



Boost Your Career
From Your Desk

General Study Skills



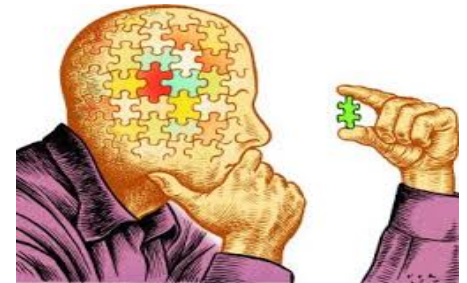
Topics

- **Qualities of a good student**
- **Basic principles of self-management**
- **Modes of learning**
- **The learning cycle**
- **Setting up goals and managing time**
- **Developing effective reading skills**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Creative thinking**
- **Taking webinar notes**
- **Writing exams**

Qualities of a Good Student

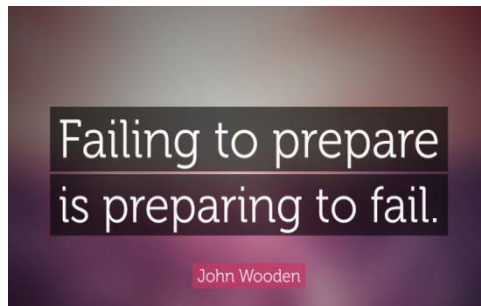
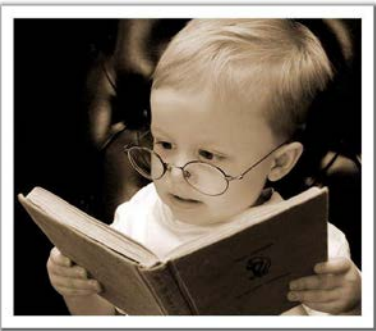
Successful students pursuing online studies generally have the following qualities:

- They have a good **attitude** and know how to remain **motivated**
- They **manage time** proactively -
 - ✓ They schedule study time for each unit/module
 - ✓ They begin assignments and projects early and finish on time.
- They think **critically** and even **creatively**, and apply this in their studies
- They build **effective strategies** for taking notes during webinars, and use these notes to their advantage



Qualities of a Good Student

- Learn as much as possible from the **assigned reading materials**
- **Prepare** for, and complete assignments successfully and on time
- **Collaborate** with instructors and fellow students in and outside of class
- **Exercise proper writing skills** during note-taking and assignments
- **Remain healthy** and **instill good habits** in order to remain motivated and experience less stress
- **Have control** over own financial situation



Self Management – Basic Principles

Be aware of the 'soft' issues:

- Habits
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Perceptions

Self Management – Basic Principles

hab·it

'habət/

noun

noun: **habit**; plural noun: **habits**

a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up.

If you do not already have a proper study habit, you will have to put in some effort towards establishing that!

It can take from 66 to 254 days for a new habit to become ingrained (or to get rid of a old one)! The '21 days' is apparently a myth.

Self Management – Basic Principles

at·ti·tude

'adə,t(y)oəd/

noun

noun: **attitude**; plural noun: **attitudes**

a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behaviour.

Your attitudes towards hard work, diligence, ethical academic conduct (e.g. avoiding plagiarism) will be very important during your studies

Self Management – Basic Principles

be·lief

bə'lēf/

noun

plural noun: **beliefs**

an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists.

Whether you believe that you can 'make it' in your studies, or whether you believe you can't; you will be proven correct in either case

Self Management – Basic Principles

per·cep·tion
pər'sepSH(ə)n/
noun

plural noun: **perceptions**

a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression. Synonyms: impression, idea, conception, notion, thought, belief, judgment, estimation

Be careful here: your *perception* that Maths is difficult does not automatically mean it *is* difficult

Self Management – Basic Principles

Self management is about taking control of one's life. Use the following tips for managing yourself:

- Accept responsibilities
- Decide what you want to achieve and get there - do not wait for things to happen, **make things happen!**
- Realize that you can change (if necessary). Remember that most people do not feel comfortable when a change is about to occur. But change is inevitable, so it helps to be prepared
- Develop a personal ethical code. Do what is right for you and for others
- Enjoy your life and enjoy meeting new people online

Modes of Learning

Learning online is different from learning at school.

- At school, teachers and guardians assume much of the responsibility to set up a mode of learning that will enable you to master at least the core of the anticipated outcome.
- With post-secondary studies (especially online studies) that responsibility is transferred to *you*
- At EIT you can use different modes of learning
- These include attendance of webinars, replay of recorded webinars, reading of prescribed reading material, and online research

Modes of Learning

Remember that different students learn in different ways, which tends to depend on their:

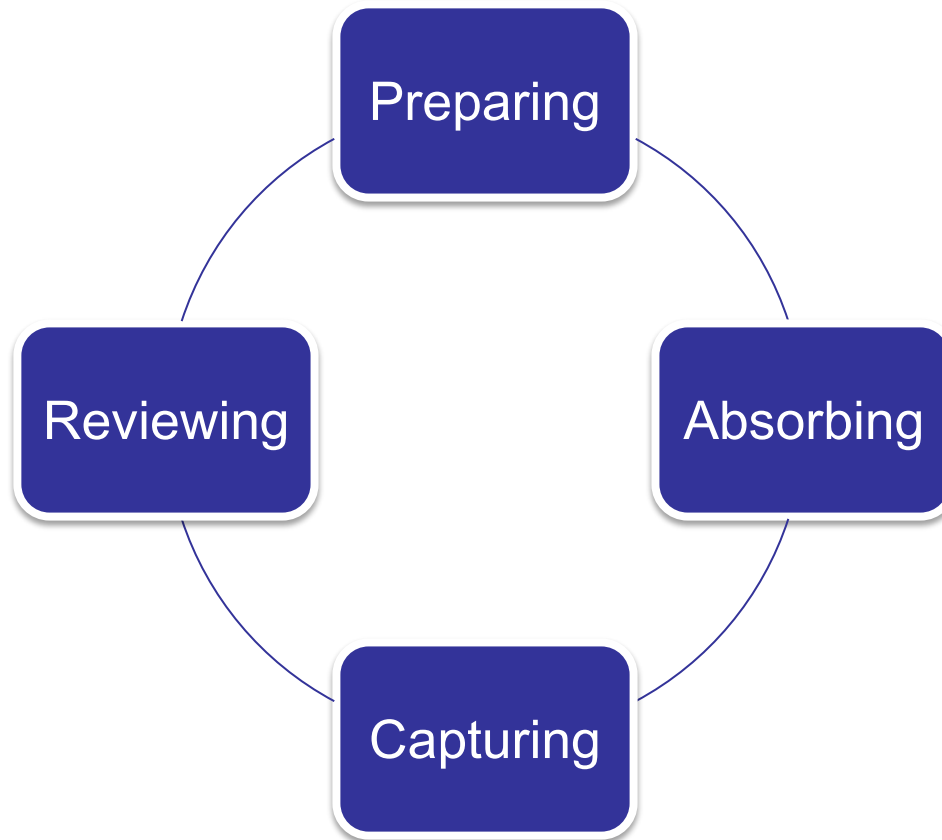
- Personality
- Cognitive processes
- Previous learning experiences

Therefore, **success turns out when you choose the right equation.** You need to:

- Identify the **variables** that suit you most
- Allow them to **function together**
- **Tweak** (optimize) where necessary

The Learning Cycle

Academic learning is a 4-step process:



The Learning Cycle

Prepare

- Prepare for the classes by going through the reading material and watching the pre-recordings
- Log into the classroom *before* the webinar starts (not 5 minutes afterwards)
- Complete assignments as required (by the due dates) or request extensions if circumstances require that
- Ask questions during webinars or email your lecturer afterwards to clarify things you do not understand

The Learning Cycle

Absorb

- This refers to the actual consumption of new ideas, information, or experiences
- It begins at the moment you attend a webinar read a textbook

Capture

- Capturing is about taking notes based on what you have absorbed
- You need to take good notes because there is so much to learn and you can't memorize it all
- You will need to go back over the material again, think about it and see how each lesson fits together to form the big picture
- The more effective your note-taking skills, the better your learning abilities

The Learning Cycle

Review :

Reviewing involves going over:

- Your **class notes**
 - Your **textbook** or **reading material**
 - Any other course materials including:
 - **Webinar recordings**
 - **Online media**
-
- Through reviewing we can also accumulate new information and construct new ideas
 - The end of the learning cycle loops back to the beginning in order to prepare for additional learning

Setting Goals and Managing Time

When we set goals and think about how to get there, it helps us realize how even the little things we do can keep us moving toward them. The following are some of the guidelines for setting up goals:

- Goals should be **realistic**
- Goals should be **specific**
- Goals should have a **time frame**

Evaluate how important the goal is and your motivation to reach it.

Setting up Goals and Managing Time

Use a table like the one below to set up your goals:

Goal Range	Describe your Goal	Priority	Timeframe	What you need to do to get there?
Short term Goal(s) (This week, this month) <ul style="list-style-type: none">12	1. The goal is to get A+ in the next assignment	High	20 days	Collect/access materials/software, discuss issues with team mates, etc.
Mid-term Goal(s)	The goal is buy a new laptop to support my studies	High	6 months	Research available models, save money
Long-term Goal(s)	Ensure 80%+ throughout the BSc program.	Extremely High	3 years	Everything being discussed in these slides.

Setting up Goals and Managing Time

You must have a positive attitude to reach your goals. Here are some characteristics associated with a **positive attitude**:

- Enthusiasm, for and enjoyment of, daily activities
- Acceptance of responsibility for your actions and feeling good about success
- Generally upbeat mood and positive emotions, cheerfulness with others, and satisfaction with yourself
- Motivation to get the job done
- Flexibility to make changes when needed
- Ability to make productive, effective use of time

Setting up Goals and Managing Time

Here are some characteristics associated with a **negative attitude**:

- Complaining
- Blaming others for own failures
- Anger, resentment
- Lack of motivation
- Unwillingness to change or adjust according to the changing situation
- Unproductive use of time
- Procrastination

Setting up Goals and Managing Time

Managing time is a key aspect in maximizing productivity as a student. It involves the following factors:

- Determine how much **time** you **need** to spend studying
- Know how much **time** you **actually have** for studying and increase that time if need be
- Be aware of the **times of day** you are at your best
- Use both **short and long time slots** for studying
- Schedule study activities in **realistic time slots**.
- Use a **system to plan** ahead and set priorities
- Stay **motivated** to follow your plan and avoid procrastination

Setting up Goals and Managing Time

Use the table below to manage time by adjusting your daily activities:

Activity	Number of hours per week
Sleeping	
Preparing food and eating	
Health and wellness	
Part time job	
Attending webinars	
Reading	
Home cleaning, shopping, etc.	
Commuting	

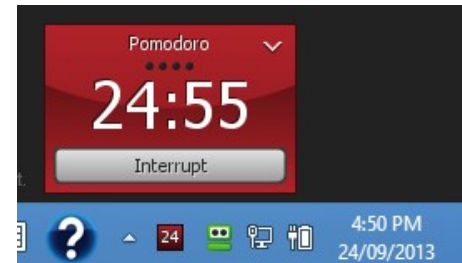
Prioritizing

This is just one method. Use whatever method appeals to you.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
	Not Urgent	Urgent
Important	I (MANAGE) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisis• Medical emergencies• Pressing problems• Deadline-driven projects• Last-minute preparations for scheduled activities Quadrant of Necessity	II (FOCUS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation/planning• Prevention• Values clarification• Exercise• Relationship-building• True recreation/relaxation Quadrant of Quality & Personal Leadership
	III (AVOID) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interruptions, some calls• Some mail & reports• Some meetings• Many "pressing" matters• Many popular activities Quadrant of Deception	IV (AVOID) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trivia, busywork• Junk mail• Some phone messages/email• Time wasters• Escape activities• Viewing mindless TV shows Quadrant of Waste

Pomodoro Technique

- Developed by Francesco Cirillo
- Based on tomato-shaped kitchen timer
- Basically allows you to break work into 25-minute 'chunks'
- Download app from Internet (there are many of them)
- For more documentation, find '*Pomodoro Technique Illustrated*' on Internet



Battling Procrastination

We often think about doing something tomorrow or next week, when it can be done right away – this is an example of procrastination.

- Some people think that they can only study very early in the morning when all is quiet. This prohibits them to study at all for the rest of the day – another form of procrastination.
- Procrastination creates a **psychological barrier** in our mind and can let us down a tough and challenging environment.
- Procrastination is powerful – most of us battle it daily, others occasionally. It can become a deeply-ingrained habit!

Battling Procrastination

Since procrastination is a psychological issue, we need psychological strategies to get out of its barrier:

- Since consistent procrastination is a habit, accept it and work to **eliminate it**. Each time you overcome it, the habit becomes weaker.
- Schedule times for studying using a **daily or weekly planner** and check it frequently to remain on schedule.
- Counter a negative with a positive. For example, think about the **advantages** of doing a certain task right now instead of doing it tomorrow.

Battling Procrastination

- Sometimes a fear of failing causes people to procrastinate. Approach your study with a positive mindset and take one task at a time.
- Study with a **motivated friend** if possible. The company of a motivated person can help you understand how other people do things differently.
- Get **help from others**. If you really can't stay on track with your study schedule, or if you're always putting things on hold until the last moment, seek a mentor or student counselor to assist.

Scheduling your Activities

Some tips for successful scheduling:

- Studying is more effective **immediately** after a webinar. Try to set aside some appropriate slot in your schedule just after class.
- Be realistic about the time allocation for each activity. Consider the setup time for joining a webinar, or the cup or coffee you have afterwards
- **Don't overdo** things. It is not necessary to study four or five hours non-stop

Scheduling your Activities

Some tips for successful scheduling:

- Schedule social events that are already on calendar, and also leave gaps in the schedule for other social activities.
- Try to schedule some **time for your health and fitness** at least three days a week. You need not join a gym. Even a walk outdoors will suffice.
- If a study activity is taking longer than scheduled, try to **adjust your weekly planner**.

Scheduling your Activities

An example of a weekly planner:

HOURS	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6-7 AM							
9-10		Math		Math		Math	
10-11	Bike ride??		History		History		
11-12 PM		English	lunch start English paper	English	lunch	English	
12-1		lunch		lunch		lunch	
	Work	A&P	Gym	A&P	Gym	A&P test today	Work
		study A&P		study A&P			
			do math problems		do math problems		

Daily/Weekly Schedule Form

Weekly Schedule Spreadsheet.xls [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Excel

File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View

Clipboard Font Alignment Number Styles

Calibri 11 A A

B I U

Wrap Text

General

Conditional Formatting Format as Table Cell Styles

B2 fx

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2	6:00							
3								
4	7:00							
5								
6	8:00							
7								
8	9:00							
9								
10	10:00							
11								
12	11:00							
13								
14	12:00							
15								
16	1:00							
17								
18	2:00							
19								
20	3:00							
21								
22	4:00							
23								
24	5:00							
25								

Monthly Schedule

Current Calendars

Calendar September 2013

September 2013						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

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Yearly Schedule

2014 Calendar												Calendarpedia Your source for calendars
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
1												
2	1 We	1 Sa	1 Sa	1 Tu	1 Th	1 Su	1 Tu	1 Fr	1 Mo	1 We	1 Sa	1 Mo
3	2 Th	2 Su	2 Su	2 We	2 Fr	2 Mo	2 We	2 Sa	2 Tu	2 Th	2 Su	2 Tu
4	3 Fr	3 Mo	3 Mo	3 Th	3 Sa	3 Tu	3 Th	3 Su	3 We	3 Fr	3 Mo	3 We
5	4 Sa	4 Tu	4 Tu	4 Fr	4 Su	4 We	4 Fr	4 Mo	4 Th	4 Sa	4 Tu	4 Th
6	5 Su	5 We	5 We	5 Sa	5 Mo	5 Th	5 Sa	5 Tu	5 Fr	5 Su	5 We	5 Fr
7	6 Mo	6 Th	6 Th	6 Su	6 Tu	6 Fr	6 Su	6 We	6 Sa	6 Mo	6 Th	6 Sa
8	7 Tu	7 Fr	7 Fr	7 Mo	7 We	7 Sa	7 Mo	7 Th	7 Su	7 Tu	7 Fr	7 Su
9	8 We	8 Sa	8 Sa	8 Tu	8 Th	8 Su	8 Tu	8 Fr	8 Mo	8 We	8 Sa	8 Mo
10	9 Th	9 Su	9 Su	9 We	9 Fr	9 Mo	9 We	9 Sa	9 Tu	9 Th	9 Su	9 Tu
11	10 Fr	10 Mo	10 Mo	10 Th	10 Sa	10 Tu	10 Th	10 Su	10 We	10 Fr	10 Mo	10 We
12	11 Sa	11 Tu	11 Tu	11 Fr	11 Su	11 We	11 Fr	11 Mo	11 Th	11 Sa	11 Tu	11 Th
13	12 Su	12 We	12 We	12 Sa	12 Mo	12 Th	12 Sa	12 Tu	12 Fr	12 Su	12 We	12 Fr
14	13 Mo	13 Th	13 Th	13 Su	13 Tu	13 Fr	13 Su	13 We	13 Sa	13 Mo	13 Th	13 Sa
15	14 Tu	14 Fr	14 Fr	14 Mo	14 We	14 Sa	14 Mo	14 Th	14 Su	14 Tu	14 Fr	14 Su
16	15 We	15 Sa	15 Sa	15 Tu	15 Th	15 Su	15 Tu	15 Fr	15 Mo	15 We	15 Sa	15 Mo
17	16 Th	16 Su	16 Su	16 We	16 Fr	16 Mo	16 We	16 Sa	16 Tu	16 Th	16 Su	16 Tu
18	17 Fr	17 Mo	17 Mo	17 Th	17 Sa	17 Tu	17 Th	17 Su	17 We	17 Fr	17 Mo	17 We

Google Calendar

← https://www.google.com/calendar/render#main_7|week-2+23299+23305+23302

Most Visited Getting Started + Add to Delicious

RoboForm Search Logins Bookmarks (logins) Setup For

Google Search Calendar

Change time zone to (GMT+02:00) Johannesburg? Yes No Never ask again Settings

Calendar Today < > 3 – 9 Aug 2015

CREATE

▼ August 2015 < >

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

▼ My calendars

GMT+08	Mon 3/8	Tue 4/8
12:00		
13:00		
14:00		14:00 – 15:00 Tea at the Ritz
15:00		

Developing Effective Reading Skills

Learn to speed read:

- Take a lengthy chapter in a novel, and read for 5 minutes (use your phone as a timer)
- Calculate the number of words you have read per minute (roughly number of pages x lines/page x words/line, divided by 5)
- If it is an MS Word document, word count is even easier
- If your result is below 100 words/minute, you may wish to consider learning speed reading techniques.

Developing Effective Reading Skills

Learn to speed read:

- Average reading speed for adults is around 200 words/minute
- You can triple this by reading phrases instead of words
- Aim for at least 1000 words/minute
- Enroll for a speed reading course, or find free ones online e.g. *readspeeder.com*

Developing Effective Reading Skills

Active reading involves the following steps:

- **Preparing** - Look at the table of contents. How does it compare with the course syllabus? What can you learn?
- **Reading** - Start by taking a look at your class notes. Look for answers to the questions you have written down during note-taking. Pay particular attention to the first and last lines of each paragraph. Think about the relationships among section titles, and graphics.
- **Capturing the key ideas** – Find answers to your questions. Solve some of the exercises at the end of each topic/section. See how the worked examples are solved. Define new keywords you found in a section. Highlight important sentences and paragraphs for future references.
- **Reviewing** – Answer the question “what did I learn?”. Write a summary of the assigned reading. Think about new knowledge.

Developing Effective Reading Skills

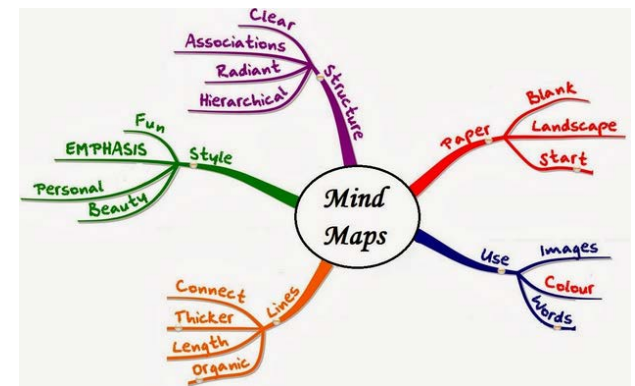
Strategies for textbook reading:

- Schedule a suitable time
- Find a space where you are most comfortable
- Try to avoid distractions
- Avoid reading fatigue
- If you are reading to complete an assignment, complete the most difficult question early

Developing Effective Reading Skills

Strategies for textbook reading:

- If you can speed read, make several passes through the text
- The first pass or two gives you an overall impression, thereafter you can slow down on the important sections
- Draw 'mind maps' as you go along



Developing Effective Reading Skills

Reading strategies for Mathematics texts:

- Do not skip over mathematical terms/texts as you read through the text
- Read the formulas and make sure you understand the meaning of all the factors
- Substitute actual numbers for the variables and work through the formula

Developing Effective Reading Skills

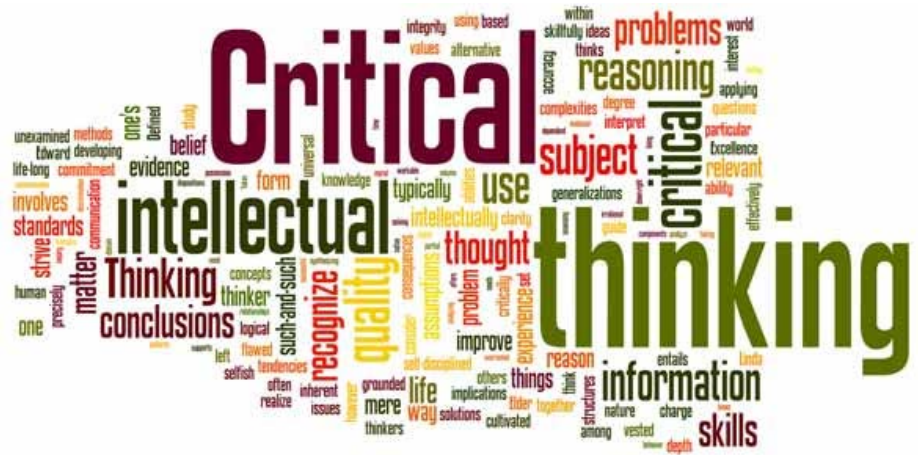
Reading strategies for Mathematics Texts:

- Make formulas real by applying them to real-life situations
- Do exercises within the assigned text to make sure you understand the material
- Do not proceed to the next section until you have mastered the material in the current section
- Seek help from the instructor by e-mail if necessary

Critical Thinking

You have the capacity to think critically when you can determine the value of:

- An idea
- A set of beliefs
- A claim
- An argument



In order to think critically, you need to use the following two processes to evaluate information and find a value/or conclusion:

- Logic
- Reasoning

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is an important skill to have for:

- Effective communication
- Effective decision-making
- Creating new knowledge
- Uncovering bias and prejudices



During the critical thinking process you need to deal with questions such as:

What is the real problem or issue I am considering?

What are my options?

What do I know about each option?

How good is my information?

Which evaluation/validation method should I use?

Critical Thinking

Tips for critical thinking:

- Consider all points of view. Seriously consider more than two options
- Keep an open mind
- Answer three questions about your supporting data:
 - Do I have **enough** data?
 - Do I have the **right** data?
 - Is my data **credible**?
- Search for clues to contradict the point of view you think the most appropriate
- Develop a set of criteria to evaluate the strength of information you want to use to support your argument

Creative Thinking

The ability to look at things from a new perspective and come up with fresh solutions to problems – is the end result of **creative thinking**.

The following conclusions are not generally true:

- Creativity is an inherited skill
- Creativity is free-form thinking. In general, free-form thinking often lacks direction or an objective whereas creative thinking is aimed at producing a defined outcome

Creative Thinking

Tips for creative thinking:

- Drive your 'curiosity wagon'. The more 'known ideas' you get yourself exposed to, the more options you'll have for combining them into new concepts
- Develop your mental flexibility by looking for a second right answer
- Combine old ideas in new ways
- Think metaphorically
- Ask questions



Taking Lecture Notes

Important reasons for taking notes:

- Notes reflect what was taught during the webinar
- Notes provide important clues for what information the instructor thinks is most important (for example, to answer some of the questions in the assignment)
- Notes inscribe information kinaesthetically
- Proper note taking means more focus during the webinar
- Notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (e.g. in your textbook)

Taking Lecture Notes

Tips for note-taking:

- **Focus** on the lecture or on the reading material
- Be **consistent** and cover the entire lecture in your notes
- **Be selective** – develop some rules so that you know what to note down and what not
- Remember that the average lecturer speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.

Taking Lecture Notes

Tips for note-taking:

- **Convert ideas** into your own words/format
- **Organize** notes in a logical form
- Write **clearly** so that you can understand it when you read it next time
- Don't be too concerned with grammar and spelling



Taking Lecture Notes

Create your own note-taking syntax based on the following questions:

- Do I use complete sentences? (Generally speaking “No”)
- Do I use any form at all? Are my notes clear or confusing? (Decide how you feel comfortable)
- Do I capture main points and all sub-points? (Generally depends on their significance)
- Do I streamline using abbreviations and shortcuts? (Yes)

Exam Preparation (if applicable)

Develop your 'D-day' program for exam preparation:

Consider D as a variable, it could be any number based on your liking.

Example: Considering $D = 5$, so let us develop a 5-day program.

Five days before the exam: Organize

- **Review** class notes and text notes in detail
- **Compile a list** of topics relevant to the exam
- List them **in order of importance**

Test Preparation

Four days before: Review and Recall

- **Review** your notes thoroughly and explain them to yourself
- Pay **extra attention** to the topics that are **more difficult** for you to understand
- Use a **suitable mnemonics device/ visualization tool** (if possible) to organize the material as a trail to the big idea

Test Preparation

Three days before: Rewrite

- **Rewrite important sections** of your notes or topics you have learned
- **Review** your notes repeatedly
- Figure out your **own explanations** instead of recalling what the text and your lecturers have said

Two days before: Question

- Make a **list of questions** that might be in the exam
- **Answer the questions** in as much detail as possible

Test Preparation

One day before: Prepare

- **Review** your rewritten notes, questions and answers you have practiced the day before
- Take **time to relax**
- **Do not be afraid** – you will forget information if you create unnecessary test anxiety
- Go over the **most important sections/topics once again**



References

- *College Success by, the Saylor Foundation (www.saylor.org).*
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