

## EFFECTIVE STUDY TECHNIQUES

### Study Skills

#### 1. Reading Excellence

- a. Understand that the level of difficulty will vary as will your reading speed.
- b. Recognize that your pace will be slowed down by new terms that should be defined.
- c. Realize different reading purposes: Consider the difference between reading a novel, a chemistry or economics chapter, or mathematics problems.
- d. Choose an appropriate pace and system, such as:
  - rapid skimming to obtain a sense of format and a book's value
  - rapid reading to grasp main points quickly, especially when reading light fiction for pleasure
  - normal speed for understanding text material, outlining, summarizing, and preparing to answer questions
  - careful speed to evaluate or criticize, understand new and difficult material, and solve problems
- e. Concentrate on each reading assignment, determine the most effective rate and what additional activities are appropriate, such as:
  - defining new terms
  - highlighting portions of the text or other material
  - outlining certain material
  - solving problems or answering questions
- f. Time yourself to find out how long various kinds of material will take to read and set aside enough time.
- g. Become aware of how authors help you to master material through:
  - table of contents
  - chapter headings and divisions
  - paragraph organization, especially topic sentences
  - signal words such as first, most important, consequently
  - graphs, tables, charts
- h. Put material in your own words, develop questions to test understanding, and look for examples from your own experience to illustrate points.

#### 2. Memorizing

- a. Focus on formulas that can be applied to a variety of problems.
- b. Develop a way of remembering items in a logical sequence.
- c. Try to visualize material and then write down key points as a way of testing your understanding.
- d. Memorize entire selections through constant repetition until an entire poem or speech can be repeated without error.
- e. Use index cards with questions on one side and answers on another when preparing to master material.

#### 3. Material Organization

- a. Keep all material for each course in a separate folder or notebook.
- b. Rewrite or summarize lecture notes shortly after each session.
- c. Highlight key points in your notes using a colored marking pen. You may want to highlight portions of a course text book; highlighting alone won't help you master

the material. When combined with preparing your own study notes, the highlighting is more effective.

- d. Put all material for each assignment on paper together in one location; doing this you spend less time organizing each time you return to work on the project.
  - e. Learn how to operate and feel comfortable with a word processing program you can use for all written assignments.
4. Concentration
- a. Find one location, where seating is solid and lighting sufficient, for serious comfortable study and use it regularly.
  - b. Beware of noise and distractions, especially when working on demanding or detail-filled material.
  - c. Put distracting objects out of your line of vision.
  - d. Set goals for each study session and challenge yourself to improve upon them.
  - e. Assemble what you need to finish assignments ahead of time to decrease tendencies to self-interruption.
  - f. Begin immediately, working through lack of inspiration or enthusiasm until a momentum begins to build.

### **Examination Preparation**

1. Critically examine how you prepared for examinations in high school, selecting the methods that seemed to work best.
2. Be sure you know what will be tested, and in what way, before you begin studying.
3. Prepare for each examination well in advance, ideally at each study session by noting how you might be tested on points being covered.
4. Review old material as you learn new items and prepare lists and outlines easily examined.
5. Set aside two or three review sessions when all material will be examined; these reviews can be done alone or with a small group of students.
6. Challenge yourself by completing problems or writing essay answers in the same period of time you will be given during the examination.

### **Assignment Completion**

1. Be sure you already understand what is expected.
2. Check with the instructor if you have an idea that might not fall exactly within the guidelines.
3. Set aside time well in advance to begin outlining the assignment, gathering material and preparing the first draft.
4. Use a personal computer to collect information and edit your work. Locate computers available for general student use.
5. Follow accepted format and reference rules.
6. Check and recheck for spelling and punctuation as well as overall organization and clarity.
7. Learn from instructor comments where improvements are needed.

Adapted from *Plan for Success*, C.E. (1988). The National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc.