Learning From Your Textbooks

Some students read their textbook assignments, but never learn a thing. This is because learning from a textbook involves more than just reading, you need to process, i.e., you need to manipulate the information that you read. In order for learning to occur, you need to be an active participant in your learning. It is important that you try to carry on a dialogue with the author of the textbook. In order for you to take an active approach to reading you need to use a textbook reading strategy.

The one that I would recommend is “The Questions In The Margin System.” This process involves using the power of questions to aid in your learning and concentration. This reading strategy can be explained in seven steps. The system actually revolves around just one principle step, that is, formulating of a questions for the main idea in each paragraph. Asking questions turn students into active readers. Each paragraph contains a main idea, and if you look at it another way, every paragraph provides the answer to an unasked question. These are the seven steps:

1. **Survey** – Read the title and speculate about what the chapter will be about. Read the headings to determine what ideas and facts will be presented. Read any summarizing sections.

2. **Question** – Turn each heading into a question by adding such words as “what,” “how,” or “who.” Then read to answer the question.

3. **Read** - Read several paragraphs; then come back to the first paragraph and ask questions such as these: “What is the main idea?” “How do the supporting materials support it?” “What do I need to know in this paragraph?”

4. **Questions** – Think deeply; then formulate and write a brief telegraphic question in the margin. Next, underline very sparingly, only the key words and text that make up the answer to your question in the margin. The less underlining, the better.

5. **Recite** – Counteract forgetting by reciting. Cover your textbook page, exposing only your questions in the margin. Then in your own words recite aloud the answers. After reciting, check for accuracy. Recite until you’ve completed the chapter.

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Test Wise Strategies

Test Wise strategies are experience based test taking tips/hints that you can use if you cannot generate an answer on a test and you are forced to make a guess.

The general strategies for objective type tests are: read all directions carefully, don’t “over-ponder” on a question, choose the answer the test maker intended, be decisive, use information provided in other questions and do not rely on flaws.

Strategies for (instructor made) tests include: if you don’t know the answer, then choose the B or C option. Look for longer or shorter answers, or if you know two choices are right, then look for an inclusive option. If two direct opposites appear as choices, focus in on them, or if the “E” option appears less than 10 percent of the time on a test choose that option. Also, actively anticipate the answer, read and consider every option, look at each item as a true/false question, use a process of elimination only if you have to, and be aware of clues from other items on the test.

Strategies for “true/false” tests consist of identifying absolute words in the statement which usually make it false or identifying qualifying adjectives which usually make the statement true. Also, remember that partly true statements make the entire statement false.

Strategies for “matching” exercises involve answering all known questions first and then eliminating absurd and non-relevant items.

Strategies for “completion” exercises (fill-in-the-blank) consists of always write something down and making sure that your answer is logical.

Strategies for “short-answer” questions also consist of always writing something down, and once again that your answer is logical.

Strategies for “essay” questions include: if you have several essay questions to choose from make sure you read them all. Then, on the blank side of the test sheet, quickly list all the information that you plan to use and organize these facts. Answer the easiest essay question first, this will give you a sense of success and accomplishment. Make sure that you organize your answer into three sections (introduction, body & summary). After answering the essay question, reread the question to be sure you have answered it entirely. Also, when writing your essay answer, use only one side of the paper. Write in blue or black ink, check your spelling, answer with the teacher in mind and avoid meaningless filler (irrelevant opinions).

6. Review – Immediately after reciting, take a fresh look at each question; mentally glimpse and hold the answer for a few moments. In this way, work through the entire chapter. This overview of questions and answers will tend to snap the separate parts together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, enabling you to see the chapter as a whole. Intersperse reviews throughout the semester.

7. Reflect – Manipulate the ideas and facts mentally. Turn them over, speculate on them, compare one with the other, notice where they agree and differ. Organize them under larger categories, or compress them into smaller units. Finally, free them from the chapter by weaving them into your existing knowledge.

Learning From Your Textbooks Cont’d

Remember, raising questions promotes concentration. They energize both the body and the mind. There is no better way to guarantee success in learning, then by asking or raising questions as you read the textbook. By raising questions over the material you are reading you are reflecting upon the information that you are studying and storing the material into your long-term memory.

Source: “How to study in college” by Walter Pauk 6th edition
TRIO DSS SEMESTER CALENDAR

November
12 Spring Schedule of Courses Available-Tentative
12 Early Registration for Spring-Tentative
22-25 Thanksgiving Break
28 Access To College Day

December
6 Last Day of Classes
7 Study Day
8-14 Finals
16 Fall Commencement
22-1/01 Christmas Break Campus Closed

WORKSHOPS ARE REVAMPED

DSS listened to the voice of our program students and revamped our workshops! The changes include having all workshops in our newly decorated classroom right across the hall from our office, in 163 Grace Wilkie Annex. We will have refreshments and feature new interactive workshop topics. DSS Workshops are only offered to program students. These are the workshops for the Fall semester.

PQRST
(A Textbook Reading/Study Strategy System)
Tuesday, September 11th, 2007
1:45 - 2:45PM
163 GWA
Phil Bowers

Microsoft Word & MyWSU Tutorial
Thursday, October 11th, 2007
1:45 - 2:45PM
163 GWA
Shanda Burch

Time Management
Wednesday, November 7th, 2007
2:00 - 3:00PM
163 GWA
John Tucker

Yes, You Do Have Skills
Thursday, November 15th, 2007
2:00 - 3:00PM
163 GWA
Randi Langley

New Faces in DSS!

We are pleased to announce our newest staff members in DSS, John Tucker and DeeDra' Branson!

Meet DeeDra' Branson: DeeDra' is the new Student Assistant in the mornings. She is majoring in Criminal Justice and will graduate in May 2008. We are very proud to have DeeDra' working with DSS. Come by and introduce yourself to her.

John Tucker is our new Academic Advisor/Tutor Coordinator. You may recognize John from his teaching in the English Department as well. We are very happy to have John on our team. Make an appointment to meet with John today!
Finals Week Stress Busters

10. Declutter! You’ll feel so much better when you are organized.

9. Listen to music.

8. Lay off the sugar. Substitute water for soda, eat fruits, instead of sugary food.

7. Stretch! Stand up and take a few minutes to shake out the cobwebs.

6. Comfort food!

5. Relax and take a break with a movie

4. Take a walk with a friend.

3. Kick things off with a “Stress-Free Night”

2. Yoga or other exercise. To get that “ah-ha!” solution you were looking for.

1. Take a Power Nap! – Studies show that a 20 minute nap in the afternoon will help.

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