

Upper St. Clair High School Counseling Department

Study Skills



A Group Curriculum

- The group is designed to promote beneficial study, homework, test-preparation and test-taking skills in high school students.
- The Study Skills Group will meet for six weeks during a nine-week grading term. The meetings will be 30-45 minutes in length.
- Participation is on a student volunteer-basis ONLY, with parent permission.
- If students exhibit a lack of commitment detrimental to the function of the group, as a whole, they may be invited to leave the group by the group facilitators. The decision will be final for the term of the session.

Date: 09/23/03

Overview

The purpose of the Study Skills Group is to help students maximize the learning process. This will require a commitment of time, effort, motivation, and discipline to explore all avenues leading toward school success.

Rules of the Group

1. Student participation in the Study Skills Group will be on a voluntary basis — ONLY. No exceptions.
2. Group begins promptly at 2:30 p.m. DO NOT be late.
3. All books go home every day.
4. Monday through Thursday evenings, students must study a minimum of one hour each night. (Students must LOG their time.)
5. On weekends, students must study a minimum of 1.5 hours (counting Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). (Students must LOG their time.)
6. No studying after 9 p.m.



Group Itinerary


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Session I: Introduction

Introduction

- Overview
- Rules of the Group
- Student Commitment
- Parent Permission
- Your text will be provided.

Excuses and Distractions

- What are the obstacles to success?

The Study Skills Program Philosophy

- ***Just do it!***
- It's up to you.
- No guarantees.
- This group is a collaboration.



Maximize your learning in a shorter period of time.

- Not studying more, just studying smarter.
- The Study Environment
- Studying vs. Doing Homework

Session II: Study Skills and Homework

The Study Environment

Many students use the same method to study that they used back in elementary school. Did you ever realize that you may be able to improve on this to save time and energy? It's a fact that most students, regardless of how bright they are, can improve study habits.

- Choose a quiet, well-lit area, preferably a desk or table — no easy chairs. Keep it clear of clutter. Use the same location every time — be consistent.
- Make sure you have resources nearby and handy. Take your books home every night. Stock your study and homework area with paper, pens, pencils, erasers, a calculator, a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a computer (if possible).
- Get rid of all distractions: radio, phone, TV, Instant Messaging (computer).
- Don't study when you're overtired. Take a nap, and come back refreshed.

Studying vs. Doing Homework

Doing Homework is... _____

Studying is... _____

**Don't study harder...
study SMARTER!**

How to Read a Textbook

1. Review VOCABULARY/TECHNICAL WORDS at the end of the chapter.
2. Read the MAIN IDEA QUESTIONS in the back of the chapter.
3. Read the CHAPTER SUMMARY at the end of the chapter.
4. Review all CHARTS, DIAGRAMS, PICTURES/CAPTIONS, and GRAPHS throughout the chapter.
5. Begin reading at the beginning of the chapter. Remember, the type in which headings are printed is a good clue to topic importance.

Remember, the textbook is the thinking of the author. Let him or her draw you a road-map by reviewing the END of the chapter before you begin reading.

Follow These Tips to Maximize Learning

When reading/studying/doing homework...

- Make notes on important points (main idea) you have learned from each assignment. Use an abbreviated outline format for note-taking.
- Review what is not clear to you.
- Try to think of questions your teacher might ask.
- When tackling homework, be sure you understand the teacher's expectations. What is the point of the assignment? (If you pay attention in class, the teacher will explain and instruct you.)
- Summarize, in your own words, what you have learned.

In class...

- Listen for important information in lectures. Try to pick out key facts and phrases, such as, "The three main reasons are..."
- Attend all classes. Skipping class only adds to school anxiety.
- Remember, teachers are human; they have their likes and dislikes, too. Study your teacher. Part of being a good student is finding out EXACTLY what your teacher wants and expects and then delivering it!
- Apply everything you learn as early and as often as possible.





Reading Comprehension Suggestions

To improve reading comprehension skills, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Noting and recalling details are key components of reading comprehension. To accomplish this, one should engage in at least some informal discussion after reading something, with emphasis being placed on the main thought of the material. Attention should also be focused on the supporting details of the material. This can be accomplished by trying to identify evidence which supports various detailed statements and specific application of how detailed information might be used.
2. A large part of being an effective reader is remembering what has been read. It is often necessary to organize in our minds the material being read. This can be done by trying to grasp the author's plan and trying to understand the relationships between major ideas and the facts or details which give them meaning. It can also be helpful to outline or summarize (take notes) on what is being read.
3. It is essential to actively intend to remember what is being read. Of course, this will need to be selective, as it is impossible to remember everything read. Those points that should be remembered must be singled out and given special attention.
4. A single reading of materials is frequently insufficient—especially when memorizing. Re-reading is crucial.
5. Additionally, it proves beneficial to recall those points which are worth remembering or to recite them to ourselves. At least half the time spent trying to fix material in memory should be spent in active recitation.
6. Comprehension is enhanced if there is effective use of headings, subheadings, tables, graphs, illustrations, and marginal notes.
7. It is helpful to identify topic sentences in each paragraph read.
8. When reading chapters or sections, pay close attention to introductory and concluding paragraphs.
9. In story reading, it might prove helpful to establish the significance of an incident by asking what feeling or emotion was felt by the character during or after the incident.
10. It is also helpful in understanding what has been read and to summarize an incident using only one simple sentence.

Session III: Organization and Time-Management

Explain the Philosophy of Conditioning

While in school...

- Get organized!!! Keep all the notes and materials on one subject TOGETHER!
- Take notes efficiently in a notebook. Write clearly so you can read later.
- Note key terms. Write down important ideas, not every word said.
- Spend a couple of minutes reading your notes right after class, if you have time. Fill in any important details while they're fresh in your mind.
- Develop a schedule. Mark deadlines and exam dates for the semester on a calendar. Keep the calendar with you for convenience.
- Getting organized makes a big difference. The keys are: knowing when work is due, planning how to do quality work and get it done on time, and setting short-term goals that you can reach.

While at home...

- Set a certain time aside each day to study and stick to it.
- Concentrate—get right down to work, immediately. No radio, telephone, TV, Computer, or conversation. No distractions!
- Study the more difficult subjects first and leave the easy ones for last.
- Skim the assignment to get an idea of length and determine the amount of time it will take. You'll get a general idea from skimming, too.
- Assign a certain amount of time per subject and stick to it! This will help structure your evening.
- Relax for a FEW minutes between subjects to change gears.
- Be realistic about how much material you can cover in one session.
- Devote one hour per week, per subject, for weekly review.



Planning Big Projects

Writing Assignments

- Know your subject — do your research and reading.
- Make an outline.
- Write a first draft.
- Review and revise the draft.
- Proofread your final draft carefully



Long-Term Projects

- Give yourself plenty of time
- Divide your work into parts. Set a deadline for each part. Use a planner or calendar to help you stay on track.
- Try to finish your work early to lower anxiety levels.


Session IV: Test Preparation

General Test Prep Tips

- Be kind to yourself. Eat and sleep well before the exam, so you can be in top form. Don't try to "cram" or stay up all night by taking caffeine or other drugs. You're likely to be tired, irritable, and distracted by test time. During exam week, maintain regular habits and get your usual amount of sleep.
- Schedule several short review sessions rather than one or two long ones.
- Create
 - Use flashcards to learn technical terms and foreign language vocabulary.
 - Make charts and timelines for historical events.
 - Use outlines to help break information into smaller units that are easier to remember.

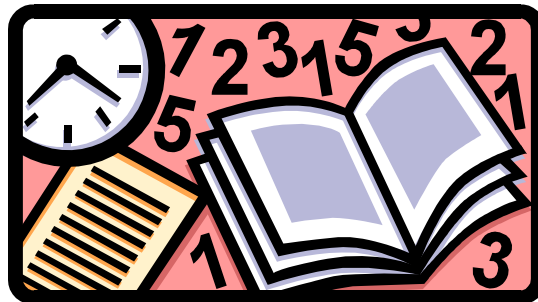
learning aids. Match the study material to the aid. For example:

When memorizing...

- If certain subject matter must be memorized, do not try to do it all at one time.
 - It is generally better to learn from, or memorize, the whole before you tackle the details.
- 

Do's and Don'ts for Proper Test Preparation

- DO have a written study schedule. Know how much time you have to spend on each activity. This schedule should be flexible, not rigid, but should be used as a CONSTANT GUIDE to help you manage your time.
- DO keep an exam schedule. This will include (1) a list of topics covered for each exam, (2) the test book pages or other material to be covered, (3) the purpose of the test in the overall scheme of the course, and (4) the type of questions you should expect on the test (true/false, multiple choice, short answer, matching, completion, or essay).
- DO review regularly, not just when exams are scheduled. This means daily review, plus a review after each main topic is covered. Research shows that learning is much more efficient when the student reviews material on a regular basis.
- DO NOT rely on your memory for important information about tests, such as exam dates, purpose, extent of material covered, and types of questions.
- DO NOT wait for inspiration to strike before studying and reviewing. Keeping up with your assignments is the key to exam success.



Session V: Test-Taking Strategies

Test-Day Strategies

- DO read the directions for all parts of the test carefully before you do anything else. Directions may change for different sections. If you have any questions, ask them before you begin working.
- DO find out the scoring system. This will tell you whether you will be penalized for wrong answers or whether you can afford to guess, even if you are not completely sure of the meaning of the question or the best answer.
- DO read the test all the way through before starting. Look to see if the test gives away some answers. Most long objective tests will. For instance, the answer to question 5 (or a good clue) may be implied by the way question 20 is asked.
- DO budget your time according to the length of the test, the value placed on different portions of it, and the knowledge you possess about the various questions.
- DO answer first those questions to which you definitely know the answers. Leave the more difficult questions and those about which you have doubts until after you have gained all the points you can from the areas of your strongest knowledge.
- DO re-read the directions after you have finished the test to make sure you have done what was asked. Make sure you have given your name, class, section number, and other required information.
- DO look over your answers to make sure you haven't made silly mistakes which could pull your score down.
- DO NOT change any answers unless you are absolutely certain the change is correct; your first hunch is apt to be right if you understood the question the first time.
- DO NOT automatically blame the teacher if you fail. Something may be wrong with your study habits, review procedures, or test-taking methods.



Avoiding Test Anxiety

What is Test Anxiety?

- It's worry or fear caused by having to take tests. It may include mental distraction, physical symptoms, and mental blocks. Building your test-taking skills can help reduce test anxiety so you can feel better and do better.

Who is affected?

- Every student who takes a test feels some anxiety. But for some students, the feeling is so intense that it affects their performance — with serious results. Some students can rise to the challenge, others view tests as threats. Students who have failed in the past often fear they'll fail again. A test-anxious student may do poorly on an exam even if he or she knows the material better than a classmate who is able to control the anxiety.

You can learn to control your anxiety!

Think positively.

- For any emotional, frightening thought, come up with a calming response. For instance, replace, "I could never study enough for this test," with, "I have a lot to study, but if I stick to my schedule and concentrate, I can do it."
- When you let your imagination go overboard, anxiety is sure to follow. Learn to imagine yourself remaining calm and in control. Cast yourself in the role of a winner, not a loser! Use your imagination in a positive way!


Have a healthy diet, and exercise regularly.

- These can help you sleep better and handle pressure better. Be sure to consult your physician before starting an exercise program.
- Avoid caffeine and don't use alcohol or other drugs.

Use relaxation techniques.

- Good techniques can help you when you feel yourself becoming anxious, to help you sleep the night before an exam, and/or as a refresher between study sessions.

If your mind is blocked during an exam...

- Close your eyes, take a long, deep breath, and let it out slowly.
 - Concentrate on your breathing — feel and hear yourself breathing. Don't allow yourself to worry about the time, test, or tension.
- 

Specific Tips by Test-Type

True-False

- Look out for qualifying adjectives, such as all, some, many, none, always, never, and most. An answer frequently hinges on these universal qualifiers. The sentence is usually, but not “always” false. “Men are created equal,” may be true enough, but “Men are created equal in *all* ways,” is obviously false.

Multiple Choice



- Answer all the questions you’re sure of, first—these are your strong response answers. Then work on the ones you’re uncertain of.
- Beware of words like “often,” “sometimes,” and “always.” Select the answer that seems most correct. Even wrong answers may be partially true.
- Think as you read; multiple choice questions can be tricky.
- Don’t take too much time on multiple choice questions—the longer you ponder, the more possibilities you’ll think of and the more confused you’ll get. Usually, only two of the four or five choices are good possibilities as correct. Eliminate the obviously incorrect, and from the two best, choose the one which seems most correct.
- On a weak response, when you’re in doubt, your first choice will usually be the best. Trust it.
- Never change an answer on multiple choice unless you’re POSITIVE your first answer was wrong.

Completion and Short Answer

- Unless you will be penalized for wrong answers, fill in ALL blanks logically, even if you’re not sure what the teacher expects. Frequently, a number of answers may be correct and instinctively you may choose one of them. Try to be as specific as possible. When in doubt, ask for clarification.
- Budget your time. Estimate how much time you have to answer each question. If some questions are worth more points than others, plan to spend more time answering them.
- Do the easiest questions first and don’t dwell on any particular question. You may come up with the answer to one question as you work on another, different question.
- Look for clues in the question. Words such as “define” or “describe” can point you in the right direction. Always use the full time — never leave early.

Matching

- First match the items you know for certain. This will make it easier for you to decide which of the remaining choices go together.

Problem-Solving Tests

- These tests involve using formulas and making calculations. Before the test, study major concepts and review formulas. Solve a lot of practice problems so you know what to expect.
- During the test, identify the givens and the unknowns. Write down the formula used in all your calculations.

**Essay**

- Read all the questions first.
- Underline key words, such as “summarize,” “evaluate,” and “compare.” Then, jot down initial thoughts. Be sure to FOLLOW Directions and answer the question being asked.
- It’s helpful to begin with the easiest question to build confidence.
- Some prefer to begin essay answers with a written outline. This is a good practice, IF YOU’RE SURE your answer is the correct one. Remember, the outline is “bare bones” - if your answer is wrong, your teacher will know it. An outline will help you to be organized, clear and precise.
- If you don’t have confidence in your answer, consider a mental outline, or one written on scratch paper. Remember, it’s always better to write MORE, rather than less on an essay response — the teacher will look for detail .
- Don’t EVER leave an essay question blank! It’s the surest way to get a zero! Put something down, make it sound as plausible as you can, and you will get SOME points for trying. Never just quit.
- Proofread at the end. Correct any errors. Make changes as neatly as possible.

Remember, these are all ways to make the structure of the test work for you. They are little tricks that may help you out, but they are NO SUBSTITUTE for good, solid preparation!

Study Time Log Sheet

WEEK	DATE	SUBJECT	TIME BEGAN	TOTAL TIME
1	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			
	W			
2	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			
	W			
3	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			

WEEK	DATE	SUBJECT	TIME BEGAN	TOTAL TIME
4	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			
	W			
5	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			
	W			
6	R			
	F/S/S			
	M			
	T			

**The Study Skills Program
is brought to you courtesy of the
Upper St. Clair High School
Counseling Department.**

**For more information,
contact the Counseling Department at
412.833.1600 X5.**