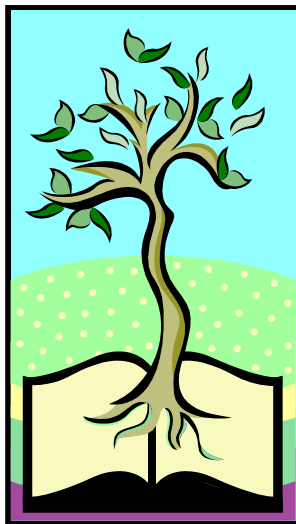


ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Your Guidebook to Learning Styles and Improved Study Strategies



NH Technical Institute Learning Center
Colleen Bolton, M.Ed., and Deborah Carley, M.Ed.

Study Skills

Study habits can be learned and refined through practice and evaluation. Making small changes in your study behaviors can make significant changes in your mastery of course material.

The purpose of this booklet is to:

- ✓ Help you identify the way(s) you learn best
- ✓ Provide insight into your style of thinking
- ✓ Help you plan, implement and control the strategies that enhance learning
- ✓ Offer practical, “Tried and True” advice based on sound learning theory
- ✓ Teach effective study habits that can be learned and refined through practice and evaluation

Section I of this booklet provides you, the reader, with tools for understanding how you learn. By identifying how you learn, you will be able to incorporate skills specific to your learning style as you study. It answers the question, “How do I learn?”

Section II helps you identify study areas needing improvement and provides concrete advice to become a more efficient learner. It answers the questions, “How can I improve my study skills and behaviors?”

Study *skills* are the potentials for action and success.

Study *behaviors* are the actions themselves.

Section II

How can I improve my study skills?



Contents:

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|
| Where are my trouble spots? | p. 11 |
| Time Management | |
| 20 Ways to Get Back Your Life | p. 12 |
| Time Management=How to Get Stuff Done | p. 13 |
| Semester Deadlines | p. 14 |
| Weekly Schedule | p. 15 |
| Things to do Today | p. 16 |
| Reading Text Books | |
| Thinking While Reading | p. 17 |
| Taking Notes | |
| Your Notetaking Know-How | p. 18 |
| Lecture Notes=Learning Notes | p. 19 |
| Two-Column Notes | p. 20 |
| Study Groups | |
| Study Groups: The Great Grade Boosters | p. 21 |
| Taking Tests | |
| Part A: Preparing for Exams | |
| Different Tests/Different Study Techniques | p. 22 |
| Part B: What Went Wrong | |
| TEST S.M.A.R.T.S. | p. 25 |
| Learning From Your Mistakes | p. 26 |
| Test Anxiety Self-Assessment | p. 27 |
| What Causes Your Test Anxiety | p. 28 |

Where are my trouble spots?

By looking at the following questions, you can identify those areas where your skills and behaviors need improvement. If you have difficulty answering any of the questions, consult the corresponding section(s) of this booklet for guidance.

I. Time Management

I have a job, a family and friends and now I am going to college. How am I going to get everything done?

How can I get myself organized to study?

II. Reading Textbooks

Next week's reading assignment is 120 pages long. How do I identify what is important in that reading?

How can I make sure I understand what I am reading?

III. Taking Notes

My professor lectures for 50 minutes, three times each week. How can I take good and complete notes?

How do I use my notes to learn the information covered in lectures?

IV. Studying with Others

I seem to learn better if I work with others. Should I be part of a study group?

How can I start a study group?

V. Taking Exams

Part A: Preparing for Exams

I have an exam in two weeks. How will I know what will be on the test?

Is there a difference between studying Anatomy and Physiology and Western Civilization?

Part B: What went wrong?

I thought I was completely prepared for this test, but I still did poorly. How can I figure out where my studying went wrong?

I know the material when I attend class and study at home, but when I get a test, my mind goes blank and I freeze. How can I overcome test anxiety?

20 Ways to Get Back Your Life

1. Plan 2-3 hours of study time for each hour in class.
2. Study your most difficult, or most boring, subjects first.
3. Study for frequent, 30-40 minute periods of time.
4. Be aware of your best time of day for thinking and remembering.
5. Use waiting time. (For example, study flash cards while waiting in line at the car wash.)
6. Use a regular study area.
7. Don't get TOO comfortable.
8. Study in a library or come to the Learning Center.
9. Practice concentrating and focusing.
10. Agree with living mates about study time.
11. Avoid noise and visual distractions.
12. Stop letting others misuse your time.
13. Get off the phone and email. Turn off the TV!
14. Learn to say "NO".
15. Hang a "DO NOT DISTURB" sign on your door.
16. Break large tasks into small tasks.
17. Give yourself positive feedback and rewards.
18. Identify how you waste time and STOP.
19. Reward yourself for a job well done.
20. Make managing your time a habit.

Managing your time is a habit, and like all habits, it takes time to practice and refine. If your first attempts are unsuccessful, let them go and try again.

You can take back your life!

Time Management = How to Get Stuff Done

- Do you find it hard to stick to a study schedule?
- Are your waking hours so filled with family and work commitments that your schoolwork suffers?
- Do you feel overwhelmed by all the demands on your time?
- Do you sometimes feel you've wasted whatever free time you have?

If you answered “yes” to two or more of these questions, this section is for you. Time management is a powerful tool that reduces your stress by returning control of your life to you and helping you make decisions about what's important. By managing your time effectively, you will be more focused, have more energy, and be more confident about reaching your short term and long term educational goals. You will know when you are going to do the work that supports those goals.

Remember, managing your time is a habit, and like all habits, it takes time to practice and refine. If your first attempts are unsuccessful, let them go and try again. You can take back your life!

Here's how to start. There are three handouts you will use:

Semester Deadlines

Weekly Schedule

Things to do Today

Begin with Semester Deadlines. In the first column, fill in the names of each of your courses. In the top row, fill in the dates of each week in the current semester. Using each course syllabus, enter key due dates: quizzes, tests, papers, projects, presentations, etc. You'll notice that some weeks look pretty light and some weeks, especially near mid-semester and final exams, look pretty busy. This overview will allow you to take advantage of light weeks by working ahead so that you are less likely to be caught by surprise and overwhelmed by busy weeks.

Next, fill in the Weekly Schedule with fixed time commitments such as family time, work hours, and class and lab times. Schedule time for friends, meals, exercise and other recreation, keeping in mind that you will need to reserve 1-3 hours of study time outside of class for every hour spent in class or lab.

Maintain a running “Things to Do Today” list. During the day, write down everything you would like to accomplish over the next two days: personal commitments, such as a dental appointment; family obligations, such as volunteering in your child's classroom for an hour; and of course, academic assignments. Be specific about which academic tasks you intend to complete. Break large tasks down into small jobs of about 30-45 minutes each; as you complete each task, cross it off. Writing something down makes a real commitment to do it. You'll find you feel a great sense of satisfaction as you fulfill your commitments, one at a time.

SEMESTER DEADLINES

1. Write in the date of each week next to the corresponding week number.
2. Write in the names of each of your courses, going across the course columns.
3. In the proper week column by date, using your syllabus as a guide, make note of every paper, report, project, exam, etc. and when it is due this semester.

| WEEK | Course Title | Course Title | Course Title | Course Title | Course Title |
|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | |

Schedule for week of _____ 20, ___ to _____ 20, ___

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 8:00 | | | | | | | |
| 8:30 | | | | | | | |
| 9:00 | | | | | | | |
| 9:30 | | | | | | | |
| 10:00 | | | | | | | |
| 10:30 | | | | | | | |
| 11:00 | | | | | | | |
| 11:30 | | | | | | | |
| 12:00 | | | | | | | |
| 12:30 | | | | | | | |
| 1:00 | | | | | | | |
| 1:30 | | | | | | | |
| 2:00 | | | | | | | |
| 2:30 | | | | | | | |
| 3:00 | | | | | | | |
| 3:30 | | | | | | | |
| 4:00 | | | | | | | |
| 4:30 | | | | | | | |
| 5:00 | | | | | | | |
| 5:30 | | | | | | | |
| 6:00 | | | | | | | |
| 6:30 | | | | | | | |
| 7:00 | | | | | | | |
| 7:30 | | | | | | | |
| 8:00 | | | | | | | |
| 8:30 | | | | | | | |

“Thinking at its highest is asking the right question.”

Socrates, c. 470-399 B.C.

Thinking while Reading

Think ahead:

1. What is this selection about?
2. What do I already know about it?
3. What do I want to find out?
4. What is my learning goal for this assignment?
5. What kinds of reading strategies are necessary for me to meet my goal?

Think while reading:

6. What have I read about so far?
7. Do I understand what I have read?
8. If I don't understand, what should I do?
9. What is the author saying, and what do I think about it?

Think back:

10. Do I remember what I read?
11. Have I learned what I wanted? Did I achieve my goal?
12. How can I use what I read?

The **SQ3R** method of textbook reading guides the questioning, interactive thinking that characterizes efficient, effective reading for comprehension and remembering. Once this method is mastered, students find that they no longer need to re-read and re-read textbook selections and that they often predict (and therefore, answer) test questions.

Survey: (before class) Skim textbook

Purpose? To prep yourself for class, and to get a general idea of the topic, the number of sub-topics, new vocabulary and concepts, and examples and visuals to refer to when you study. Pay attention to the chapter title and objectives, headings and subheadings, and highlighted terms. Read the chapter summary.

Question: (before class) Turn each bold heading into question by preceding it with who, what, where, when, why, or how.

Purpose? To set a purpose for reading the material in more detail at a later time. Our minds are programmed to seek answers to questions; the college environment stimulates this as well.

Read: (after class) Read each textbook section to find the answers to your own questions.

Recite: (after class) Recite the answers in your own words. Write your answers and underline key words.

Purpose? Help you think about and understand what you have read, and to help you retain it by speaking and hearing it in your own voice.
cannot answer.

Review: (before next class) Answer your questions from memory. Write down any questions you cannot answer.

Purpose? To help you prepare for the eventual test and focus on those things you do not yet know, understand or remember.

Your Notetaking Know-How

Assess your lecture notetaking skills by circling the appropriate response to the following questions. Be honest with yourself; you deserve it!

1 = usually

2 = sometimes

3 = rarely

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. | When I review my notes, I have trouble finding the main point of the lecture. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | My notebook is a mess. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | I sometimes lose notes, handouts or other important papers from my notebook. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | I rarely take notes in class. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | I don't know what to write down during a lecture; either everything seems important or nothing seems important. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | My notes are full of doodles or random markings. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | I cannot organize my notes into an outline, flow chart or idea web | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. | My notes tend to be jammed together. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. | I never re-write my notes. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. | It is difficult for me to keep up with the organization of a lecture. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. | I use both sides of a sheet of paper for my class notes. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. | I can't keep up with the lecturer because he/she talks too fast. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. | My attention wanders in class and I miss some of the lecture. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. | I only look at my notes before a test or a quiz. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. | I just borrow a classmate's notes to get ready for a quiz or test. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. | My notes are hard to study from. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. | Technical terms are often misspelled in my notes. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18. | I rarely read my previous notes before a lecture. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. | When I look at my notes a few days after a lecture, nothing looks familiar. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. | I rarely create test questions from class notes. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Sutotals: ___+___+___

Total: _____

A score of **50-60** indicates strong note taking skills. Your classmates can learn from you!

A score of **35-49** indicates room to improve your note taking skills. Small changes make a big difference!

A score of **20-34** indicates weak note taking skills. Make an appointment in the Learning Center for some assistance in implementing some tried-and-true techniques.

Lecture Notes=Learning Notes

Why are Lecture Notes Important?

Taking notes during a lecture

- keeps you focused on what you are hearing
- creates a written record of what you are expected to learn
- begins the remembering and learning process
- forms the beginning of your study guide for each class

Taking good lecture notes is a 3-step process: before class, during class, and after class.

TLC's Tips for Effective Note-Taking

Before each lecture:

1. Review previous notes.
2. Read course outlines and objectives for each lecture.
3. Skim the related textbook material.
4. Make note cards of new vocabulary, or list new terms and definitions on a special page in your notebook.
5. Anticipate lecture content; think about what the lecture will cover.

During the lecture:

1. Attend the lecture.
2. Sit where you can see and hear, where you will not be distracted.
3. Listen actively; be mentally and physically alert.
 - a. Pay special attention to main ideas.
 - b. Use headings in your notes.
 - c. Become familiar with speaker's voice, gestures.
 - d. Get to know speaker's pattern of ideas, signal words.
 - e. Copy down ALL blackboard writing.
 - f. Tape record lecture IF you have time to listen to the tape while you check your notes for completeness and accuracy.
4. Record notes in organized form.
 - a. Date and number each page.
 - b. Write legibly.
 - c. Leave wide margin on left.
 - d. Leave space between ideas and topics.
 - e. Use abbreviations IF you will remember what they mean.
 - f. Connect ideas with arrows and diagrams.

After the lecture:

1. Reread and rewrite your notes to:
2. Write a heading or title on each page to:
 - a. pull together the content;
 - b. help you to remember and review.
3. Write key words and concepts in the left margin as cues.
4. Write study questions in margin.
 - a. Recite the answers to the questions when you study.
5. Review notes and vocabulary frequently, but especially:
 - a. before the next lecture;
 - b. when you study;
 - c. before quizzes, tests and exams.

Two-Column Notes

Since you cannot memorize an entire lecture, it is important to have a system for taking notes that helps you efficiently organize the content of the lecture and provides a tool for studying. The following is an example of a two-column note taking system that does just that.

| | <u>Left brain</u> (logical, looks at parts) | <u>Right brain</u> (synthesizing, holistic) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Key terms Related vocab. | Definitions | Drawing or Diagram |
| New Terms | | |
| Concepts Processes Sequences Procedures | Explain 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. | Diagram, Flow chart, or Idea web |
| Related questions ➤ handouts ➤ study guide ➤ lecture ➤ text ➤ self | Answers | Drawing, Schematic, or Visual trigger |

Study Groups: The Great Grade Boosters

What are study groups?

Study groups are small groups (3-5) of students who meet regularly to do homework, prepare for tests and discuss the content of specific courses.

Why do students form them?

Students form study groups because they want to earn good grades in their courses. Meeting with a study group provides motivation to study and do homework, structure and support for your study time, practice in preparing tests and exams, and opportunities to ask questions and try out your own ideas for feedback.

How do study groups get set up?

Ask around in classes, labs, the library or residence hall. Look for students who are serious about their studies and want to do well. Study partners don't have to be "A" students but they should be conscientious and reliable.



Does the group need a leader?

Not necessarily! Take turns being the session leader. This way, everyone takes responsibility for getting the group to work, staying on task, and searching out all available resources to answer difficult questions.

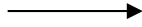
Where and when should the study group meet?

Find a place away from the social scene. The library, unused classrooms, or study lounges in the residence halls have tables for study groups. Some groups meet just once or twice a week; others try to meet nearly every day.

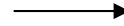
How can the Learning Center help?

The LC can help students get in touch with classmates enrolled in different sections of a course but who have the same instructor. Occasionally, Peer Tutors from the LC may meet with study groups to help them develop problem solving and test preparation strategies.

DIFFERENT TESTS?



DIFFERENT STUDY TECHNIQUES



DIFFERENT TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

“Your grade in this course will include tests and quizzes.”

Be an active student, not a passive student!

Study **SMART**, not hard:

- ✓ Attend all classes – what does your professor think is important
- ✓ First and last 5 minutes of class are often most important, e.g. “By the way, students...”
- ✓ Sit in front row – see & hear professor, fewer distractions, write questions in text and notes
- ✓ Make up practice test questions & study these pre-tests
- ✓ Retake old tests and quizzes – correct errors, look for patterns

Strategize for learning

- ✓ Develop and maintain a schedule that reflects your priorities: be realistic, honest, and persistent. Use the LC’s TO-DO lists, weekly calendar and semester log
- ✓ Learn your physical and mental peaks & valleys: take advantage of your best times
- ✓ Study in small time increments and when you are alert, comfortable and rested
- ✓ Plan for 5-6 contacts with information to move from short-term memory and store in long-term memory
- ✓ Study in natural or bright light for better concentration and to reduce depression
- ✓ Develop a winning attitude, i.e., that you will spend as much time as you need to succeed

Different kind of tests = different kinds of preparation

Objective

Essay

Lab Practical

Open Book

Before every test:

- ✓ Prepare mentally, physically, & psychologically
- ✓ Train by giving up bad habits
- ✓ Know type of exam and content (all semester vs. last unit only)
- ✓ Organize your notebook with all handouts, study outlines, rewritten notes
- ✓ Prepare answers for all review questions
- ✓ Outline, list or map what you consistently forget or do not understand
- ✓ Review your professor’s pet topics, especially old tests and quizzes
- ✓ Create a checklist of what to take to exam, i.e. formula or vocabulary cards, fact sheet, calculator, pens/pencils/erasers
- ✓ Study as you will be tested: practice, practice, practice

What kind of test will it be?

Employ different study techniques depending on type of test

Objective (short answer, multiple-choice, T/F)

Emphasis on detail: terms – brainstorm all possible related questions

Names: group names with terms or theories

Facts: group with names or theories

Memory techniques: acronyms (HOMES), mnemonic: Minerva's Violet Eyes Make...;
rhymes & jingles, link: blended images, 5 W's: who, what, when, where, why, how, flash
cards & matching: oral practice, recitation, verbatim memorization with repetition, privacy,
quiet, no interruptions, physical peak time, involve senses, don't be hungry (use coffee or
gum), alternate concentrating & relaxing, keep a positive attitude

Essay emphasizes themes & broad ideas

Look for key words that tell you what kind of information the instructor is expecting you to know.

For example, review EN-101 notes: descriptive, persuasive, compare/contrast, research

Compare/contrast: how alike, how different

Describe/discuss/explain: broad with detail

Outline, mapping (combines left & right brain techniques, begin with a word or picture
pertaining to topic, draw branching lines for subtopics with one key word

Open Book: organize notes by topic, date & number all pages & cross-reference lecture notes to
text, prepare study guide

Different kinds of tests = different kinds of test-taking strategies

Objective

Essay

Math/Physics

Open Book

During the exam:

- ✓ Be physically and psychologically prepared
- ✓ Use relaxation techniques: jaw, shoulder, temple massage, roll neck, positive thoughts, good posture
- ✓ Shower and wear fresh & comfortable clothes for improved self-image
- ✓ Review your checklist and bring what's needed, suggested, allowed
- ✓ Sit in front row and stay until end of exam period: you will overhear prof's remarks, hints, answers to questions, last minute instructions
- ✓ Establish time priorities appropriate to point distribution
- ✓ Read all directions – know what is being asked and answer only what you are asked
- ✓ Write your name on all sheets

Check backs & fronts so no questions (or sides) are missed

Objective Tests: multiple choice, matching, T/F, short answer

Skip & mark questions you are unsure of to make the best use of limited time

Answer those you know first to help your thinking “flow” and build your confidence

Skip a question and return to it later; subsequent questions may jog your memory

Multiple Choice: read question stem and do not look at answers

Formulate the elements of the correct answer in your own words then check each choice against your own to find the best match

Free associate: brainstorm

If you have no idea: eliminate obvious wrong answers & select longest option

Read all options: even wrong answers may be partly right

Make sure your answer is grammatically correct

If you must guess, always choose the same letter

True or False

50/50 chance. Absolutes (always, never, none) are often false.

Check each part of statement to see if true or false

If all else fails, choose false

Matching and Short Answer

Answer those you know first, free associate, use process of elimination for those you’re not sure of, look elsewhere in test for clues to answers

Important: ALL types of objective tests

When you are through, go back and answer those you may have skipped.

Do not change answers unless you see a careless error; your first response is usually the best.

Essay tests:

Read question carefully to see what you are being asked

Less is more; write short paragraphs with focused content

Write neatly

Plan your time:

50 minutes to write an essay

10: think and organize

25: write

15: revise & proofread (check content, general vocabulary, spelling, etc.)

TEST S.M.A.R.T.S

TEST SMARTS are Strategic
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely
Specific

Do you use these SMART strategies? Check how often you: Always Sometimes Never

CONTENT REVIEW SKILLS

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Review assigned readings? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Test yourself by reciting important information? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Review class notes and reading notes? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Create and use memory techniques (mnemonics)? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Form a study group? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Use self-monitoring to determine test readiness? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 7. Record test dates? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Plan time for test preparation? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Avoid cramming? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Plan to arrive on time, alert and refreshed? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Keep track of time during the test? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

TEST SMARTS

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 12. Verify what the test will cover? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. Ask and verify the question format? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. Know the importance of the test to your semester grade? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Bring items needed for the test, including study aids? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Sit in the best location for you? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Read test directions carefully? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. Look over the test and determine relative point values? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Use appropriate answering techniques? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

MANAGE TEST ANXIETY

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 19. Use relaxation techniques? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Use positive thinking? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Express feelings of anxiety to relieve them? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Overlearn the material? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

* Adapted from Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., Jacobsen, D.R., Bullock, T.L. (1990). Tools for learning: a guide to teaching study skills. Alexandria, VA: The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Learning From Your Mistakes By Using Returned Tests

Use returned quizzes and tests to further your learning. Examine your mistakes and analyze why you made them. You can do this analysis by using a problem-solving technique. Ask your course instructor, tutor, or study partner to go over a returned test with you, or you can do the analysis by yourself.

1. Reread the test question you got wrong, look at the correct choice, and look at your choice.
2. Repeat the steps of the thinking you engaged in to arrive at your answer. Why did you make that choice?
3. Indicate the type of error you made. Did you get the questions wrong because you did not know the answer, because test anxiety prevented you from demonstrating your knowledge, because you did not read the questions and answer options carefully, because you were confused by the way all the multiple-choice answers sounded the same, or because you ran out of time and had to guess?
4. After you have gone through the entire test, examine your list of explanations. Your errors may show a trend, that is, you followed a faulty train of thought several times. In other words, if you had twenty errors, it may be that you really only had two, but you made each of them ten times. You can probably pinpoint the reason for many of your errors, such as incorrect reading of the questions, confusions in choices which caused you to change correct answers, or failure to enter your answer in the correct space. Also, you can find out if you are studying adequately. Knowing *almost* all the answers usually shows that you are not following your course objectives closely, or are not reciting to remember part of the important information.
5. After you have studied the pattern of your errors, take steps to overcome the indicated weakness so you will avoid making the same kind of error in the future. Use effective learning strategies and set specific study goals. When you make a mistake on a test, you must relearn the facts in which you erred or you will probably make the same mistake again, on the midterm or final exam. The test reinforced your original learning error, so you will have to take active steps to erase it from your memory and replace it with the correct response.
6. Determine the source of the information you did not know. Did the test answer come from your notes or your text book? You may find you need to hone your notetaking and/or test reading skills.
7. Use your returned tests for a study and review guide. Write down the topic of each test questions in the margin of your test paper. If you are not allowed to keep the paper, copy the topics in your notebook. This list can be used as a guide for studying for a comprehensive final examination. Your instructor obviously considered the items important or he would not have used them as test questions. Therefore, you may see questions on the same topics on the final.

TEST ANXIETY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Check the response that seems most characteristic of you.

| | Never | Sometimes | Usually |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| 1. Have trouble sleeping the night before a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Before a test, I get a headache. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 3. I lose my appetite before a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Because of panic, I have cut class on a test day. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 5. My heart pounds just before or during a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 6. During a test, my palms sweat. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 7. During a test, I have become nauseated and have had to leave. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 8. I have had pains in my neck, back, or legs during a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 9. I feel nervous and jittery when I am taking a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 10. During a test, my chest feels tight and I have trouble remembering. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 11. I make careless errors on tests. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 12. My mind goes blank during tests. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 13. I worry when other students are finished before I am. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 14. I feel pushed for time when I am taking a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 15. I worry that I am doing poorly on a test and that everyone else is doing well. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 16. When I am taking a test, I think about my past failures. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 17. During a test, I feel as if I studied all the wrong things. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 18. I can't think clearly during tests. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 19. I have a hard time understanding and remembering directions when I am taking a test. | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 20. After a test, I remember answers to questions I either left blank or answered incorrectly. | ___ | ___ | ___ |

Questions 1-10 on the self-assessment refer to physical symptoms of test anxiety. Questions 11-20 refer to mental symptoms. If you checked “sometimes” or “usually” ten or more times, you may have some test anxiety. To be sure, you might want to visit a counselor and talk about how you feel before, during, and after taking tests. *Test anxiety is a learned response; and because you learned it, you can unlearn it.* This lesson will give you a better understanding of test anxiety and identify coping strategies to reduce it.

WHAT CAUSES YOUR TEST ANXIETY?

If you are like most test-anxious students, your anxiety results from several common causes:

1. Being afraid that you won't live up to the expectations of important people in your life; worrying that you will lose the affection of people you care about if you don't succeed;
2. Believing grades are an estimation of your personal worth;
3. Placing too much emphasis on a single test;
4. Giving in to guilt feelings or anxiety as a result of inadequate preparation for tests;
5. Feeling helpless, believing that you have no control over your performance or grades.

Expectations. Many students' *perceptions* of what their parents or important others expect are inaccurate. If you worry that you will alienate people you care about unless you do well in college, you may become fearful and anxious that you will disappoint them or make them angry. If you believe that you can't live up to the expectations of others, tests may make you especially anxious.

Grades and Self-Esteem. A grade of D, F, or even C for some students translates into "I'm stupid" or "I'm not college material." These feelings may lead to a loss of self-esteem and more anxiety. Students who equate test grades with self-worth are assigning more importance to grades than they deserve. One real value of testing is that it gives you an opportunity to find out what information you understand well enough to associate with material that you will learn later. Before your next exam, you can give this material a quick review. Mistakes on a test pinpoint areas that you need to study more thoroughly for the next exam.

Feelings of Helplessness. If you have an external locus of control, you may not see the connection between study and grades. You may become anxious because you cannot predict the outcome of a test. Even if your locus of control is internal, you may feel temporarily helpless in a testing situation when you know you have not studied enough. Feeling guilty for not meeting your responsibilities may cause you to experience test anxiety.

Once you have identified the cause of your test anxiety, you can take steps eliminate it. The chart on the following page shows you how to start.

| Causes | Eliminators |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Trying to meet other people's expectations | Decide whether living up to these expectations is something you want to do for yourself. Set your own goals and live up to your own expectations. |
| 2. Fearing loss of affection | Understand that people like you and value your presence in their lives for many reasons, none of which is the grade you made on a test. |
| 3. Letting grades determine your self-worth | Realize that a grade is only an approximate measure of your performance. Grades have nothing to do with you as a person but are a helpful guide to what you need to review. |
| 4. Placing excessive emphasis on a single test | Your semester grade may include, in addition to tests, quizzes, homework, papers, presentations, lab reports, and class participation. Keep up with the material as if you must take a major test every week to demonstrate what you are learning and how to apply information. |
| 5. Giving in to guilt or anxiety due to lack of preparation | College requires a commitment of time and money. If you are truly well prepared, you will "forgive" yourself for a few mistakes due to stress or anxiety. If you do feel guilty, it may be because you have not really done your best to make school a priority and focus in your life. |
| 6. Under-preparing and "going blank" | The purpose of tests and exams is: (1) to evaluate your retention of course material and (2) to apply the information to demonstrate understanding or to solve new problems. Failing to properly prepare and doing poorly on the exam becomes a self-perpetuating cycle of low effort leading to low grades. |
| 7. Feeling helpless, with no control over what happens | Take charge by developing an internal locus of control. Improve your study habits. Prepare for your next test, starting NOW. Observe the connection between the amount and quality of your studying and the grade you earn. |