

Studying Efficiency

The feeling of uncertainty which follows the usual plan of study can be avoided by carrying out an organized attack. The student will know what he/she has studied because he/she will have crystallized it in a question-answer form. The following steps will insure better mastery of a textbook chapter:

SURVEY THE CHAPTER

Determine the structure, organization, or plan of the chapter. Details will be more easily remembered when their relationship to the total picture is clear.

1. Think about the title. Guess what will be included in the chapter.
2. Read the introduction. The main ideas, which must be seen before the details make organized sense, are usually presented here.]
3. Read the summary. This usually shows the relationship among the main ideas.
4. Read the main-heads (boldface type). Here are the main ideas which provide a basic outline of the chapter.

FOLLOW THE NEXT FOUR STEPS ON EACH CHAPTER SECTION AND/OR SUBSECTION

QUESTION

1. Formulate questions by changing main-heads and sub-heads to questions which you anticipate you will find the answers to while reading. EXAMPLE: "Causes of Depression." (What are the causes of depression? What conditions are usually present before depression occurs?) Having in mind a question results in (1) a spontaneous attempt to answer with information already at hand; (2) frustration until the question is answered; (3) a criterion against which the details can be inspected to determine relevance and importance; (4) a focal point for crystallizing a series of ideas (the answer).
2. The kinds of questions you ask will be determined by the kinds of information that are important in a given class. The kinds of information you will be expected to read for will vary from class to class, instructor to instructor. Here are a number of different kinds of information you might be expected to read for: definitions, processes, names-dates-places, general concepts, specific details, formulas, rules, applications, examples, causes and effects, problems and solutions; theories, reasons why, general trends, sequences, etc. After deciding what kinds of information are important, formulate questions by using "What?" "When?" "Why?" "How?" "Who?" "Where?", etc.
3. Jot these questions down in the margins of your book or in a notebook.

READ

Read to answer the question. Move quickly. Sort out ideas and evaluate them. If content does not relate to the question, give it only a passing glance. Read Selectively.

RECITE

Answer the question out loud — in your own words, not the author's — to check your understanding. By doing this you will be clarifying the information for yourself and catching information you don't understand or partially understand. This process also reinforces memory.

WRITE

Now you can: (1) Underline your answer(s) in your book or (2) Write a brief answer in your own words under the questions written in your notebook. This becomes a review sheet for test preparation. When underlining or writing answers, use only key words and phrases necessary to recall the whole idea — don't bother with complete sentences.

REVIEW

Increase retention and cut study time by 90% by means of immediate and delayed review. To do this:

1. Read your written question(s).
2. Recite the answer without looking at your notes. If you can't, look at your notes and try again. Five to ten minutes will suffice for a chapter.
3. Review again after one week using the same approach.