

No two people learn the same way. Everyone is different and for some students, studying and being motivated to learn comes naturally. If you are reading this pamphlet, it's likely that you are not one of them, but don't despair, there's hope. We all learn differently and over time you will find study techniques and strategies that suit you.

This guide is designed to help you develop effective study skills. **It is not a magic formula for success - studying any material requires work!** However, by using the techniques described in this guide, and by applying yourself, you can gain a valuable edge in understanding material and ultimately learning. Be prepared to experiment with different ways to approach note-taking, planning assignments and other study skills.

### HOW TO PLAN YOUR STUDIES

When, where and how you study will all depend on your lifestyle, but you need to PLAN. Here are a few tips to get you going:

- ◆ Keep your work organised
  - have a system for dealing with the paperwork, so you don't waste time looking for course material.
- ◆ Keep an eye on assignment cut-off dates.
- ◆ Make realistic plans! Don't waste time constantly redoing a plan at the expense of studying.
- ◆ Try to keep in a routine with your studies. 3 hours every day is better than no study at all.
- ◆ If you fall behind, try not to panic! Sit down, review what you haven't studied and plan how to tackle the work.
- ◆ If you have problems knowing what to study, or if you get behind, talk to your lecturer.

Before you even begin to read about the learning techniques, complete the following survey on study attitudes and organizational strategies to get a picture of your current learning habits.

Next, there 3 general techniques that will help you to produce good results. We will focus on the following:

1. Concentration while reading
2. Preparation for studying textbooks
3. Use of SQ4R study technique

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South Campus: 041-5042511  
North Campus: 041-5043222  
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In case of an emergency:

- Mandela University Protection Services: 041-504 2009/3483
- Suicide Emergency Line: 0800 567 567 or SMS 31393
- Life Line: 0861 322 322 (Counselling available 24/7)
- SA Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline: 0800 12 13 14

Note: Student Counselling services are confidential, free of charge to registered Mandela students, and offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists.

Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre  
<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

email – [counselling@mandela.ac.za](mailto:counselling@mandela.ac.za)



[mandela.ac.za](http://mandela.ac.za)

Learning

## 1. Concentration while reading

### **Read in the same place**

If you have a place set aside specifically for reading and studying, you can concentrate more easily when you sit down to work.

### **Take care of physical comfort**

Read at a time of day when you are most alert. Set up your reading space to maximise concentration.

### **Minimize distractions**

Your study area should be free of external distractions such as people, noise and sights which interfere with your ability to concentrate. Find a place to study that works for you.

### **Set specific reading goals**

Setting specific goals motivates you to use your time efficiently and complete the task. To set specific goals, use the chapter headings as a guide for where to break the chapter into sections.

### **Take regular breaks**

Take breaks regularly, approximately every 45–60 minutes. If you read when you are tired, you are less likely to understand and retain the information.

### **Keep a distraction list**

You might find your mind wanders when you read. When you notice you are not concentrating, note this on a sheet of paper. You'll find that as you monitor your level of concentration, you will be able to concentrate for longer periods of time and notice more quickly when your concentration begins to waiver.

## 2. Preparation for studying textbooks

The textbook is an important source of learning and frequently you are tested on its contents. Important factors to consider with regard to textbook reading are:

### **Review the course outline**

Spend time at the beginning of the semester to become familiar with the course outline to give you a good idea as to what is important and what your learning and your note-taking should focus on.

### **Determine the relationship between classes and the textbook**

Knowing the importance of the textbook helps you to determine how you should approach it when you read.

### **Identify the kind of test/exam questions**

Early in the semester determine if you need to prepare for multiple-choice, short answer or essay type exams. Find out whether you will be examined on your ability to recall information or apply it, analyse or integrate (put together) data, solve problems or evaluate the worth of ideas. Ask your lecturer for a sample of questions which might be used in the exam. Check on the student portal or at the library for previous exam papers.

### **Preview the textbook**

Before you begin to read a textbook for the first time, preview (scan) it. Briefly look through the book to become familiar with its organization and its component parts: Introduction, Table of contents, the text chapters and the glossary.

## 3. Use of the SQ4R study technique

SQ4R is a useful strategy for fully absorbing written information. The acronym SQ4R stands for the six sequential techniques you should use to study. Survey, Question, Read, Record, Recite and Review.

It helps to create a good mental framework of a subject. By using SQ4R to actively read a document, you get the maximum benefit from your reading time.

**1. SURVEY** the chapter: gather the information necessary to focus and formulate goals.

**2. QUESTION:** Turn the title, headings, and/or subheadings into questions. Read questions at the end of the chapters or after each subheading. Ask yourself, "What did my lecturer say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?" Ask yourself, "What do I already know about this subject?"

### **Note:**

**If it is helpful to you, write out these questions for consideration.**

**3. READ:** Look for the key point in each paragraph. Search actively for answers to the questions you have set. Is this information of primary or secondary importance? Re-read (several times if necessary) in order to gain a thorough understanding of the material.

**4. RECORD:** Use your own system to note the primary points – highlight, underline, write in the margins or on a separate pages/s, make summary notes/mind maps.

DO NOT copy directly from the text – put it in your own words.

**5. RECITE:** Use your own system to note the primary points – highlight, underline, write in the margins or on a separate pages/s, make summary notes/mind maps.

DO NOT copy directly from the text – put it in your own words.

**6. REVIEW** is an ongoing process: refine your mental organisation and begin building long-term memory. Check whether you recalled the key points correctly. If not, try again. Review work regularly, not just prior to the exams, to keep yourself familiar with the subject matter.

**If you have any more study or academic related queries; visit CTLM( Centre for Teaching and Learning) offices on North campus: R-Block R107 or contact them at 041 504 3207**

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