

# Important Study Skills

## A. Reading Before Lecture

- It is extremely important that you read the lecture materials (at least once) before you come to lecture. This will enable you to follow and understand the lecture more easily.

(If you have not read the material, you wouldn't know what to expect during lecture, and you will not be able to follow or understand most of the lecture.)

## B. Listening and Note Taking

### 1. General Suggestions for Classroom Behavior

- Sit near the front of the classroom where you can hear and see clearly. It also helps to create a good impression, eliminate distractions, and make you more attentive.
- Copy down everything on the board (and as much as you can from lecture). A single word may be a clue to a test item or be useful to you later.

### 2. Listening Checklist

1. Listen for ways to relate ideas to previous lectures, to the textbook, and to previous experiences.
2. Listen for what is being said, not how it's being said.
3. Do not try to write everything down.
4. Be ready to participate.
5. Look for clues from the professor that indicates what he/she considers important.
6. Review the lecture materials as soon as class is over.
7. Seek answers to questions that arise.

### 3. Note taking Suggestions

- It is better to take too many notes than too few.
- Use abbreviations as much as possible to increase your note taking speed.
- Try to restate what is being said in your own words.
- Try not to take notes in paragraph form. It is difficult to find important parts when you are studying for a test. Take notes in lists or "one-liners" as much as possible.
- Mark your notes with checks (✓), stars (\*), question marks (?), circling dates and names, etc. to bring out the important facts.

## C. Study Formula SQ3R

- I. SURVEY
- II. QUESTION
- III. READ
- IV. RECITE
- V. REVIEW

### *I. & II. Survey and Question - Method*

- READ title, author, introduction, table or contents, and skim through sections of the book noting illustrations, size of print, chapter, glossary, appendix, and other sources of quick information. Skim the index for unknown terms.
- QUESTIONS. Who, what, when, where, and what emphasis? What aspect is my weakest point? What will need to be memorized?
- SELECT a Chapter. Read introductory paragraph. Skim with a pencil. Mark any who, what, when, where, or other vocabulary that is unknown. Stop to read headings, subheadings, and last paragraph. If the material is very difficult, read the first sentence of each paragraph. This survey should not take more than a minute and should show at least three to six core ideas.
- QUESTION. Now turn the first heading into a question.

### *III. READ*

Read to the end of the first headed section to answer this question. Make this an active search for the answer. Underline only key words--*never whole paragraphs*. Re-state in your own words the relationship being made. Use a dictionary if necessary. *No note should be written until the whole headed section has been read.*

### *IV. RECITE*

Now look away from the book and try briefly to recite the answer to your question. Use your own words and cite an example. You can jot down from memory brief cue phrases in outline form on a sheet of paper. These should be brief and your own words. If you cannot do this, glance over the selection again.

Now repeat steps QUESTION, III, and IV with each successive headed section. Do this until the entire lesson is completed.

### *V. REVIEW*

When the lesson has been studied in this way, check your memory by reciting the major points under each heading. You can do this by covering up the notes and trying to recall points listed under it. Review daily during the period of time before class exam. Review should probably not be longer than five minutes.

**Make a study plan so that time is available!**

## **D. Test Taking Skills**

### **Effective Study Techniques for Essay Tests**

#### **1. PREDICT QUESTIONS FROM YOUR NOTES.**

- **SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- If your notes list a group of people or things, the kind of essay question to predict is a short answer question.
- Short answer questions usually include one of the following words: list, name, define, or identify.
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- **TRACE QUESTIONS**

- If your notes show the steps in a process of the listing and development of something, you should predict a trace question.
- Some key words or phrases usually found in trace questions are: "Describe the steps involved in..."; "Outline the procedure to make ....or to carry out...";
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- **COMPARE AND CONTRAST QUESTIONS**

- If your notes describe two or more things that have some features which are similar and others which are different, predict a compare and contrast question.
- Words or phrases found in these questions might be: "Compare and contrast..."; "Show the similarities and differences..."; "Tell how two things are alike and different..."; "Weigh the advantages and disadvantages..."
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- **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- If your notes describe the effects of one thing on another, or the significance of a particular event, or the role of a specific individual or institution, predict a discussion question.
- These questions often begin: "Discuss the significance of..."; "Discuss the role of..."; "Discuss the effect of..."; "Discuss the relationship between...."

#### **2. PRACTICE WRITING ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS YOU PREDICT.**

#### **3. PLAN YOUR APPROACH TO ANSWERING THE ACTUAL TEST QUESTIONS.**

- Note points assigned to each question and allot your time accordingly.
- If you have a problem with a question, go on to the next one and come back to the first one later, if possible.
- Make brief, concise notes for each essay question.

## **E. Tips on Writing the Essay-type Examination**

The well-organized, neat-appearing individual will usually get the nod over another equally capable person who is disorganized and careless in appearance. Although other factors are involved, the analogy to examination writing is a skill. This skill can be improved by instruction. The student would be advised to follow certain steps in writing an essay exam.

### ***1. SET UP A TIME SCHEDULE.***

If five questions are to be answered in a 2-hour exam, allow yourself only 20 minutes for each. When the time is up for one question, stop writing and begin the next one. There will be 20 minutes remaining when the last question is completed. The incomplete answers can be completed during the time. Five incomplete answers usually receive more credit than three completed ones. If one question is worth more points than the others you allow more time to write it.

### ***2. READ THROUGH THE QUESTIONS ONCE.***

Answers will come to mind immediately for some questions. Write down key words, listings, etc. now when they're fresh in mind. Otherwise these ideas may be blocked (or be unavailable) when the time comes to write the later questions. This will reduce "clutching" or panic (anxiety - fear which disrupts thoughts).

### ***3. BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO ANSWER A QUESTION, LOOK AT THE DIRECTIVE WORDS.***

Your instructor may give you specific directions how to write your answer. If he/she wants you to evaluate a philosophical theory, you won't get full credit if you describe just the theory. Make sure you know what you are being asked to do.

### ***4. OUTLINE THE ANSWER BEFORE WRITING.***

In an essay type question, it is better to write an outline for your answer before writing the full answer. Be sure to follow the directive words in the question, and check your outline to see that it is logical.

### ***5. TAKE TIME TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.***

The introduction will consist of the main point to be made; the summary is simply a paraphrasing of the introduction. A neat bundle with a beginning and ending is very satisfying to the reader. Be sure that your answer is to the point and really answers the question.

### ***6. TAKE TIME AT THE END TO REREAD YOUR ESSAY***

Check for misspell words, missing words or missing parts of the questions, and incorrect numbers or figures.

## **7. QUALIFY ANSWERS WHEN IN DOUBT.**

It is better to say "Toward the end of the 19th century" than to say "in 1894" when you can't remember whether it's 1884 or 1894, though approximate, may be incorrect, and will usually be marked accordingly. When possible, avoid very definite statements. A qualified statement connotes a philosophic attitude, the mark of an educated man.

### **FOR \*ESSAY\* QUESTIONS**

The following words are commonly found in essay test questions. Understanding them is essential to success on these kinds of questions. Study this sheet thoroughly. Know these words backwards and forwards.

- **ANALYZE:** Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.
- **COMPARE:** Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences. Comparisons generally ask for similarities more than differences. (See Contrast.)
- **CONTRAST:** Show differences. Set in opposition.
- **CRITICIZE:** Make judgments. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.
- **DEFINE:** Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course of subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.
- **DESCRIBE:** Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities and parts.
- **DISCUSS:** Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict. Compare and contrast.
- **ENUMERATE:** List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.
- **EVALUATE:** Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.
- **ILLUSTRATE:** Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.
- **INTERPRET:** Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.
- **OUTLINE:** Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean \*write a Roman numeral/letter outline\*.)
- **PROVE:** Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the test).
- **STATE:** Explain precisely.
- **SUMMARIZE:** Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.
- **TRACE:** Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.