

# Study Tips and Useful Strategies for Students.

## Introduction:

The main aim of school education is to prepare students to be able to be successful in society. Success for different students can mean many different things, such as

- Identifying the top level students for the professions and a university education
- Preparing students for technical training to equip them for a trade or technical or similar employment
- Being able to participate in society and look after their personal affairs.

However, there are many consequences of education that bear contemplating before considering how this study guide relates to your child.

Firstly, the great bulk of students have a high level of success.

Unfortunately, there are some students who, for a variety of reasons, leave school without having mastered survival education. They cannot read adequately or have a competency level in basic mathematics and are therefore unable to look after their personal affairs.

Master Coaching's educational philosophy espouses the view that ALL CHILDREN

- **love to learn**
- **love success**
- **are adaptable**
- **want more information**
- **have unlimited powers to achieve**

We believe that much more that can be achieved with the right attitude and correct study techniques.

Many scientists and educational psychologists now recognise that indeed All students are capable of academic success at the highest level, provided they prepare well and have the right attitude.

We encourage all students and parents to read through this study guide carefully, as it may be the most important study that you have done to this stage.

## 1. What is Study?

Study is “the application of the mind to the acquisition of knowledge, as by reading, investigation or reflection” - Macquarie Dictionary.

## 3 How to Study

There are two situations where the student studies:

- 1 Classroom study under the guidance of a teacher or mentor in a formal situation.

Some of the most effective study is done in the school classroom, with your teacher. If you, the student, are able to empathise with your teacher, its amazing how much you can learn at school, without having to resort to many hours of out of school study.

Prepare for each class:

- Re-read the previous lesson information
- Approach each lesson with a positive attitude – Say “I will learn something new” – I will learn more about myself, my classmates and my teacher
- Have an expectation that your teacher can assist you to be successful
- Avoid places and people in class who might distract you
- Be an active listener—take notes, make a sketch, draw, anything that helps you to stay focused on what is being done in class
- Always ask questions if uncertain or unclear. Near the end of the lesson ask the teacher if he/she could repeat the most important points of the lesson.

Real listening skills are very hard to develop; a good trick is to be writing or doodling whilst you are listening to the teacher. Use texta colours to make your doodling more vivid and if you have a special doodling book you will be able to translate your main points to your notes at the end of the lesson or at home that same night.

In the modern classroom there are many distracters which are the thieves of your valuable time. Avoid sitting with your best friends, as this will only encourage you to talk and to communicate during the lesson. Remember, if you are in communication with others whilst the teacher is teaching then you are not learning and you are wasting the most valuable time of the day.

Also there are many different types of lessons. For instance, an English lesson may take the form of a class discussion out of which a mind map is drawn to answer an essay topic. Active participation in these lessons are invaluable training for later life. Express a point of view and defend it with logic and passion, even express a contrary view to your own belief and see how hard it is to defend such a proposition. Listen to other people’s points of view, respect their belief, and challenge them if you hold a contrary view. Again, this type of learning is an invaluable part of life skills that are taught by gifted teachers. It is most

important that you make every effort to support your teacher when such lessons are programmed; if the lesson runs as planned every student will receive enormous benefit.

There are many other types of lesson that make up effective teaching. Common sense will generally dictate the response that will bring you the student the best result. In real life situations, the most successful people are the ones that develop extraordinary communication skills. Every lesson in the school situation is teaching you a different part of communication; enjoy the experience and make the most of your opportunities.



## 2 Classroom study in the security of your home or dormitory.

The efficiency with which you are able to do private study is often the difference between success and failure at school, university and in business. Be organised – study time should be study time, not time wasted in a frustrated search for materials and work-space.

Theory books for all subjects should be considered. These books should contain a bare outline of all the topics to be studied in summary form and direct the student to where further information on the topic can be found if needed. In mathematics your theory book would be classed as a formula book. In essay writing subjects you could include mind mapping for different topics.

Each school day is not complete until the notes etc generated for that day have been collated and filed. Take ownership of your notes by personalising them in your own words. This aids memory retention.

Develop a day sheet to keep track of routine tasks and special needs; a day planner is an excellent idea. Many students achieve lower rewards than they deserve simply because their effective study time has been lost because of frustration caused by poor organisational skills.

Organisational skills are a state of mind and there are simple techniques that can be taught in a one day seminar that can change a C student into an A student and in the process actually reduce the number of study hours required.

When studying at school the Law of the Farm applies: “you cannot expect to reap in the Autumn if you have not prepared the ground and sown in the Spring”. In fact the same rule applies to life.

## 4 Goal Setting

Happy students are far better learners. The secret of happiness is to “Be Happy” and this state of grace most often happens when you are working towards some clearly defined goal.

Students have the complete gamut of goals that could apply to them and their schooling – these goals could be as general as “to do my absolute best” or as specific as “gain university entry to Medicine.

Your goals may change as you progress through school but you should always have goals targeted for your progress. Your main goal may be to be dux of your school or else in the top 10% of students. Your main goal could generate other supporting goals such as being first in mathematics English or science.

At every lesson you should silently re-affirm the goal that you will take maximum benefit from that lesson.

Home study should be conducted with a particular targeted goal in mind. For example, if your main goal is to study economics for an hour you will probably read your notes for an hour with an indeterminate amount of learning takes place.

However, if you have committed yourself to the main goal of learning the causes of the 1929 stock market crash in Europe and the Americas, then your study program could be far more beneficial.

Let us exam how you could achieve this goal. Note you must become active and involved in your learning.

- **Before commencement, sit in your chair, close your eyes and visualise yourself achieving your study goal. Take some deep breaths and relax and feel happy**
- **You will need a clear working space and all your reference material available. (The internet is a valuable resource but be mindful that you could waste all your study time surfing the net for no real study gain. The moral is: use the internet when specific information is needed and cannot be obtained easier elsewhere)**
- **Have a clean writing page (or computer) and write down in dot/point form the factors contributing to the stock market crash of 1929**

- **On a separate sheet of paper mind map your material into a logical or sequential grouping that could be used to write a number of essays relating to the topic**
- **If you have completed your task, reward yourself with a break. Frequent study breaks punctuated with light exercise and/or the ingestion of light snacks, (fruit nuts etc., not sweets), will enhance your study performance. Drink plenty of water whilst studying**
- **After your break move to your next study goal for the evening (if you have one)**
- **At the end of the session take a clean sheet of paper and quickly sketch what you have learnt in all your study goals for the session. Check your results and reinforce points if necessary**
- **Take a small time to relax and visualise yourself as having mastered your goals.**
- **Complete your evening by mentally reaffirming your success**

Below, stating on the next page is a template that you may use to help you devise goals meaningful to you.

## Goals

Please consider as frankly as possible your long and short-term goals with regard to your future schooling and career. Remember this information is confidential to you and should not be shared with anyone unless you feel it is in your own best interest to do so.

To help you focus on your own most desirable goals write down where applicable to you the following:

(1) My long-term career/school goals are:

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(2) My personal goals for the next 18 months are:

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(3) My school goals for this year are:

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(4) Starting from today I intend to:

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## Personal Evaluation of Career.

(1) Have you decided on a particular career? If so write it down. If not write down the careers that most appeal to you at this time.

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(2) Why do you think it is important to have some career path in mind as you go through school?

(a).....

(b).....

(c).....

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(3) The three most important things that I must consider when choosing a particular career that **may** last for all my working life are:

(a).....

(b).....

(c).....

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(4) Opportunities that I can use to increase the chances of gaining the career of my choice.

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(5) Be brutally honest when considering the completion of the following:

**If I want to succeed in my future life what other efforts must I now be making**

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Remember, these are your own private thoughts and be cautious when considering sharing this information with others.

## 5 Learning Skills

Because there are now recognised different learning styles there has to be some allowance for variation in study modes. You need to recognise which type of learner you are and which method best suits you.

Dunn's classification of learning styles is

- Visual – these students learn best from reading and seeing
- Auditory – learn best from hearing. Maybe a tape recorder could be used
- Kinesthetic – need movement (could be clapping etc) to facilitate learning
- Tactile – most suitable for younger students who respond best to concrete material. A small band of students will continue to need this type of learning to develop their abstract skills

The following lists will give you some idea of what type of learner you are and how you can best maximise your study skills and your exam results. Being aware of your learning style will help you increase your retention of the material studied.

### **Visual Learner Characteristics:**

Visual learners are those who learn through seeing things. Look over the characteristics below to see if they sound familiar. A visual learner:

Needs quiet study time.

Is good at spelling but forgets facts and names.

Has to think awhile before understanding lecture type lessons.

Is good at spelling.

Learns well from mind maps

Likes colors & fashion.

Understands/likes charts. .

### **Learning Suggestions for Visual Learners**

Draw a map of events in history or draw scientific process.

Make outlines of everything!

Copy what's on the board.

Ask the teacher to diagram.

Diagram sentences!

Take notes, make lists.

Watch videos.

Color code words, research notes.

Outline reading.

Use flashcards.

Use highlighters, circle words, underline.

## **Auditory Learner Characteristics**

Auditory learners are those who learn best through hearing things. Look over these traits to see if they sound familiar to you. You may be an auditory learner if you are someone who:

Likes to read to self out loud.

Is not afraid to speak in class.

Likes spoken sessions.

Is good at explaining.

Remembers names.

Enjoys music.

Is good at grammar and foreign language.

Reads slowly.

Follows spoken directions well.

Is good in study groups.

## **Auditory Learners Can Benefit from:**

Using word association to remember facts and lines.

Recording lectures.

Watching videos.

- Repeating facts with eyes closed.
- Participating in group discussions.
- Using audio-tapes for language practice.
- Taping notes after writing them.

## **Kinesthetic Learner Characteristics**

Kinesthetic learners are those who learn through experiencing/doing things. Look over these traits to see if they sound familiar to you. You may be a kinesthetic learner if you are someone who:

- Is good at sports.
- Can't sit still for long.
- Is not great at spelling.
- Does not have great handwriting.
- Likes science lab.
- Studies with loud music on.
- Likes adventure books, movies.
- Likes role playing.
- Takes breaks when studying.
- Builds models.
- Is involved in martial arts, dance.
- Is fidgety during lectures.

## **Kinesthetic Learners Can Benefit from:**

- Studying in short blocks.
- Taking lab classes.
- Role playing.
- Taking field trips, visiting museums.
- Studying with others.
- Using memory games.
- Using flash cards to memorize.

## Planning Your Study Program

A much over-used expression “**IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN THEN YOU PLAN TO FAIL**” is very valid.

Planning is strongly linked to your goals and aspirations. If you have strong long-term goals, and you can clearly visualise yourself achieving those goals, then planning for your success is your next step.

Remember, examination success starts on the first day of the school year, as your results will not just reflect how much you have studied right before the test but rather, how well you have studied throughout the year.

How much depends on how much of your study time is used for study.

How well depends on your efficient use of the available study time.

Home study, including homework is a contentious issue. Opinion is divided on whether children should do any home study at all, up to some students doing many hours every night of the week. This writer is of the opinion that a small amount of home study is essential in today’s educational environment. As a guide rather than a rule we would suggest the following:-

- Primary school students up to age eleven, a maximum of one hour per night is more than sufficient. Young people need time to play and enjoy the sunshine to help develop healthy bodies, social skills and happy learning experiences
- Years 7 – 10 in secondary school (roughly ages 12 – 15 years) start with one hour per night in year 6 and add fifteen minutes/night for each succeeding year. This translates to a year ten student doing two hours per night on average. Note: it does not mean that every night the year ten students will do two hours of study/homework, but that he/she will average that amount over the school week. The weekend should be free and available for other tasks.
- In the final two years of high school the amount of study will be governed by your goals. Students who seek to be among the elite will be studying in excess of five or six hours per night at home, with a fair amount of weekend study.

**Developing time management skills is a journey that may begin with this Guide, but needs practice and other guidance along the way.**

Time management means just that, to succeed you have to make the best use of your available time. Stephen Covey in “The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People” talks about tasks which are

1. **Not important and not urgent**
2. **Important and not urgent**
3. **Urgent and not important**
4. **Urgent and important.**

Dr Covey’s suggestion is that you should be spending most of your available time on type two tasks, and the same applies to study.

To manage your time effectively you need to first analyse your behaviour patterns during the week and then decide just when you do have time available.

Then try to make a timetable that should include all your activities for the week, including meal times, travel, recreational and leisure as well as your study time. Once you have programmed your study time, monitor your progress to ensure that you are indeed doing the time that you have allocated yourself.

When studying try to incorporate Covey’s concept of working in quadrant two, ie be prepared for your tests well before study becomes a cram or panic episode.

A sample study timetable for a student who wishes to study two hours per night could be. Note, this program would not be the same for every night of the week, in fact, every night could have its own completely different program,

### **Monday:**

4:00pm Arrive home from school. Snack and relax for 30 minutes. Change into something casual.

4:30pm. Complete any home-work assignments that have been given as over night tasks.

5:00 Break 30 minutes. Do some light exercise or just go for an outside walk/jog.

5:30 evening meal

6:30 pm Review notes from the day and organise your study material.

7:00pm Review the main tasks that you have set yourself for the week. This may require you to alter some other part of your weekly program. This task should take no more than 15 minutes.

7:15 – 8:00pm Study or homework as per your goals for the week.

8:00pm Break 15 minutes.

8:15 – 8:45 Study.

This completes one night of study. Once you have decided HOW YOU are going to allocate your time, stick to it. However, if you are on a roll with some topic, be flexible enough to continue to derive maximum benefit from the situation. You may reward yourself with time credits at a later stage.

Some points to remember.

- Prepare a prioritised To Do list
- Monitor your progress and check your progress against your intermediate goals
- Be aware of striving for quality time spent
- Make your health, social skills as equally as if not more important than your schooling goals and career goals.

### **Preparing a To-Do List**

- The solution is often simple: Write down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. For example, you may have a large project that has a long time allocation and many parts to it. The first task maybe to adequately research the project. The next task for that project maybe to decide the outline of your project etc. Obviously, if you identify your tasks sequentially and space them throughout the life of the project it will not only ensure that your best project is completed on time, but that the whole daunting spectre of the project will be remove from the very beginning of the project.

- **Daily/weekly planner**

Write down appointments, classes, and meetings on a chronological log book or chart.

If you are more visual, sketch out your schedule

First thing in the morning, check what's ahead for the day.

Always go to sleep knowing you're prepared for tomorrow

- **Long term planner**

Use a monthly chart so that you can plan ahead.

Long term planners will also serve as a reminder to constructively plan time for yourself.

Add your favourite quote to your planner. Maybe you could use

**“IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME”**

## **Retention.**

When you have studied a topic for the first time you lose 20% of everything that you have learnt in that topic in the first 24 hours.

Without further revision you lose a further 40% (making a 60% loss of information) within the next three weeks. However, research has shown, that with a minimum amount of revision every second day or so for the first two weeks will enable you to recall up to 80% of the information after six months. Obviously, the exact amount of retention will depend on the quality and quantity of revision.

The real trick of school and university success is not the ability to master and understand a body of knowledge, but rather the ability to retain and reproduce that body of knowledge when needed. Plan your study year to include time spent retaining information already mastered in class or other home study periods.

## **The Final Words**

**We have already emphasised the main philosophies of learning previously in this page: they are**

### **ALL CHILDREN**

- **love to learn**
- **love success**
- **are adaptable**
- **want more information**
- **have unlimited powers to achieve**

**We also fully stress that any person (student or adult) will only achieve at the level that they realistically expect to achieve.**

**Enjoy your time, life is the greatest adventure of all**