

1: Study Skills Guide: Improve Reading Comprehension Skills

High school students often feel overwhelmed at the thought of college-level reading. Academic writing comes into play more in college, and since college textbooks are more dense than high school-level reading, that can be challenging to adjust to.

Below are some strategies for active reading and studying. We hope it helps! SQ3R Knowing what you need to get out of your reading will help you choose the appropriate learning strategy and set your reading speed. The appropriate choice helps to maximize comprehension and reading efficiency. Having a planned reading schedule with realistic and attainable goals will ensure a successful learning outcome. The plan must consist of organization, time management, an understanding of what should be learned, consistent review and recall to monitor comprehension, and a way to assess results ability to fluidly recall information presented in chapters read. An active reading method like SQ3R encompasses all of the parts of the described plan. Before an active reading method can be learned successfully, the reader must analyze their reading skills and rate. There are many factors that contribute to slow reading speed. These factors may point to reading problems that must be addressed before you can increase your reading speed for maximum benefit. Three of the main factors that inhibit reading efficiency are poor concentration, vocabulary, and comprehension. Concentration Are you unable to concentrate for a specific block of time that allows you to complete a task e. Are you easily distracted by others while reading? Are you distracted by internal thoughts and your environment while reading? If you answered yes to one or all of the above questions then concentration may be an issue for you. To combat this issue you must: Break up your reading into small sections - the text naturally does this for you by introducing each topic by heading. Read the first heading and turn it into a question. Turn this into the question -What is photosynthesis? Now read that section. Periodically evaluate if you are concentrating. If not, why and diffuse the situation. Stop the thought, refocus, and begin reading again. Are you getting tired? Stand up and stretch or pace while reading. When you are done with that section write down the answer to the question. Count how many paragraphs you were able to read in the short period of time. Keep yourself accountable for the time you use. Take breaks between reading sections. After each break try to recall what was previously read before starting the new section. After practicing this technique consistently, your ability to concentrate for longer periods of time should increase. The environment you create to study has a great impact on your ability to concentrate. Where do you study? What type of environment allows you to stay focused? Do you have an organized process for studying? Most students go to the library, to an extra classroom, or stay in their dorm rooms to study but are these places the best for optimum concentration? Are there numerous distractions where you study e. Is your study area organized or do you have to search for your texts, assignments? Is the chair you use uncomfortable or to comfortable? Is the area quiet or to quiet some need "white noise" in order to focus. By answering these questions then making appropriate adjustments you are creating a positive learning environment that supports your study and concentration efforts. Much like external factors, internal factors can also impede your concentration. Do you enjoy the subject you are studying Do you have personal issues that are taking over your thoughts? If the problems are so intrusive that you find yourself primarily concentrating on them and they are impeding your ability to get things done then you should immediately seek assistance through the appropriate resource e. Counseling Center, Health and Wellness Center Otherwise, creating a plan of action each time you study will assist you in knowing what should be accomplished for that study period. Study subjects that are the most difficult or that you have the least interest in first. Each time you accomplish an assignment reward yourself by taking a break, exercise, or visit a friend for a few minutes. Set goals that are realistic and attainable. Vocabulary The better your vocabulary the better understanding and recall of information read. To improve your vocabulary: Read often and vary your reading material to give yourself a varied vocabulary background. Read with a dictionary available. Do not assume you know the meaning of a word! If you hesitate then look it up. Write the word on an index card and create a file of new words learned each week. Write the definition in your own words and create a sentence using the word that relates to your life. The more you associate the word to your life the

better the recall. Get a vocabulary calendar and learn a word a day! File the calendar pages in your word file. Use the words each day in conversation. Comprehension The best way to know if you are comprehending material is to monitor your recall as you read. Learn an active reading method to ensure you are staying engaged in the reading process. The SQ3R method is described in later in this section Try to recite details and main ideas after each section. The more you can recall the better the comprehension. If you find that you cannot recall much, break your reading up into smaller sections using the subheadings and again recite. Increase the section size as you see improvement. Remember, concentration plays a large part in your ability to comprehend so assess your focus. Do not slow down your reading speed to try and compensate for lack of comprehension. Research tells us that reading at a slower speed often interferes with comprehension because it forces us to resort to word for word reading. Use an index card or ruler as a guide to keep focused and your eyes moving. You should see improvement in comprehension as you learn to monitor your recall, practice and develop the habit of active reading, and increase your reading speed next section. Reading Speed Increasing your reading speed can help you maximize your study time and develop additional skills for better learning efficiency. In order for reading speed to increase with effective results you must have the motivation to practice the necessary techniques and the desire to improve. Once you understand your present reading rate you can learn to increase your speed by practicing the hints described below. These hints are not to be confused with speed reading techniques that are best learned by taking a speed reading course for maximum benefit. Understand that each type of reading demands a different reading rate. An adventure novel may allow for a quick rate whereas a science text may demand a steadier rate. Most individuals fixate on each word. To increase speed you should proactively focus on words at a time. The better your vocabulary, the better your recall, the faster you read, the better your comprehension. Mouthing the words while you read slows down your reading speed because it forces you to focus on each word rather than groups of words. Practice makes perfect therefore the more you read the more proficient you become. Practice will increase speed, vocabulary, comprehension, knowledge base The type of reading you need to do dictates the reading rate. If you are reading for detail you must read at a rate for comprehension. If you are reviewing, reading for general main ideas then skimming and using a faster rate is appropriate. To increase your speed you need to force yourself to read at a faster rate for short periods of time. Use a card or ruler to guide your speed and focus on the page. Go at a speed that is uncomfortable but you are still comprehending the material. This must be practiced daily. After practicing the above for a few days, retime yourself reading at an average rate and you should see a speed rate increase. The rate increase will only continue if you practice this technique. If you do not practice then your speed rate will revert back to your previous "comfortable" rate. Remember to check for comprehension as your reading rate increases to ensure that you are increasing at appropriate increments to enhance learning. Try to avoid rereading. Pay attention to your concentration so that rereading becomes unnecessary. Rereading is usually a habit formed from lack of confidence in comprehension ability. If you practice the SQ3R method and consistently recall and review while reading, the rereading habit will become unnecessary.

2: Study Tips - Cornell College

HOW TO IMPROVE COLLEGE READING SKILLS IN 10 STEPS Have you ever sat and read the same sentence in a textbook over and over without getting anything from it? Now that you're in college, the information you get from reading textbooks is often necessary.

If you want good grades in college, you must attend every class, not almost every class. The importance of regular class attendance cannot be overemphasized. When you miss classes, you miss lectures, notes, discussions, explanations, and assignments. You cannot make up what you miss. Use a student planner: Also use your planner to keep track of tests and quizzes, activities and appointments. Completing these smaller portions over a longer period of time will allow you more time to focus. Use three-ring binders for class notes: Organize and save computer work: Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests: Have different colored folders for each class to keep all returned materials. Old tests can be helpful study guides in the future. Maintain a neat and organized study area: Set up an area or desk with everything you will need and keep this area clean. Manage your time well: Schedule 90 minute study sessions: Rate each item as an A must do today , B should do today , or C would like to do today, but can wait. Listing and prioritizing your tasks only takes a few minutes but it is a great way to organize your time. Focus on one task at a time until everything is completed. Be Successful in Class: Do every class assignment: Sit in the front row when possible: Be on time to each class. Participate in class Communicate with your instructors: Therefore, it is important to have good class notes. Be an active listener: Taking notes can help you pay attention and stay focused. In your notes, underline or star the most important information so you can pay special attention to it when studying. Take notes that are easy to read: Know How to Read a Textbook: Knowing how to scan, read and review will make it much easier for you to understand and remember what you read. To scan, read the title, subtitle, and everything in bold and italic print. Look at the pictures, captions, charts, graphs, and read the introduction, the summary and the review questions. This time, as you scan restate the main idea of each passage using your own words. Find a good place to study: Know your learning style: Some learn best by seeing the material visual learner , some learn best from hearing the material auditory learner , and some learn best by doing kinesthetic learner. As a rule, the more senses you involve and the wider variety of methods you use while studying, the more you remember. Organize your study time: Decide exactly what you want to get done. Always allow more time than you think you will need and prioritize your work to make sure that you have enough time for the things that are most important. Do difficult tasks first while you are most alert and fresh and remember to take regular short study breaks. Know How to Take Tests: Having done that, you can further improve your test performance by using these test-taking tips. Get off to a good start: As soon as you get the test, write anything that you will need to remember facts, dates, equations, memory clues, etc at the top of the test. Mark the questions you want to return to. Increase your odds on multiple choice by trying to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the options. Always read all the choices and if you are unsure, cross out the choices that you know are incorrect and then make an educated guess with the remaining options. Know how to approach an essay question: Before you start writing, brainstorm by jotting down the key words and ideas along with other key points you want to include. Statements with words like always, all, never, every and none are often false where statements with words like usually, most, often, sometimes, many tend to be true. Be prepared for open book tests by going through your notes and highlighting the most important information. Put self stick notes or bookmarks in your textbook to help you located specific information quickly.

3: Reading for Fun as a College Student – My College Advice

First off, time management is helpful when it comes to comprehension. Tip #1 - Break your lengthy reading assignments into sections. For example, instead of reading 50 pages in one sitting, read 5 pages in the morning, another 5 pages over lunch, and 5 or 10 pages in the evening.

Some Scattered Suggestions on Reading in College The first thing you should know about reading in college is that it bears little or no resemblance to the sort of reading you do for pleasure, or for your own edification. Professors assign more than you can possibly read in any normal fashion. We know it, at least most of us do. You have to make strategic decisions about what to read and how to read it. That calls for a certain kind of smash-and-grab approach to reading. Nor would I personally want to talk at my students day in and day out. They all take a while to master, through trial and error. But skimming is not just reading in a hurry, or reading sloppily, or reading the last line and the first line. A good skimmer has a systematic technique for finding the most information in the least amount of time. Let me take you through a skim of this book, bit by bit. In the first four pages, you should only really care about this sentence: Objectives Why are you reading this: If this were a class centrally concerned with Marxist theories of history, or on Marxist revolutions and their relationship to nationalism, it might be another matter. Signposts "I will argue" is a signpost--"If the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia" is not. But these are pretty tricky passages. Table them for a while. So, look for more signposts: At the top of page 6: No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. More on the dictionary shortly. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. Note the sequence of chapters by looking at their titles: Read the introduction of each of the chapters assigned, and perhaps even the ones not assigned. Return to each chapter as assigned, in the sequence they appear in the book. Do exactly what I outlined for the intro: Sketch out an outline of the sequence of argument in each chapter: You start to see this instead on the middle of page The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. Nationalism and national communities replace religion and religious communities. Nationalism and national communities also replace the dynastic realm, the old monarchical order, around the same time. This happens in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. Many students, when writing papers, understand that you need to clearly define an overall argument and place it up front in the paper. But after that point, many student papers often contains a more or less random jumble of evidence which has some vague relation to the argument. To develop an argument well, each point should lead logically and sequentially to the next. His notion of simultaneity is critical to his argument in Chapter 3. Outlining the sequence of argument in readings should help you grasp this--assuming the reading is well-written. This is, of course, a perilous assumption with academic writing. There are five different basic kinds of footnotes: Sometimes amusing when you get "Anti-Logrolling", e. Sometimes scholars stick big, hairy problems with their argument down in the footnotes somewhere. Scholars, especially junior scholars, need to prove to their colleagues that they know the scholarship in the field that they are working on. So many footnotes are laundry lists of relevant books, or recap bodies of theory on a particular subject. Note their date of publication. Quite a few of these sources are older ones. Might there be a newer scholarship that would complicate matters? It also depends on the reading. Not that much of his book is going to need detailed references to primary material: It is different from a monograph, a tightly focused study of some specific historical subject or era. In a monograph, footnote references to evidence may be very, very important. But if a term recurs regularly in a text, or seems particularly central, you MUST learn to pick up a dictionary and find out what the author means. The Hi-Lighter Event Horizon. Try writing down key arguments and making your own outline. Mark two or three areas of potential disagreement or debate:

4: Interpreting Grades in College: A Guide for Students

The first thing you should know about reading in college is that it bears little or no resemblance to the sort of reading you do for pleasure, or for your own edification. Professors assign more than you can possibly read in any normal fashion.

The basic aspects of reading, such as word recognition, phonetics and fluency, can be mastered in just a few years. However, throughout this process reading comprehension must be emphasized. Sadly, classrooms across the United States have students who struggle with reading comprehension. Whether to gain understanding, develop a new skill, or for pure pleasure of reading, full comprehension of what you read is necessary. Reading comprehension is also imperative for a successful career and to excel academically. Students frequently enter college without understanding how necessary good reading comprehension skills are for academic success. The following tips will enhance your ability to understand complicated concepts detailed in textbooks and improve your reading comprehension.

Pre-reading survey Before reading a text, complete a pre-reading survey for a brief summary of it. This will give you an idea of what to expect in the text, so your reading will be more productive. The first thing you should do in a pre-reading survey is read the introduction and review the table of contents. Next, read section and chapter headings and text highlighted with bold print. Throughout the process, be sure to focus on general information, not specifics. Chapter title and subtitles. Focus questions at the beginning of each chapter. Reviewing these questions before reading the text will help provide focus and indicate what to look for while reading the chapter. Chapter introductions and first paragraphs. Reviewing these subheading before reading the chapter will provide you an idea of what major topics to focus on as you read each chapter section. First sentence of each paragraph. It tells you what the paragraph is about. However, in some texts, the first sentence is more of an attention getter. This exercise alone will provide you a very good idea of what the entire chapter is about and the major themes to look for as you read.

Visual aids Look for any material that is presented in list form ie. Bulleted list of information, pictures, diagrams, maps and pictures can all help you identify the most important points of the chapter. Last paragraph or chapter summary. If present, review these materials to get a better idea of the important ideas and concepts to look for as you read.

Define your purpose Many texts contain information and details that is unrelated to the most important concepts and ideas. If you have a difficult time concentrating when you read, we recommend reading out loud. Many people comprehend material better if they read it out loud especially if your an auditory learner. Take notes or highlight important concepts Writing something down is one of the most effective memory techniques. As you come across key concepts, facts and ideas, use a highlighter, write them down on a piece of paper, or make a note in the margin.

5: Learn Ways to Become a Better College Reader

Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.

Introduction to College Writing Statement of Mission and Course Goals Recent research into the role of first-year writing reveals that first-year writing courses are best used to encourage meta-awareness of the genres, contexts, and audiences that writers encounter in college see Anne Beaufort, *Writing in College and Beyond*. English, which the great majority of incoming students take their first or second semester in college, serves as an important introduction to the culture of the academy—its habits of mind, conventions, and responsibilities. Its central purpose is to immerse students in the writing, reading, and thinking practices of their most immediate community: Students explore how literacy works, both within the academic and without, through extensive inquiry-based writing. English focuses on engaging students as writers and building the reflective awareness needed for success in a wide range of writing experiences within the university. Because writing in the 21st century means composing in a wide variety of print-based and digital environments, the curriculum encourages students and instructors to work in online environments as is appropriate. The overall goals, outcomes, and curricular components for English and have been developed locally through discussion and collaboration among instructors in the First-Year Writing Program. They are directly informed by our annual student assessment process, and they have been written within the framework of nationally accepted outcomes for first-year composition. Students learn that language has consequences and writers must take responsibility for what they write. The course frequently puts students at the center of their own discourse, challenging them to discover and express their own ideas and to make their ideas convincing or compelling to others. Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing In English, students work with readings that stretch them intellectually; readings may be challenging, or may be in genres with which they are less familiar. Generally, readings in English center on intellectual challenges and questions—that is, they are written to respond to and extend the conversations in academic communities of various kinds. However, instructors sometimes also provide a wider range of nonfiction texts as they guide students toward becoming more flexible readers. While English is a primarily a writing course, it is also a course in rhetorical reading. Knowledge of Process and Conventions Part of helping students to embrace writing as a lifelong practice is to emphasize that writing itself is a kind of inquiry, a way to think and learn. It is not simply a means of recording what one already knows. English creates the conditions that allow students to gain confidence as they discover what they think through writing, helping them see that this process can be used in any subject, any discipline, and almost any situation that demands thought. As a consequence, English focuses, in part, on the affective dimension of writing and thinking processes; the course encourages students to believe that reading and writing are meaning-making activities that are relevant to their lives, within school and without. They experience writing as a social interaction for a particular purpose, for knowledge is not created in isolation but through dialogue and writing shared with a real audience. The writing classroom functions as an intellectual community in which students are encouraged to think freely and deeply, where difference is not only accepted but is also seen as an opportunity for learning. Curricular Components The curricular components listed here only begin to capture the energy and commitment necessary for student success in a first-year writing course. Individual instructors work within these outcomes and curricular expectations in a variety of ways. Writing Students in writing classes continuously produce written work. This includes evaluated work, such as formal assignments and subsequent revisions, as well as informal and non-evaluated work, such as research blog entries, annotated bibliographies, collaborative wikis, in-class writing exercises, reflective logs and memos, rough drafts, and peer responses. Students can expect to write a considerable amount of informal and non-evaluated work from which their formal, evaluated work may grow. Instructors will encourage student writers to draw purposefully on a range of sources, including but not limited to personal experience, observation, interviews, field work, and text-based sources—both online and in print—in a wide variety of ways. As students work in digital

spaces, the writing produced should be appropriate for those genres and media. English is a revision-based writing course. Taken as a whole, the revisions and reflection demonstrate how students have met or exceeded the assessment scoring guide for English Reading and Research. Instructors encourage students to engage with readings through a variety of critical reading strategies. These may take the form of informal, in-class work as well as annotated bibliographies, source reports, double-entry journals, and reading workshops of various kinds. Instructors will provide an introduction to library references and methods of citing sources. Course Community Writing courses are highly interactive and depend on frequent feedback, discussions, and in-class workshops. Attendance, in-class participation, and respect for submission deadlines are expected in writing classes.

6: How to Get Good Grades - UMass Dartmouth

Students frequently enter college without understanding how necessary good reading comprehension skills are for academic success. Those who grasp the information they read in textbooks earn better grades and experience far less stress than those who struggle to fully understand what they're reading.

So how do you find a happy medium? College reading is all about strategy. For example, skimming and scanning are great for research purposes. Close reading, on the other hand, is necessary for any material that is brand new to you. Skimming is a reading method that can help you uncover the main ideas of a text very quickly. Skimming involves reading titles, headlines, first and last sentences in paragraphs. If the material seems relevant, you may choose to go back and read the entire text closely. Close reading is the kind of reading that English students use in order to interpret works of literature. Close readers absorb every word on a page. They also pay attention to how written material is organized and how it relates to other fields of study. Whenever you are connecting ideas and reading in between the lines, you are engaged in close reading.

Efficient Reading Tips In order to become an efficient reader, you need to eliminate the distractions and roadblocks that sometimes cause readers to lose their place, to reread the same lines, or to mentally "check out" from the words and their meanings. Daydreaming is strictly prohibited! Try not to do this with your eyes, either. Ideally, you should approach your reading in the morning or the afternoon. Sit in an upright position, in a chair with proper back support. Improve Your Comprehension Preview the entire document before you start reading. Are there headings or subtitles? Read a little bit every day. Small doses of information are easier to digest. Plus, each new day of reading is an opportunity to review what you learned on the previous day. Read with a dictionary a hardcopy or an online version nearby. Discuss your reading with friends or classmates. Try offering a summary in your own words. If you or your listeners have questions, go back and try to answer them. Other students are probably wondering the same things. Some readers tend to over-rely on highlighters. They wind up with textbooks covered in neon. The most effective note-taking involves changing the language into your own words – or paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is an advanced exercise in cognition, kind of like translation. Writing your own outline is an even more active way to explore your reading. Research shows that memory improves when you engage with the material, using multiple learning cues. Reading and writing about your subject will help to solidify those concepts in your mind.

Web Reading Some experts report that reading text from a computer screen is slower and more stressful on your eyes. Other experts say that online reading offers less of a connection – if only because there are no material pages to hold in your hand. Still, if you prefer to read on the web, bear in mind that flat screens are better for your eyes than traditional computer monitors. Try to avoid lighting that creates a glare on your screen. You can purchase an antiglare screen to cover your monitor. Disable pop-ups and turn off your email alerts. Keep your homework area free of bills, magazines, and catalogues.

7: 5 Active Reading Strategies (And How I'm Applying Them)

Grades are the measure of college success. Like the salary at a job, the batting average in baseball, or the price of a stock, your grade-point average is an objective indication of how you're doing.

As a college professor, I am often asked for my advice on how students can get better grades. And after a couple of years of refining my ideas, I have developed these 10 tips. And by the way, these tips will work for you – whether you are a first-year student or a senior, whether at a small college or a large university. These tips are universal. So, if you are struggling with grades and interested in raising your grade point average, take a close look at these 10 tips for getting better grades. Attend All Your Classes Now, you might think this was an obvious one. But I speak from experience when I say that many students skip classes for one reason or another. But if you want good grades, there are several reasons why you should attend all your classes: And often faculty have participation points or bonus points, so beyond just attending, make an effort to be involved in the class discussions. Many professors have attendance policies, so you can have a direct impact on your grade simply by attending. Here are some ways to master your professors: Most professors give out a class syllabus during the first week of classes – and it is your responsibility to know deadlines and all the requirements for the course. Understand professors on personal level. Rather than viewing the professor as some figurehead at the front of the class who decides your fate in some abstract way, get to know your professor as a person. Visit him or her during office hours, or stay after class. Communicate with professors when you are struggling. Here are some tips for getting organized: Use a planner or other organization system. Others are that same way with their personal digital assistants. So once you have some sort of system, get in the habit of using it and it will soon become second nature. Keep homework, tests, and class papers in central location. Use Time Wisely Even if you do not procrastinate and are the most organized person in the world, time can be one of your biggest enemies in college. Here are some tips for using time wisely: Tackle harder work first. Yes, tackle the harder stuff first so that you are sure to have enough time to complete it. Take breaks as reward for work. Reward yourself for completing a major task by taking a break and chatting with a friend or watching some television. Break larger projects into smaller, easy-to-accomplish pieces. If you have a massive term paper due at the end of the semester, break up the work into smaller chunks and assign deadlines to each part. Do not overextend yourself; learn to say no. Besides all your academic work, you will also be asked to get involved in all sorts of clubs and organizations while in college – and at some point, you will have to learn to say no to some requests of your time. Work hard to play hard. These notes are vital clues to what the professor thinks is the most important material for you to learn, so besides taking notes, learn how to better use them to your advantage. Here are some specifics: Be an active listener in class. Instead, listen attentively and actively – and ask for clarification when you need it. Take good notes in class. Rewrite or organize notes on your computer outside of class. This suggestion may sound a little extreme, but the writing-to-learn literature shows that you can increase your understanding and retention of material by rewriting it. Do buy all the textbooks – and follow these tips for using it: Read all assigned material. When a professor assigns a chapter, read the whole thing unless told otherwise, including the opening vignettes, the case studies, and tables and exhibits. At the same time, know what parts of the text are most critical. For example, in one of my classes, the vocabulary is most critical, and the textbook emphasizes the point by having all the terms and their definitions printed in the margins of every chapter. Use outlining system to help comprehend material. Reading and highlighting the material in the text is just the minimum. Organize your thoughts before writing. Understand requirements for paper. Be sure to understand the reference system and all the mechanics of the paper font, margins, cover sheet, footnotes, etc. Write a draft and get feedback when possible. Rewrite, edit, rewrite, edit, rewrite. Learn that editing and rewriting are your friends. No one is a good enough writer to whip out the final draft in one sitting. The best writers go through a process. Spellcheckers catch spelling errors, but not other problems, so learn the art of proofreading. Study, Study, Study Another obvious one here? Perhaps, but the rule is you should be spending at least three hours outside of class for every hour in it. So, here are some suggestions: Study early and often. Breaking your studying into

shorter periods of time will make less of a chore and give your mind time to absorb the material before moving on. Develop and practice good study habits. Make it a habit and studying will become second nature to you. Know how you best study, learn material. Some people need complete silence to concentrate while others like a little noise. Find what works for you and stick with it. A study buddy can be a great tool, as long as you actually get some studying accomplished. Make sure work is done before socializing. Studying is critical to learning, which is critical to better grades so do the work before heading out to have fun. Here are some hints: Know what to expect on exams. Every professor has a style of test development, so obtain old copies or ask the professor directly. Know the types of questions that will be asked as well as the content that will be covered. Read questions carefully and plan answers. Take your time at the beginning of the test to read through all the instructions and make a plan of attack. Pace yourself so you have plenty of time to complete all parts. And know the point values of questions, so you can be sure to complete the most important ones first in case time does run out. Polish Those Verbal Communications Skills Many classes include a presentation component, so use these tips to improve your verbal communications skills and maximize your grade: The best speeches and presentations are the well-rehearsed ones, so complete your script or outline early enough to have time to practice the presentation and to make sure it falls within the specified time limit. If using technology, always have a back-up. Technology is great, but sometimes it fails. If you have a PowerPoint presentation, make copies of it as a handout in case you need it. Know the presentation situation and plan accordingly. Every professor has a set of guidelines when grading presentations, and many classroom set-ups are different, so know the situation before going into the presentation. Final Thoughts on Improving Your Grades Following these guidelines should help your grades immensely, but here is one other tip. Remember to think of your professors as your allies, not your enemies. And if not your allies, at least your partners. Our goal is for every student to learn and master the materials in the course. And if you master the materials, you should have a good grade in the class. Hansen is founder of Quintessential Careers , one of the oldest and most comprehensive career development sites on the Web, as well CEO of EmpoweringSites. He is also founder of MyCollegeSuccessStory. Hansen is also a published author, with several books, chapters in books, and hundreds of articles. Hansen is also an educator, having taught at the college level for more than 15 years. Visit his personal Website or reach him by email at randall at quintcareers.

8: Reading Strategies | Saint Mary's College

College demands that you become efficient and skilled at note-taking, listening, communicating and studying. This page will, hopefully, offer you tips to help you become a successful student and learn skills that will be useful to you in life beyond college.

Subscribe at Apple Podcasts. Class begins with a big "shhhh" from the instructor. This is an introductory chemistry class at a state university. For the next hour and 15 minutes, the instructor will lecture and the students will take notes. By the end of class, the three large blackboards at the front of the room will be covered with equations and formulas. Students in this class say the instructor is one of the best lecturers in the department. Physics professor Joe Redish at the University of Maryland. Emily Hanford "Before printing, it was very difficult to create books, and so someone would read the books to everybody who would copy them down," says Joe Redish, a professor of physics at the University of Maryland. He points out that the word "lecture" comes from the Latin word meaning "to read. He says lecturing has never been an effective teaching method, and now that information is so easily accessible, lecturing is a waste of time. But after a few years in the classroom, Redish was meeting with one of his mentors, a famous physicist named Lewis Elton who had begun doing research on education. He knew that Elton was right. I would find other students. I learned how to learn physics on my own. So he began trying to better understand how people learn. This was the s and 80s, a time when cognitive scientists were making big breakthroughs in their understanding of how the human brain processes and retains information. At the same time, a small and growing group of physicists was becoming interested in the questions that kept Redish up at night: What do students learn in a traditional lecture-based physics class, and are there ways to teach them better? A lot of the information presented in a typical lecture comes at students too fast and is quickly forgotten. Physics education researchers, among whom Redish is now a leader, determined that the traditional lecture-based physics course where students sit and passively absorb information is not an effective way for students to learn. A lot of students can repeat the laws of physics and even solve complex problems, but many are doing it through rote memorization. Most students who complete a standard physics class never understand what the laws of physics mean, or how to apply them to real-world situations. Read more about what physicists learned. Project-based learning and other interactive approaches have been popular in elementary and secondary schools for a long time, and of course the discussion-based seminar is an age-old approach. But lecturing is still the dominant teaching method in large classes at the college level, and also at many high schools - especially in the sciences. Experts say different approaches to teaching large classes can help more students learn, and help them learn better. Harvard physics professor Eric Mazur preparing to teach class. Emily Hanford "We want to have a class where everyone can be successful because we need everyone to be successful," says Brian Lukoff, an education researcher at Harvard who is studying ways to more effectively teach large classes. Mazur calls his approach "peer instruction. But in the early s Mazur read about the research being done by Redish and other physicists interested in education. Mazur realized that even many of his Harvard students were getting through class by memorizing information but not really understanding the fundamental concepts of physics. One day, after he discovered this, Mazur decided to spend a big chunk of class time reviewing a fundamental concept. Half his students had gotten a question about this concept wrong on a recent test. So Mazur gave what he thought was a thorough and thoughtful explanation of the concept. He went slowly, putting all kinds of helpful diagrams up on the board. The students just stared at him. But I knew one thing. I knew that 50 percent of the students had given the right answer. Eric Mazur teaching his class at Harvard. Emily Hanford "And something happened in my classroom which I had never seen before," he says. They were dying to explain it to one another and to talk about it. Mary has the right answer because she understands it. Rather than teaching by telling, he teaches by questioning. Before each class, students are assigned reading in the textbook. He expects students to familiarize themselves with the information beforehand so that class time can be spent helping them understand what the information means. To make sure his students are prepared, Mazur has set up a web-based monitoring system where everyone has to submit answers to questions about the reading prior to

coming to class. The last question asks students to tell Mazur what confused them. He uses their answers to prepare a set of multiple-choice questions he uses during class. Mazur begins class by giving a brief explanation of a concept he wants students to understand. Then he asks one of the multiple-choice questions. Next, he asks the students to turn to the person sitting next to them and talk about the question. Once the students have discussed the question for a few minutes, Mazur instructs them to answer the question again. Then the process repeats with a new question. What Mazur has found over nearly 20 years of using peer instruction is that many more students choose the right answer after they have talked with their peers. By the end of the semester, students have a deeper understanding of the fundamental concepts of physics than they did when Mazur was just lecturing. Students end up understanding nearly three times as much now, measured by a widely-used conceptual test. He says this shows something that may seem obvious. A Skeptical Audience College students typically come into peer instruction courses skeptical. His classmate Stacey Lyne says she has too. She says it will be frustrating to go back to the traditional approach when she takes classes from other teachers. Change is slow in the academy, and professors tend to be rewarded for focusing on their research, often at the expense of their teaching.

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Reading a college textbook effectively takes practice and should be approached differently than reading a novel, comic book, magazine, or website. Becoming an effective reader goes beyond completing the reading in full or highlighting text.

Heading off to college is kind of like leveling up in a video game. In high school, the tests and courses were smaller bosses that you could take down with low-level equipment. This is a whole new adventure, my dude. One of the tools you have at your disposal is your notes. Maybe in high school you were pretty good at taking notes, and now you just need to upgrade them a little bit. Your guide to taking awesome, effective notes is finally here. Your days of looking back at what you scribbled down in class and trying to decipher useful information from them before a test are over. A study by Spies and Wilkin found that the law students who were responsible for reading a legal case before they got to class displayed a greater understanding of the learning materials than students who were not expected to prepare before class. Make sure you have multiple pencils or some backup lead, a notebook, pens, highlighters, sticky notes, your textbook, and your laptop. Try to stick to water and consume caffeine intelligently. Lastly, grab a snack before you head out the door for class. Apples and peanut butter, crackers and cheese, or even certain power bars are good options.

The Notetaking Mindset The other thing you should get in order before coming to class is your brain. I suck at math. I failed my high-school algebra courses three times. I decided that I was going to pass the class. So, I showed up every day with a more or less positive attitude, made an effort to make friends with a classmate I could study with, and paid attention to the lecture, working out problems myself as we went along. In the end, I may not have gotten an A in the course, but I did get a B⁺—which was the highest math score I had ever gotten since elementary school. Moral of the story? If you notice during class that your professor has mentioned the same fact twice or more, or has repeated a fact that was talked about in the previous lecture, make a note to yourself. Circle it, underline it, something to tell your brain to pay attention. Keep an eye out for repetition. Everyone has a slightly different way that they learn, and certain subjects lend themselves to different styles.

The Outline This is for people who like simplicity. When taking your outline notes, start by choosing four or five key points that will be covered in your lecture. Beneath those points write some more in-depth sub-points about each topic as the professor covers them. Or, you can take them on a computer and simply rearrange as you go in your text document. This is a great, simple approach to take notes. To aid in reviewing these kind of notes, try to read each main point and summarize it yourself without looking too much at your notes. Use your notes to test yourself on how much you actually know rather than simply rereading them over and over. In this method, you divide your paper into three sections: Your notes section is for the notes you take during class. You can structure them however you like, but most people like to use an outlining method. You should write your cues section either during or directly after class. You can fill this section with main points, people, or potential test questions. Use this section to give yourself cues to help you remember larger ideas. Use this section to summarize the entire lecture. Keep your cue and summary sections as simple as possible. However, feel free to fill up the notes section with doodles, diagrams, page references, and whatever else you need to properly represent the material presented in class.

The Mind Map The mind map is a great way of taking notes for specific types of subjects. Class subjects like chemistry, history, and philosophy that have interlocking topics or complex, abstract ideas are perfect for this method. Use the mind map to get a handle on how certain topics relate, or to go in depth with one particular idea. Things like debt, irresponsible emperors, attacks from the surrounding barbarian tribes, and so on. Later, to review, go more in depth and add smaller sub-concepts onto each branch. Things like dates, formulas, supporting facts, and related concepts make for great branches. In the end, it might look something like this:

Flow Notes This notetaking method is great for students looking to maximize their active learning within the classroom and minimize their review time later. The point of flow notes is to treat yourself like the student you are, and not a lecture-transcribing machine. Jot down topics, draw arrows, make little doodles and diagrams and graphs. Engage with the material. Write those facts down and draw connections. If not, try pairing your flow notes

with the Cornell Method to make them easier to review for tests. The slides give you a leg up on the outlining process. The professor already did the work for you! All you have to do is take notes and expand on key concepts already presented in the slides. It works great, too, because later you can look at the slide and more or less remember what the professor was talking about when they reached that slide.

Bullet Journaling This is my personal favorite. When you write in your bullet journal, you turn a blank page into a beautiful representation of your thought process. Try using it to combine different aspects of other notetaking styles. This method does have drawbacks. It can be difficult to take notes quickly. One way to combat this is to take notes during class in an outline or using some other method, and then organize them later in your bullet journal as a form of review. Need ideas for what your journal should look like? So, should you use your laptop to take notes, or write them longhand? Students, scientists, and teachers have been debating this ever since laptops were allowed into classrooms. The longer answer is a bit more complicated. In a study published in , students who took notes on a laptop were more likely to simply copy down what their professor said verbatim. This actually impaired their learning because their brains were processing the information shallowly, instead of taking larger concepts and condensing them into note-form. These students performed poorly on conceptual tests compared to others who took notes longhand. These students were more likely to fall off task and were less satisfied with their education when asked about it. Of course, it all depends on how you use your computer. One history class I took in college was actually better because we had access to our laptops, and could quickly check facts for our professor. They were put to good use during discussion times, since students could do a tiny bit of googling before they contributed their thoughts. If you find yourself nipping out of your notetaking document to play Sims 3 or scroll through your Facebook feed, maybe switch to taking longhand notes.

The Best of Both Worlds: Rocketbooks are a super cool piece of new notetaking technology. The notebook is completely reusable. Simply take your notes, scan them using your phone and the Rocketbook app, and then, depending on which notebook you have, wipe it clean with a damp cloth to re-use it virtually indefinitely. How are you doing? That was a lot. There are three great ways to maximize your notes: Make sure that you review your notes within the first 24 hours after your lecture. Review a small portion of your notes every day. Ultimately, we could talk about notes and notetaking techniques all day. But the most important thing to understand is that notetaking is a skill. Take notes often, experiment, and find out what you like. You made it to the end!

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