begins with one step.**

## Concentrating When Studying

Concentration: the ability to direct your thinking

### **The art or practice of concentration:**

no matter if studying biology or playing pool, is to focus on the task at hand and eliminate distraction

We all have the ability to concentrate -- sometimes. Think of the times when you were "lost" in something you enjoy: a sport, playing music, a good game, a movie. Total concentration.

### **But at other times,**

- Your mind wanders from one thing to another
- Your worries distract you
- Outside distractions take you away before you know it
- The material is boring, difficult, and/or not interesting to you.
- See the **Flash distraction** (needs high speed connection)

**These tips may help:** They involve

1. What you can control in your studies
2. Best practices

### **What you can control in your studies:**

- **"Here I study"**  
Get a dedicated space, chair, table, lighting and environment  
Avoid your cell phone or telephone  
Put up a sign to avoid being disturbed or interrupted  
If you like music in the background, OK, but don't let it be a distraction. (Research on productivity with music versus without music is inconclusive)
- **Stick to a routine, efficient study schedule**  
Accommodate your day/nighttime energy levels  
See our Guide on **Setting goals and making a scheduling**
- **Focus**  
Before you begin studying, take a few minutes to summarize a few objectives, gather what you will need, and think of a general strategy of accomplishment
- **Incentives**  
Create an incentive if necessary for successfully completing a task,  
such as calling a friend, a food treat, a walk, etc.  
For special projects such as term papers, design projects, long book reviews, set up a special incentive

- **Change topics**  
Changing the subject you study every one to two hours for variety
- **Vary your study activities**  
Alternate reading with more active learning exercises  
If you have a lot of reading, try the **SQ3R method**  
Ask yourself how you could increase your activity level while studying? Perhaps a group will be best? Creating study questions?  
Ask your teacher for alternative strategies for learning. The more active your learning, the better.
- **Take regular, scheduled breaks that fit you**  
Do something different from what you've been doing (e.g., walk around if you've been sitting), and in a different area
- **Rewards**  
Give yourself a reward when you've completed a task

### Best Practices:

- **You should notice improvement in a few days**  
But like any practice, there will be ups, levels, and downs:
- **It will benefit other activities you do!**

**Be Here Now:** This deceptively simple strategy is probably the most effective.

When you notice your thoughts wandering astray, say to yourself:

*"Be here now"*

and gently bring your attention back to where you want it.

### For example:

You're studying and your attention strays to all the other homework you have, to a date, to the fact that you're hungry. Say to yourself... **"Be here now"**...Focus back on subject with questions, summarizing, outlining, mapping, etc. and maintain your attention there as long as possible.

When it wanders again, repeat... **"Be here now"**...and gently bring your attention back, and continue this practice, repeatedly. It will work!

Do not try to keep particular thoughts out of your mind. For example, as you sit there, close your eyes and think about anything you want to for the next three minutes except cookies. Try not to think about cookies...When you try not to think about something, it keeps coming back. ("I'm not going to think about cookies. I'm not going to think about cookies.")

You might do this hundreds of times a week. Gradually, you'll find that the period of time between your straying thoughts gets a little longer every few days. So be patient and keep at it. You'll see some improvement!

Do not constantly judge your progress. Take it easy on yourself. Good practice is enough to say that you did it, and that you are on the road. The mind is always different and the practice unfolds over time with many ups and downs.

### **Worry or Think Time**

Research has proven that people who use a worry time find themselves worrying 35 percent less of the time within four weeks.

- **Set aside a specific time each day to think about** the things that keep entering your mind and interfering with your concentration.
- **When you become aware of a distracting thought,** remind yourself that you have a special time to think about them,
- **Let the thought go,** perhaps with "Be here now,"
- **Keep your appointment** to worry or think about those distracting issues

For example, set 4:30 to 5 p.m. as your worry/think time. When your mind is side-tracked into worrying during the day, remind yourself that you have a special time for worrying. Then, let the thought go for the present, and return your focus to your immediate activity.

### **Tallying your mental wanderings.**

Have a 3 x 5 inch card handy. Draw two lines dividing the card into three sections. Label them "morning," "afternoon," and "evening."

Each time your mind wanders, make a tally in the appropriate section. Keep a card for each day. As your skills build, you'll see the number of tallies decrease

### **Maximize your energy level**

When is your energy level at its highest? When are your low energy times? Study your most difficult courses at your high energy times. Sharpest early in the evening? Study your most difficult course then. Later in the evening? Work on your easier courses or the ones you enjoy the most.

Most students put off the tough studies until later in the evening when they become tired, and it is more difficult to concentrate. Reverse that.

Study hard subjects at peak energy times; easier ones later. This alone can help to improve your concentration

### **Visualize**

As an exercise before you begin studying, think of those times when concentration is not a problem for you--no matter what situation. Now try to feel or image yourself in that situation. Recapture that experience immediately before your studies by placing yourself in that moment.. Repeat before each study session.

