Acknowledgements

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Education is all about learning
There is no universal method by which all of us learn

Everyone has a unique style of learning which allows them to learn information efficiently. For this reason it is important to investigate the type of learner that you are. Knowing your learning style will help you develop coping strategies to compensate for your weaknesses and benefit from your strengths.

The three main learning channels include:

1) Visual

Tip → Use flashcards, highlighters, colour coding
Individuals who learn primarily through the visual channel tend to learn best by seeing. They may think in pictures and prefer diagrams, images, pictures, colours, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. They can easily visualize objects, plans and outcomes in their mind. This type of learner has a preference for seeing an activity demonstrated rather than just verbally explained. In general when reading, the visual learner will conjure up images in order to understand the text they are reading. They will often remember faces rather than names.

Auditory learners prefer to learn through words, usually by listening e.g. to conversations or listening to the radio. They can take in language very quickly, whether it is spoken or read. They are often talkative, needing to think aloud. Auditory learners are more likely to remember somebody’s name than what they look like. They can also remember quite accurately details of information they hear during conversations or lectures. They have strong language skills, which include a well-developed vocabulary and an appreciation for words. The strong language skills often lead to strong oral communication skills. They can carry on interesting conversations and can articulate their ideas clearly. Often information written down will have little meaning until it is heard.
Kinaesthetic learners prefer to learn by ‘doing’ and learn best through touch, movement and manipulation. They actually concentrate better and learn more easily when movement is involved. Furthermore, they often enjoy physical activities and crafts, and would rather get something straight out of the box and figure it out than read the instructions. They often dislike sitting still in long talks and like to move around when working. Kinaesthetic learners often wiggle, tap their feet, or move their legs when they sit. Kinaesthetic learners learn best by moving their bodies, activating their large or small muscles as they learn.

**Tips for Visual Learners**

- Replace or accompany text with visual aids.
- Use multimedia computer activities which have a high visual content.
- Use visual mapping, organisational charts and vision boards.
- Highlighting important aspects of the text.
- Use images, pictures and colour to help you learn.
- Test yourself by visualizing main ideas or questions and write the details or answers.
- Rewrite or redraw things from memory.
- Use flash cards for learning new spellings or definitions - then close your eyes and visualize what you have seen and then write the word/definition out on paper.
- Highlight and underline key ideas.
- Retype notes - use different fonts, bold print, and underline important concepts and facts.
Tips for Auditory Learners

- Participate in discussions
- Listen to audiotapes, radios or the television
- Explain concepts aloud to others
- If possible record lectures and study groups (Then you have a verbal record you can review).
- Read aloud written material when studying and then restate it in your own words.
- Form study groups to discuss written material or prepare for upcoming tests.
- Discuss your ideas verbally whenever possible, even if you’re having a conversation with yourself!
- Make up and repeat rhymes to remember facts, dates, names, etc.

Tips for Kinaesthetic Learners

- Hands-on activities are a good way of learning – the ideal would be to add practical elements to the learning experience.
- Rewriting notes can utilise the physical component to add to the visual aspect of learning
- Study in short blocks of time and take frequent breaks when studying.
- Draw charts or diagrams of relationships.
- Change locations each time you take a break to help stretch your legs and give you a chance to move about when studying.
- Study or brainstorm while walking or working out.
- Transfer reduced information to flash cards.
- Write, copy, and underline with bright colours.
- Make your learning more active by creating or using computer software, puzzles and other hands-on activities will help you to learn through doing.
Please Circle the answer that best reflects you

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do you tend to remember</th>
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<td>Faces?</td>
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<td>Names?</td>
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<td>Play sport/go for a walk?</td>
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<th>Do you prefer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Or read up about it first, so you know what you need to do?</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do you prefer working out solutions to problems</th>
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<td>By doing the task and then seeing how it works?</td>
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<td>By talking about the task first?</td>
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<th>Do you prefer to get information in</th>
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<td>Pictures, diagrams, graphs, or maps?</td>
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<table>
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<th>Do you remember best</th>
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<td>What you see?</td>
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<td>What you hear?</td>
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### Scoring the Learning Styles Questionnaire:

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<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>A = Visual</th>
<th>B = Auditory</th>
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<td>Q2</td>
<td>A = Auditory</td>
<td>B = Kinaesthetic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>A = Kinaesthetic</td>
<td>B = Visual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>A = Kinaesthetic</td>
<td>B = Auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>A = Visual</td>
<td>B = Kinaesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>A = Visual</td>
<td>B = Auditory</td>
</tr>
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</table>

If you chose, e.g. A for Q1, then tick the visual column below. Do this for all questions.

Whichever column has the most ticks indicates your preferred learning style.

Note some people will have equal scores in all three columns which indicates that you learn best evenly through all learning channels.
• Try different methods of learning by using the tips outlined above. This may prevent you from feeling frustrated when you are trying to study and learn.

• If you experiment with different learning styles, you may find that different styles of learning allow you to reach your potential more efficiently and effectively.

• Try using the tips that best suit your learning style one at a time. Don’t try and change everything at once. Remember, not all of the tips will suit your style of learning so take on board the ones that do and discard anything you don’t find useful!

• If you feel that you are not reaching your potential in school or college you may need to change your study habits i.e. getting in tune with your learning style.

• It is important to be tuned into how you as an individual process information. Additionally, knowing your own style can also help you to realize that other people may approach the same situation in a different way from your own.

• It is good to know what your learning style is so that you can respond most effectively to the material being presented. Even when the material is not presented in the way you prefer, you can use your knowledge of learning styles to adjust and be flexible, no matter who your instructor is or what the topic might be.
Chapter 2 - Memory

Memory is the ability to understand, store and recall information – all learning depends on memory.

A lot of research has been carried out over the centuries on memory: how it works both from a psychological and philosophical point of view. The research is still on-going and today all the complexities of the workings of memory are not answered and have to be explored and researched further.

70% of what we learn in a day is gone in 24hrs.....unless we intend to remember it and practise it!

There are 3 primary steps in remembering:

- **Encoding**: The Process by which we absorb information
- **Storage**: When information is encoded by the brain it is then stored
- **Retrieval**: The retrieval stage entails plucking out the information we need from storage

Fig.1 Three Stages of Memory processing.
Memory can be broken down into three distinct types:

Immediate Memory: Information from the world is transmitted through our senses (eyes, ears, touch) to the brain and is registered briefly without our awareness. The purpose of our Immediate Memory is to hold a sensory image long enough so that if it needs to be placed into storage it will be, e.g. remembering a phone number that is called out to us.

Short Term Memory: This type of memory differs from Immediate Memory in that it allows us to remember several things at once (not just one). It allows us to recall something from several seconds to as long as a minute without rehearsal. However, its capacity is very limited and can only hold approximately 7 items of information at any one time. If information is not rehearsed, or visualised immediately, it will be forgotten within 30 seconds. Short term memory is often referred to as working memory.

Long Term Memory: This memory can store much larger quantities of information for a potentially unlimited duration (sometimes a whole life span). Our Long Term memory allows us to recall large quantities of information from our past. The more we use a particular memory the easier and quicker it is accessed.

Memory is like a muscle the more you use it the stronger it gets!

It is apparent that organisation during the initial storing period will enhance retrieval at a later stage. Organisation and association are key components to improving your long-term memory. LTM is not limited to the number of items it can retain. No one can exceed the limits of long-term memory because it is limitless.
Summary of the stages of memory

Fig. A model of memory

**Immediate (Sensory) memory**
Immediate information enters from the environment, this may be considered as ‘perception’ rather than ‘memory’

1. Focusing/ Attending

**Short-term memory (STM)**
A temporary store with limited capacity. It is involved in conscious thought. Processed information is transferred to Long-term Memory.

2. Encoding

3. Retrieving

**Long-term memory (LTM)**
A permanent memory store. LTM includes episodic and semantic memory.
(Episodic = memory for events/incidents
Semantic = memory for facts and knowledge)

Tips to help improve memory

If you think you have a poor memory, you may just have some less-than-effective habits for taking in and processing information.

Pay attention. You can’t remember something if you have never learned it, and you can’t learn something (encode it into your brain) if you don’t pay enough attention to it. It takes about eight seconds of intent focus to process a piece of information.
Tips for paying attention:
1. Try to focus on one task at a time

2. Try to work in an environment that is not distracting

3. Keep study/reading periods to short sessions

4. Use a highlighter to focus on key points

Tailor your study to your learning style.

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinaesthetic

Involve as many senses as possible.

Even if you’re a visual learner, read out loud what you want to remember. Try to relate information to colours, textures, smells and tastes. The physical act of rewriting or typing information can help imprint it onto your brain. Use as many learning channels as possible.
Relate information to what you already know.

Connect new data to information you already remember, i.e. build on information.

Rehearse information frequently and “overlearn.”

Review what you’ve learned the same day you learn it, and review it at intervals thereafter. What researchers call “spaced rehearsal” is more effective than “cramming.”

Be motivated and keep a positive attitude.

Tell yourself that you want to learn, what you need to remember and you can learn and remember it. Telling yourself you have a bad memory actually hampers the ability of your brain to remember, while positive mental feedback sets up an expectation of success.

Use Mnemonic devices to help you remember.

Mnemonics are clues that help us remember something, usually by causing us to associate the information we want to remember with a visual image, a sentence, or a word. Mnemonic devices are a great way of helping break down and remember hard topics. Using Mnemonics and your imagination help you remember things easier.
Common types of mnemonic devices include:

- **Visual images**: Use positive, pleasant images, because the brain often blocks out unpleasant ones. Make the images vivid, colourful, and three-dimensional — they’ll be easier to remember.

- **Acronyms** is a memory technique where the first letter of each word is part of or represents an initial of what you want to remember.

Example: Colours of the rainbow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>Richard</td>
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<td>ORANGE</td>
<td>Of</td>
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<td>YELLOW</td>
<td>York</td>
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<td>GREEN</td>
<td>Gave</td>
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<td>BLUE</td>
<td>Battle</td>
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<td>INDIGO</td>
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<td>VIOLET</td>
<td>Vain</td>
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- **Rhymes and alliteration**: Do you remember learning “30 days hath September, April, June, and November”? Using simple rhymes such as this one can help you remember difficult or confusing information.

- **“Chunking” information**: This technique involves arranging a long list in smaller units or categories that are easier to remember, e.g. a long telephone number—break it down into more manageable chunks -08954321 → 089 543 21
Exercise your Brain!!

Our brain, like every other part of our body, needs to have exercise. The more we use or work out our brain, the quicker and better it becomes.

It is very easy to stimulate our brain. Doing simple things like changing our daily routine can help stimulate areas of the brain that are not normally used.

For example, brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand can activate neuronal connections on the non-dominant side of your brain. This is the most effective way to keep your synapses firing. Challenge your mind by engaging in activities that you would not normally do.

Juggling three or more balls at the one time is another great way of exercising both sides of your brain.

In relation to remembering, instead of trying to cram as much information into your head the night before your exam, learn in small chunks through as many learning channels as you can. Breaking an essay into a series of images and recording the essay on to an audio tape stimulates a number of different areas in the brain and increases the likelihood of the information being remembered.
A Healthy Body, a Healthy Mind!
When we are tired or feeling unwell it is a lot harder for us to remember information. Treating our bodies well can help enhance our ability to process and remember information.

Regular Exercise → Increases oxygen to our brain.

Managing Stress → Cortisol, the stress hormone, can be harmful to memory if it is not relieved. Taking regular breaks and engaging in fun activities can help you control the cortisol levels in your body and hence help you learn.

Get plenty of sleep → Sleep is necessary for memory consolidation. When we don’t get enough sleep it is very difficult to concentrate.

Diet → You probably know already that a diet based on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and “healthy” fats will provide lots of health benefits, but such a diet can also improve memory. B vitamins, especially B6, B12 and folic acid, play an important role in helping to protect neurons. They can be found in foods such as Spinach and most dark green leafy vegetables. Omega-3 fatty acids are found in large amounts in the brain and are associated with cognitive function. These particular acids have been found to play an important role in concentration. The best sources of Omega-3 fatty acids are cold-water fish, flax seeds and walnuts.
Memory test – quiz
Test your memory with this short easy quiz.
Our memory can be impaired by a number of different reasons such as stress, fatigue, illness and lack of sleep.

1. I forget where I leave my keys:
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never

2. I forget whether I have locked the front door:
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never

3. I find it difficult to remember the name of a person I was just introduced to:
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never

4. I often forget appointments I have made (i.e. Doctor or Dental):
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never

5. I often forget to turn on the security alarm before I leave the house:
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never

6. After reading a lot of information I find it hard to remember the information I read in the beginning:
   • Always
   • Sometimes
   • Never
Memory test – Quiz Answers

Give a tick in the box for each of your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
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If you answered mostly ‘Always or Sometimes’ you may have difficulty with your memory.
If you answered ‘Never’ you find remembering different events, places or objects comes easily to you.

Tips for remembering:

Places ⇒ Take your time absorbing your environment. Try finding a distinctive aspect of the environment that will help you remember.

Numbers ⇒ If you have difficulty remembering numbers, especially a long sequence of numbers like a telephone number, break the sequence into a series of small manageable chunks.

Names ⇒ If you find it difficult to retain names, ask the individual to repeat their name or even write it down. Sometimes visualising the name can help you remember it. Associating the individual’s name with a well known object can also help you recall the name. For example, you could visualise a rose for the name Rosie.

Where you put things ⇒ If you are constantly losing your keys etc., find a logical place like a bowl on the hall table to place your keys or glasses. When you are finished using the object always return it to its rightful place. Organising yourself can help you remember where you have left things.
Memory Span.

Our Memory Span refers to the number of items (words or numbers, for example) that an individual can hold and remember. The amount of items that we can hold in our memory is often seen as a measure of our working or short-term memory. Improve your memory span by practising the amount of items that you can retain and recall.

Look at the items listed below for 2 minutes:

Line 1

- Clock
- Frog
- Flower
- Cup

Line 2

- Sun
- Scissors
- Truck
- Stapler
- Banana

Line 3

- Ladybird
- Screw driver
- Elephant
- Ball
Now test your Memory Span by trying to name or draw an image of each of the items, in the order in which they appeared, without looking back.

Take it slowly, and move from line 1 to line 3. After you have completed this task look back and see how many you got right. Improve your memory span by practising and trying to complete each of the lines correctly without looking back.

Line 1_________________________________________

Line 2_________________________________________

Line 3_________________________________________
Jane, Marion, and James were in a spelling competition. Here are their results:

1. The youngest person in the group received the least points.
2. Marion got half of the points of the eldest person in the group.
3. James received as many points as both others combined.

**Question:**
Who is the eldest in the group?

**The Brain Exercise:**
This puzzle requires you to use your planning and reasoning skills. From reading the statement above you must develop a plan to solve the problem using your reasoning skills. These skills are found predominantly in your prefrontal cortex. This area of your brain is responsible for executive functions such as planning, structuring, and evaluating voluntary, goal-directed behaviour. Our executive functions help us to work towards a defined goal and assess the actions of achieving that goal as we go along.

**Answer:**
Solution:

Start with statement #2 which tells us that Marion is not the eldest. So the eldest must be either Jane or James.

Statement #3 tells us that James received the sum of the other two people's points, and those point totals are not equal, per statement #1 (the youngest has less points than the other two).

For James to be the eldest, Marion and James would each have half of the points that Jean has, but we know they can't have the same amount of points.

Therefore, James must have the most points, and Marion must be the youngest, but Jane is the eldest.
Concentration refers to the ability to focus on what is most important in any situation while ignoring distractions (Moran, 1997). We all have different ways in which we concentrate. For some of us, having music in the background helps us zone in and pay attention. For others, having complete silence in their environment helps them concentrate. The trick is to find out what suits you and helps you to concentrate.

Recent research has shown that we never really lose our concentration. What actually happens is that we get distracted and begin to redirect our attention away from the task at hand. For example, if you are beginning your study for exams, and you hear the television in the background, for most of us we begin to focus our attention on the television and end up losing all our concentration for the task of studying.

**Common Distractions**
- Trying to do too many tasks at once
- Being too tired to concentrate
- Having a lack of goal setting and motivation
- Thinking too far ahead about task

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**Tips for dealing with distractions**

- Keep your study area as neat and tidy as possible.
- Exercise everyday to help clear your mind.
- Set your study area up to suit your learning style. If you are a visual learner have plenty of visual aids around your study area. If you enjoy background music make sure you have a radio or your favourite music in the background.
- Keep yourself motivated by having a constant reminder why you are studying and what you are working towards.
- Make sure you have a good night’s sleep.

In order to maximise the learning experience we must be concentrating. Maintaining our attention on one particular task takes practice. We all have different time thresholds for the length of time that we are able to keep our attention. Discovering your threshold is the key to successful study. Your threshold for attention may vary depending on how tired you are and the time of the day that you are beginning your study.

*Remember we often have a preference for the time of day we study.  **Morning or Night***

*Be an Active Learner!*
How to keep your attention while in class or lectures.

- As the Girl Guides say, Be Prepared! Try doing some of the assigned reading before class. This will help you follow your lecturer easier by having the background knowledge before you go in. It will also help you to pick out the most important points of the lecture.

- If you find that you get tired really easy in the lecture then bring in a small snack with you to boost your energy. Drinking plenty of water before and during the lecture can also help keep energy levels up. Taking a swift walk out in the fresh air before the lecture can also wake you up and get your blood flowing.

- If you are predominantly a kinaesthetic learner and find it hard to sit still and keep your concentration, try keeping a small doodle pad with you during lectures. Doodling while in a lecture can help increase your concentration level.

- Keeping your focus on the lecturer can help you keep your attention. By focusing on the lecturer as if you were in a one to one conversation you are more likely to absorb more of what they are saying.

Concentration Techniques

Concentration strategies can be split into two main areas:

1. Learning mental self regulation. Learning mental self regulation requires recognising the possibilities of your mind as well as its limitations. Try out different methods of study at different times to understand when the optimum time is for you to be able to concentrate and effectively learn.

2. Arranging factors that you can immediately control. Arranging factors that you can immediately control refers to your ability to arrange your environment to suit your taste. For example, if you concentrate better with background noise, simply open a window or turn on your radio.

Time-out

Remember to take short breaks. Lectures are usually 50 minutes long, and that's about the length of time most people can direct their attention to one task. Your concentration time-span might be less (20-35 minutes) or longer (perhaps 90 minutes). Similarly, when you are studying, try to time the length of time you can study before you begin to lose your
concentration. Keep your study periods within this time frame. Break your study into time blocks that suit your concentration span. In between these blocks make sure you get up and walk around. Go get some fresh air and get the oxygen circulating around your body again.

8 Golden rules of Concentration

1. Study at the same time each day. A regular schedule can help you frame this as "study time".

3. Set a timer for the amount of time you are able to hold your concentration (e.g. an hour). Train yourself to keep studying until the timer goes off.

4. Take breaks. A three minute break for every 30 minutes of study is a good guideline. Take a longer break after 90 minutes.

5. Set goals for your session that are realistic (number of problems to solve, pages to read, etc.) When you have met one of your study goals, reward yourself with a short break. Then, return to your study area. Keeping a simple weekly timetable can help you with this.

6. Study in an area away from distractions such as a library, study lounge, or an empty classroom. Tailor your study area to suit your specific learning style.

7. Make sure you have everything that you need before you begin. Getting up and down to get a book, or a set of notes can break your concentration.

8. Ensure that you are sleeping enough, eating well, and getting regular exercise. Your mind will be more alert, and you will be less likely to fall asleep or daydream.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips for being an active learner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Visual Learner</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Auditory Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kinaesthetic Learners</td>
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**Break it up**

**Sometimes it helps to break a subject into smaller sections**

Breaking a subject into smaller sections can make the task of studying less overwhelming. It also allows you to plan your study into block times where you can deal with one section at a time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject needed</th>
<th>Smaller Sections</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>10.</td>
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Test your concentration

This is a simple and easy game to test your concentration level.

What you need?

A deck of cards.

How to play?

All you need to do for this game is to get 15 matched pairs of cards. Mix the cards up at random and then place the cards face down on the table.

The aim of the game is to find the 15 matched pairs, but you can only turn over 2 cards at a time. If the 2 cards that you turn over are not a pair you must place the cards back on the table face down, in the same location you picked them up from, and turn over two new cards.

When you discover a pair you can leave the pair turned face up or take the pair from the table.

To complete this simple game of pairs successfully you need to concentrate carefully and use your memory to remember where similar cards are located and to turn over as many pairs as possible.

To make this game more difficult try setting yourself a 2 minute time limit and see how many pairs you can get. Then try beating your record.

Use this game as an experiment to test what distracts you. Try doing the game in the area where you usually study. If you find that noise or a particular picture distracts you from concentrating then eliminate that stimulus when you are studying.
Motivation is concerned with all the factors which initiate, direct and sustain our behaviour. In order to be successful in your area of study you must be motivated to learn. Being motivated to study, learn or even get up in the morning is something that does not always come naturally to everyone. In fact most of us have the task of training ourselves to be motivated to study or to go to work. Being motivated in any field can determine our level of achievement.

Two primary types of motivation have been identified

Primary motivation consists of our intrinsic needs which are in place in order to help us survive. For example, our motivation to eat food and drink water on a daily basis is essential for our survival, or our motivation to run when we are being chased by a lion. The motivation to engage in these activities comes naturally to us. We do them without even thinking.

Secondary motives refer to our learned desires. They are not directly essential for our survival. However, they do control our well-being and happiness. For example, we are motivated to interact with other people or to learn new skills and talents because these activities help us to feel good and happy (Moran, 1997).

*Tiger Woods revealed that his main motivation sprang from enjoying the challenge of beating his own personal record* (Scott, 1999)
Study is regarded as a Secondary Motivation and like most secondary motives we often have to teach ourselves to engage in this activity. We often regard the process of studying as a task that we don’t like. Changing our perspective on how we view study can help us be more motivated.

Incorporating simple self motivation strategies can help you be more motivated and enjoy the process of studying more.

**Self motivation strategies**

**Begin positive**
Before you begin to study, think of some positive aspect of your studies e.g. reminder of good results/marks in recent exam/test. The idea of learning new knowledge and new skills as a result of the study you do.

**Planning**
Plan ahead – make a ‘to-do-list’ and when you have one list completed, work out your tasks for the next week. This helps to keep you organised and on top of things. As you tick off your list you will see your progression and boost your morale. Set yourself small attainable goals as you go along. For each goal that you reach reinforce yourself by doing something you enjoy, such as going out with friends or watching your favourite television programme.

Setting attainable goals can help you remain positive while studying for exams. It also gives you a sense of progression.

**Your study environment**
You should study in a temperate, quiet, well-lit, spacious (have desk, straight-backed chair and storage space), distraction free room. You should take a few moments at the end of each session to tidy up, file away sheets of paper and tidy your desk. This keeps you organised and helps you concentrate at the next session and slot into immediate work/study.

**Rewards**
The key principle in learning theory is that activities which are followed by rewards gradually tend to become rewarding themselves i.e. studying will become associated with positive consequences and over time will become an enjoyable activity of its own. Reward yourself if you spend an extra hour studying than what you had planned, or if you reach a stage in your study before the target date. Studying should not be a tiresome, laborious activity, you should try to make it as fun as possible.
Goal setting
A goal is a target or objective that we strive to attain. Accordingly, goal setting theory is the process by which we set targets for ourselves. By setting personal goals routinely, you will be aiming to achieve targets and so you will keep trying your best consistently.

Principles of Goal Setting

S.M.A.R.T.

S  Specific
Clear goals are more likely to be achieved.
E.g. “I will answer all the questions on chapter 8 by 6pm this evening”

M  Measurable
If your progress in achieving a goal is not measurable then you can easily lose interest in it.
E.g. All questions in chapter will be answered.

A  Action
Break down the series of steps or actions needed to attain the goal.
E.g. First read chapter 8, make a summary of the main points, answer the questions

R  Realistic
Your study goals should be realistic and achievable.
E.g. only do one chapter per night.

T  Time based
Put a deadline on your goals in order to place urgency on their completion.
E.g. finish the chapter by 6pm.
(Bull, Albinson & Shambrook, 1996)

Goal Vision Boards
Bandura (1986) indicated that visualisation experiences are a great source of self-efficacy (situation specific self-confidence). Visualising the end goal of your study can help you keep motivated. Creating a Goal Vision Board can help you achieve this. Use the board as a way of illustrating the end product of your study or learning experience.
It can be very difficult for us to keep motivated when the end goal seems so far away. Creating your own Goal Vision Board can help you visualise and motivate you to finish your study.

**Creating your Goal Vision Board**

**Step 1**  
Begin by writing down the reasons for doing your course.

**Step 2**  
Continue by writing down your expectations when you have finished the course. For example, the job you will have etc.

**Step 3**  
Find visual representations for each of the points on your list and place them on your Goal Vision Board.

**Step 4**  
Place your Goal Vision Board above the area where you study to act as a constant reminder as to why you are studying.

**Example**→ A female student studying to be a Nurse.

**Step 1**- Helping people get better, working in a hospital, having a stable job, working with different age groups, the variety of experiences in the job.

**Step 2**- To have a good job, to be able to eventually buy a car and a house, making a difference to lives, learning new skills.

**Step 3** -
**Exercise**
A healthy student needs regular physical activity and six to eight hours of sleep. Good health should also include a well-rounded diet for the body and spiritual food for the soul.
Stretching, walking, sitting up straight, make faces, putting on some upbeat music and dancing round the room. Taking some really deep breaths – oxygen refreshes the brain & learning. All of these exercises (and many others not mentioned here) help us to feel more energetic and so, more open to ideas and a better learning state.

**Healthy Eating & brainpower**
The healthier foods/diet we have – the better will our memory and concentration work.

Quick dos and don’ts for keeping well:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat healthy food</td>
<td>Skip meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space out your study</td>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink lots of water</td>
<td>Live on junk food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise regularly</td>
<td>Drink lots of caffeine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep well</td>
<td>Forget leisure time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relieve tension with exercise</td>
<td>Cram information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leisure/Study Balance**
You need to have a healthy balance of study and leisure time. When you achieve your study goal take a break and get away from learning for a while. Do something fun and when you return you will be refreshed and ready to work again.
**Goal Setting Motivation Table.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Goal Completed &amp; Reward</th>
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**Morning**

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**Afternoon**

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<th>N</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Evening Time**

|     |      |      |      |      |      |                         |
Test your motivation with this short easy quiz.

1. I find it easy to complete any tasks that I start:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

2. I enjoy learning new skills and developing as a person:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

3. When I learn something new I want to research it more to find out as much as possible about the subject:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

4. I have set goals in life that I want to achieve:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

5. I embrace new environments by getting involved:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

6. I engage in opportunities to learn new things:
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

Obstacles are there for us to demonstrate our strength and motivation.
Motivation quiz answers

Give a tick in the box for each of your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
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If you answered mostly ‘Always or Sometimes’ you are a motivated individual.
If you answered ‘Never’ you may have difficulty with your level of motivation and may need to put some of the strategies mentioned above in place to help pick up your motivation level.
Chapter 5
Being an Active Learner

Being an active learner involves:

- Becoming active in your learning experience. It is not just up to the teacher to teach you, the student must want and be motivated to learn.
- Learning note taking skills or organisational skills that can help improve your educational experience.
- Time and motivation, as both are needed to figure out what strategies help you study and pay attention in lectures and class.
- Noting that not every strategy will be effective for you. It’s a game of trial and error to figure out what helps make studying easier for you.
- Finding out what type of learner you are (Visual, Auditory or Kinaesthetic) as it is a good place to start with your investigation. From there you can tailor your study strategies.
- Putting simple strategies in place that can help you to be an active learner.


**Strategies for Reading**

The main aim when reading a text is to identify the central message the text is trying to convey. At times this can be difficult. If you get overwhelmed by large amounts of text, break the reading into short achievable time frames.

Often when reading a large chapter or paper we scan through the piece very quickly and lose the main subject of the text. A simple way to rectify this is to read the text paragraph by paragraph. After each paragraph write in the margin the key words or the key meaning and important details such as dates or statistics given. This will help break down the text into a simpler form and understand its key meaning.

Keep an eye out for diagrams or charts as often these are another method by which the author is trying to clarify key ideas. Rewriting or drawing diagrams is a great way of learning the information given. It is also a good break from reading text.

Critically evaluate the text. Ask questions about the author’s information, evidence and opinions. Ask yourself if the author’s opinion could be biased and if so why?

When you have finished each paragraph write a brief summary of the paragraph’s content in your own words. This will help you remember what you have previously read when you have reached the end of the text.

It is normal to be more engaged in reading when we are interested in the topic of the text. When the subject is of less interest to us it often becomes a tedious task. When this happens it becomes more difficult to keep our concentration levels up. Be aware of this and lift your concentration by using highlighters, colour tags and an index card to block out text and keep you focused on the current sentence.

**Quick Tip**
The meaning of the paragraph is often in the first or last sentence!
Before beginning to read the text ask yourself a few simple questions.

1. What do I want to learn from reading this passage?

2. What are the key ideas explored in this text?

3. Do they relate to my course material?

4. Is the subject matter discussed in the text new to me?

The most efficient way of reading is to re-read. Unfortunately it is very unlikely that we will understand the meaning of a text by reading it once. For most of us the more we read a passage the more we understand it. As the saying goes, read, read and read again. The PQRR technique devised by Moran, 1997 is based on the strategies laid out by a researcher named Francis Robinson (1961) and is an excellent technique to follow when reading.
The PQRR technique

The PQRR technique stands for previewing, questioning, reading and reviewing.

Previewing
When you begin a chapter in one of your text books have a quick scan (2-3 minutes) over the whole chapter before you begin your in-depth reading. This gives you the basic idea of the chapter and its layout. As you move through the chapter highlight the paragraphs that you think are of particular relevance to you. This will help capture your attention when you go back to read the chapter properly. Previewing the chapter also helps establish a retrieval cue for the information (Moran, 1997).

Question
To get the full benefit of reading the chapter you must first ask the question as to why you are reading the chapter. Are you reading it to gain information about a new topic? Or are you reading a novel in order to write an essay on it? Establishing these questions before you go into in-depth reading can help you bias your reading towards the information that is of particular interest to you. For example you might have a particular character to focus your essay on; therefore you would pay more attention to that particular character when you are reading the novel. This is a great way of being an active learner. Identify the information that you need and then source the answer to that information.

Read
Read the chapter very slowly, absorbing as much of the information as possible. Use highlighters, index cards and colour tags to highlight the important information. Have a pen at the ready to write down any important information. If you are finding the material overwhelming, take it extra slow and try to summarize each paragraph in your own words as you go along. Keep in sight the study questions that you laid out in the previous step. This will help you keep on track with your reading goal. Anything that you don’t understand, write it down and source its meaning and then continue. There is no point in continuing your reading if you don’t understand a key term.

Reviewing
After you have finished the chapter review what you have learned. If you have broken down each paragraph into your own words read over your own explanation and assess if you have understood the central idea in the chapter. Ask yourself “Am I able to answer my original study questions?” The more you review the information the more you are likely to absorb. If the material is particularly difficult then reviewing after each page can often help you understand the subject more easily. Break everything down into small digestible chunks.
Quick Summary

- Identify your reading goal
- Read in short achievable time frames
- Highlight the important information as you go along
- Using a ruler or index card can help keep your concentration.
Strategies for Visual Mapping

Visual mapping is a great way of breaking down information into a fun, easy way to study. A visual map is used to represent tasks, words or ideas linked to a central idea. By presenting your study information in this manner you are encouraging brainstorming and organization of thoughts.

Some of the practical uses for Visual Maps are:

- Concentrating
- Organising
- Memorising
- Brain Storming
- Thinking
- Studying

Some of the benefits of Visual Mapping are:
- Encourages Brainstorming which helps build up information about the topic
- They can gather and hold large amounts of data
- Encourages critical thinking
- Helps you be efficient and organised
- Helps you memorise large amounts of information
- Can help give an overview of a large subject area
- Can be applied to all disciplines
- Aids easy recall

Making a Visual Map is very simple. The key to a Visual Map is to work with one key idea at a time. Use this idea to guide your map. Write down on a blank piece of paper all the ideas etc. that spring to mind and that are related to your key idea. Then begin to filter through the information you have gathered and pick out the points that are most relevant to you and the subject.
The next 5 steps take you through how to make your Visual Map.

How to make a Visual Map (1)

→ Take a blank piece of paper

→ Start in the centre

→ Make a central image that represents the topic about which you are thinking/writing

Example:

Starting College
How to make a Visual Map (2)

→ Begin adding Branches from your central idea
→ Use a different Colour for each new branch
→ Your visual map will create its own shape. You do not need to use a frame
→ Keep the map simple

Step 1.

Step 2.
Step 3.

Finding the right college

Will I have to commute to college?

When is the starting date for that college?

Starting college

Finding a suitable course

Applying for the course
Step 4.

- When is the starting date for that college?
- Will I have to commute to college?
- Finding the right college
- Starting college
- Finding a suitable course
- Applying for the course
- Registration fee for the course
- Closing date for payment
Step 5.

Produce a basic Visual Map yourself using the layout provided below.

Activity

This is where your central idea will go
Lectures

Pre-Lecture Routine

- Read what is recommended off your reading list for that lecture. Knowing background information before going into the lecture can help you follow the lecturer more easily.
- Look over the notes from the previous lecture. This will enable you to pick up where the lecturer is starting from straight away.
- Remember to put the date and lecturer’s name at the top of all your lecture notes. This will help you keep organised and make revision for exams less stressful.
- Always come organised. Have your pen, pencils and notebook, as well as any course material you may need with you when you go to lectures.

Having a pre-lecture routine will encourage you to be organised and will help keep you focused.
The Lecture

Being an active learner in lectures will increase your performance in essays and exams. You can do this by listening and participating in the lecture. Here are some handy tips to improve your active participation in lectures.

- Try and have full attendance to your lectures. If you do happen to miss a lecture make sure you get the notes from a reliable source and go through them before the next lecture. It is essential you attend lectures as they are the building blocks of your learning experience.
- Sitting at the very front of the lecture hall or class can help you concentrate better. In general there are fewer distractions at the front of the class than at the back.
- Be prepared for taking notes in the lecture. If you come across something you don’t understand either ask the question straight away or write it down and approach the lecturer after class. Always ask as it may be a vital bit of information for an essay or an exam.
- Keep your attention as much as possible in class.
- Don’t be afraid to participate in class. Engaging in a debate or acting out something can be great ways to learn and help others around you learn.
- Sometimes the best ideas for essays etc. will come to you during the lecture. Jot down your ideas as they come to mind.
- If the lecturer uses power-point ask the lecturer for a copy of the lecture before class. This is a great way of making sure you don’t miss anything. It also puts less pressure on you to keep writing which leaves room for critical thinking.

Writing Notes

- Do not try to write every word down as you will more than likely end up getting lost. Write down the key points. It is a good idea to swap or compare notes with a friend after the lecture. Often you might have missed a point they got and vice versa.
• Write as clearly and as neatly as possible. If you find it difficult to understand your own writing after a lecture, try using a computer to type the notes instead. Even asking the lecturer for a copy of the lecture slides prior to the lecture can cut down the amount of information you have to write.
• If you find it difficult to listen and take notes try taping the lecture on a Dictaphone with the lecturer’s permission.
• Listen carefully when a lecturer elaborates on an important topic.
• Using the Visual Mapping technique mentioned earlier is a great way of taking notes in a lecture.
• If you are a very visual learner, using different colour pens, highlighters and ’Post-its’ can help you absorb the material as you go along.

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Starting College

♦ Finding a college

♦ Finding a suitable course

♦ Applying for the course

♦ Starting date for college
When I find a suitable course I will need to find out more information about it. For example, what is the **starting date**? Can I afford the **fees** and will I need to **commute** a great distance every day?

**After the Lecture**

After the lecture take a quick break to rest your mind. Before the next day’s lectures try the following strategies.

- Review your notes. Highlight the important information and fill in the blanks. Make sure you have taken down the lecture information properly.
- If there is something you come across that you don’t understand follow it up straight away.
- Break down your notes into key words or key information. You can use the Visual Mapping technique or the Break it up technique to do this.
- Before you put the notes away look over the key information you have taken out. This will help you remember the information later on.
- Check up any reference to extra reading material made in class. This will save you time around exam time or during an essay.

Set some time aside every week to review all your notes. The more times that you review your lecture notes the more likely you are to remember the information.
**Tips for when the lecturer talks fast**

- Come prepared to the lecture by reading background information on the topic before the lecture starts.
- Forming a study group is a great way of sharing information and catching information that you may have missed.
- Leave enough space in your notes to put in information that you may have missed.
- Develop a signal to write in your notes to show where you got lost, this way you know where to go back over after the lecture.
It is important to have a good vocabulary as it is a valuable asset in this world. It is particularly important within the education system and students should aspire to continually increase their vocabulary. It allows you to express yourself in a more effective and proficient manner.

To increase your vocabulary you don't have to memorize the entire dictionary. By reading you can learn new vocabulary all of the time. Read more books, articles, magazines, and newspapers. Highlight the words you don't understand. Get yourself a notebook for vocabulary building, write down the words you highlighted and then look them up in the dictionary. Note the meaning, context, and pronunciation of these words. Then try to incorporate these words into your speech and written language. By doing this simple task you are constantly building your repertoire of words.

**OTHER TIPS FOR VOCAB BUILDING**

- Play scrabble. Use a thesaurus when you play
- Do crossword puzzles
- Use flash cards. Scan the dictionary for words you are unfamiliar with. Write them on a flash card. Use the flash cards as much as possible.
- Buy a book of vocabulary words. These usually have exercises in the back that will help you reinforce your vocabulary.
- Join email lists that introduce a new vocabulary word a day.

Remember a large vocabulary is beneficial to you
Here is some useful vocabulary to get you started

To indicate more information

- Besides
- Making an additional point; anyway
- Furthermore
- In addition
- Moreover
- Likewise
- In fact
- Also
- Firstly, Secondly, Thirdly

To indicate an example

- For example
- For instance
- In particular
- Specifically
- To illustrate
- To demonstrate

To indicate a cause or reason

- Since
- Because
- Due to
- For the reason that
- As
- Consequently
- Hence
- Therefore
- Thus

To conclude

- For the aforementioned reasons
- To sum up the foregoing,
- Given these facts
- In conclusion, to conclude
- In closing
To describe or make

- portray
- depict
- exhibit
- illustrate
- expose
- present
- represent
- demonstrate
- embodied

To prove

- attest - Provide evidence for
- testify - Provide evidence for
- certify - Provide evidence for
- endorse, indorse - Give support or one's approval to
- establish

To compare or contrast

- Whereas
- In comparison
- In contrast
- However
- Although
- On the other hand
- Likewise
- Similarly
- But
- Yet
- Nevertheless - Despite anything to the contrary
- Nonetheless - Despite anything to the contrary
- Notwithstanding - Despite anything to the contrary
- Even so - Despite anything to the contrary
- All the same - Despite anything to the contrary

To indicate time

- After
- Before
- Currently
- During
- Eventually
- Finally
- First, Second, etc.
- Formerly
• Immediately
• Initially
• Lastly
• Later
• Meanwhile
• Next
• Once
• Previously
• Simultaneously
• Soon
• Subsequently
• Subsequent - Following in time and order
• In due time
• Henceforth

To indicate certainty

• Truly
• Sincerely
• Genuinely
• Surely
• Rightfully
• Absolutely
• Indubitably
• Certainly
• Without doubt
• Needless to say

To indicate doubt

• Most likely
• More likely
• Possibly
• Probably
• Dubitable
• Dubious - Distressed with uncertainty or doubt

To summarize

• Overall
• To summarize
• In summary
• To sum up
• Paraphrased
• Briefly
• In brief
• To put it briefly
To express positive words

- magnificent
- grandeur - The quality of being magnificent or splendid or grand, the quality of being exalted in character or ideals or conduct
- magnanimous
- fantastic
- fantastical
- phenomenal
- wonderful
- extraordinary
- marvellous
- superb
- good
- fine
- great
- excellent
- spectacular
- prodigious
- grand
- brilliant
- glorious - Bringing great happiness and thankfulness
- illustrious - Widely known and esteemed
- notable - Worthy of notice
- respected
- impressive
- splendid
- splendiferous - Having great beauty and splendour

Said

- pronounced
- articulated
- vocalized
- posited
- stated
- expressed
- reported
- alleged
- averred - Report or maintain, To declare or affirm in a grave manner and formally as true
- affirmed, asserted
- wrote
- composed
Noted (said)

- remarked
- observed
- commented
- mentioned
- referred
- announced

Numerous

- innumerable
- many
- various
- several
- diverse
- umpteen
Organisation

Being organised is half the battle for being a successful student. Living in a world of complete disorganisation can cause immense stress and tension. Being organised regarding your education can decrease your stress levels when it comes to exams or writing an essay.

Organising your study schedule can help you get the study/personal time balance right. Being organised should be something that you build into your daily routine. By following a few simple steps you can become a more organised individual which will help you become a more organised and successful student.

Organise your Time

Using a weekly time planner can help you organise your study and personal time. Most colleges will give you a timetable at the start of each semester identifying when you have lectures and tutorials. Use this timetable to identify time slots that you will use for studying and reviewing your notes each week.

Make use of short study times. Fifteen minutes can be ideal for revising lecture notes or looking through note cards. Use time spent on the bus or train to review your notes.

Work out what time of the day suits you best to study. Some people feel fresher working in the morning, while others have a preference for working at night. Tailor your study schedule times around this preference, as you need to be fresh and ready to concentrate when you are starting study.
Organise your Subjects

Make sure that you have a full set of lecture notes for each of your course subjects. Organise your notes by separating them into the individual subjects. Using a colour coding system is a very easy and visual way to separate your notes. Make sure that you have a copy of any extra readings or handouts that were given during class. Having your notes organised will help reduce the stress of exam time.

Organise your Study Area

The area where you study will have an important impact on how well you learn and how productively your time is being used. You want to create a relaxed, stimulating study area that will facilitate your learning by helping you to stay concentrated.

Tips for organising your study area

• Choose an area where you won’t be easily distracted
• Try having your study area near a window. If the room gets too stuffy you will be more likely to feel tired and unable to concentrate
• Make sure you are comfortable
• You should have a comfortable straight backed chair which is the correct height for your desk and your feet should be on the floor
• Make sure there is good lighting in this area
• Have all your study materials close to you so you won’t have to be getting up from desk constantly.
• Have a notice board above your study area with your “to-do list” and study timetable in view.
Organising your Study Schedule

Set yourself study periods → Set yourself achievable time blocks to study. Try not to make time blocks longer than 60 minutes without taking a short break. It is better to study for shorter more intense periods of time than to study for long periods. If you study for long periods without taking a break your brain will become tired and unable to absorb information effectively.

Set yourself study goals → Setting yourself achievable goals can help motivate and keep you focused when you are studying. Have your study goals and a reward for completing the goal set out before you begin studying. A reward could be something as simple as 15 minutes of television. Some examples of goals could be:

1. I will read through and summarise chapters 1 and 2
2. I will work through and learn 5 equations
3. I will review my lecture notes from week 5 and 6

Study goals are a great way of working through your revision at a good pace. They are also a great way of helping you get that study/personal time balance.

Golden Rule → Do not study in bed!

Our brain is trained to behave in a certain way depending on the environment we are currently in. When we are in bed, our brain is telling our body to start winding down in order for us to sleep. Due to this the study that you do in bed will be mostly ineffective.
Timetables

Timetables are a great way to help you get organised. They are a great method of organising your study time as it is much easier to stick to a well laid out study plan rather than just working off the cuff.

Benefits of timetabling

• You have a well laid out plan to follow
• They help you keep on track with where you are in your study i.e. what you have covered and what you have left to cover
• A timetable can help motivate you. If you use your timetable to plan out both your study and personal time, you can visualize the reward of having personal time once you have completed the block of study.
• They are a great time keeping aid if you constantly forget where you are meant to be at a certain time
• They are a very flexible method of keeping you focused and on track
• You can create an assignment timetable to keep track of due dates for assignments
• Here are a few examples of some timetables you can use to organise yourself.

Here is a quick check list of items you may need to gather before you start studying:

- Timetables
- Textbook
- Lecture notes
- Pens, pencils, rubber, topper, ruler, tip-ex
- Highlighters
- Calculator
- Dividers, files
- Post it notes
- A4 pad
- Drink/snack
### Weekly Timetable

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### Assignment Timetable

This timetable can be used to organise your assignments. The due date section will help you prioritise which assignments need to be done first.

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**Weekly Revision Timetable**

Use this timetable to plan out your weekly revision. Use the exam paper section to keep track of which past exams papers you have revised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Exam paper</th>
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# Thesis Timetable

Use this timetable strategically to plan a time frame for your thesis completion

<table>
<thead>
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### Second Level – School Term

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## Further Education and Third Level

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Many students find essay writing a very difficult task. Trying to organise their thoughts and ideas into an answer is often a struggle. As with tasks we find daunting, they become a lot easier when we are able to break them down into smaller sections. Essay or assignment writing is no different.

All essays/assignments/presentations have 3 basic areas:-

1. Opening/Introduction
2. Main body
3. Closing/Conclusion

Being aware of these three areas initially will help you organise and structure a comprehensive answer. Below is a simple method of planning your essay from beginning to end.

**Planning** – Choose an appropriate topic and title for your essay that is in line with the course requirements. Make a quick draft of what you intend the content of the essay to be.

**Research** – Assemble and evaluate relevant information. Make sure you keep references of any secondary sources that you use as you go along.

**Key points for your essay** Assemble all the key points for your essay that you have gathered from your research. Create your essay plan from these points.
**Choosing a topic**

Make sure when you are choosing a topic for your assignment that you choose a topic that you are particularly interested in, this will make the writing and research aspect much easier. Also check if there is enough extra reading sources to aid you in answering the question.

In order to get the most out of your assignment, the research work should be of informative value.

Jotting down ideas and some brainstorming may assist in making the most appropriate decision. Using visual mapping can help you identify the topic on which you have the most interest and information.

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**Start your first draft** Your draft will always be a work in progress, so don’t worry if it does not turn out the way you had hoped.

**Edit your essay** Keep revising and re-writing your essay until you are completely satisfied with your essay. The more you proof read your essay the more mistakes you will identify.

**Do one more final check for mistakes then submit your essay.**
Discussing your essay topic with your peers or lecturer is a good way of making sure that you are on the right track.

Be organised

**Some questions to think about before you start.**

1. What is the deadline for submission of the assignment?
2. What is the maximum word length allowed?
4. In terms of structure, what kind of essay is it – Critical/Argumentative/Research Based/a Literature review
5. If an academic supervisor is assigned, how is contact made either by the individual or group of students? And when is the supervisor free to meet you.

**Structuring your essay**

**Title/question:** Every essay has a title or implied question. The complete essay must focus on the title. Refer back to the title as many times as possible throughout your essay

**Introduction:** This should be a brief introduction into the direction you intend to take the essay. Give a brief explanation of your interpretation of the question, the issues you intend to explore and how you intend to deal with these issues.

**Paragraph 1:** This section should cover your primary argument in the essay. You should give a brief explanation into the background behind your argument.
Paragraph 2 and the other paragraphs: Use your second and following paragraphs to make new points to support your original argument. Your first sentence in each paragraph should link in with the previous paragraph. This will help you keep a nice flow to your essay.

Conclusion: You should not raise any new points in your conclusion. This section should be used to summarise your whole argument. State the general conclusions you came up with while answering the question and why these conclusions are so important.

Reference section: This section should include all the secondary material that you referred to in your essay. You can do your reference section in either alphabetical order or in the order in which the references are made throughout your essay.

Bibliography: This section is for all the materials that you read or used in relation to the topic but did not refer directly to in your essay.
ESSAY STRUCTURE.
Use this template to help you break down your essay into smaller sub-sections.

Essay Question/Title
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Key points for Introduction
1. __________________________________
2. __________________________________
3. __________________________________
4. __________________________________
5. __________________________________

Main point for Paragraph 1
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Paragraph 2
____________________________________________________

Paragraph 3
____________________________________________________

Paragraph 4
____________________________________________________
Paragraph 5

Paragraph 6

(The number of paragraphs in your answer depends on the word count you are allowed)

Main points for Conclusion

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

References
Chapter 9

Dealing with EXAMS

Stress
The weeks leading up to an exam can be an extremely stressful and difficult period. Even the most confident student can be affected by exam stress. A certain amount of stress can be effective in motivating us to study. When our levels of stress cross that line to the point when it begins to prevent our ability to study and learn, this is when it becomes a major problem.

Examinations are the most common method of assessment and thus usually a vital component of all courses. Knowing how to deal with them and the stress that surrounds them is an essential skill that every student needs to learn.

Signs of stress
♦ Difficulty in concentrating or an inability to make minor decisions
♦ Headaches, abdominal pain, unusually cold hands and feet, tightness in chest, pounding heart, breathing difficulties.
♦ A loss of efficiency in school
♦ A lack of joy, spontaneity, happiness, or enthusiasm
♦ Preoccupations with certain thoughts, especially negative ones
♦ Being unable to sleep, persistent nightmares or the recurrence of a disturbing dream
♦ Abnormal eating habits
♦ An intolerance of people and irritability or outbursts of anger, especially during discussions or disagreements
♦ Loss of sense of humour
♦ Increased use of stimulants, especially alcohol and tobacco
♦ Withdrawal from friends and social situations
(VHI, May 2002)

If you can deal with the stress surrounding exams, they can become a great opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge on the subject to your lecturer.
**Tips to reduce your stress levels**

1. **Be organised!** Keeping your lecture and study notes organised is a great way of reducing stress around exam time. It will also save you time by not having to rummage around for lost notes.

2. **Do not try and cram for exams the night before.** Making a simple revision timetable and spreading your revision over a long period can help reduce stress. Cramming can cause immense stress and anxiety, which can leave the student drawing a ‘blank’ when they go into the exam. It is easier to recall information that is learned over a long period and constantly revised than information learned over a very short period of time.

3. **Eat well.** A well balanced diet is crucial around exam time. Skipping meals can leave you feeling tired which will affect your concentration and attention levels. A well balanced diet is a great step towards that ‘healthy body, healthy mind’ balance. Eating a diet that is full of fibre can help keep your digestive system flowing which will prevent you from feeling tired and sluggish.

4. **Get plenty of sleep.** Recent research into REM sleep (Rapid eye movement) has found that this specific type of sleep may play a role in memory storage (Maquet, 2001). This would mean that a good night’s sleep is essential when you are studying.

5. **Take time to Relax.** Taking time to relax away from your revision is a great way to reduce stress. Allow blocks of time in your revision timetable for relaxing. It is so important to keep that Study/Personal time balance when you are coming up to exams.

6. **Recognise your stress.** When you feel like you are getting stressed, take a step back from your revision. Stress is a signal from your body and mind that you are doing too much.

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Try avoiding excess caffeine, alcohol, smoking and sugar. While they might have initial soothing effects, they have bad long-term effects.
Relaxation Techniques

Take Deep breaths. Stopping and taking a few deep breaths during moments of intense stress can help relax you. This is often a very useful technique when you are in an exam hall waiting to take an exam. Right before an exam stress and anxiety levels often peak. Taking a few deep breaths before turning over your exam paper to look at the questions can help relax and focus your mind. When taking the deep breath try to visualise the air flowing in through your feet the whole way up through your body and then out your head. Repeat this exercise about 10 times and you should begin to feel relaxed. Make sure you are breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Simple Meditation. Try meditating before and after you study. This is a great technique to help relax you before beginning your study and after you finish your study. When beginning your meditation find a place where you feel comfortable. Have your body in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Try visualizing something that relaxes you, like sunbathing on a beach or taking a long walk. Take slow deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Playing relaxing music can also help you focus on your thoughts when relaxing. Use this meditation time to relax and zone out from the stress of exams.

Exercise. Taking regular breaks to exercise can help you relax. Even a simple walk can help get the blood moving around your body; it is also a great outlet to release frustration.
Revising for your exams
Exams are a crucial aspect of education and, as previously mentioned, the most common form of testing. Adapting easy revision strategies can help you be well prepared for an exam. There is no reason that with proper revision and a calm cool attitude on the day of the exam why you can’t excel in the exam situation.
There are 2 central elements for exam preparation.

1. Revision
2. Exam Practice

If you concentrate on these 2 elements of exam preparation you should find that the exam situation will be a lot easier for you. Like with other aspects of your study you also need to organise your time and plan your study. Cramming the night before an exam is not a good revision technique. Instead you should space your revision time over a few months.

There are several methods of revision that work depending on your learning style. Tailor your revision techniques to correspond with your specific learning style.

- **Visual learners**
  - Use visual maps, highlighters, visual charts, diagrams and images to represent essays and key information

- **Auditory**
  - Rehearse your notes by talking out loud to yourself or someone else. Study groups are good for auditory learners. Try recording your essays onto audio-tapes and listening to them over and over again.

- **Kinaesthetic**
  - Rewriting your notes repeatedly can help you learn them. If you find this tiring try typing them out on a computer. Turning your revision notes into a chart or diagram can be beneficial for kinaesthetic learners.
How to avoid a crisis during revision

- Have all your lecture notes clear and organised. Spend the week before you begin your revision making sure that you are clearly organised.
- Have a clear plan made out for what you need to cover and what you have already covered. Make sure you give extra time to areas of your course that were emphasised by your lecturer.
- If you are confused with an aspect of your course try not leaving it until the last minute to ask for help.
- Keep a list of references for any secondary sources you intend to use in the exam.

Setting out a revision timetable before you begin your revision is a great idea for keeping you on target. Use a Visual Map to brainstorm on each individual subject. This will help you outline what areas need to be covered. Being pro-active about your revision allows you a sense of control over the situation. It also helps you to be organised.

When making a revision plan consider the following:
1. Where are you going to revise?
2. Will you work alone or form a study group?
3. Always cover enough topics i.e. at least cover twice as many topics and the number of questions you need to answer in the exam.
4. Devise a revision timetable which should begin at least 5-6 weeks before the exams – make sure you schedule enough time to revise each topic.
5. Gather together lecture notes, handouts, journal articles, assignments, essays and key text books.
6. Revising past exam papers is important when studying for exams as it helps you focus on the most important areas of the course. Also go through the final lectures in courses carefully as these may give useful summaries and tips to likely exam questions.

Exam Practice

Everything we do in life takes a little practice to get used to; exams are the exact same. Doing some exam practice will help you when it comes to the time constraints in an exam situation. It will also help you practice thinking and forming an answer under pressure. If you go into an exam without any practice the experience may overwhelm you and you may fail to get down on paper all your knowledge.
When preparing your revision essays from past exam papers, it is often helpful to practise writing your sample answer out in the time constraint given for the actual exam. When you are in a 3 hour exam and you have to answer 4 questions sticking to your time limit of 40 minutes per question with 20 minutes for your essay plan will mean that each question will get the same amount of time and effort. If each question is weighted evenly then it is vital that you give each question the same amount of time and effort.

At the beginning of the exam, after you have decided which questions you are going to answer, it is very helpful to take a few minutes to write down an essay plan for your answer. Taking those few minutes to make an essay plan will help you lay out a well structured answer. It will also help you keep to the point and will be a reminder of information you need to put into the essay as you go along. Try to practise making essay plans for questions you have not seen before to prepare for the exam.

Exam Essay Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Your introduction should set the tone for the entire essay. It should be short and to the point. If a statement is given, make sure you begin by saying whether you agree or disagree with the statement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point 1</td>
<td>Your first and last points should be your strongest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Point 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Point 5</td>
<td>Your last point should tie up your whole argument /essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Use your conclusion to quickly review your whole argument. State why you took the approach you took. This section should be a paragraph long, definitely no more than 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you are writing your answer try to keep in mind the following rule.

- **Make a Point**
- **Reference the Point**
- **Prove the Point**

The Plus, Minus, Other Appealing Aspects Technique

If you find that you can’t answer a question in the exam, do not panic! Try the following technique to help trigger your memory. This technique works by taking a few minutes to find as many Positive, Negative and Other Appealing Aspects about a certain subject.

**Advantages, Disadvantages, Other appealing aspects**

- **Advantages**
  - The good things about an idea – why you like it

- **Disadvantages**
  - The negative things about an idea – why you don’t like it

- **Other appealing aspects**
  - What you find interesting about an idea or areas you would like to critique

By giving a few minutes to find reasons for each aspect of the answer – this will help you to form a comprehensive and structured approach to the essay.
Example

The legal age for drinking in *Ireland should be raised to 21 years of age?*

**Advantages**

- People would be more mature before they start drinking
- It would help clamp down on under age drinking
- It puts less social pressure on people to start drinking in their teens
- Because you would be more mature you would be more likely to drink sensibly

**Disadvantages**

- People would find a way to get drink despite their age

**Other appealing aspects**

- Whether the ban would make a difference to under age drinking
- The level of support that young people would give to the ban

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**In The Exam**

**Firstly, check that you are sitting the correct exam!**

- Read the instructions carefully. If you don't understand something ask the examiner for help.
- Read through the whole paper before you begin and mark any questions you could answer.
- Don't panic. Exam papers always look dreadful to start with.
- Put down an answer for everything--in some cases you will receive marks for being on the right track.
- Write helpful notes in the margins, like equations, rules, diagrams, etc, particularly if you've worked hard to memorize them--it reduces the load on your memory.
- Always show your work where it's appropriate--sometimes the steps leading to an answer are just as important as the final result
- With multiple-choice questions, eliminate obviously wrong options straightaway and choose among the remaining ones--your odds are better!
Check each section of the exam after you've completely finished - often you'll catch simple mistakes or better answers will occur to you after you've seen the whole exam.

**Quick Summary**
- Take a few deep breaths before turning over your exam paper
- Don’t panic if you do not immediately see a question that you can answer. Make an essay plan out and use the above technique or Visual Mapping to help trigger brainstorming
- Use your time wisely. Try to keep within the time block that you have set for each question
- Leave yourself a few minutes at the end to look back over your answer for mistakes
References


4. [http://www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)


6. [www.wwu.edu/depts/tutorialcenter/studyskills/participation.htm](http://www.wwu.edu/depts/tutorialcenter/studyskills/participation.htm)

7. [www.teacherjoe.com/notetaking.htm](http://www.teacherjoe.com/notetaking.htm)


10. [www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-001.jsp](http://www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-001.jsp)

Additional References: available on request


