



“Studying Successfully – Learning Techniques and Study Skills”

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The three-hour lecture presents a survey of the most efficient learning techniques and skills for independent study at university or college. You can review your own approach and change or modify it if necessary.

This script has been designed to help you while listening to the lecture. You are invited to add your own notes, for which ample free space between the lines has been left.

1. Planning and Timing

1. Study schedule

2. Semester schedule

3. Daily and weekly schedules

- working hours: not more than 6 hours per day
- daily rhythm: performance peaks and lows
- breaks: one fifth of the time spent on learning
- sleep: six to eight hours per day
- recreation / leisure time

2. Motivation

Knowledge acquisition is driven by different kinds of motivation: curiosity, the need for admiration and recognition, the fear of punishment or failure, the expectation of success and reward.

Motivation can be strengthened by:

1. Setting a target
2. Reaching a result which stimulates further action
3. Rewards

Larger learning units should be subdivided into smaller entities, and long-term targets should be broken down into short-term and medium-term objectives.

Three rules

1. Success reinforces success. It can be immediate success, i.e. the pleasure of understanding, the correct solution to a mathematical problem, or an essay that pleases the writer, or consequential success: acceptance and appreciation, praise, love, affection, confirmation.

2. The tolerance to frustration is growing with experiences of success increasing in number and intensity.
3. Making oneself aware of success on the way towards a target is much more important than looking back at what has not yet been achieved.

3. The Place of Work

- desk and chair
- the work materials
- the lighting
- the noise
- library vs. private office

4. Memory and Learning

1. Three types of memory

- ultra short-term memory
- short-term memory
- long-term memory

2. Learning techniques

- **multi-channel learning: learning & reviewing with different senses**
- **subjective importance**
- **network building**
- **piecemeal learning: changing the content of learning**

• **learning by reviewing**

Reviewing schedule:

1. reviewing on the same day
2. reviewing one day afterwards
3. reviewing after one week
4. reviewing after a month
5. reviewing after six months or after one year

• **Mnemotechniques & Reminders**

• **Card files**

Ideal for learning new words, formulae, definitions, rules, etc.

In a box of card files with five compartments an item is to be moved from one compartment to the next when it is remembered. If it is not remembered, it must stay in its compartment. If an item has finally arrived in the fifth compartment in this way, it will surely be fixed in the long-term memory. For a more detailed description cf: Hülshoff/Kaldewey: "Mit Erfolg studieren", page 96

5. Reading Techniques

The way a text is read depends on the text type, on whether or not its subject is known and on whether the text is considered difficult or easy to understand.

1. Skimming (for reviewing previously read texts / grasping main ideas)
2. Swift reading, with certain chapters being read more thoroughly
3. Thorough, reflective reading

Rules

- Reading enhances the personal vocabulary, which makes it easier to understand texts
- Reading should be selective: What is actually relevant, what is of interest for you? Also with books: reading should be focussed on the relevant chapters.
- Working through a text:
 - a) Understanding the general idea
 - b) Asking questions
 - c) Discovering the text means reading it!

Do not read texts like a novel; pause between chapters; reflect; discuss; distinguish between facts and opinions or views; take notes; make summaries.

6. Group Work

1. Advantages

- facilitates co-operation and exchange
- encourages discussions
- makes contact easier
- furthers activity and motivation
- provides opportunity to review own knowledge
- helps to get to a comprehensive overview
- strengthens self-confidence
- is good preparation for exam situations
- helps to work more effectively

2. Framework

- size: 3 to 5 participants
- fixed meetings

- clear-cut objectives (e.g. preparation for an exam)
- subject(s) and structure of each meeting to be fixed in advance
- meetings to be chaired in turns, i.e. each group member must take responsibility.

3. Risks

- Group work cannot replace individual learning.
- Rivalry can hardly be avoided.
- Some may strengthen their position at the expense of others: "free riding".
- Contributions might not be received constructively.
- Unity within the group may lead to unwillingness to accept other views.
- The predominating behaviour of some participants may discourage others.
- Deferred group meetings are likely to disturb continuity of work.
- Trouble-makers may disturb the group's work.

Information:

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