

College Study Tips
Instructor: Sue Ward

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This packet will help you to develop good study skills so that you will succeed in college. You can add to these skills at the Teaching and Learning Center which is available to students to assist them in writing papers, developing study skills and increasing grades. I encourage you to visit the center

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Adapted from: Walter Paul: How to Study in College 4th ed., 1989

Learning Style Self-Assessment

What Kind of a Student Are You?

Understanding your good habits as well as your bad will help you improve your learning. Complete this questionnaire first, then as you go through this packet assess which of these are beneficial and which need to be revised.

1. I study better (a) by myself ; (b) in groups ; (c) a combination of the two.
2. I remember best when (a) I've heard something ; (b) I've read or seen something ; (c) I've done something more active , like problem-solving.
3. I think I'm better with (a) facts, such as names or dates ; (b) concepts, ideas or themes; or (c) about the same with both.
4. I learn better when I read (a) slowly ; (b) quickly; (c) it doesn't seem to matter in terms of what I remember.
5. I study more efficiently in (a) one solid study period ; (b) small blocks of time.
6. I work (a) well ; (b) poorly, under pressure.
7. I work (a) quickly for short periods of time ; (b) at a steady, slower pace for longer periods of time.
8. I (a) do ; (b) do not learn best in a structured setting, such as a classroom or library setting.
9. I think that the greatest strength in my learning style is

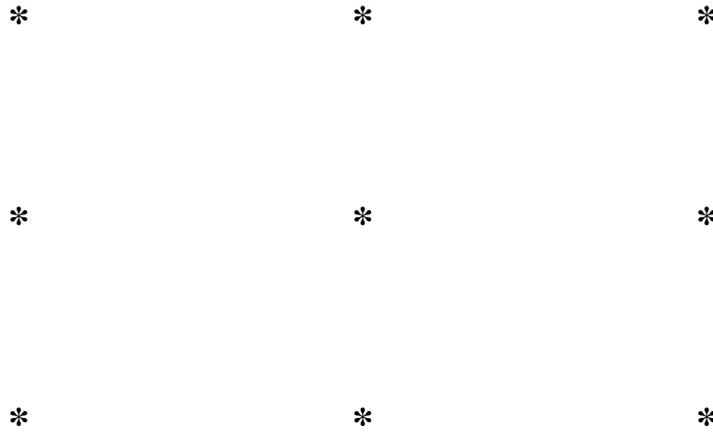
10. I think that the greatest weakness in my learning style is

This is an assessment of styles that are comfortable to you. This comfort may have created blind spots in your view of studying.

Adapted from: Walter Paul: How to Study in College 4th ed., 1989

Blind Spots Can Limit You

Try to solve this problem:



Connect the dots by drawing four straight lines without taking your pencil from the paper and without retracing any lines. **Hint: Learn to think outside the lines.**

Walter Paul: How to Study in College, 4th ed. , 1989

Dealing With Stress

Did you know that there is a difference between stress and stressors?

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1. stressor- a situation, person or event that makes demands on you.
2. stress - your response to those demands

Just the anticipation of an exam is a stressor. The stress is your physical, psychological and behavioral response.

Example: imagine you are walking through a jungle, the bush moves and you think to yourself “there might be a tiger behind that bush”. Your body will respond in several ways.

The fight or flight mechanism of your sympathetic nervous system immediately stops the digestion of any food in your stomach. Your heart rate increases and the blood supply to your vessels increases. Your kidneys constrict to decrease urine production and your eyes will dilate. These are natural responses to prepare the body to fight, or run away from the impending danger. Yet, nothing has happened to you. You have only had a thought.

Today, the tiger behind the bush is our modern- busy- life-style, the exam, the car on the freeway, or the Highway Patrol in your rear-view mirror.

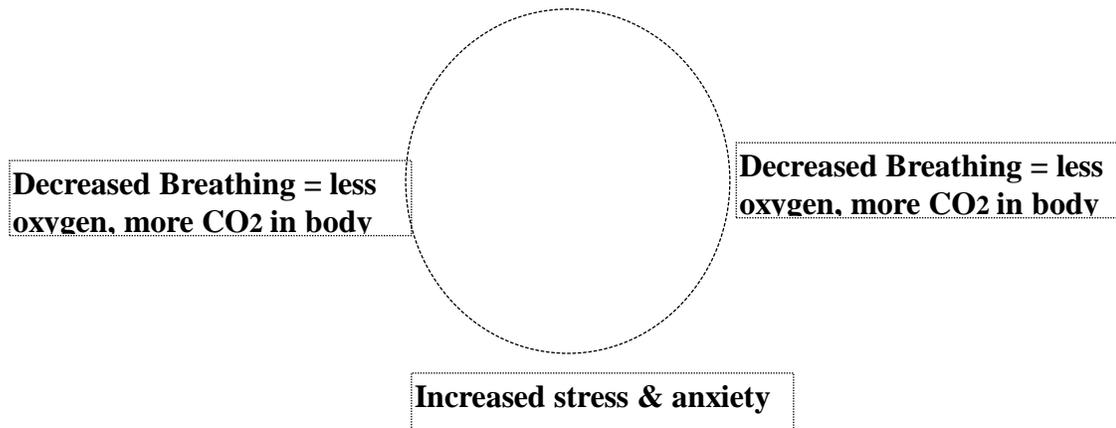
It is important to know that stress anxiety is normal. It is how you respond to the stressor that is important

Did you also know that these responses can affect your physical well-being? They can leave you tired, feeling dragged out, anxious or confused. Eventually, if the stress is not relieved, you may notice that your behavior toward others changes.

Strategies to Deal With Stress

BREATHE: When we are under stress, most people hold their breath. This will cause a rise in the CO₂ level in your body. The rise of Co₂ makes one feel more anxious, and a vicious cycle begins.

Stress & Anxiety



As you can see, your first line of defense against stress is to breathe.

Count Three Method of Stress Reduction

Just before an exam or during some other stressor you may notice changes in your body (clue: heart is racing, palms are sweaty, short shallow breathing, may feel anxious). This exercise will decrease your pulse and heart rate, while increasing the oxygen to your brain.

1. Inhale slowly through your nose while silently counting.
2. Hold your breath for the count of three.
3. Exhale slowly through your nose while silently counting to the same number as inhalations.
4. With your breath out, count to three.
5. Repeat the cycle (step 1-4) several times. Once you have the rhythm you need not continue counting. However, maintain the same pauses.

The Doctors Method of Stress Reduction

This breathing exercise reduces blood pressure while increasing your oxygen supply.

1. Breathe in until your lungs are full and can hold no more.
2. Then take in a quick extra gasp of air through your mouth.
3. Breathe out slowly and evenly.
4. Repeat this several times.
5. What works for high blood pressure also works well for stress and anxiety.

Type “A” and Type “B” Personalities

Type “A” Personalities

Research has shown that **Type “A”** personalities are linked to an increased rate of heart disease and increased stress. They are more likely to exhibit the following traits:

- aggressive, competitive, impatient, angry, tense
- always trying to accomplish more in less time
- success is important and it is difficult to relax

Type “B” Personalities

- rarely impatient or angry
- do not feel a chronic sense of urgency

- more relaxed, easygoing and readily satisfied
- less concerned with achievement and the need to acquire more things

In the U.S. about 50% of the population exhibit Type “A” behaviors. About 40% Exhibit type “B” Behaviors, and about 10% exhibit a combination of each.

Type A Test

1. I like to do things quickly, such as eating, walking, talking
2. I am hard-driving, feel very competitive about almost everything, and I don't really trust most people.
3. When others take too long to get to the point, I usually jump in and finish their sentences to speed things up.
4. I like to be precisely on time and get irritated at delays or when others are late for appointments.
5. I often do two things at once, such as opening the mail while on the phone, or reading or watching T.V. while eating.
6. I often think of other things when people talk to me.
7. I hate being interrupted and get irritated waiting in lines or when slow drivers hold me up.
8. I usually bring conversations around to what interests me.
9. I am very aggressive about getting what I want.
10. Compared to my friends, I easily lose my temper and usually show it.

To Score: Count the number of “Yes” and “No” answers. Give one point to either “Yes” or “No” answers. About 4 “Yes” answers is average. Higher “Yes” scores indicate a possible Type “A” behavior pattern, especially for “Yes” answers to questions 1,2,4,7, and 10.

Remember: A relaxed mind receives information more clearly. Ideas received clearly have a better chance of sticking in your memory.

Rosenman, R.H., “Do You Have Type “A” Behavior?” *Health and Fitness*, 1987 (New York: Newsweek), June 22, 1987, pp.s-12 & s-13

Caffeine and Coffee

If you use caffeine in any form to study, you should know that it may keep you stressed. Symptoms can include an increased heart rate, nervousness, stomach upset or sleeplessness. Just 300 to 500 mg. of caffeine can produce these symptoms.

Caffeine in Foods and Drugs

<u>Foods and Beverages</u>	<u>Per</u>
<u>Serving</u>	
Brewed coffee, 6-oz. cup	100-150mg.
Instant coffee, 6-oz. cup	86-99 mg.
Decaffeinated coffee, 6-oz. cup	2-4 mg
Tea, 6-oz .cup	60-75 mg.
Cocoa, 6-oz .cup	5-10mg.
Colas and Dr. Pepper, 12-oz.	32-65 mg.
Milk chocolate, 1-oz.	6 mg.
Bittersweet chocolate, 1-oz.	20mg.
Baking chocolate, 1-oz.	35 mg.

<u>Over the Counter Drugs</u>	<u>Per Tablet</u>
Vivarin	200mg.
NoDoz	100 mg.
Excedrin	66 mg.
Midol or Emprin	32 mg.

Triaminic and Coryban-D	30 mg.
Dristan	16mg.
Neo-Synephrine Compounds	15 mg.

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Reading for Comprehension

Do you ever find that having just finished a page of reading you have no idea what you read? Maybe your mind wandered and you were thinking of something else. Or perhaps your eyes moved over the words but your mind was not paying attention. Me too.

There are several things you can do to increase your reading comprehension. Unfortunately, there are no magic bullets, and changing your reading comprehension takes time and practice.

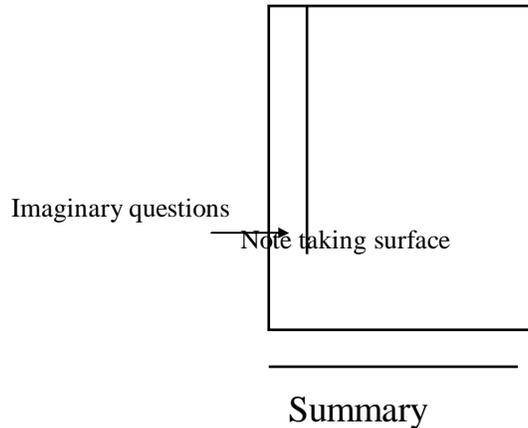
As adults, we learn new materials if we are given some point or element we already know. We are then more able to interpret, store and remember new points. Try these methods to increase your knowledge of the materials before you begin reading.

1. Take time to survey the chapter before reading it. This means skimming to get a feel for how the material is organized. Note chapter headings, read captions under pictures and graphs and be sure to read the summary. Now you have an idea of what the chapter is going to be about.
 - Once you have gone through the materials you can begin reading.
2. The secret to comprehension is thinking. You must think about the words you see and give thought to the ideas they generate.

- It takes practice to keep your thoughts from wandering as you read. Thinking about something else keeps you from learning what you are reading. So think along with the materials.
3. Myers suggest that you ask the author questions and give thought to the ideas the words generate.
 - Get a feel for what the author is trying to convey. At the end of each section, see if your questions were answered.
 4. You can also improve comprehension by stopping at the end of each section to summarize and condense the information. Look at the topic sentence or controlling idea, the supporting sentence and the concluding sentence.
 5. Don't over tire yourself. Studies show that one retains more information when taking frequent breaks. Experts suggest that a study hour consist of 50 minutes of reading and a 10 minute break. During your break, think about the materials and what you have just read or studied.
 6. Watch for concentration robbers that create physical and mental fatigue:
 - noise, bad lights, hunger, over eating, too much caffeine or sugar, lack of sleep, stress or boredom.

Principles of Note Taking and Note Reviews

1. While you read, jot down only the information you believe is important enough to master.
 - Studies show that reducing your notes down to a handful of main ideas creates magnets to hold together the main ideas.
2. **Use just one side of the paper** and leave a 2 or 3 inch margin at the bottom and a 1 inch margin at the left side.
3. **Summarize:** As soon as possible (while the lecture is still fresh in your mind) read your class notes and summarize them in the bottom margin.



4. Make up imaginary questions from the notes in the left-hand margin after you summarize them.
5. **Review:** Take 5 or 10 minutes to review your notes before each new lecture. You won't be spending the first part of the lecture playing catch up and trying to remember what the instructor was talking about.
 - Read the imaginary questions. If you can answer them, move on. If not, read the summary at the bottom of your note taking page. This should jog your memory. If you are still unclear, re-read the entire note page.
6. Set a time-limit on your sessions. Parkinson's Law notes that: "work expands to fill the time available". Work this law in reverse. For each session set a time limit and work hard to meet that goal.
7. During the last weeks before the exam, you will re-read your imaginary questions and summaries. Create flash cards to keep with you for memorizing on the run.

Test Tips- How to Analyze Multiple Choice Questions

1. Types of multiple choice questions are:
 - **Knowledge** - involves remembering and understanding previously learned materials. Also, one must demonstrate an interrelationship between facts

- **Interpretation** - These questions require that you understand and make use of information presented as opposed to recalling a fact or definition
 - **Problem Solving and Evaluation** - These questions require that you organize facts, interpret data, assess the situation and choose the best alternative course of action.
2. Read the directions carefully. Some say “mark the one best answer” (all the answers may be correct). Don’t be in a rush. Read all options.
 3. When all answers are correct, to find the one-best answer, you must ask: “given one option would the other option be true”? The right answer is the one that must be true before the other conditions are acceptable.
 4. After you read the stem, if you do not know the answer quickly, don’t spend more than a few seconds puzzling over the question. Cross out any options you can eliminate. The more distracters you can eliminate, the better your chance of finding the correct answer. Move on to the next question. Mark the questions so you will be able to find it easily later on.
 5. Use the true-false technique. If an option results in a false statement it is eliminated as a distracter.
 6. Don’t pick strange options. If you do not recognize an answer, chances are it is a distracter.
 7. Watch out for negative words such as “not” or “except”. Circle them so they will stand out.
 8. Circle 100 percent words such as: never, no, none, best, worst, always , all and every. If you have to guess, eliminate all the options that contain absolute words.

9. The option “ all of the above” is usually correct. One way to confirm the choice is to find two correct answers in the options.
10. Numbers in the middle range are usually correct. If you have to guess, eliminate the highest and lowest numbers. This eliminates half of the options.
11. Check for look-a-likes. If you have no inkling you would be wise to choose from similar pairs.
12. Check for longer or more inclusive options. The correct option is often longer or more inclusive of qualities or ideas than the distracters.

Concept Maps Or Thinking Visually

We learn by hearing, seeing, reading, feeling and tasting.

The brain is divided into two hemispheres-- left and right. Recent experiments on split-brain patients have confirmed that for most people the left hemisphere is more verbal and the right hemisphere is more visual. Some researchers contend that when you commit facts and ideas to memory using only words, you are using only one-half of your brain power.

To study effectively, you need to learn how to convert the words in text into pictures or work maps. Creating visual displays converts word descriptions into pictures.

Concept maps are diagrams. They are used to organize and make visible connected information. The visual image often aids memory during a test.

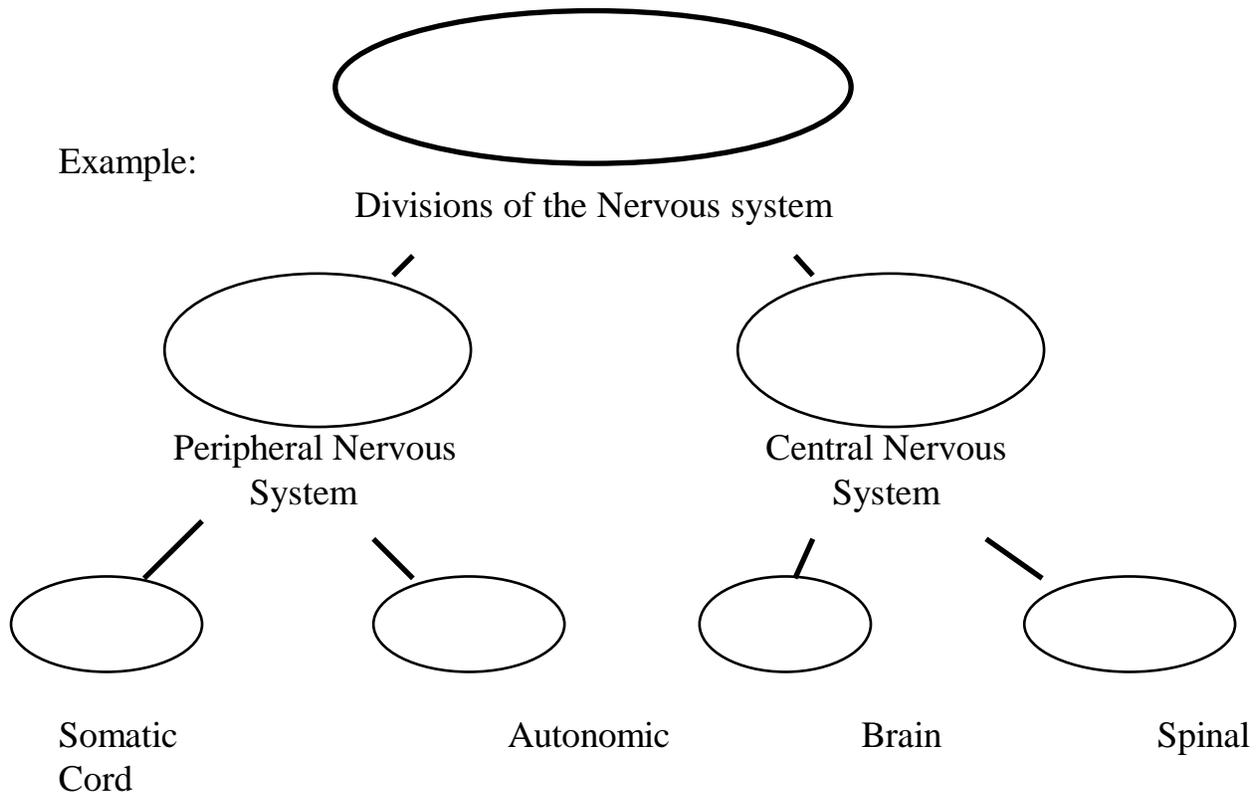
- Use them to clarify passages that are difficult
- Reinforce textbook materials
- To pull together several main ideas
- Make a one-page summary
- Organize ideas

- Review for an exam
- Organize ideas for writing papers or making speeches

Procedure:

1. Read the information to be mapped. Try to comprehend it as best as possible.
2. Select the most important idea in the passage, one that all the other concepts can be related to.
3. Re-read the passage and identify the words that stand for key concepts by circling them or listing them on a sheet of paper.
4. Rank the concepts hierarchically from most inclusive to least inclusive.
5. Link the concept words by drawing lines showing the connections between and among them. Label the lines with a word or word phrase that explains the relationships. If an idea relates to other ideas represented in another portion of the map, show the relationship by drawing a broken line to indicate cross-linkages.

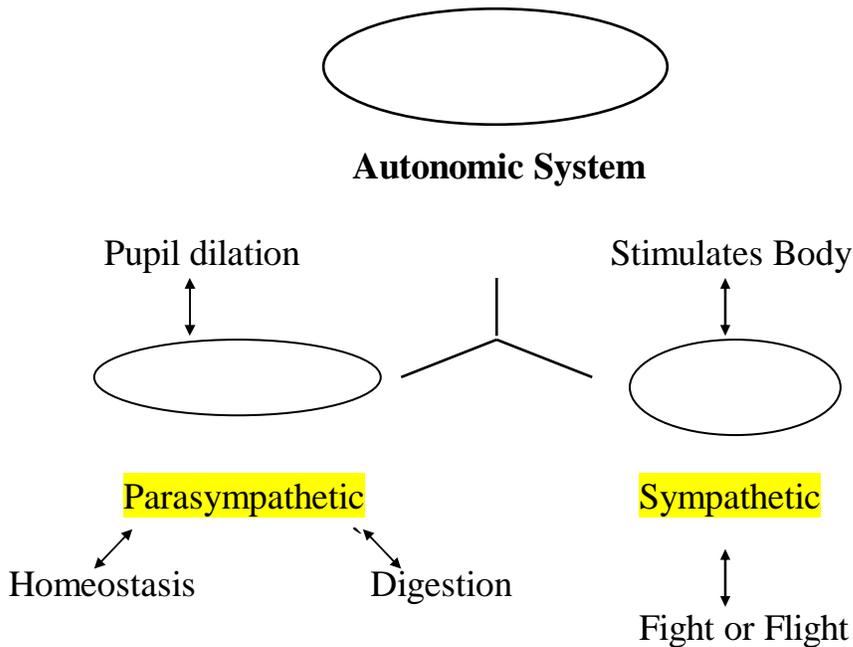
Example:



Write a paragraph to summarize the concept of the map.

The Nervous System Consists of 2 main divisions: (1) The Peripheral Nervous System and (2) the Central Nervous System. Peripheral System is composed of Somatic and Autonomic System. The Central System is composed of the Brain and Spinal Cord.

Here is another map idea: Use multiple colors to increase memory



Students Who are Successful in Their Studies Have Solid and Consistent Work and Study Habits

The Successful Student Has:

- A regular study schedule
- Usually works at the same time each day
- Works mostly in a regular study place

- Works for short periods with frequent rest breaks
- Reviews notes soon after a study session or class
- Does not leave work until the last minute
- Does not get easily distracted
- Does not use the deadline of an exam for motivation.
- “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to treat everything as if it were a nail (Maslow).”

Adapted from: Walter Paul: How to Study in College 4th ed., 1989

