



Learning Resource Centres

Studying ~ Getting Started

Learning Resource Centres
Study Skills Series 1

Many of the following points have a sound basis in research findings on student learning. However, study is a very personal matter, and you should develop those methods best suited to yourself. However, you should remember that there are no short cuts to instant and easy success. Good organisation and thorough working habits are the only answer.

Reasons for studying

The purpose of studying is to learn, therefore before any course of study, ask yourself what knowledge, skills and attitudes you wish to develop. Effective study is very dependent on your knowing why you want to know and what you want to know. You will gain a great deal more from being actively involved in your education, rather than merely processing information.

For each course, make certain that you know what you are expected to cover. Course handouts, overviews of set texts, and the opening lectures of a course should provide this knowledge. So will interrogation of students who have already done the course! But remember, courses change.

The Study Environment

- Try to work in the same place as far as possible, although an occasional change can be stimulating.
- Banish distractions, see that you have good light, fresh air and the room temperature is comfortable.
- It is important to establish a place where you regularly sit down to study. Organise a large desk or table, a suitable chair and a book case. Have a good dictionary, thesaurus and text books for your subject to hand.
- Keep a supply of stationery readily available.

Draw up a timetable showing your commitments of lectures and tutorials etc. This will help you to work out the best use of your remaining time. Using a timetable or chart in this way will help identify where clashes are likely to occur and where you may have to cut back on other activities.

Before you begin to study, ensure that you are tuned in to your 'biological clock'. If you work best in the morning, plan to finish early afternoon, leaving enough time for a rest! Try to avoid waiting until you feel 'in the mood' for studying ~ most of us never are!

Planning Your Study

- Plan ahead what and when you will study. Divide your time into approximately 40—60 minute blocks of time and plan to spend two to three hours per week studying a subject for each hour spent in lectures.
- Give each subject equal time. Do not concentrate on one at the expense of another.
- Allot difficult tasks to those times when you are most efficient and discipline yourself to confront them, they won't go away!
- Plan to study a particular subject as soon as possible after a lecture. Material is remembered better if some attempt is made to recall it soon after its original presentation.
- Make certain that you allow sufficient time for each subject. Keep your timetable flexible, allowing you to cope with any eventualities.
- St the end of a period of study, have a break. Go for a short walk, relax or have a drink. However, beware, it is all too easy to find something more 'appealing' to distract you.
- Ensure that you have proper breaks for meals and at least an hour's physical recreation a day. You cannot work if you are physically tired or mentally stale.
- Do not underestimate the value of conversation with your fellow students. Talking is one of the most important ways of extending our range of knowledge.
- When you first begin a study period, do not expect to achieve a high level of efficiency immediately. At the beginning of each period of work, review what you have done and will do in the next study period.