

# HOW TO STUDY 1

## You and studying

You have to find your own 'best way' to study and discover what suits your personality and available time the best.

The following is a set of points that most people find work well for them. Try them and find if they work for you. If some of them do not work for you, try something else.

## Strategies

When reading anything for study purposes, rather than say a novel for pleasure, you should have a pen (or tape recorder) in one hand, or at least within easy reach, and a pad of paper beside you.

You should **note the main ideas** if the topic or the ideas are new to you. If you are familiar with the topic, you might choose only to mark the new or controversial points made, as you will use the material as an alternate view, or perhaps to argue against later.

You should reread your notes for each subject often, doing this by section. It is better to read your module notes and all other notes devoted to one section or topic, then move on to another. This is a good reason for keeping module and other notes together. Remember that you do not learn something merely by possessing it. Hard work is required to learn something. The importance of reading and rereading your notes cannot be over-stressed. If you think of this as meaning constant revision, then fine, just make sure you do it.

## Concentrating while you study

This section has suggestions for studying effectively in study sessions for at least an hour. These sessions might include reading, note taking,

writing, organising or editing material, or listening to tapes. Concentrating during a lecture or while working with other people involves similar principles.

Concentrating is not always something that you have to work at. If you really want to know something you can concentrate easily, possibly for a long time. If you are required to learn about a topic which doesn't particularly interest you (and let's face it, a certain amount of any course is about jumping through hoops) you need to figure how to keep motivated. Sometimes you have to study for a purpose which doesn't coincide with yours, or if you have to study at times or in ways which are difficult for you, then you have to make an effort to focus and sustain your concentration.

**The length of time for which you can concentrate fully depends on factors such as your enthusiasm for what you are doing, your skill at a particular task, your emotional and physical state, and your surroundings at the time.** You don't have to sit at a desk to concentrate. Why not let your ideas sort themselves out while you do the housework, travel to work or watch the sunset? When you do read and write, concentrating is not simple reading every word on page or putting lots of words on paper or a computer screen.

**Full concentration involves actively questioning your material and integrating it into what you already know.**

This questioning and integrating helps you understand what you read and organise what you write. **It also helps you when you share your ideas and knowledge with others.**

Have you consciously thought about your study habits; when, where and how you prefer to study. You can concentrate for longer periods and more effectively if you know how to cope with distractions that may arise at certain points in your study. While preparing for study you may be prone to procrastination. After you have been concentrating intensely for a short time you may become impatient with your task. After sustained concentrated work, you may feel that you are reaching the end of your concentration span for a particular subject.

### **If you have difficulty getting started**

1. Consider how you feel emotionally and physically. If you feel good direct this energy to learning. If you don't plan another time to study, or use techniques that deal with or set your problem aside. Try a brief walk or run, a cup of coffee, or a **short** chat.
2. Seat yourself comfortably, with everything you need at hand.
3. Decide on your time limits for this study session. Take into account your other commitments, then set a minimum study time to become involved. Set a maximum time so you don't feel overwhelmed and so you can focus yourself fully. Don't be inflexible, and plan to reward yourself after you have completed your study by doing something you particularly enjoy.
4. Decide what to study while your mind is fresh. Will you tackle an assignment that has been worrying you? Will you start with the subject or activity you find the easiest? Set yourself a goal to accomplish. If you have a large task, tackle it one section at a time.
5. Begin with a brief warm up task which helps you concentrate. Use this task only if necessary, not as a

form of procrastination. Do some routine tasks which are part of the subject, such as filing or compiling notes. Revise previous work in the area, for example summarise notes, write comments on a discussion or reading. Preview a topic by asking yourself 'why am I studying this topic?' and 'to whom do I want to communicate my ideas?'

### **Problems**

#### **Identifying your procrastination habits**

- \* Day dreaming - staring into space.
- \* Inaction – sitting at desk, vegetating in front of TV.
- \* Inappropriate action – avoiding tasks – making coffee, phone calls.
- \* Making numerous lists, timetables, planners.
- \* Organising and reorganising notes.
- \* Stuck in the reading or research phase – doing unnecessary reading

### **Solutions**

**Start writing** – put pen to paper

Have all that you need on the desk

For a task (assignment) which you just cannot start, choose one achievable section, - **one small step!**

If losing concentration, **change topics**

Set yourself small timed **goals**

**Make daily 'to do' lists;** what **must** be done today?

- Put on the list things that are **achievable**
- **Put** the list in a place that you will see it often – wall, mirror, phone etc.
- During the day **look** at the list
- **Do** one thing, cross it out

At the end of the day – cross out what you have done.

## **My.CSU**

Increasingly electronic communication is used to provide information and services to students. My.CSU eBox messages and forums are the main ways in which CSU communicates with students on and off campus.

## **Subject Forums**

Most subjects' students study by distance education has a subject forum. The forum is available through My.CSU and your lecturer will have informed you about it at the beginning of the semester. Subject forums are a good place to ask all those questions about assignments, subject readings and other additional readings. You can discuss the subject with the lecturer and other students.

## **Other types of forums**

There are several types of forums available to students. Apart from any subject forums, students can also access a variety of other forums such as the CSU General Forum, and Student Services Forum. There is also a Mature Age Student Forum, which is available to all students regardless of their age. It's a great place to talk about the challenges of juggling work, study and family responsibilities.

## **Videoconferences**

These are another form of electronic communication where groups of students at different sites can see and speak to each other. Your lecturer will advise you if there is to be one organised for your subject.

With out wishing to re-invent the wheel in compiling this brochure, we have drawn on material from Australian universities and other sources for advice and examples. Particular mention must be made of the following:

Bucknal, K.B. (1995) How to succeed as a student, Griffith University:

[http://www.gu.edu.au/gwis/stubod/stuadv/stu\\_advice.htm](http://www.gu.edu.au/gwis/stubod/stuadv/stu_advice.htm);

Marshall, Land Rowland, F (1993) A guide to learning independently

Longman Cheshire: Murdoch University.

Nothedge, A (1990) The good study guide. Open University: Milton Keynes, UK.

**Division of Student Services**

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