

## Searching for Solutions: Improving Student Study Skills

### Reading Skills

The most common deterrents to fluent reading are briefly described below.

#### Regressions

In reading, regression refers to the tendency for the eyes to look back at something that has already been read. This is the most common symptom of slow reading among first-year college students.

#### Word-by-Word Reading

Focusing attention on /one/word/at/a/time/ while reading is called word-by-word reading. If you read this way, you need to practice thinking in phrases as you read, just as you think in phrases when you speak.

#### Lip Movements

Check to see if you are moving your lips while you read. Hold your fingertips gently to your mouth as you read silently. If you detect movement of your lips, this may be preventing you from reading faster.

### Getting More Out of Your Books

1. Read your assignments before the material is discussed in class and review soon after class.
2. Try to integrate the material into your previous readings.
3. Read actively and use textbook headings as the basis for quick notes.
4. Adjust your reading speed to the difficulty of the material and your ability.
5. Sort out the main ideas from the minor details and distinguish between facts and opinions.
6. Ask yourself questions while you read to test your understanding of the material.
7. Ask the teacher questions or consult reference books if the material seems too difficult after reading.
8. Study visual aids along with the book to increase your understanding.

### Reading and Study Skills: The SQ3R Method

If you learn and practice the following five steps, your comprehension will improve quickly.

- **Step 1: Survey** the reading assignment quickly. Skim the introduction and summary, the topic

headings and subheadings, and the visual aids.

- **Step 2: Question** yourself by asking: What are the main ideas? Turn the headings into Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions.
- **Step 3: Read** the assignment carefully for meaning. Reread difficult sections and take notes.
- **Step 4: Recite** to yourself, from memory, the main ideas of the assignment.
- **Step 5: Review** the reading at periodic intervals to refresh your memory and make the facts stick.

### Note-Taking Tips

Good note-taking habits can improve your ability to learn and pay dividends when you are preparing for tests.

1. **Be prepared.** Read your assignment before going to class.
2. **Listen carefully.** Be physically and mentally alert.
3. **Keep an open and curious mind.** While you may not agree with some points your teacher makes, you should not reject an idea before exploring it.
4. **Take notes in outline form** to help you distinguish between major and minor points.
5. **Date and title your notes** carefully.
6. **Record or write down examples** that may help you remember.
7. **Take note of study aids** (e.g., handouts, overheads, maps). These are usually cues that the material is important.
8. **Listen for emphasis.** Repetition, writing on the board, or extended comments usually mean that the information is important.
9. **Leave room on your paper to expand your notes** after class.
10. **Take time after class** to add comments or thoughts to help clarify your notes.
11. **Take notes in a different color for each subject.** The colors may help you remember and distinguish each subject better.
12. **Watch your teacher as much as possible.** It will help you concentrate.

## Why Do Students Procrastinate?

Some reasons for procrastination are:

1. The task seems overwhelming.
  2. To delude themselves into thinking if they postpone doing it until tomorrow they might "have more energy", "have fewer interruptions", or "be able to concentrate better".
  3. Wanting to avoid unpleasant tasks. If students have the choice of doing something pleasant (even if it is not important) and something unpleasant, they usually choose the pleasant task.
  4. To excuse inadequate or poor work. "I couldn't do it until the last minute" or "If I had more time, I could have done a better job" often are used to camouflage poor work.
  5. To get someone else to do the job. In some situations it is important to delegate a job or task, but to intentionally put off your job so that someone else will end up doing it is an immature way of handling an assignment.
  6. To protect a weak self-image and fearing failure.
  7. By rationalizing inaction, students do not risk the anxiety and pain of failure. Inaction also can allow students to avoid success and the accompanying responsibilities and problems that can come with it.
  8. They have inappropriate goals or goals without deadlines.
5. **Become aware of and take advantage of your moods.** Sometimes you feel more like doing one thing rather than another. Maybe you feel more like reading about the topic rather than writing. Do that part of the assignment instead of postponing the whole thing.
  6. **Learn to reward yourself for completing a task you have been dodging.** Once you complete the task, do something for fun. Of course, you should not reward yourself if you don't finish the task.
  7. **Review your goals and make certain they are your own.** Review your goals to determine if they are important to you.
  8. **Learn how to say no, avoid over-commitment, and prioritize tasks.** Make sure you do not have too many commitments and responsibilities. This can create additional problems.
  9. **Learn to set realistic time schedules.** Remember, everything takes longer than we think it will. Set deadlines.
  10. Students with positive attitudes are not procrastinators. **With a clear set of goals you can develop positive attitudes and overcome procrastination.**

### What To Do To Get Started?

1. If you are a procrastinator, you must **admit it and recognize the problems** it causes in your life.
2. **Learn to break down overwhelming tasks into small ones.** Henry Ford once remarked, "Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs." He founded the auto assembly line on this concept.
3. **Face unpleasant tasks with a new resolve.** Postponing does not make it pleasant.
4. **Recognize that "getting started" is important.**

*This Pointers for Students was adapted from "Searching for Solutions" published by the American School Counselor Association.*

### REFERENCES

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