INSTANT STUDY SKILLS
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This short handout contains some study techniques that you can apply with little investment in time. They will be things you can do without any extra work to your already busy schedule. But they should help you considerably. As long as you have to put the time in anyway, why not...

In the Classroom

1) Sit as close to the instructor as you dare on the first day of class.

Do you know that students who sit closer to the instructor get better grades? Perhaps that's true because the people who choose to sit closer to the front are the more serious students. They would get good grades no matter where they are in the classroom. However, there is some evidence that regardless of ability, you can increase your chances for a good grade by sitting closer to the instructor. The closer you sit, the fewer visual distractions there are. The fewer the distractions, the easier it is to concentrate and to take notes. And to cap it off, you are much less likely to daydream, read a paper, or write letters if you are under the instructor's eye. So, sit as close as you dare. If the seating is assigned, wear glasses and plead nearsightedness. Just get down front.

Why would you sit there on the first day? Because students are creatures of habit. they tend to use the same seat automatically. Did you ever notice that you step over the same feet and bump into the same knee going to your seat every day? Seating position tends to be a habit. Use it to your best advantage. Sit down front, establish the habit early.

2) Review previous class notes occasionally.

Let's be honest...everyone gets bored occasionally in class, even the teacher. If you're bored in a lecture, don't doodle in your notebook or write letters. Flip through your previous notes. You are in the classroom anyway, so you may as well be productive. Looking over previous notes may generate some interest and help get you back on the track. Even if the instructor continues to ramble and you continue to be disinterested, reviewing previous notes will be a good way to get ready for upcoming examinations. The more review you do, the better able you will be to retain material later for exams.

3) Copy down everything on the board, regardless.

Did you ever stop to think that every blackboard scribble may be a clue to an exam item? You may not be able to integrate what is on the board into your lecture notes, but if you copy it, it may serve as a useful clue for you later in reviewing. If what the instructor says doesn't seem to agree with what he has written on the board, or if you can't see how it relates, jot down a word or two from the board in the margin of your notes. A single work may be useful to you later. If not, what the heck - you haven't wasted anything. You were in the classroom anyway.
Study and Concentration

4) **Try to find a fixed place for study and nothing but study.**

Do you have a place for study you can call your own? As long as you are going to study, you may as well use the best possible environment. Of course it should be reasonably quiet and relatively free of distractions like radio, TV, and people. But that is not absolutely necessary. Several surveys suggest that 80% of a student's study is done in his room, not in a library or study hall. A place where you are used to studying and not doing anything else is the best of all possible worlds for a student. After a while study becomes the appropriate behavior in the particular environment. Then, whenever you sit down in that particular niche in the world, you'll feel like going right to work. Look at it this way; when you come into a classroom you sit down and go to work by paying attention to the instructor. Your attitude, attention and behavior is automatic because in the past the room has been associated with attentive listening and not much else. If you can arrange the same kind of situation for the place where you study, you will find it easier to sit down and start studying.

5) **Before you begin an assignment, write down on a sheet of paper the time when you expect to be finished.**

This one step will not take any time at all. However, it can be extremely effective. It may put just the slightest bit of pressure on you, enough so that your study behavior will become instantly more efficient. Keep the goal sheets as a record of your study efficiency. Try setting slightly higher goals as a record of your study efficiency. Try setting slightly higher goals on successive evenings. Don't try to make fantastic increases in rate. Just push the goal up a bit at a time.

6) **Use a magic charm or thinking cap when you study.**

Select one particular article of clothing like a scarf or hat, or buy a new little figurine or totem. Just before you start to study, put on the cap or set your little idol on the desk. The ceremony will aid concentration in two ways. First of all, it will be a signal to other people that you are working, and they should kindly not disturb you. Second, going through a short, regular ritual will help you get down to work. But be sure you don't use the cap or your idol when you are writing letters or daydreaming, or just horsing around. Keep them just for studying. If you charm gets associated with anything besides booking, get a new one. You must be very careful that it doesn't become a symbol for daydreaming.

7) **If your mind wanders, stand up and face away from your books.**

Don't sit at your desk staring into a book and mumbling about your poor will power. If you do, your book soon becomes associated with daydreaming and guilt. If you must daydream, and we all do it occasionally, get up and turn around. Don't leave the room. Just stand by your desk, daydreaming while you face away from your assignment. The physical act of standing up helps bring your thinking back to the job. TRY IT! You'll find that soon just telling yourself, "I should stand up now" will be enough to get you back on the track.

8) **Stop at the end of each page and count to ten slowly when you are reading.**

This is an idea that may increase your study time and it will be quite useful to you if you find that you can't concentrate and you mind is wandering. If someone were to ask you "What have you read about?" and the only answer you could give is "about thirty minutes," then you need to apply this technique. But remember, it is only useful if you can't concentrate, as sort of an emergency procedure.
How to Read Faster and Retain More

9) Don't try to read whole lines or even phrases in one glance.

Some students have the false idea, fostered by advertisements for super speed reading courses, that they should try to see a whole line or phrase in one glance while reading. True, you can learn to see a long phrase exposed briefly when you stare at a screen. But your eyes are not fixed passively on one point when you read.

Photographic records show that your eyes actively track across a line of print in a series of rapid bumps and pauses. You can see words only when your eyes are stopped. But unfortunately, the human eye does not have a perfect lens. During each stop only one inch of print is seen clearly enough to read. Depending on type size and the distance between letters, at normal reading distances this may be as few as one and as many as three words per fixation. Attempting to consciously increase your visual span to see a whole line or even a complete phrase is a waste of time. It can only result in partial, inaccurate reading, or skimming. Skimming is a useful technique for finding facts or reviewing for a test. But even when you skim, you can't see a line at a time.

You can increase your rate, however, by consciously cutting down on regressions. Most readers have an unfortunate habit of jumping back to look at words they have already seen. More often than not, this is purely a habit. Unlike visual span, it can be controlled by conscious effort. Simply forcing yourself to read at a slightly uncomfortable fast rate can have very beneficial effects on your reading rate. As long as you are going to read anyway, speed up!

10) Flip through your reading or assignment quickly before you go on to something else.

Few students realize that a short immediate review is their very best study time investment. This one step may take a tiny bit more time so it really can't be considered instant study skills. However, you will find that the very few minutes you take flipping through an assignment before you start something new will aid you tremendously in retaining the material for future review. Research has indicted that a brief review, at the end of a study assignment, is much more efficient than the same amount of time spent in review later on. The immediate review is terribly important.

11) Reward yourself, with a minor luxury, if you read faster than a target rate.

Does reward for faster reading work for adults? You bet! One way to use it is to begin studying something you don't like. Then when you get your assignment completed, reward yourself by studying something you like, or by reading a favorite book. One student rewarded herself for every page of text reading with two pages of recreational reading. Her textbook rate went from 100 words a minute to over 200 words a minute.

Another college student rewarded himself with fifteen minutes of music for every five minutes of reading. This was a rather incredible over-reward. But until he had started that contract with himself, he hadn't done any reading at all.

Another student was training a German Shepard dog for obedience trials. She enjoyed working with the dog more than reading. So when she had completed 20 pages of study, she walked her dog one mile. She found this helped her speed up her study from 200 words per minute to over 300.
Another student put herself on a consistent punishment contract. She promised that if her rate went below 300 words a minute she would not smoke for the next hour. She moved her rate from 195 words a minute up to about 325 with this system.

You can contract with yourself for this same kind of reward or punishment without increasing your study time at all. Select for reward some minor luxury. Make it something you can get along without. Carefully keep a record of your study rate and study time from day to day. Take your reward only if you match or go beyond a previously stated goal. Try setting the goal slightly higher day by day. Don't try to make jumps all at once.

**Underlining**

12) **Never underline a whole sentence.**

Many students underline as they are reading. They underline whole sentences and, in some cases, whole paragraphs. For the most part, they are wasting their time. If you underline, and a very well controlled study indicates that it is the most efficient way to take notes, underline only after you have read the material. Go back and pick out a few words that summarize the author's main point. Never underline a whole sentence. If you do, you will not be forced to select from the material that which seems important to you.

Look at the examples of underlining on the following page. In the top example, the student has underlined a great body of material. Only part of it summarizes the author's main point. In the second example, the student has read and then selected words to emphasize the main idea. Try reading just the underlined words. In which example, the first or second, do the underlined words best summarize the author's point? Which example would be more useful to you in reviewing for a test? Which type of underlining are you going to try and develop?

Political theory (often called "political thought," "political ideas," "political philosophy" or "theory of the state") is that branch of political science which attempts to arrive at generalizations, inferences, or conclusions to be drawn from the data gathered by other specialists, not only in political science and the social sciences, but throughout the whole range of human knowledge and experience. Political theory may be called the "so what?" department - the place where findings by statisticians, psychologists, historians, and all the rest of the researchers and tabulators may be weighed, tied together, cross-referenced, and contemplated, to the end that meaning and significance may be extracted from this mountainous mass of data. "Facts" - even if demonstrably incontrovertible - do not, by themselves, point to any single, inescapable course of action. The function of the political theorist is to consider facts in all their varied ramifications and at least suggest conclusions, remedies, and public policies. This is to say that most scholars in the field of political theory do in fact come to grips with all or most of our contemporary problems and suggest remedies. Indeed, too many of them rake over the ashes of the dead past. But if only a small proportion labor toward integrating out tremendous and rapidly growing fund of political knowledge, they perform an invaluable service in this age of over-specialization.
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**Tips on Taking Exams**

13) **When you take an examination, do the easy questions first.**

This is a good technique whether you are writing an essay test or answering objective questions. Research has shown that taking easy items first on a test tends to produce better results than taking the difficult items first on the same test. So skim over the test and find where to begin. On an objective test don't spend a lot of time worrying over a tough item. Skip it and come back to it later. On an essay test write the easy items first but leave plenty of space so that your answers will be in the correct sequence.

14) **On an essay test write down something for every time.**

Be sure to read the directions. You may be asked to answer only part of the items. Then, for each item you select, write something. Don't leave any item blank. You can only get a zero for the questions. But if you have something - maybe even a little wild and apparently unrelated - you may pick up a few points.

15) **On an essay test, be neat!**

Some informal research has indicated that a neatly written paper is worth about one letter grade more than the exact same paper written in a sloppy, messy sort of way. Look at it this way: You are just naturally going to be a little more sympathetic to the person who makes your job easier by writing neatly and clearly. So, for an essay test, do the best you can to make the instructor's reading more pleasant. S/he will probably repay you many times for your effort.
16) **On objective tests if you change your mind, change your answer.**

Many students think that their first answer to a test item is somehow magically the best. On the basis of that unfounded belief, they rarely change answers. Perhaps you, yourself, have changed your response to an objective item and found out later that you were wrong. That was such an uncomfortable event that you couldn't forget it. "Never again," you tell yourself, "I'll stick to my first choice." But you probably also changed many items and got them right. However, doing that was such a reasonable thing that there was no reason to remember it.

As a matter of fact, the question of whether or not to change answers has been carefully researched. All of the studies, over two decades, are quite consistent. They indicate that, on the average, you can expect to pick up more points than you will lose by changing answers. So, if you change your mind, change your answer.

Perhaps you want to test out the truth of this suggestion. If so, you need only keep a careful track of your changes. Check with your answer sheet later to find out how many points you gained and how many points you lost by the changes. Then, in the future, you can be guided by data, not superstition.

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Well, there you have a set of instant study improvement techniques. Each of them is designed to improve your grades and make studying a little bit easier, without any extra time devoted on your part. These techniques certainly can't hurt you. And, as long as you have put the time in anyway, why not...