

Adult Learner

STUDY SKILLS GUIDE



Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) Cycle 1, National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) Strategic Alliances with Institutes of Technology Lifelong Learning Subgroup



Fáilte

Congratulations on your decision to return to education. Learning is a lifelong pursuit and this is an important step in a journey of greater personal development and growth. You are joining the increasing numbers of adults who are re-entering education to improve their knowledge and skills for future education and employment options.

All colleges continually work to provide more education opportunities that reflect the diverse educational needs of adult learners. While returning to learning is exciting and rewarding, it can also be challenging. Adult students bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to their studies and to become successful independent learners they require effective study skills.

We hope this Adult Learner Study Skills Guide, which contains many tips on managing your learning effectively, will be of benefit to you as you pursue your course of study.

Yours faithfully,

Departments of Adult and Continuing Education



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Preparation for Lifelong Learning

As you decide to enrol on an adult education course, it is important to consider some points which will have an influence on your enjoyment of learning and ensure your success. You will need to be self-motivated, disciplined, able to set goals, manage your time effectively and open to working with others.

The key to your success will be your motivation for study and a positive attitude towards the different tasks required of you. This approach will need to be backed up by practical organisational skills to make the most of your time and the resources available to you. Naturally, your learning style and particular talents will have a bearing on how you tackle your work. You can save yourself unnecessary effort by learning some simple techniques for dealing with and managing the information which will be presented to you through your course of study.

This section of the guide will help to prepare for learning by giving you the opportunity to assess your present situation and plan for the future.

You - The Adult Learner

As an adult, you perform many roles each day. You may be a friend, a parent, a worker or a neighbour depending on where you are and whom you are with and the way you act in any role expresses your values and what you consider important in life.

Now that you want to become a student, you need to take stock of the values you attach to your new role and the characteristics you will bring to bear on your time in the classroom and at private study. Therefore, understanding yourself and why you want to study is important.

Motivations for Study

Your motivations can be varied and may include one or more of the following:

- *To gain a qualification*
- *To broaden my career prospects*
- *To learn and develop a new skill*
- *For my own personal development*
- *To learn a new hobby*
- *To make new friends*

Assess your Motivation for Study

It may help you to focus on your motivations by answering the following questions:

Why do you want to study?

What do you hope to achieve with a qualification?

What do you think will be involved in studying at third level?

What are your areas of interest?

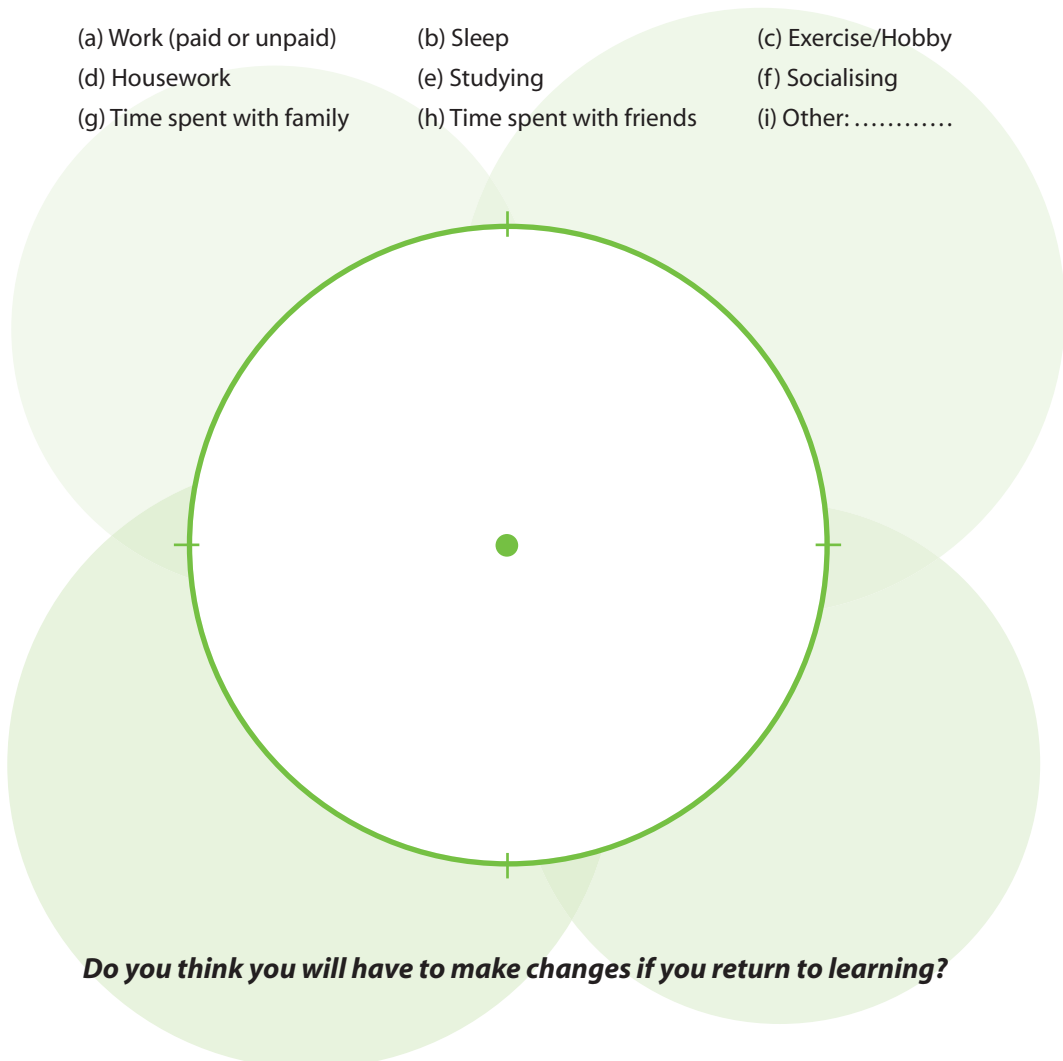
Your Time Management

The most practical aspect of organising yourself is managing your time and setting priorities in a way that fits in with your lifestyle and personal commitments. Learning involves regularly setting aside dedicated time to study and meet course deadlines. You also need to take care of yourself and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Poor time management can increase your stress levels and decrease your work output.

MY TIME CIRCLE

Take a moment to look at how you spend your time now and how you will manage the changes that come with studying. Divide up the time circle below to assess how much time you spend each day (24 hours) on the following pursuits:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Work (paid or unpaid) | (b) Sleep | (c) Exercise/Hobby |
| (d) Housework | (e) Studying | (f) Socialising |
| (g) Time spent with family | (h) Time spent with friends | (i) Other: |



Do you think you will have to make changes if you return to learning?

Your Learning Style

If you look at the people around you, you will realise that everyone is unique in how they learn and work. Some people like to plan their work well ahead while others work best to deadlines. Also, some people prefer to learn from books while others benefit from talking things over with other people. The following four questionnaires will help you identify your own learning style.

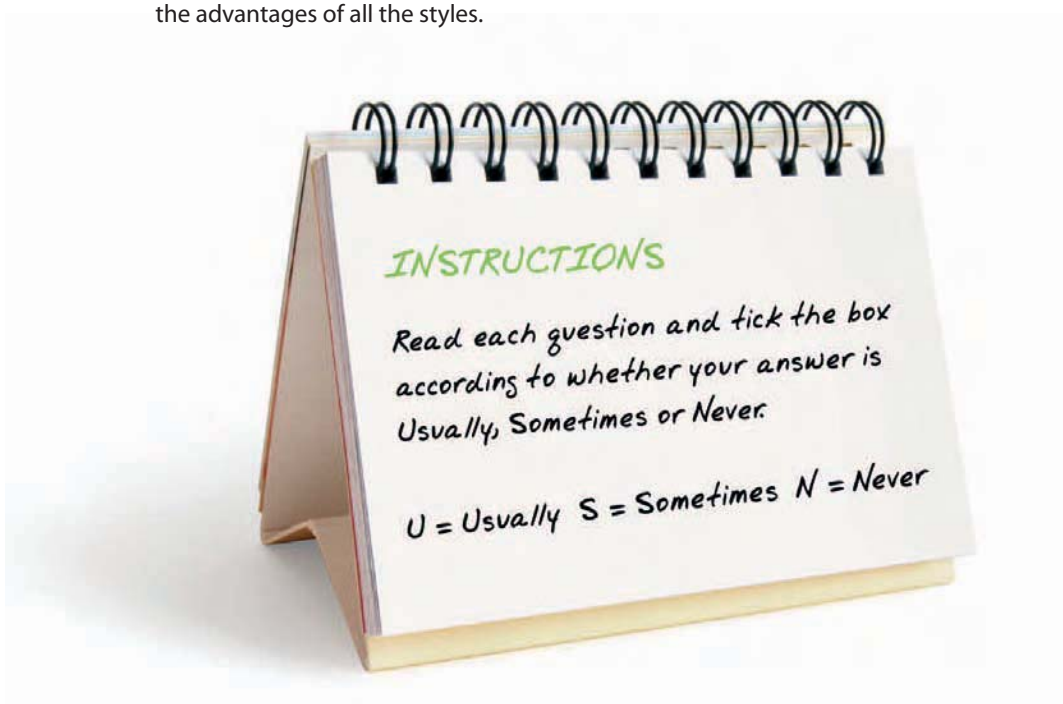
The four questionnaires relate to different learning styles:

E = Enthusiastic L = Logical P = Practical I = Imaginative

To find your score for each learning style use the following values:

Usually	=	2 points
Sometimes	=	1 points
Never	=	0 points

At the end, add up your scores and check your major learning style. There is no best style but you will discover your strengths as a learner and what makes it easier for you to learn. You should read through the advantages and disadvantages of each learning style so that you can see your best approach to study. Aim to push up your score for all the learning styles so that you have the advantages of all the styles.



E Questionnaire

	U	S	N
I get bored easily and like moving on to new things. I love variety.			
I learn by talking things through with other people.			
I work quickly and like to flit from one thing to another.			
I like to skim through books quickly.			
I enjoy group discussions and ask a lot of questions.			
I look quickly at instructions and then begin to work almost immediately.			
When I enjoy my work I am totally involved in it.			
When I don't like something, I tend to neglect it.			
I don't like planning things. I want to get down to work.			
Details bore me. I don't read through or check my work once it is finished.			
I like trying out new things.			
If I am upset, I like to find someone to talk to.			
I like to take life as it comes and be spontaneous.			
TOTAL FOR EACH COLUMN			
TOTAL FOR QUESTIONNAIRE			

L Questionnaire

	U	S	N
I work hard on the things I have to do which I don't enjoy as well as those I do enjoy.			
I like to understand how things work, or how an idea was developed.			
I like to make lists, work out timetables and plans.			
I always check my work and will persevere until I get it right.			
I enjoy solving problems and like to pose new questions.			
I prefer to listen to others rather than to talk.			
I learn best by working on topics alone.			
I pay great attention to detail.			
I like to work on one thing at a time.			
I learn best by reading or finding out about things and then making up my own mind.			
I prefer to work through personal problems by myself.			
I always consider all the options carefully before making a decision.			
TOTAL FOR EACH COLUMN			
TOTAL FOR QUESTIONNAIRE			

P Questionnaire

	U	S	N
I like to get on with things and not get side-tracked.			
I make sure I know exactly what is required of me before starting an assignment, e.g. how many marks for each part.			
I get down to work easily.			
I like to plan ahead, have a clear timetable for my work.			
I get annoyed by people who don't keep to deadlines.			
My work is well organised. I think in advance about the things I will need for my work.			
I enjoy the feeling of completing a piece of work more than I enjoy doing it.			
I think that daydreaming is a waste of time.			
I like working on my own.			
I draw diagrams, graphs or maps to give information. They are not meant to be works of art.			
I read instructions carefully before beginning any piece of work.			
I work steadily which means that I usually have time for doing things and still get my work done.			
TOTAL FOR EACH COLUMN			
TOTAL FOR QUESTIONNAIRE			

I Questionnaire

	U	S	N
I forget to take home things that I need to work at home.			
I spend too long thinking about my work before getting down to it.			
I like to find new and original ways of presenting my work.			
I can see the connections between different areas of my work.			
I like thinking and talking about my work better than doing it.			
I like daydreaming and thinking around topics.			
I like to float ideas around with other people.			
I am not interested in detail, but I am good at seeing the whole picture.			
I tend to work in bursts of energy.			
I prefer to work without timetables and plans.			
I like to draw creative, attractive diagrams, graphs or maps.			
I sit down to my work only to discover that I do not have important things that I need to do it.			
I enjoy thinking about or questioning ideas.			
TOTAL FOR EACH COLUMN			
TOTAL FOR QUESTIONNAIRE			

When all four sections are totalled, read the Advantages and Disadvantage of each type of learning style to help you with your learning and study.

Advantages of Each Learning Style

ENTHUSIASTIC

- You get totally involved in something that interests you.
- You work well with other people.
- You will try out any new idea or way of working.
- You enjoy writing freely - as it comes.
- You are not concerned with making a fool of yourself by asking questions or volunteering for something new.
- You like variety and excitement.
- You learn by talking with other people.
- You can skim and scan new books.

IMAGINATIVE

- You see new ways of doing things.
- You come up with creative solutions.
- You see the long-term implications of things.
- You can see the whole picture.
- You see the connections between the different subjects or topics being studied.
- You don't hurry or get in a flap.
- You present work in novel and artistically pleasing ways.
- You are good at coming up with new alternatives.

LOGICAL

- You organise facts and material well.
- You like to understand everything you are working on.
- You work at things until you get them right.
- You are curious and enjoy problems.
- You are a good critic.
- You work well alone with minimum help from other people.
- You are precise and thorough. You see the link between ideas.
- You plan well in advance for any work you have to do and know how to prioritise tasks.

PRACTICAL

- You work alone.
- You are good at setting goals and you like to use timetables and work plans.
- You know how to find the information you need.
- You get things done on time.
- You don't get distracted.
- You organise your time well so you have time for other things.
- You read instructions carefully before starting to work on something.
- You have any equipment or written materials you need organised and / or filed.

Disadvantages of Each Learning Style

ENTHUSIASTIC

- You rush into things without thinking them through in advance.
- You tend to neglect the things, which don't interest you.
- You are not good at organising time.
- You try to do too many things at once.
- You find it difficult to prioritise tasks.
- You leave things until the last minute.
- You can be demanding of your friends.
- You can't be bothered with details.
- You don't read through or check work.

IMAGINATIVE

- You tend to forget important details.
- You wait too long before getting started.
- You accept ideas uncritically.
- You don't like timetables for work or work plans and you don't organise your work well.
- You only work in bursts of energy.
- You forget important things you need for your work.
- You are easily distracted from the task in hand.
- You don't go over your work or organise materials.
- You are too easy going, not assertive enough with other people.

LOGICAL

- You need too much information before getting down to work and allowing yourself an opinion.
- You don't use friends and others as resources.
- You are over-cautious and don't like taking risks.
- You can get bogged down in theory.
- You don't trust feelings, your own or other peoples'.
- You don't function well in group discussions.
- You keep problems to yourself.
- You are reluctant to try out new approaches and you like to do things in a set way.
- You only trust logic.

PRACTICAL

- You are impatient with the views of others.
- You don't use friends and others as resources.
- You can't see the wood for the trees, i.e. you get preoccupied with details.
- You lack imagination.
- You think there is only one way of doing things – your way!
- You are poor at coming up with new questions.
- You often don't work well with others.
- You are more concerned with getting the job done than ensuring you do a good job.
- You cut corners and are not interested in the presentation of your work.

Multiple Intelligence

Psychologists tell us that there are different kinds of intelligence covering a wide range of activities and experiences. These are now known as Multiple Intelligences. They commonly list seven types, namely:

- 1. Verbal Intelligence** - you like talking and listening to people, you like writing letters, you are good at remembering jokes and stories.
- 2. Logical and Mathematical Intelligence** - you are good at making conclusions, you are good at using numbers and doing calculations, you remember phone numbers.
- 3. Musical Intelligence** - you love music and rhythms, you like listening to music, singing or playing an instrument.
- 4. Visual and Spatial Intelligence** - ideas come to you as pictures, your memories are like pictures or movies, you read maps easily, you remember people's faces.
- 5. Kinaesthetic Intelligence** - you like exercising, you like dancing and handicrafts, you feel emotions in all your body (happiness, sadness, etc.).
- 6. Inter-personal Intelligence** - you are good at working in a group, you like interacting with people as you are interested in others.
- 7. Intra-personal Intelligence** - you can work independently, you sometimes daydream, you are interested in developing yourself, you like to take care of yourself - your body and mind.

You probably realise that you use different intelligences every day so it is safe to presume that you will use them all in your study and course work. You are probably more intelligent than you ever realised and that should give you the confidence to face any learning task.



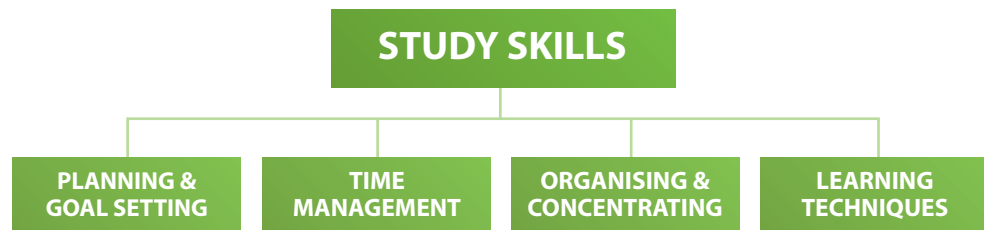
Practical Study Skills

Practical Study Skills

Over the course of your studies, you will acquire a range of learning skills that demonstrate development in your learning. The main skills you will acquire are:

- Study Skills:** The work-load and time pressures that are part of being a student. This will involve recognising what type of learner you are and organising your time and life around your college year.
- Note-taking Skills:** This will be your means of recording and understanding information in class, demonstrations, assignments and reading of texts.
- Research Skills:** Becoming familiar with information systems (library, web, etc.) and the use of appropriate research methods to find relevant information for your studies
- Reading:** Development of a reading strategy that is effective and relevant in the context of your study and time frame.
- Thinking:** This requires you to think critically in your chosen subject area and develop the ability to weigh up arguments and evidence 'for' and 'against', checking for accuracy, logic, comparison of theorists and the development your own arguments based on your analysis of your reading and research.
- Writing:** Developing the skills of writing that display clarity of thought, logical progression and evidence-based knowledge to support your arguments. There are a number of writing formats required at third-level that include presentations, reports, essays and theses.

STUDY SKILLS



1. Planning and Goal Setting

Planning involves setting **SMART** study goals which are realistic. Your goals are what you hope to achieve within your ability, taking into account your present circumstances and your past experiences. It is important to be positive and decisive when setting both short-term and long-term goals. Once you have chosen your goal - that is the first step towards successful learning. These can be both short-term and long-term goals. You need to take a broad look at everything you have to cover on your course and break it down into goals that are;

- S** **SPECIFIC** - is my reason for doing the course clear and precise?
- M** **MANAGEABLE** - do I have the necessary resources and opportunities?
- A** **ATTAINABLE** - is it within my ability?
- R** **REALISTIC** - will my circumstances allow it?
- T** **TIME** - how much time will it involve?

Goals are achieved in small steps ...
Rome was not built in a day.

2. Time Management

Start controlling how you use your time effectively by designing a timetable and sticking to it. Too much time is wasted getting stressed about having no time to do anything. It may mean prioritising, delegating, cutting back on leisure and social activities during your studies, but it will pay off. However, you do need to take some time to rest, exercise and recharge your mental batteries!

Guidelines for Organising Your Learning Time

- ✓ Make a timetable for the week.
- ✓ Try to work out how long different tasks will take and match them to appropriate time slots.
- ✓ Plan your most demanding activities for the times when you work best.
- ✓ Fit short tasks into spare moments in the day.
- ✓ Be realistic. Don't try to achieve the impossible.
- ✓ Prioritise important and urgent tasks.
- ✓ Be flexible. Allow extra time for emergencies. Don't leave important assignments until the last minute.
- ✓ Decide where you are going to study. If it affects other people, make sure that you get their co-operation.
- ✓ Organise your files and notes so that you can easily look back at work you have completed.
- ✓ Find a safe place to keep your books, files and equipment.
- ✓ Learn how to say no to unnecessary demands on your time.



Create a Weekly Study Timetable

Fill in your commitments and activities for each day so that you can identify the times available for study.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			

3. Organising and Concentrating

It can be difficult to motivate yourself to study but you need to think of the end result. What are you aiming for? Putting in the work now will bring rewards in the future. When you have your study plan and timetable created start by studying in blocks of time - 40 to 60 minutes is usually a good stretch. Concentration levels only last for a limited amount of time so you might need to change subject or topic. Set a reward for yourself at the end of the session or end of the week. Do not be tempted by outside distractions. If you can, study in a quiet, warm area without interruptions.

Learning Preparation: Homework Quiz

Answer these questions to find out whether you can manage your time for homework and study effectively.

Accuracy

1. I write down all the tasks I have to do...
 - a. **Always**
 - b. **Usually**
 - c. **Seldom**

2. I sometimes make mistakes because I fail to read the questions properly...
 - a. **Never**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Regularly**

Checking My Work

3. When I finish written work...
 - a. **I usually check it carefully**
 - b. **I sometimes read it over**
 - c. **I hardly ever check it over**

4. I test myself or get someone else to test me...
 - a. **Often**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Never**

5. When I get an assignment back...
 - a. **I go over all the mistakes carefully**
 - b. **I quickly read any corrections**
 - c. **I just look at my mark**

6. I review what I have learned...
 - a. **Often**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Never**

Organising Work Space

7. I watch TV whilst studying
 - a. **Never**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Often**

8. I have a quiet place of my own to work at home...
 - a. **Always**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Never**

9. There are other distractions when I work at home...
 - a. **Seldom**
 - b. **Sometimes**
 - c. **Nearly always**



Organising Work and Time

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>10. I make a timetable and stick to it...</p> <p>a. Yes
b. I try but find it impossible to stick to it
c. I do not think it is necessary</p> | <p>14. Before I start homework, I decide how long the session will last...</p> <p>a. Nearly always
b. Sometimes
c. Hardly ever</p> |
| <p>11. I have an arrangement with family and friends about when I can work...</p> <p>a. Yes
b. No</p> | <p>15. I try to apply my work to other things in my life...</p> <p>a. Always
b. Sometimes
c. Never</p> |
| <p>12. When I work at home, I take short breaks to keep me fresh...</p> <p>a. Usually
b. Occasionally
c. Hardly ever</p> | <p>16. When doing homework...</p> <p>a. I save the hardest part until last
b. I start with the hardest
c. I do not separate my work this way</p> |
| <p>13. I usually spread a large assignment over two or more days...</p> <p>a. Always
b. Sometimes
c. Never</p> | <p>17. I give myself a reward or treat when I finish my homework...</p> <p>a. Often
b. Sometimes
c. Never</p> |

Now, count how many 'a', 'b' and 'c' answers you have:

If you have mostly 'a'

You have a positive approach to your work, taking care to make the most of your time and resources.

If you answered mostly 'b'

Your score suggests that you are trying to work but may not always make the best use of your time and resources.

If you answered mostly 'c'

To study successfully, you need to give more thought and planning to your study times.

You may have some disruptions in your life making it difficult for you to work.

4. Learning Techniques

We all have different ways of learning and revising. You will need to develop good memory techniques. There are certain skills involved to improve your learning styles.

Reading: SQ3R Method

SQ3R is a flexible strategy that can be applied in different ways to different materials, to suit your own purpose. These are the basic stages:

1. Try to get the general drift of the material you are looking at by carrying out a quick preview or survey of the text.
2. While you are doing your survey, start asking yourself questions that you might expect to find answers to, if you think the text worth reading more carefully.
3. Now read the text carefully.
4. When you have finished reading, try to recall the main points.
5. Check how well you have recalled by writing them down and going back to review the text.

Revision: Flash Cards

Use Flash Cards (small cards) to record the key points and information on different subjects and topics that can be looked over very quickly. Key points will stay in your memory as opposed to large pieces of information. From the key points you can develop your answers in the exam.

Mind Maps

One of the best methods for organising information and creating links is designing a Mind Map, (see Tony Buzan on this). Pick any topic, e.g. an English novel, and from the core title map out on paper the themes, characters, and relevant information linked to it. By looking at something visually you can bring it back into your mind and down on paper much quicker than trying to write about it from scratch!

Chunking and Repetition

Chunking is a good way of remembering numbers (e.g. telephone numbers). This means grouping information into chunks and holding it in your short-term memory. Repetition means going back over again and again the material you have studied to keep it fresh in your mind. This can be done at the end of every study session and at the end of every study week.

Note-taking

The main purpose of making notes is to help you remember things. You tend to remember things better when you write them down. Making your own notes will also help you to understand what you are learning especially when revising for exams.

As everyone absorbs and understands information differently it is important that you make your own notes. You are then more likely to link new information to what you already know. It also helps you to concentrate on what you are learning when you are reading a book or listening to a lecture. Finally, you can make notes as a starting point for a project, an essay or some other piece of writing.

PRESENTING YOUR NOTES

Good notes should be clear and concise. They should also be easy to read and understand. Organise your notes to suit the way you learn. Your notes should only contain the information that you need to learn. If you set out your notes in a striking way, you will be better able to remember the information (e.g. highlighter markers)

NOTE MAKING STYLES

There are a number of different ways of making notes, so it is up to you to decide which method suits you best. You may want to use a combination of methods.

The most popular types of notes used are:

1. LINEAR NOTES (sometimes called sequential notes) which are in lines.

Example - Some people find them easier for memorising.

Making notes helps me:	Notes should:	Types of notes:
<i>Remember</i>	<i>Be Clear</i>	<i>Linear</i>
<i>Understand</i>	<i>Be Easy to Read</i>	<i>Pattern</i>
<i>Revise</i>	<i>Be Well Organised</i>	
<i>Make Links</i>	<i>Suit My Way of Learning</i>	
<i>Concentrate</i>	<i>Set Out in a Striking Pattern</i>	

2. PATTERN NOTES and SPIDER PLANS (also called 'nuclear notes')

Pattern Notes are more visual. They are useful for planning an essay.

Spider Plans (like Mind Maps) help you to make links between different ideas. They also help you to recall information. Some people find it easier to remember this kind of notes as they can visualise them on the page.

MAKING NOTES FROM A BOOK

Ask yourself what information you hope to get from the book. What is your purpose in reading the book? Which parts of the book are relevant to your study? Once you have decided which part or parts of the book are needed you should read those sections in depth. Making notes in your own words will help you to recall the information you have read.

Look for the main topic areas and note them down. For each topic, write a list of the most important points in as short a form you can. Don't copy out chunks of text. The mental activity of putting the information into your own words will actually help you to understand it. Make a note, however, of any technical terms or special vocabulary which you need to know for your subject. If you are unsure of the meaning of a word, look it up in a dictionary and write out a short explanation of the word. This helps to build up your vocabulary and expand your knowledge of relevant terms.

TAKING LECTURE NOTES

Notetaking in a 'live' situation, i.e. lecture, presentation or demonstration, is different from making notes from a written text as you will probably only get one chance to get the information down on paper. Before the lecture, if possible, be sure you know what the topic is so that you can look out for the main points. Always be there on time and ready to take notes from the start. Don't depend on someone else's notes as everyone interprets and records information differently. Sit where you can see and hear the lecturer. Have adequate paper, pens, highlighters or any equipment needed

Apply an organised system - keep a specific lecture folder/copybook per subject. Concentrate on listening to get an overall picture of what is being said. Write down the main points. Use symbols, abbreviations and shortened words to help you get the information down quickly:

<i>i.e.</i>	<i>that is</i>
<i>cf.</i>	<i>cross reference</i>
<i>e.g.</i>	<i>for example</i>
<i>b/e</i>	<i>because</i>
<i>+</i>	<i>plus or positive</i>
<i>C18th</i>	<i>18th century</i>
<i>=</i>	<i>equal</i>

<i>N.B.</i>	<i>note well</i>
<i>?</i>	<i>question</i>
<i>th</i>	<i>theory</i>
<i>x</i>	<i>times or multiplication</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>percent</i>
<i>&(or +)</i>	<i>and</i>
<i>v</i>	<i>versus</i>

Essay Writing

Essays are one of the major forms of assessment on third level college programmes and may vary in style depending on the course requirement. However, the approach to essay writing is standard and your method will improve with feedback and practice.

The Key Points of Essay Writing

Firstly, analyse the question. If you have more than one essay choice, decide which one interests you and what you know already about the topic.

- **Break down the question:** underline key words, identify the problem areas and follow the instructions (i.e. discuss, analyse, describe).
- **Take stock:** create a map or make notes of what you know on the topic already (i.e. what has been covered in class).
- **Do your research:** do background reading from your lecture notes, prescribed reading list and possibly some literature around the topic
- **Create a plan:** the ABC of an essay which is the Introduction, Middle and Conclusion. You do not have to start with the Introduction - create the body (Middle) first then go back and put the 'head' and 'feet' on it!

Essay Style

Clarity: Provide a clear line of reasoning by expressing your point in a straightforward way. Do not use long-winded sentences, edit regularly. Divide ideas into paragraphs with the opening sentence in each paragraph signalling the essence of the paragraph and linking into the next paragraph. Do several drafts and ask someone to read it before final draft.

Avoid: Repetition of words, ideas, wordiness, 'un-academic' language (i.e. can't = cannot, don't = do not), subjective language unless asked for (i.e. I feel, I think), illogical sentences, and mixing of tenses in sentences (i.e. past, present and future)

Essay Structure

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Title/Question | The essay must focus on the title - return to it regularly. |
| 2. Introduction | Explain what the essay is going to do, identify issues to be explored and how you will deal with each issue. |
| 3. Develop Argument | Each paragraph is a new idea/theme to be discussed |
| 4. Conclusion | No new material here. Summarise your argument and main themes. State you conclusions assertively. Last sentence should sum up your argument briefly, linking it to the title. |
| 5. References and/
or Bibliography | To avoid plagiarism, list all books, articles and other materials referred to in the body of the essay using a recognised referencing system (e.g. Harvard). |

Academic Words Used in Essay and Exam Titles

Analyse:	Examine in very close detail, identify important points, pros and cons
Assess:	Weigh up the value of and give a judgement
Comment on:	Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read or heard. Avoid purely personal opinion
Compare:	Show the similarities between two given items
Contrast:	Point out all the differences between items
Evaluate:	Critically make an opinion of the worth of something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides with criteria (theory) to guide your argument
Define:	Give the exact meaning of
Describe:	Give a detailed account
Discuss:	Offer both opposing and supporting arguments.
Explain:	Give details and opinions in your own words
Explore:	Examine from various standpoints, showing the implications
Identify:	Show your knowledge of a topic
Illustrate:	Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence
Interpret:	Give a clear and exact meaning of something
Justify:	Show adequate grounds for conclusions etc.
Outline:	Give the main points of
Relate:	Show how things are connected to each other
State:	Give facts and details in clear order
Summarise:	Give a brief account of

Report Writing: Six Steps

A report is generally a factual document produced after a piece of research has been conducted, e.g. on organisations, study visits, personal learning. Reports on research conducted should be as objective as possible.

Step 1:	Gather all relevant information
Step 2:	Planning - Sift material and decide on a framework by creating headings/ sub-headings and reference list from the start.
Step 3 & 4:	Write a number of drafts - Is it easy to read? Does it flow? Is it logical and well laid out? Ask someone you trust to read the report.
Step 5:	If required, write a 'Summary' to put at the front of the report. Check other reports for styles of summaries used
Step 6:	Final Draft - Check again for accuracy. In research, avoid using names of people if possible - use job titles instead. Always read your report from the reader's point of view before submission.

Referencing and Bibliography

For academic writing you will be required to submit evidence of the material you have sourced and used in your writing (i.e. direct quotes and paraphrasing). In order to avoid PLAGIARISM, and accusations of intellectual theft, you need to acknowledge your original literature sources be it from books, journals, magazines or the internet. It is advisable to follow a specific style (i.e. Harvard referencing system)

REFERENCE LIST: This is a list of all the sources you have referred to the body of your essay/report. It comes at the end of your assignment in an alphabetical format.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: This is a list of everything you read for your assignment, whether or not you referred to it in the body of the essay/report. Some courses may require it to be a separate section to your reference list but it is styled in the same format as your reference list.

The two methods of referencing are:

Paraphrase - involves restructuring and reporting a point an author makes in a book or article in your own words rather than as a direct quotation

Direct Quotation - only use direct quotation sparingly, in particular from an authoritative text, i.e. government report, primary source (historical document)

The key components of referencing are:

1. Author (s) or
2. Editor (s)
3. Author of Chapter
4. Year of Publication
5. Title of Book/Article
6. Title of Article Source (i.e. Journal)
7. Place of Publication
8. Publisher
9. Article

Examples of Referencing Style

- Book:** Bailey, P. (1978) *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*. London: Methuen
- Chapter in a Book:** Humm, M. (1991) 'Landscape for a literary feminism: British women writers 1900 to the present', in Forsas-Scott, H. (ed.). *Textual Liberation: European feminist writing in the twentieth century*. London: Routledge.
- Journal Article:** Nijhof, W.J., (2005) 'Lifelong Learning as a European Skill Formation Policy', *Human Resource Development Review*, 4 (4), pp. 401.
- Journal Article from Internet Source:** Rodrigues, M.J. (2006) 'The Lisbon Strategy after the mid-term review: implications for innovation and life-long learning'. *Corporate Governance*, 6 (4), pp. 349-357 Emerald [Online]. Available at: www.emeraldinsight.com/insight (Accessed: 13th January 2007)
- Material cited within another text, where you have not quoted the original source:** O'Connor, J. and McDermott, I. (1996) 'Principles of NLP'. London: Thorsons. Cited in Cottrell, S.M. (2003) *The Study Skills Handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Electronic source from Internet:** Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*. Available at: www.education.ie (Accessed: 15 May 2005)

Examinations

Many courses now involve assessment by examination, either written or practical. Exam preparation involves applying your time management skills for effective revision of the course leading up to and during the exam sessions.

(1) Revision

- **The Scope of the Course:** Read through course outlines and reading lists to identify what topics are examinable, know number of questions to be answered, duration of exam etc.
- **Previous Exam Topics and Questions:** Survey past exam papers and check for patterns evident in the type of questions asked from year to year.
WARNING - exams may feature surprises so be prepared.
- **Your Notes:** Organise yearly essays, all relevant notes, handouts, photocopied articles and divide into sections of subject and course.

(2) Check Your Understanding of Content

- Clear up any questions with lecturers and/or tutors that you may have
- Refer back to primary texts for quick synopsis of content and theories

(3) Summarise Key Points in the Form of Possible Exam Questions

- Construct summaries for each examinable topic on the course which can be developed in the exam itself. Use a Mind Map system or Flash Cards to record these if you are a visual learner. They should contain the following:
 - your introduction; a concise statement of the question underlying this topic/issue/theory.
Have an opening line learned off as a trigger to start you writing
 - key definitions and assumptions
 - a list of important features/relevant research findings
 - a summary of points of disagreement/controversies
 - a brief list of criticisms/evaluative comments
 - conclusions

(4) Test Yourself under Exam Conditions

- Recall your summaries
- Answer previous exam papers
- Draw diagrams from memory

Pre-Exam Tips

You cannot avoid the nerves and stress of exam but you can learn to minimise them by adequate preparation:

- Know the date, time, duration and location of each exam - put it in your calendar and arrive early
- Design a revision timetable
- Know the subject and part of the course being examined
- Be familiar with previous exam papers
- Make sure you get exercise and plenty of rest before and during the exams; walking to the exam hall is a good opportunity to get the brain cells working
- Be familiar with exam regulations.

Answering the Exam Paper

- Time manage your exam by breaking it down into parts
- Allocate specific time to each question, time for planning and rereading at the end
- Check that you have received the correct paper as you may be in a large hall with a combination of courses being examined
- Write your name and any required details on answer sheet
- Review all the questions and nominate the ones you are going to answer
- Quickly write down your notes, key points, maps or diagrams on the scribble section of the answer sheets.
- It may be better to start with your best questions and leave the difficult ones until the end
- Always keep the question in mind - 'what am I being asked here?'
- If a question has several parts, make sure you deal with all of them in your answer
- Watch your timing on a regular basis
- If you run out of time, write down your main points to the question not completed
- Keep writing until the examiner asks you to stop
- Allow 10 minutes before the end to reread your answers
- After the exam, avoid POST-MORTEMs.
You have no control over the past, focus on the next paper.

Recommended Reading

- Coman, M.J. & Heavers, K.L. (1998) **How to Improve Yours Study Skills**
Chicago: NTC Publishing [371.30281 WIT ISBN No.]
- Cottrell, S. (2003) **The Study Skills Handbook** (2nd ed.).
Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan [371.30281 WIT]
- Fry, R. (1997) **How to Study**
London: Kogan Press Ltd. [371.30281 WIT]
- Lashley, C (1995) **Improving Study Skills**
London: Cassell [371.302812 WIT]
- Northledge, A. (1995) **The Good Study Guide**
Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Pears, R. & Graham, S. (2006) **Cite Them Right: The Essential Guide to Referencing and Plagiarism**
Newcastle upon Tyne: Pear Tree Books
[808.02 WIT]
- Rose, J. (2001) **The Mature Student's Guide to Writing**
Basingstoke: Palgrave. [808.066 WIT]

GOOD LUCK!

Weekly Study Timetable

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			



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 Tel: 059 917 6252
 Fax: 059 917 0500
 Email: info@itcarlow.ie
www.itcarlow.ie



**Lifelong Learning Centre
 Dundalk Institute of Technology**
 Dundalk, Co. Louth
 Tel: 042 937 0585/6/7
 Fax: 042 933 1163
 Email: parttime@dkit.ie
www.learn.ie



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www.ittdublin.ie



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 National University of Ireland Maynooth**
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