

# How to Study and Take Exams

## UWF Writing Lab

### GENERAL FACTORS

1. Secure the best available place for studying.
2. Keep a record of time spent on each subject.
3. Prepare and follow a permanent schedule.
4. Always study in the same place; loaf elsewhere.
5. Always gather equipment and then begin; don't dawdle.
6. Clear your table of distracting objects.
7. Keep the room cool.
8. Have adequate light on the whole page.
9. Assume a vigorous posture.
10. Don't study when very tired or sleepy.
11. Relax daily by talking, loafing, and exercising.
12. Break study time into several segments, taking a short break occasionally.

### LEARNING TO CONCENTRATE

1. When ready to study, discard other tasks and ideas.
2. If intruding duties do occur, write them down for later attention and dismiss them.
3. Do only one thing at a time, no matter how efficient you may be.
4. If frequent distractions occur, re-examine your program and your purposes.
5. Tell your friends about your study hours and observe them faithfully.
6. Work rapidly; this method often shuts out distractions.
7. Set definite tasks and perform.
8. Decide the order of your tasks.
9. Begin work at the designated time.
10. Compete with your own record.

### GETTING THE MOST FROM READING

1. Vary the type of reading to fit the purpose and the material.
2. Consciously increase your reading rate.
3. Eliminate lip movements and vocalization.
4. Read for ideas.
5. Re-read only when necessary for clarifying meaning.
6. Use the editor's aids, such as headings, subheadings, italicized words, and boldface type.
7. Find the main idea of each paragraph or section.
8. Look for transitions, such as first, but, soon, for example, on the other hand, and consequently to help you follow the author's thinking.
9. Get the connotations of new words from the context.
10. Look in the dictionary for fuller meanings for new words which seem to be important.
11. Do not skip graphs, tables, and pictures.
12. Read footnotes.

13. Match the author's illustrations with others from your own experience or previous reading.
14. Explain new ideas to your friends; they may not want to hear them, but you need to practice.

### STRENGTHENING THE MEMORY

1. Insist upon understanding, or you cannot remember.
2. Emphasize learning rather than remembering.
3. Decide what to remember and then do so.
4. Classify, arrange, and organize before trying to remember.
5. Organize by categories like time periods, continents, institutions, etc.
6. Picture as vividly as possible what you read.
7. Memorize economic laws, name lists, offices, and short quotations.
8. Trust your memory; brag about it. It will respond.
9. Recite to yourself and judge yourself critically.

### Suggestions From "What To Do About Forgetting" By Walter Pauk

10. Think about this fact: in reading a prose passage straight through, the ideas and events which come in rapid succession crowd each other out. By the time the reader has finished a novel, about 50% of it will have been forgotten. The process of forgetting goes on even while reading.
11. To combat the problem of forgetting material which has been studied: SPEND ANOTHER 15 MINUTES IN RECITING. No other single study technique is more effective in helping students to do a better job scholastically.
12. The process of recitation is essentially this: After reading a headed section, stop reading, look away from the book, and recite aloud, in your own words, the ideas just put forth by the author.
13. If you take notes on separate sheets of paper as you read, you may read the entire chapter, taking notes, before recitation begins. Then, going back to the first page of notes and glancing occasionally at them for clues, recite aloud the author's ideas from beginning to end. After reciting, you should quickly skim through the chapter to check the accuracy of your recitation.
14. Remember this: if after reading a section, you cannot say aloud what you have just read, then you have no right to expect that tomorrow in class, or two weeks hence in an examination, the author's ideas will somehow float to the top of your mind ready to be skimmed off and shouted forth by you. So while you still have time, re-study the section to learn it. Keep at the chapter until you can recite it. Being able to recite the author's ideas in your own words is the only true test of knowing that you know.

### LEARNING AN ASSIGNMENT

1. Review the preceding chapter or unit; preview the following lesson; see how the assignment fits into the context of the preceding and the following material.
2. Survey the whole assignment first.

- a. Squeeze the full significance out of the title.
  - b. Note the subheadings.
  - c. Read introductory and concluding paragraphs.
  - d. If a summary is available, read it next.
  - e. If study questions are available, read them carefully to discover what kinds of information you should look for as you read the assignment.
3. Now read the assignment straight through quickly to get an overall general idea of its content, putting a check in the margin when you recognize an answer to a question.
  4. Next read the whole lesson carefully and critically.
  5. Underline, but only the important words and ideas.
  6. Make marginal notes and cross references.
  7. Review the whole lesson immediately after completing this careful reading.
  8. Recite to yourself, orally or in writing, in your own words.
  9. Check your memory by referring to the book.
  10. Re-read the portions on which you were weak.
  11. Make an outline, abstract, or summary.
  12. Review the lesson just before class.

### PASSING EXAMINATIONS

1. Try not to be emotional about tests and examinations.
2. Think of the answers rather than of your grade.
3. Prepare, rather than trust to luck.
4. List important events, names, laws, principles, ideas, and books.
5. Cramming is beneficial only if it is a concentrated review of materials already studied.
6. Make up questions which you would use if you were the instructor; answer them.
7. Review selectively rather than trying to cover everything at random.
8. Ascertain the type of the coming test.
9. Analyze previous examinations.

### OBJECTIVE TESTS

10. In objective tests, read the directions carefully.
11. Guess, unless guessing carries a penalty for missing.
12. Act on vague associations if nothing more definite occurs to you.
13. Skip difficult items and return to them.
14. Utilize foils like only, always, and never.
15. Reword confusing items to clarify meaning.
16. Do not change answers.

### ESSAY EXAMINATIONS

17. In essay examinations, read all the questions first.
18. If some are optional, decide carefully which ones to answer.
19. Answer easier questions first.

20. Apportion your time; don't write five pages on one question and a half page on another equally important question.
21. When a mental block arises, move on to another question, and return if the idea comes to you.
22. Concentrate on one answer at a time.
23. Write accurately and briefly.
24. Don't manufacture answers; bluffing is usually penalized.
25. Write topic sentences and summarize your answer.
26. Learn the vocabulary of questioning used by your instructor.
27. Depend upon yourself; others often know less.
28. Proofread your paper before handing it in.

### LEARNING FROM LISTENING

1. Listening, or the ability to understand and recall the spoken word, is a skill that can be improved through training.
2. The average adult spends 45% of his communicating time listening.
3. Listening skills are improved by understanding what the skills are. The good listener looks for the speaker's main ideas.
4. Try to anticipate what the speaker will say.
5. Continually summarize.
6. Weigh the speaker's evidence for his statements.
7. Listen for inferred meanings.
8. Realize that the development of good listening skills requires work and practice.
9. Practice listening to talk that required hard work mentally.
10. When listening for note-taking, spend more time listening than writing. Sort out the most important facts and ideas from what the speaker is saying and make brief notes of key words and phrases, showing relationships when possible by indenting, outline form.

Probably you can study more effectively by following a specific method than you can when you use no particular pattern for studying.

For example, if you over-emphasize detail, you will find that three-level outlining will help you get a general picture of ideas and their relationships to one another.