

Study Skills

3.1 Introduction

Study skills are generally regarded as strategies and methods of motivated learning. This often is centered around reading and writing. When study skills are effective, they help make good grades. In fact, the essence of any educational process is to make students appreciate what is taught and come out with good grades. Therefore, good study skills are essential not only for students to acquire good grades, but are also useful in improving the learning process throughout one's life either in enhancing one's career or in support of other interests.

3.2. Stages in Study Skills

Figure I below provides a conceptual framework of stages involved in designing and developing functional study skills.

figure 1: **Stages in Study Skills**

3.2.1. Time Management

Study skill will be examined from three very important perspectives. The diagram above expounds these three stages effectively. The first stage ostensibly is preparing the study process. This is very fundamental for any effective study programme. Time is not effectively managed; students will never be able to study. Managing time demands that a study time/period be included in one's day to day programme. Time must be created out for study. A balance must be maintained between other activities within the campus and school work.

3.2.2. Goal Setting and Scheduling

Students must early-on in the academic session schedule their time. This is very important as it helps to get students organized. It also helps to prevent unnecessary waste of time and idling about. It is equally important that goals be set. A good student must have a target or set goal for every week of the semester. A student can determine that by the eighth week of a semester that all term papers and assignments would have been completed so as to have ample time to focus on school work.

Without the setting of reasonable and achievable goals students will be perambulating, and will allow assignments build up. Towards the end of the semester, with school work, assignments and term papers bursting at the seams, most students are often not able to stay focused and many sometimes fall ill.

3.2.3. Organizing Tasks

A well organized programme of activity must be strictly adhered to. This is important, particularly for freshmen. On arriving the campus, there should be time for registration and this period should never be exceeded. As soon as lectures start, students should have finished with every other business of registration and accommodation. Other tasks needed to be performed should be organized, so that events will move seamlessly and tasks executed right on target.

3.2.4. Avoiding Procrastination

This is very important. Procrastination according to the Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1994:1147) means to defer action, delay action until an opportunity is lost. Procrastination has remained one of the greatest threats to scholarship. It is also one of the most prevalent study problems that students encounter. Most assignments, projects, practice skills are deferred to a point that the culprit finds that work is crowding in on one and one is then helpless in the face of it all because things which should have been done long ago have been built up. To avoid this, it is necessary to tackle problems head on and not wait for another day. No matter how daunting a task is, it is helpful and important to embark-upon it immediately, and request for guidance in the process of executing the task than waiving it off for another day.

3.2.5. Developing Self-discipline

This helps to avert procrastination. Discipline helps one to stay focused, to manage time well, to stay organized and avoid procrastination.

3.2.6. Note Taking

The next step in the study process is *note taking*. In classes, teachers will teach different types of topics in your course of study. The information gained during such lectures often help in the process of writing both

examinations and term papers/projects. Students must be able to take good written notes from what lecturers teach them. The process of note taking involves three stages, the before, during, and after class note-taking. To be able to take notes effectively during class, certain things are usually expedient it done before the class. One of this is preparing for the class. Students should review notes from the previous class session and sometimes notes from all the earlier topics taught. This helps in remembering what was covered and prepares one to grab new things that the teacher provides It is necessary to complete all assigned readings before students come to class.

Your lecturer will expect that this has been done and will build upon what was previously taught. Reading extensively, even beyond the bounds of classroom work helps students a lot in note taking Avid readers are often more familiar with words and can spell words better than students who hardly read.

Note taking during class is very crucial and should never be toiled with. Students must listen to their lecturers with rapt attention and should always be attentive to 'signal statement These tell you that what the lecturer is about to say next is very crucial. Some of such signal statements may come in remarks such as it is important to note this down, 'include this point in your note and so on.

It is important to write quickly so as to be able to include all the important highlights in the note. This can be done by the use of abbreviations. The MS text we send is a good example of some of the abbreviations that can be used. Limit abbreviations to words that can easily be understood even after the lecture. Otherwise, the whole essence of the lecture would have been lost altogether. Place question mark(?) on information whose meanings are ambiguous and get back to recast these words later. The next step in note taking is what is done after class. It is necessary for students to get back to their notes after class. Notes should be properly read and abbreviated. Words and symbols should also be properly spelt out and certain abridged sentences should also be expanded. Use text books and reference sources to obtain information that would enrich whatever the lecturer has given in class. Write out difficult areas and questions that you need clarification on and ask during

the next lecture it is often wise to check with other course mates to be sure that no important information has been left out.

3.2.7. Studying

The next very important area in study skills is studying. Studying is a skill that must be learnt. A number of things are highlighted in this session which helps to improve the study process. The first part is inculcating effective study habit. There are certain important habits which every good student must have.

These are:

1. Plan specific times for studying. Study time is anytime you are doing something related to school work. It can be a term paper, a project, studying for a test or completing an assigned reading. Students must schedule specific times everyday for study.
2. Plan studying at the same time each day. This helps to establish a routine and becomes parts of the life of a student much like eating and sleeping. When a scheduled study time comes up, one is mentally prepared to begin the study process.
3. Set specific goals for study times. Goals will help one stay focused and also help in monitoring of progress.

Simply sitting down to study has little value. It is necessary to be clear about what the study process is aimed to accomplish.

4. Plan not to study too much at one sitting. The study process is usually not very effective if you plan to do so much work at a time. It can also make certain students hate the entire idea of studying. It is important to space the work that needs to be done over shorter periods of time. This can be achieved by drawing up a programme of activities of what one needs to achieve within each study time. Taking short breaks in the study process also helps restore mental energy.
5. Start the study process with the most difficult assignment. It is necessary to do this because the most difficult assignment will

require more mental effort and should not be embarked upon when one is already tired.

6. Every student must have a 'me time'. A time when all phones are switched off and every kind of distraction is warded off. Switching off the phone allows you to progress in your study without any interruption. It is difficult and also takes time to get back to what one was doing before a phone call.

Another area worth investigating in studying is the ***study method***. These are methods used to study effectively and to achieve positive results in school work. ***Scanning*** means to read hastily. This is a kind of reading that one uses to have an over all picture of a work. It is often related to ***skimming*** which is also reading in a cursory manner but skimming is a much more detailed reading than scanning. These two methods of reading are important when one is looking for information and preliminary sources of information like when the encyclopedia and other reference sources are used. The student is not required to go through such works page by page but to Scan and skim through eliciting all important information. Next is speed reading which is very crucial in tertiary education. Students who read too slowly even when their comprehension is adequate will run into problems because of the amounts they have to read. Speed reading helps students cover a lot of grounds in very little time

Memorizing

Memorizing vocabulary words, multiplication tables, historical dates can be difficult. Fortunately there are easier ways to tackle these problems. First of all start small and learn and master things in small numbers and add more things as progress is made. Use of ***mnemonics*** can also help in memorizing things. ***Mnemonics*** is an old method of memorizing lists and organizing them This is a way of remembering new facts by linking them to event, word or song e.g. BODMAS in mathematics for Bracket, Division, Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction There are mnemonics that come as a sentence like Never Eat Shredded Wheat which helps in remembering the points of compass: North, East, South and West

- 3.2.8. **Studying with flash cards** also helps students immensely. To do this one can get a 3 X 5 card, write a vocabulary word or name on one side of the

card and its definition on the other side. Then read one side of the card and try to remember the words on the opposite side. The cards can be kept round the room and one can study them as one prepares for lectures.

3.2.9. Hybridization

This is all the study methods are used at the same time. This is quite effective and helps to make an A student. Students should use all possible methods at their disposal ensure that success is achieved.

3.2.11 Quizzes

Quizzes are an excellent way to review study notes especially in the weeks and days before an examination. Quizzes can show where your strengths and weaknesses are.

This will then allow you to focus your efforts more precisely is also good practice to share your study quiz with your classmates and test each other periodically. This method can help throw up even more areas and details you may have missed.

3.2.12 Thinking Skills

Students must learn to be good thinkers. Effective thinking skills must be built up over a period of time. It is good to ask yourself questions as you read. If you are not a good thinker yet, then seek out other students who you feel are good thinkers and find out from them what you can do to think critically and creatively

3.2.11 The SQ3R Method

The SQ3R Method helps to sharpen study skills. SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.

Survey

You must get the best overall picture of what you are going to study before you study. Read the outlines to appreciate what the subject or topic is about.

Question

Ask questions for learning It is important to know the answers to questions. When you raise questions it helps to guide you on what you should emphasize on by throwing up the what, why, how, when, who and where of the study content. Asking questions in the process of study helps you not only to make sense of the material but also to remember it more easily because the process will make an impression on you.

Read

Do not just run your eyes over a textbook. Read actively. Read to answer the questions you have raised or the ones raised by the lecturer. Look out for marks of emphasis such as bold or italicized print in the text. Do not be selective when you are reading a text Also read tables, graphs and illustrations because in many cases, they convey an idea more effectively than the written text.

Reading

Reading is a primary means by which one acquires information. However, for this to be effective, you must read with a purpose. From the outset, it is important to know what your purpose is and then read accordingly. Find out the author's main or central idea in every paragraph of the text This implies that you must read the same assignment three to four times, each time with a different purpose.

Recite

Stop reading periodically and mull over what you have read by reciting it. Recitation enables you to review the text This is also a good time to go over what you may have noted as you read. The best time to review is when you have just finished studying something It is risky to wait until an examination to begin this process. A final review should be done before an examination, much like fine tuning one's knowledge of the material

3.3 Study Group

It is good practice to join a study group. However, caution must be exercised here. Students must ensure they join a group that is motivated, purposeful and focused. When you join the study group it can really help you with difficult topics and course works. It may not be wise to be in the same study group as your best friend to avoid distraction. The study

group should be one that each individual has something to contribute. None of the members should be a "sponge" who is only in the group to listen. Study group is most effective when topics are shared ahead of the group's meeting so that members can prepare ahead of time. Also, the group should set tests from time to time. Note that while important, study groups must not take the place of personal study time.

3.4 Examinations Strategies

The aim of examinations is to test students' knowledge of a subject or topic. It is a formal method of assessment of knowledge. Examinations can be a source of worry for a student who is ill prepared. Students are advised to begin their preparation well ahead of time by adopting the strategies that have been outlined earlier. However, at the examination proper, students can adopt the following measures so as to come out successful.

1. Objective examinations

Surveying

It is not wise to jump into answering the questions simply because the first question you lay your eyes on is simple and known by you. Survey any objective examination to find out what types of questions are being asked. Surveying helps you to know what to expect.

Know the ground rules

It is important that students read directions. Answer in line with the directions. Make sure your answers are clear. Find out what the rules for marking are and be careful to follow them. For example, if wrong answers are penalized, don't guess unless you can reduce the choices to two.

Answering easy questions first

Answering the questions you find easy is the best strategy. This gives you time to tackle the more difficult ones. If you spend too much time on difficult questions, you may not be able to complete the examination.

Picking out key words

Objective examination questions usually contain one or more key words. A key or group of key words is those on which the truth or falsity of a statement hangs. Students should endeavour to detect the key words in the statement that define the meaning statement contains two clauses, one of which is false, the whole statement is false. Usually, two-statement true-false questions are either both true or both false.

Reading multiple choice questions

Multiple choice questions are mostly true-false questions arranged in groups. Usually, only one alternative is correct. It is your job to pick the alternative that is more nearly true than the others. Be careful to read multiple choice questions the same way as for true-false. Eliminate obvious false choices.

2. Reading Other Types of Questions

You should use the same methods used to answer true-false and multiple choice questions to answer questions that require you to match. Always scan the entire list of alternatives before matching any. Try to identify the key words in each list and test them. Completion questions require you to provide a word or phrase. When you come across completion questions, choose your words carefully. If you don't know the answer, give it your best guess, as long as responses get at least partial mark.

3. Essay Examinations

Time is of the essence in answering essay questions. Plan your time so as to ensure that you distribute it evenly. Do not get carried away on one or two questions to the extent that you cannot answer the other questions in the time allowed. Read through the entire questions first to have a good idea of what you are expected to answer. If you are required to choose from a number of questions, ensure that your number the answers to match the questions. Watch out for key words such as "list, "describe compare and contrast" and "outline and do exactly as required. After scanning the list of questions to be answered, choose the you know most about.

Prepare an outline of your answers while paying attention to time. Outlines will help you remember important ideas and facts. Write legibly!

4.0 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with Term paper writing and study select part on writing a term paper discussed the of a term paper topic, information search in the library, information search for online resources and ups for collecting and collating information from these sources. In addition, the major elements of writing the term paper were delimited. These are Thesis statement, outlining the work and the organization of the work in such a way as to highlight the Introduction, the body of the work, and its conclusion.

Study skills dealt with strategies and methods of studying in a proactive manner. Important issues such as time management, goal setting. organization of tasks, are effectively discussed. Various steps in note-taking and different study methods are also delineated.

This chapter therefore, is geared towards giving students all the necessary rudiments needed in writing an excellent term paper.

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