

EFFECTIVE STUDENT 101

Good Listening In Class

- ✓ It is important for you to be a good listener in class. Much of what you will have to learn will be presented verbally by your teachers.
- ✓ **Just hearing what your teachers say is not the same as listening to what they say.**
- ✓ Listening is a **cognitive act** (i.e. pertaining to the mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning, as contrasted with emotional processes) that requires you to **pay attention** and think about and mentally process what you hear.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO BE A GOOD LISTENER?

Be Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.

- Make sure you complete all assigned work and readings.
- Review your notes from previous class sessions.

Be Emotionally Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.

- Your **attitude** is important. Make a conscious choice to find the topic useful and interesting. Be committed to learning all that you can.

Listen with a Purpose.

- Identify what you expect and hope to learn from the class session. Listen for these things as your teacher talks.

Listen with an Open Mind.

- Be receptive to what your teacher says.
- It is **good to question** what is said as long as you remain open to points of view other than your own.



Be Attentive.

- Focus on what your teacher is saying.
- Try not to daydream and let your mind wander to other things. It helps to sit in the front and center of the class, and to maintain eye contact with your teacher.

Be an Active Listener.

- You can think faster than your teacher can speak.
- Use this to your advantage by evaluating what is being said and trying to anticipate what will be said next.

Meet the Challenge.

- Don't give up and stop listening when you find the information being presented difficult to understand.
- Listen even more carefully at these times and work hard to understand what is being said.
- **Don't** be reluctant to ask questions.

Triumph Over the Environment.

- The classroom may too noisy, too hot, too cold, too bright, or too dark. Don't give in to these inconveniences.
- Stay focused on the big picture - LEARNING.

THE THREE W'S OF GOALS

Each goal you set should state **WHAT** you will do and **WHEN** you will accomplish it.

Implied in each goal you set is your **WILL** (determination) to do it.

For example, a goal for a research paper might be stated as follows: *I will* (your determination) *finish gathering information for my research paper* (what you will do) *by November 20* (when you will accomplish it).

CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROPRIATE GOALS

Your goals should be:

1. *within your skills and abilities.*

- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help you set goals you can accomplish.

2. *realistic.*

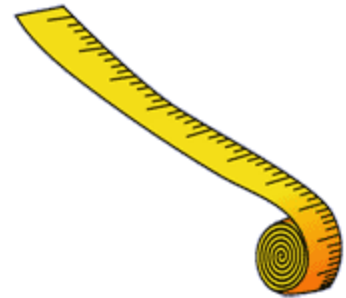
- Setting a goal to learn the spelling of three new words a day is realistic. Trying to learn the spelling of fifty new words a day is not realistic.

3. *flexible.*

- Sometimes things will not go the way you anticipate and you may need to change your goal. Stay flexible so when you realize a change is necessary you will be ready to make the change.

4. *measurable.*

- It is important to be able to measure your progress toward a goal.
- It is especially important to recognize when you have accomplished your goal and need to go no further.
- Failure to measure your progress toward a goal and recognize its accomplishment will result in effort that is misdirected and wasted.



5. *within your control.*

- Other than when working as part of a group, accomplishment of your goal should not depend on other students.
- You can control what you do, but you have little or no control over what others do. You may do what you have to do, but if others don't, you will not accomplish your goal.

Successful students:



1. **Try not to do too much studying at one time.**

If you try to do too much studying at one time, you will tire and your studying will not be very effective.

Space the work you have to do over shorter periods of time.

Taking short breaks will restore your mental energy.

2. **Plan specific times for studying.** (I.E. A Study Schedule)

Study time is any time you are doing something related to schoolwork.

It can be completing assigned reading, working on a paper or project, or studying for a test.

Schedule specific times throughout the week for your study time.

3. **Try to study at the same times each day.**

Studying at the same times each day establishes a routine that becomes a regular part of your life, just like sleeping and eating. When a scheduled study time comes up during the day, you will be mentally prepared to begin studying.

4. **Set specific goals for their study times.**

Goals will help you stay focused and monitor your progress. Simply sitting down to study has little value.

You must be very clear about what you want to accomplish during your study times.

5. **Start studying when planned.**

You may delay starting your studying because you don't like an assignment or think it is too hard.

A delay in studying is called "**procrastination.**"

If you procrastinate for any reason, you will find it difficult to get everything done when you need to. You may rush to make up the time you wasted getting started, resulting in careless work and errors.

6. **Work on the assignment they find most difficult first.**

Your most difficult assignment will require the most effort.

Start with your most difficult assignment since this is when you have the most mental energy.



7. **Review their notes before beginning an assignment.**

Reviewing your notes can help you make sure you are doing an assignment correctly.

Also, your notes may include information that will help you complete an assignment.

8. **Tell their friends not to call them during their study times.**

Two study problems can occur if your friends call you during your study times. First, your work is interrupted. It is not that easy to get back to what you were doing. Second, your friends may talk about things that will distract you from what you need to do. Here's a simple idea – turn off your cell phone during your study times.

9. **Call another student when they have difficulty with an assignment.**

This is a case where "two heads may be better than one."

10. **Review their schoolwork over the weekend.**

Yes, weekends should be fun time. But there is also time to do some review. This will help you be ready to go on Monday morning when another school week begins.

11. **Understand that CRAM is a four letter word!** Good test/exam prep begins early.

12. **Act:** Active learning is the key to success. In order to move information into your long term memory, you have to act. Suggestions include:

- Rewrite material into your own words
- Recite the information aloud

- Discuss concepts with a study group
- Teach the material to a friend
- Organize and categorize your notes
- Break down information by using graphic organizers and concept notes
- Make diagrams
- Create acronyms to remember information
- Pay attention, teacher often give HINTS about possible test questions: write down and highlight these “possible questions”

13. **Personalize the material.** It is more likely you will remember information that connects to things you already know.

- Use yourself as an example
- Find personal relevance
- Create imagery
- Use mnemonic devices you’ve created (i.e. acronyms)

14. **On exam day...**

- Psych yourself up—BE CONFIDENT!
- Sleep, eat, exercise
- Bring the correct materials (Pens (more than one), pencils, highlighter, calculator etc.)
- Glance at review notes
- Practice relaxation strategies—breathe!
- Sit where there are minimal distractions.

Preparing to Study: A Good Study Place

You need a good study place to be prepared to study. You should be able to answer **YES** to all of the following questions:

1. **Is my Study Place available to me whenever I need it?**

- Your Study Place does you little good if you cannot use it when you need it. If you are using a Study Place that you must share with others for any reason, work out a schedule so that you know when you can use it.



2. **Is my Study Place free from interruptions?**

- It is important to have uninterrupted study time. You may have to hang a DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door or take the phone off the hook.

3. Is my Study Place free from distractions?

- **Research** shows that most students study best in a quiet environment. If you find that playing a stereo or TV improves your mood, keep the volume low.

4. Does my Study Place contain all the study materials I need?

- Be sure your Study Place includes reference sources and supplies such as pens and pencils, paper, ruler, calculator, and whatever else you might need.
- If you use a computer for your schoolwork, it should be in your Study Place .



5. Does my Study Space contain a large enough desk or table?

- While working on an assignment or studying for a test, use a desk or table that is large enough to hold everything you need. Allow enough room for writing and try to avoid clutter.

6. Does my Study Place have a comfortable chair?

- A chair that is not comfortable can cause discomfort or pain that will interfere with your studying.
- A chair that is too comfortable might make you sleepy. Select a chair in which you can sit for long periods while maintaining your attention.

7. Does my Study Place have enough light?

- The amount of light you need depends on what you are doing. The important thing is that you can clearly see what you need to see without any strain or discomfort.



8. Does my Study Place have a comfortable temperature?

- If your Study Place is too warm, you might become sleepy. If it is too cold, your thinking may slow down and become unclear. Select a temperature at which your mind and body function best.

SQ4R

A helpful way to review notes and text material

Survey

- Read over introduction
- Look over headings/subheadings
- Scan the first sentence of each paragraph
- Read the chapter summary and chapter questions
- Check pictures, charts, graphs

Question

Questions focus attention, provide a purpose for reading/studying and encourage active reading

- Turn headings into questions
- Ask a question for each section of the chapter or notes
- Sort and evaluate ideas to determine if they answer the questions

Read

Read the section of the text or notes in search of the answers to your questions. Reading will help in understanding and evaluating what has been read.

- Read to determine the main points and details that answer the questions
- Highlight or underline while searching for the answers
- Adjust reading speed to suit the material

Recite

After reading, take a moment to paraphrase or summarize the information

- Test comprehension by stating:
“The most important points in this section were...”

Record

By paraphrasing (i.e. putting into your own words) and recording the information: understanding and retention increases.

- Make study notes

Review

Review the chapter or notes to check recall of the main material that goes with them.

- First, review within 24 hours
- Review again, within a week
- Finally, review again before major test or exam

Method 1: Cornell Notes

Divide your paper as follows:

CUES	NOTES
Write down significant points and cues in the margin	Take down the information here Leave space for new ideas Test yourself by covering up the notes Recall all you can of hidden material If you can say it you know it.

Method 2: Outline Method

Write notes in points or bullets in an organized pattern.

Use space indentation to offset different ideas.

Place major points farthest to the left

- Indent each of the more specific points to the right
 - ◆ Levels of importance will be indicated by the distance away from the major point.

Extrasensory Perception

- Means of perceiving without the use of sense organs
 - Three Kinds
 - Telepathy: sending messages
 - Clairvoyance: forecasting the future
 - Psycho kinesis: Perceiving events external to the situation

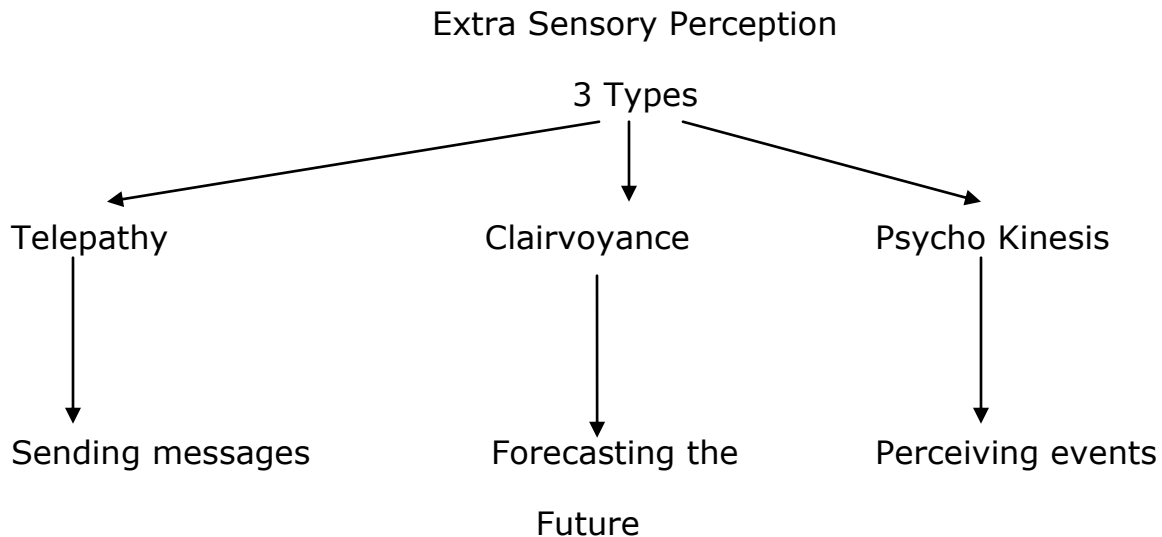
Method 3: Mapping

Mapping is a graphic representation of notes

Each fact or idea relates to every other fact or idea

Notes can be easily edited by adding numbers, marks, or color coding

To review, cover lines for memory drill



Method 4: Charting Method

If the information is presented as distinct (e.g. chronological) notes may be set up by drawing columns and labelling appropriate headings.

Determine the categories

Set up the paper into columns headed by the categories

Record the information into the appropriate category

The chart method provides an easy review mechanism that quickly organizes and shows relationships between facts

Period	Important People	Events	Sign
1941-45	Franklin D. Roosevelt	WWII	U.S. involvement

Study Tips: Using Acronymic Sentences to Remember Information

Creating an acronymic sentence is a good strategy to use when you have to remember information in a certain order.

An acronymic sentence is a sentence that is created using the first letter of each piece of information to be remembered.

Here is how to create an acronymic sentence.

- Write each piece of information you have to remember.
- Underline the first letter of each piece of information. If there is more than one word in a piece of information, underline the first letter of the most important word.
- Write a sentence using words that begin with the underlined letters.



"My (Mercury) very (Venus) earthy (Earth) mother (Mars) just (Jupiter) served (Saturn) us (Uranus) nine (Neptune) pizzas (Pluto)" is an acronymic sentence that students through the years have used to remember the order of planets around our sun, from closest to furthest.

If you accept recent evidence that Pluto is not a planet, you can use "My very earthy mother just served us noodles."

Using Acronyms to Remember Information

Forming an acronym is a good strategy to use to remember information in any order. An acronym is a word that is formed from the first letter of each fact to be remembered. It can be a real word or a nonsense word you are able to pronounce.

Here is how to form an acronym.

- ▶ Write the facts you need to remember.
- ▶ Underline the first letter of each fact. If there is more than one word in a fact, underline the first letter of only the first word in the fact.
- ▶ Arrange the underlined letters to form an acronym that is a real word or a nonsense word you can pronounce.



“HOMES” is an example of an acronym that is a real word you can use to remember the names of the five Great Lakes: Michigan, Erie, Superior, Ontario, Huron:

In HOMES, H is the first letter of Huron and helps you remember that name; O is the first letter of Ontario, and so on.

Test Taking Tips

General Tips

- ▶ Answer the questions you find easiest first. Come back to the others later.
- ▶ Don't spend more than a minute or two on any question.
- ▶ As you work on a section, keep track of how much time remains. (It's a good idea to bring a reliable watch.)
- ▶ Answer every question. There is no penalty for guessing.
- ▶ Be careful to mark only one answer choice per question.
- ▶ Write in the test book in any way that will help you.
- ▶ Consider all answer choices before you choose one. Use the process of elimination to narrow your choices.



English Section Tips

- ▶ Consider the writing style used for each section. The correct answer choice will be the one that works best with the writing style used.
- ▶ When asked a question about something that is underlined, consider how the underlined portion fits with the rest of the section.
- ▶ Examine each answer choice to see how it differs from the others.
- ▶ For items that include "No Change" as an answer choice, choose this as your answer only if you are sure none of the other answer choices are correct.
- ▶ Reread the underlined portion with your answer choice to be sure it is correct.

Reading Section Tips

- ▶ Read the passage carefully before you read the questions.
- ▶ Focus on the main ideas in the passage. Underline these. Don't get lost in the details.
- ▶ Try to identify how ideas in the passage are connected.
- ▶ Refer back to the passage as you answer each question.

Mathematics Section Tips

- ▶ Work out the problem before looking at the answer choices. When done, choose the answer choice that matches your answer. If none match, redo the problem.
- ▶ Don't overly rely on your calculator. Some problems are best worked out manually. Some don't even require calculation.
- ▶ The questions focus much more on reasoning than on calculation. If you find yourself doing complicated calculations, you're probably on the wrong track.
- ▶ Make sure your answer choice makes sense. A calculation error can lead you to a wrong answer choice.
- ▶ Check your work.

Science Section Tips

Given the complexity of the passages, it may help to make some simple notes as you read them.

Cross out irrelevant information.

Don't be overly concerned with any technical terminology. Technical terms usually have little to do with the correct answer choice.

Be watchful for conflicting viewpoints in some of the passages.



Writing Section Tips

Organization of your response is very important. Use a five-paragraph essay that includes an introduction, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Plan your response before you begin to write it.

Stay with the topic throughout your response.

Vary your sentence structure and word choices.

Use specific examples wherever possible.

Write legibly.

If you have time, check your grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

The DETER Strategy for Taking Tests

To do well on a test, you must have **good knowledge** of the information that is being tested.

But you must also have a **strategy** for taking the test that allows you to show what you know.

The DETER strategy can help you do your best on any test. Each letter in DETER reminds you what to do.

D = Directions

Read the test directions very carefully.

Ask your teacher to explain anything about the test directions you do not understand

Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the test.

If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.



E = Examine

Examine the entire test to see how much you have to do.

Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.

demonstrate what you know.



T = Time

Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.

If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.

Planning your time is especially important for essay tests where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other test items.

E = Easiest

The second E in DETER reminds you to answer the items you find easiest first.

If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that test things you know.

R = Review

If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.

Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Test Anxiety

WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY?

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety.

It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test. In fact, a little anxiety can jump start your studying and keep you motivated.

However, too much anxiety can interfere with your studying. You may have difficulty learning and remembering what you need to know for the test.

Further, too much anxiety may block your performance during the test. You may have difficulty demonstrating what you know during the test.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TEST ANXIETY?

You probably have test anxiety if you answer YES to four or more of the following:

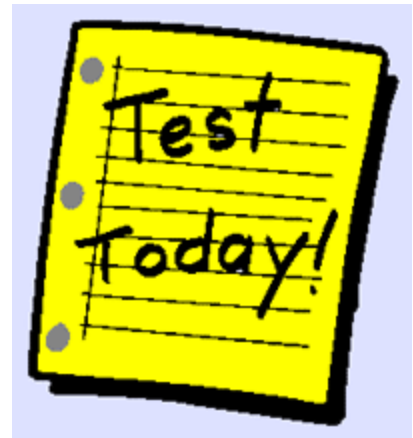
1. I have a hard time getting started studying for a test.
2. When studying for a test, I find many things that distract me.
3. I expect to do poorly on a test no matter how much or how hard I study.

4. When taking a test, I experience physical discomfort such as sweaty palms, an upset stomach, a headache, difficulty breathing, and tension in my muscles.
5. When taking a test, I find it difficult to understand the directions and questions.
6. When taking a test, I have difficulty organizing my thoughts.
7. When taking a test, I often “draw a blank.”
8. When taking a test, I find my mind wandering to other things.
9. I usually score lower on a test than I do on assignments and papers.
10. After a test, I remember information I couldn’t recall during the test.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT TEST ANXIETY?

Here are some things you can do *before*, *during*, and *after* a test to reduce your test anxiety.

1. **Use good study techniques** to gain mastery of the material that will be covered on the test. This mastery will help you to approach the test with confidence rather than have excessive anxiety.
2. **Maintain a positive attitude** as you study. Think about doing well, not failing. Think of the test as an opportunity to show how much you have learned.
3. **Go into the test well rested and well fed.** Get enough sleep the night before the test. Eat a light and nutritious meal before the test. Stay away from junk foods.
4. **Stay relaxed during the test.** Taking slow, deep breaths can help. Focus on positive self-statements such as “I can do this.”
5. **Follow a plan for taking the test such as the DETER strategy.** Don’t panic even if you find the test difficult. Stay with your plan!
6. **Don’t worry about other students finishing the test before you do.** Take the time that you need to do your best.



7. **Once you finish the test and hand it in, forget about it temporarily.** There is nothing more you can do until the graded test is returned to you. Turn your attention and effort to new assignments and tests.
8. **When the graded test is returned to you, analyze it to see how you could have done better. Learn from your mistakes** and from what you did well. Apply this knowledge when you take the next test.
9. **CRAM is a four letter word**

Writing Multiple Choice Exams

Multiple choice exams are a common source of frustration and anxiety for students. Using a simple strategy may help.

1. Define the problem.

Read the question completely and carefully before starting to look for the right answer.

It is crucial that you **identify** what the “problem” is, first (preferably by restating it in your own words).

If you skip down to the answers too quickly, you won’t really know what you are looking for.

One way of reinforcing this approach is to cover the answers while you are reading the question.

Once you have a clear understanding of the problem, remove the paper and go on to the next step.

2. Generating solutions.

In multiple choice exams, the teacher generates the solutions.

Your responsibility is to read each answer carefully and to make sure that you understand all of the choices.

3. Evaluating solutions.

Usually one or two choices can be eliminated immediately.

After the initial elimination, you may need to go back to the question to ensure that you understand the “problem” completely.

Then, in light of the problem, carefully review each of the remaining answers and evaluate them systematically.

If you know the material, this should be fairly straightforward.

4. Making the decision.

The best solution to the problem should have become clear during the evaluation step.

At this point, however, many students are tempted to throw out the systematic approach in order to try and second guess the teacher.

If they do so, they forfeit their control over the process. Giving into this temptation will probably reduce the quality of your answers!

Your first choice is most likely to be the best choice.

To change or not to change?

Students frequently ask when or if they should change answers on a multiple choice exam.

Here are some general guidelines.

When **NOT** to change your answer:

1. **General rule** – If you have **read the question carefully and analyzed** the answers **systematically**, your **first answer** is most likely to be correct.
2. If you change your answer because you think the revised answer is “what the teacher is looking for”, the change is more likely to **be wrong**.
3. If you change your answer after you have looked for a double meaning or “trick” in the question, the change is more likely to **be wrong**.
4. If you change an answer in a rush near the end of an exam, the decision making has probably been unsystematic. Therefore, your first answer is more likely to be correct.

TRUST YOURSELF!

When to change your answer:

1. If you remember **significant new information** that affects your decision about a question (or discover important new information in another part of a test), then your second answer is more likely to be correct.
2. If you are very confident that you misread the question initially, the revised answer is more likely to be correct.
3. If you discover that your math calculations were incorrect, the second answer is more likely to be correct.

Glossary of Key Test Words

Analyze:

To separate (a thing, an idea) into its parts to find out the nature, proportion, function, interrelationship, etc.

Comment:

To explore the impact, meaning of something; give note in explanation, criticism, or illustration of something written or said; remark or make an observation made in criticism or as an expression of opinion.

Compare:

Examine the qualities or characteristics in order to discover resemblance. The term implies that you are to emphasize the **similarities**, although differences can be mentioned.

Contrast:

Tell how two or more topics are **different** from associated things, qualities or events.

Criticize, Interpret and Review:

Express judgement with respect to the correctness or merits of the factors under consideration. Give the results of analysis and discuss the limitations of, good points or contributions of the work in question.

Define:

Definitions call for concise, clear, authoritative meanings. Details are not required, but limitations of the definition should be cited.

Diagram or Illustrate:

Present a drawing, chart, plan or graphic representation in the answer. Expect to label the diagram or add a brief explanation or description. To illustrate can also mean to provide specific evidence for a written answer, i.e. a quotation is an illustration used to support an answer.

Discuss:

Examine, analyze carefully, and present detailed considerations—pro and con—regarding the problems or items involved. Often found with essay questions.

Evaluate:

Present a careful appraisal of the problem, stressing both the advantages and limitations. Evaluations implies authoritative and to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

Explain:

Clarify and interpret the material presented. State the “how” or “why”, reconcile differences in opinion or experimental results, and state causes if possible. In brief, tell how it all happened.

Justify or Prove:

To justify an answer, provide factual evidence or logical reasons. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form. Establish the answer with certainty by evaluating and citing experimental evidence or by logical reasoning.

List:

Present an itemized series or tabulation. Be concise.

Outline:

Give main points and essential support material, omitting minor details. The information is presented in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Summarize:

Give the main points or facts in condensed form. Omit details, illustration and examples.

Trace:

Give a descriptive progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or deductions.