



The Art of Studying

A Reference Guide For Students & Parents

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I. INTRODUCTION

To the Student:

Why should you read this booklet? The main reason is that developing efficient study habits will help you become a better student. In the future, many of the skills you learned as a student will help you succeed in your job.

Although the ten chapters may be read in any order, they are arranged to be read sequentially for the fullest understanding. In Chapter II you will take a short quiz to discover what kind of learner you are, and there are suggestions for studying based on your preferred learning style. Chapter III gives helpful suggestions on how to organize your home for studying. Using correct spelling and learning new vocabulary are difficult for many students, and Chapters IV and V give suggestions for becoming more proficient in these areas. If memorizing is difficult for you, Chapter VI will show you several techniques and tricks that may work for you. Chapter VII demonstrates that reading a textbook is different from reading a novel. The reading process chart in Chapter VIII summarizes this in a helpful way. Knowing how text is arranged is discussed in Chapter IX, “Patterns Show the Way”. Finally, if you are interested in becoming a better test taker, this subject is covered in the final chapter.

While you are in school, your job is to be the best student you can be. We hope that this booklet will help you accomplish this goal.

II. LEARNERS LEARN DIFFERENTLY

Students learn and study differently. What type of learner are you? Knowing your learning style will help you know what studying techniques are most beneficial for you. There are three learning styles: auditory (hearing), visual (seeing), and kinesthetic (touching). See which of these statements describes you to decide which type of learner you are.

This short survey will identify what type of learner you are. Answer YES or NO to the following questions and keep track of your answers:

Auditory (hearing):

1. When I really want to understand what I have read, I read it softly to myself.
2. I learn better if someone reads a book to me than if I read it silently to myself.
3. Saying facts over and over helps me to memorize them better than writing them over and over.
4. I remember things I hear better than things I read.

Visual (seeing):

1. I would rather read a story than listen to it.
2. I can write about most of the things I know better than I can tell about them.
3. I remember what I read better than what I hear.
4. I understand a math problem that is written down better than one that I hear.

Kinesthetic-Tactile (touching):

1. I would rather show and explain how a thing works than write about how it works.
2. I like to make things with my hands.
3. I understand what I learn better when I am involved in making something for the subject.
4. I like to use the computer to learn and make things.

Scoring the survey: If you scored 3 out of 5 items YES in one group of questions, you are most likely that type of learner. If you scored 3 out of 5 items NO in one group of questions, you are most likely not that type of learner. If you scored 2 items YES in one group and 2 items YES in another group, you, like most people, are probably a combination learner and need to use some suggestions from both learning areas.

Here are some tips to help you learn best.

If you are an auditory learner, you would rather learn by hearing. You like to be told things. Reading in silence is not the best method for you.

- Make sure you have eye contact with your teacher and participate often in discussion.
- To improve reading, tape yourself, then play it back while following along in the text.
- Work with a partner to reinforce what you know.
- When studying for a test, say the material out loud.

Math: Repeat facts aloud numerous times and drill with a parent.

Spelling: Say the word aloud, spell it, and repeat at least three times or until you do so perfectly

Languages, Social Studies, Science: Read softly to yourself. Stop after two or three paragraphs and restate in your own words.

If you are a visual learner, you absorb new material better by reading it. You prefer printed handouts and more examples on the board, something you can relate to visually.

- Ask your teacher for handouts.
- While in class, write important facts down as you hear them. Use index cards to help you remember words and facts. Be sure that notes are written in your own words so that they make sense to you.
- Read along when something is being read to you.
- Watch a film or video or find a book about the subject.
- When studying for a test, it is better to write down the facts.

Math: Practice by writing the problems.

Spelling: Write the words several times and check each time to see that it is correct.

Languages, Social Studies, Science: Organize your notes into a chart or study guide.

If you are a kinesthetic-tactile learner, you prefer instruction through the sense of touch. Hands-on learning works best for you. You prefer to touch something for it to make sense to you. Often your learning style combines with one or both of the other two.

- If possible, do your work on the computer.
- Make flash cards or games to help you study.
- Choose projects that allow you to make things, such as clay figures, dioramas, and posters.
- When studying, use a bulleting board or flannel board to organize your material.
- When learning from a text, make an outline or a visual from the material.

III. ORGANIZING YOUR HOME FOR STUDYING

Best Location: A quiet, well-lit space of your own, away from the television, will work best for you.

Students should try to complete homework independently, but under the supervision of an adult in case help is needed. Homework is usually an independent activity, reinforcing learned material from the classroom. Children should be able to complete the work without constant supervision of an adult. However, an adult could check the homework to see that it is completed. The amount of supervision needed depends on the age of the child and the degree of responsibility the child displays.

Materials: The workspace should be supplied with materials such as pens, pencils, paper, crayons, paste, scissors, tape, stapler, and possibly a calculator, computer, or word processor.

Time: The best time to study depends on the individual student. Consider the following important factors?

- How much homework do I have?
- How long will it take?
- Do I have after school activities or responsibilities?
- Do I like to eat a snack after school?
- Do I like to watch TV after school or in the evening?

After considering all of these factors and any others that apply, decide when to study. The time chosen should be the same time each day if possible. Homework and studies should be the first priority.

A special Note: All students should have a library card from the local public library. It will serve as a valuable tool when you are not able to use your school library. The following are the public libraries in the Marple Newtown School District:

Marple Public Library
2599 Sproul Rd.
Broomall, PA 19008
610-356-3588

Newtown Square Public Library
201 Bishop Hollow Road
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-353-1022

IV. DEBUGGING SPELLING

How can you become a better speller? There are a number of helpful ways to improve your spelling ability.

Test-Study Method

You probably have a weekly list of spelling words. A pretest is usually given on Monday to determine which words you need to learn. The study method is as follows:

1. Copy the word correctly from the board or the list.
2. Look at the word as you say it aloud.
3. Cover the word. Picture it in your mind. Say it and write it.
4. Check the word to see that you spelled it correctly.
5. Repeat this method 3 or 4 times.

Styles of Learning

We know that people have different learning styles. Although spelling is primarily a visual skill, this study method addresses other skills as well. All three types of learners can use this study method and succeed!

Helpful Hints

Some words are just plain hard to learn. Here are a few tricks or hints that might make it easier:

1. Learn *rules* such as the old familiar “i before e, except after c”. (believe and receive)
2. Find *words in words*. If you can break words into bits, it is easier to remember them. (baseball)
3. Look at the *fronts and backs* of words. Examples of Fronts: sta-, pre-, uno; and Backs: -tion, -ate, -ght)
4. Make a *picture* in your mind about the word. (Picture: There’s a bus in business)
5. *Highlight* the hard part of the word. The hard part of school is the sch.

Writing and Spelling

The test-study method and these hints will help you, but the most important thing to improve spelling is to get practice writing words in sentences and stories. You may spell the words perfectly on the weekly spelling test, but until you spell the same words correctly in your daily writing, you can't be sure you have really learned them. Parents can help by making sure you continue to spell these words correctly in written homework assignments throughout the year.

Special Note to Parents:

What if your child says that his/her teacher allows incorrect spelling on a story written in a class? When students are writing a first draft, some teachers refer to this as a "sloppy copy". Teachers encourage students to write their ideas quickly without stopping to check the spelling of every word. Your child's teacher would like the students to use new and interesting words in their writing and not to be limited by easy words that they are sure they can already spell. However, when students revise and edit their stories for mistakes, this is the time to check for correct spelling. The final copy should not contain spelling errors for words the student is expected to know how to spell. More difficult words will need the use of a dictionary, or the writer could ask another student or the teacher for help with spelling these more advanced words.

These ideas to improve spelling will work for parents, too!

V. STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING NEW VOCABULARY

Do you wish you had a better vocabulary? There are several ways to acquire new vocabulary words. Parents can help by providing many varied experiences. It is much easier to learn a new word or concept when you can relate it to something you have experienced. For example, you will have a much better ocean vocabulary after a visit to the seashore. Books provide experiences, too. Read, read, read! Read books, magazines, recipes, schedules, food package labels, everything you can find!

How do you keep this in your head once you've learned it? You can keep a personal word bank of flash cards or an ongoing list of vocabulary words. A picture on the back of flash cards or beside the word on the list can help you remember the meaning. Use new vocabulary right away, and use it often. Include it in your speech and in your writing.

Context Clues

When reading, stop periodically and ask yourself if you understand what you are reading. If not, which words are keeping you from understanding? Can you get clues from the remaining words to help you guess the meaning of the problem word? Try some of these context clues.

- Is there a smaller word contained within the bigger word that could help you understand?
- Does the sentence *define* or say the word in another way?
Example: Archaeologists, people who study the past by digging up old bones, have learned many things about dinosaurs. In this sentence the definition of archaeologist is right in the sentence. Sometimes the definition is found between commas, parentheses, or dashes. Archaeologists (people who study the past by digging up old bones) have learned many things about dinosaurs.
- Is the word *compared* to something else in the sentence to give you a clue? *Example:* The hydrofoil, similar to air hockey games, uses air to make the ship move along the water. In this sentence a game that you may know helps you understand the new word. The words and, but, and similar help us see the comparison.

- Are *examples* given within the sentence? *Example:* Tarantulas, black widows, and other arachnids are feared by both children and adults. Since you know that tarantulas and black widows are spiders, that knowledge plus the word “other” tells you right away that arachnids are spiders.
- Does the sentence indicate that the word you want to know means the *opposite* of a word you do know? *Example:* The leopard is a large cat, but the domestic cat is very small. Words like but, instead, and however help us see that the meaning will be opposite.

Structural Analysis

Look at how a word is put together.

- Is there a base word?
- Are there prefixes or suffixes?
- Is the word a compound word?

Many modern English words come from Greek or Latin roots.

Knowing the meaning of a root will help you understand an unknown word. Since we know that descend means to go down, we can guess that a descendent of a person is one who comes after or “goes down” from that person.

Prefixes and suffixes can also help us know the meanings of vocabulary. Since we know that the prefix anti- means against, we can guess that antisocial must mean against society. In the word falsehood, once we know that the suffix –hood means a state or quality, we know that falsehood probably is the state of being untruthful.

A compound word is one word made up of two smaller words. In the word mailbox the compound word mailbox is explained by looking at the two smaller words it contains. A mailbox is a box in which to put mail.

Try to use these strategies when you can. Don’t forget to use the dictionary or your textbook glossary if these have not helped you.

VI. MEMORY AND MIND TRICKS

Do you have trouble remembering information you have learned? Remembering names and important facts can be easier with the use of some strategies. Different tricks lend themselves to remembering different things. Many of them use association and visualization.

To make an association, ask yourself, “What does it make me think of?” The crazier and more colorful the association, the better you will remember it. Then picture it (this is visualizing) in your mind. Finally, link your picture with the thing you need to remember.

For example, suppose you have to remember the name of the great egret, a white water bird with long thin legs. The egret is often confused with the heron. Here is an association-visualization you might use-or you could think of your own.

Follow these steps:

1. “What does the word egret remind me of?” – “Eek!” (as when you see a ghost) might come to mind.
2. Picture it (EEK! A GHOST!)
3. Link the picture with the thing to be remembered (ghostlike white egret-EEK!)

To remember and keep several things in order, you still use association and visualization, but you might use various mnemonic devices-another name for memory tricks. Some often used are:

1. Make a word out the first letters of the items you must remember:
For example, “HOMES” to remember the five Great Lakes:
Huron
Ontario
Michigan
Erie
Superior

2. Make a sentence out of words with the same first letters as words you must remember.

For example, to remember the planets in order from the sun: “Miss Venus eats my jelly sandwiches under Ned’s porch.” (Mercury-Venus-Earth-Mars-Jupiter-Saturn-Uranus-Neptune-Pluto)

3. Make up a story which links the words you must remember:
One was created from some ninth grade students to remember the 12 exceptions to the “I before E” spelling rule—I before E, except after C, or when sounded like “ay”, as in “neighbor” and “weigh”.

We were on a wonderful trip until, at the height of our leisure, we ate a foreign food that had either caffeine or protein in it. It looked very weird. Right after we ate it, we both had seizures. We forfeited the weird food to the police so that they could check it out and keep other people from getting sick. We found out that the food had come from a sheik who had seized it using counterfeit money.

4. The RHYMING PEGWORD METHOD helps you remember up to 10 items in order, always using the same basic mental image for each given number from 1 to 10. You associate what you must remember with something, picture it, and link it with your pegword. The pegwords are:

- 1 – sun (or bun)
- 2 – shoe
- 3 – tree
- 4 – door
- 5 – hive
- 6 – sticks
- 7 – heaven
- 8 – gate
- 9 – line
- 10 – hen

To illustrate, suppose you have to remember the first ten amendments to the Constitution – the Bill of Rights. The first is freedom speech and of the press. Your first pegword is “sun”. Picture the sun with a widely opened mouth – as if he/she were speaking (freedom of speech) – and reading the newspaper (freedom of the press). Continue, in a similar way, to make associations and visualizations with the other nine amendments and their corresponding pegwords.

To summarize, the memory strategies are:

- association
- visualization
- making words from first letters of items
- rhyming pegword method

Why not try some of these strategies ... they really work. But you must practice.

VII. ORGANIZATION OF TEXT

(or how to Spoil the Ending of Your Textbook)

When reading, we need to understand the most important ideas. Much of what we read is fiction. The main elements of short stories and novels are the characters, the problems, and the setting. A short story or novel has all its words printed in the same size and usually has no pictures. The main ideas are hidden inside the paragraphs.

Although everything we read is not fiction, we still need to find the main ideas in everything we read. The way that a page is printed gives the reader important clues about its main ideas and about how to read it. Pages are not all printed the same way. Phone books are printed in alphabetical order. Calendars and train schedules are printed by time. Maps are printed pictures with words on them.

Compare a page in a novel and a page in a textbook. Instead of having all words printed the same size, the main ideas in a textbook are identified by the larger print of titles and subtitles and the use of charts, graphs, and pictures. Because they are the main ideas, those titles often become test questions.

Textbooks and fiction are printed differently and must be read differently. Graphics, bit print, and boldface are not accidentally put into textbooks; they are put there on purpose to show main ideas. If you look at the big print and the pictures in a textbook chapter before reading and then read the introduction, you will find it easier to understand the chapter. As you read the textbook chapter, think of the titles and subtitles as topics you want to learn about. Turn them into questions. Example: “Effects of Improved Transportation” would make you ask “What *were* the effects of improved transportation?” You would then read to find the answer to this question. Write the answer in your own words.

The next time you read a textbook or informational article, think about these facts and use the reading process steps which follow in Chapter VIII.

VIII. THE READING PROCESS

The information below is a scheme or a plan that you can use to get the most out of what you read. If you learn the plan and use the plan, you will read and learn more successfully.

Before

Survey the material.

- titles and subtitles
- pictures, charts, graphs, etc.
- introduction and summary

Ask yourself questions.

- What do I predict the text will be about?
- What do I know about this topic?
- How titles/pictures relate to text?

During

Monitor yourself.

“Am I understanding?”

No—use fix up strategies:

- Correct predictions which were wrong.
- Adjust your rate.
- Reread.

Yes

-Keep reading.
-Take notes and summarize continually.

After

Summarize.

Answer questions.

Evaluate/Decide to read more.

IX. PATTERNS SHOW THE WAY

Basically, only four patterns are present in speeches and books. Knowing these patterns can help you understand, take notes, and study information in a better way.

The four patterns of organization are:

- a. simple list
- b. compare and contrast
- c. sequence
- d. cause and effect

1. The **SIMPLE LIST** pattern presents information in any order. No piece of information is more important than any other. Words like “several”, “many”, “there are many”, etc. often tell the reader or listener that the pattern is a simple list. Notes would look like this:

Daniel Boone’s roles:

- a. hunter
- b. trapper
- c. guide
- d. explorer

2. The **COMPARE AND CONTRAST** pattern tells how two people, places, things or situations are alike or different. Words like “same”, “similar”, and “also” are used to present a comparison (likeness) while words like “different”, “unlike”, and “in contrast” are used to present a contrast (difference).

Notes for the pattern might show likenesses and differences separately, or they might look like this:

If asked to compare/contrast early and modern roads a student could list:

Early roads	Both (Early/Modern Roads)	~ Modern roads
<u>construction</u> stone and gravel turned to mud in spring	expensive	hard surface
<u>uses</u> sheep and cattle going to market held up traffic		<u>uses</u> goods to market

3. In the **SEQUENCE** pattern, order is important. It may be time-order, smallest-to-largest, best-to-worst, or some other order. Recognizing the type of order and remembering the information in that order is important here. Words like “first”, “second”, “then”, “later”, and “finally” are often used when this is the pattern.

Similar to the simple list, notes can be listed –1,2,3, etc. – but in this case, order is important. You can see this pattern often in social studies or science materials. Sample notes:

Daniel Boone’s building of a trail through Kentucky:

1. Boone and 40 others start, Spring 1775
 2. Reach Cumberland Gap in 4 days
 3. Follow Warrior’s Path for 50 miles
 4. Follow Bison Street trail
 5. Build fort at Kentucky River
 6. Call trail “Boone’s Trace” (later “Wilderness Road”)
 7. Native Americans use it for many years
 8. 200,000 + settlers use it up to 1800
4. The **CAUSE AND EFFECT** pattern shows events and what happens as a result of these events. This pattern is often found in science or social studies. Words like “because”, “as a result”, “why”, and “therefore” signal this pattern. Notes for this pattern may list the causes and/or the effects, or they may be more like a diagram, showing the cause(s) and the effects which occur as a result. Sample notes:

Effects of improved transportation:

1. trips took less time
2. new areas in West open up
3. trade faster and cheaper
4. towns start along trading routes
5. nation grows

-OR-

Improved transportation

- > trips took less time
- > new areas in West open up
- > trade faster and cheaper
- > towns start along trading routes

OF COURSE, YOUR TEXT MAY USE COMBINATIONS OF THESE PATTERNS. LIFE IS NEVER SIMPLE! However, recognizing these patterns helps us take notes more effectively and study more efficiently. Furthermore, tests on the information usually expect us to recognize these patterns and answer questions which come directly from these thought patterns. Some examples of test questions might be:

- Name three roles of Daniel Boone. (simple list)
- How were early roads different from modern roads? (compare and contrast)
- Where did Boone's trail through Kentucky go after it passed through the Cumberland Gap? (sequence)
- What were the results of improved transportation? (cause and effect)

X. TACKLING THE TEST

Know the kind of test you will be taking. Teacher-made tests are made by teachers to test information you have been taught. It is one way to measure what you have learned. Spelling tests, chapter or unit tests, quizzes, midterm and final exams are a few examples.

Standardized tests are the other type of test you might be taking. These tests are made by people who do not know you and have not taught you. They test your general knowledge as compared to others at your level or age. Terra Nova, PSAT, SAT, and PSSA are some examples. (Remember the information in Chapter VIII)

Begin by studying before you even know you have a test. You should study for the test every day. Studying means learning the information in your textbook or notes.

- Reread your notes daily. Repetition is the best way to learn.
- Rewrite your notes. The repetition is helpful, and you will understand them better if you write them in your own words.
- Add information to your notes as you read your textbook.
- Skim the textbook information covered that day.
- Highlight your notes.
- Test yourself. Begin a week before the test. Using your notes and the book, make up questions and answer them.

Kinesthetic-tactile learners: Write the questions and answers.

Auditory learners: Check them with a friend or in a study group, answer them out loud; perhaps use a tape recorder.

Have someone else ask you the questions.

- Spend most of the time studying the hardest material
- You cannot study for standardized tests, but you can prepare by practicing with various test-preparation books.
- Prepare your body for a test by getting to bed early the night before and by eating a healthy breakfast.
- Have the needed equipment for a test (pencils, pens, etc.)

Set Your Test “Plan”

First, be smart with your time. Look over the whole test first. See how long it is and what kinds of questions there are. Begin with the part that is easiest for you. Do the harder parts later. If there are essays, save them until last, because the rest of the test will usually give you information you can use.

Tips for Answering Different Types of Questions

Multiple Choice tests demand you to think quickly. First, read the questions and think of possible answers before looking at the choices the test gives you. Then read all the choices, thinking of each one as a true-false statement. Eliminate the false ones, and choose the best answer of those which remain.

- Example:* Ventricles are
- a. pumping houses of the heart.*
 - b. blood vessels.
 - c. elbow joints.

Matching tests are fun and fast. Save time by reading the side with more words first (the one on the right in the example below) and then choosing from the other side. As you use each one, check it off so you can see which answers are left. Sometimes answers are left over or used more than once.

Example:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1. oak | a. hardwood tree with acorns. |
| 2. pine | b. fast growing tree with helicopter type seeds |
| 3. maple | c. evergreen with needles |
| 4. willow | d. tree with long drooping leafy branches |

True-False tests can be tricky. Read them carefully. Sentences with words like “always” or “never” are usually false. Any false word or phrase makes the *whole* sentence *false*.

- Example:*
- a. All children are quiet. (false)
 - b. Some children are quiet. (true)
 - c. Marple Newtown, *a suburb of Philadelphia*, has one high school. (false, because of the false phrase)

Short answer tests require quick, steady work. Begin with the easiest, and spend the same amount of time on each question.

Example: The Declaration of Independence was signed in the year _____, in the city of _____.

Essay tests require careful planning. Save them until last so that you can get information from the rest of the test. Read each question carefully. Circle the direction words (list, compare, discuss, etc.) and underline the topics (the things you have to compare or list). Each direction word shows you a part of the question that you need to answer. Do all parts of the question. Brainstorm, jotting down ideas you want to include for each part of the question. Then start your answer by restating the question. Just answer the question. Do not add unnecessary information. Do exactly as it says. For example, *trace* means to show what happened from beginning to end. *Compare* means to show likenesses and differences. *Contrast* means to show differences. *Discuss* means to write all you know.

Example: Compare and contrast two board games. Include the object of each game, how many people can play, how long it takes to play each game, what pieces are included in the game, and the basic rules for playing.

Possible answer (in part) Two board games are Monopoly and Scrabble. They are alike in several ways. For both you can play with as few as two players, but as many as six...There are also several differences...The object of Monopoly is to end the game with more money and property than your opponents, while the object of Scrabble is to earn more points than your opponents by forming words on the board...

Finally, check over your test to see that you answered all the questions completely and correctly. Don't change answers unless you are positive you have made an error.

