

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
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READING SKILLS

Focus on Reading Skills.....	9	Power Reading System	22
Reading	10	SQ3R.....	26
Determining Reading Purpose	11	SQ3R...with Adaptations	27
Five Different Reading Rates.....	13	SQ3R Chart.....	29
How to Skim	14	Important Comprehension Skills	30
How to Find the Main Idea	15	Reading Graphics	31
Signal Words.....	17	What Slows You Down & How to Improve	32
Surveying the Textbook.....	19	Hints for Effective Reading	36
Power Reading	21	When the Reading Is Hard	37

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Focus on Note-Taking Skills.....	39	Creating a Graphic Organiser	71
Overview of Note-Taking Skills	40	Sample: Pizza Graphic Organiser	74
Note-Taking Skills.....	41	How to Study a Graphic Organiser.....	75
Steps to Better Note-Taking.....	42	Graphic Organiser “Mind Map”	76
Why We Don’t Listen	43	Graphic Organiser Example 1	77
Listening Skills	44	Graphic Organiser Example 2	78
Personal Shorthand System	45	Graphic Organiser Example 3: Cycle	79
Sample: Personal Shorthand System.....	47	Graphic Organiser Example 4:	
Super Note-Taking System	48	Common Characteristics	80
Instructions for Super Note-Taking.....	49	Graphic Organiser Example 5: Timeline.....	81
Sample: Note-Taking Form	51	Graphic Organiser Example 6: Tree #1	82
Note-Taking Form.....	52	Graphic Organiser Example 7: Biography.....	83
Text Note-Taking	53	Graphic Organiser Example 8:	
Identify Text Note-Taking Problems.....	55	Tree Outline	84
Hints for Better Text Note-Taking	56	Student Study Guide	85
Lecture Note-Taking	57	Writing Note Cards.....	86
Identify Lecture Note-Taking Problems	61	Literature Note-Taking Method	87
Hints for Better Lecture Note-Taking.....	62	The Divided Page	88
Teacher Inventory	63	Text Note Taking: Enumerative	89
The Magic of Flash Cards	64	Text Note Taking: Sequential	90
How to Edit and Review Notes.....	68	Text Note Taking: Cause/Effect	91
Constructing Study Sheets:		Text Note Taking: Comparison/Contrast	92
Dump & Pile System.....	69	Text Note Taking: Description	93

INTRODUCTION

Students of all abilities are often at risk when it comes to using successful learning strategies. Learning how to learn – applying successful techniques – is like mountain climbing with a backpack equipped with appropriate tools.

Throughout life, we are always facing new and challenging mountains, and we depend upon the tools we carry with us to help us reach the top and attain our goals. It is vital for us to stock our backpacks with both the right background experiences and the tools to achieve a successful ascent. Most students forgo learning basic climbing skills or carefully gathering learning tools because they don't feel the need for them. But then, when the mountain finally looms before them, they often cannot begin to climb (much less scale) the peak. They are lost.

For many, the big mountain appears overwhelming and the climb hopeless. They begin to doubt their abilities, intelligence and capabilities for learning.

Some potential climbers have natural ability and do not bother with extended practice, essential equipment and critical experience. They may succeed for a while, but they usually become lost when they need this combination of resources the most. All too often, students find themselves suddenly facing the stressful predicament of acquiring *unfamiliar learning skills* and *content* simultaneously. They find themselves out on a ledge with no tools to help them.

Learning and practising good, useful and appropriate study skills builds self-confidence so that when faced with the challenge, students can successfully conquer their own mountains. It is vital they *learn how to learn* along with what they learn. Learning to learn is one of the most basic and important lifelong skills we can acquire. Our lives of learning are filled with hills and mountains. It's simply not enough to know what to climb; we must also know how to climb.

Learning to Learn: Reading and Note-Taking Skills is a book intended for students who want a hands-on guide to processing and setting out information in ways that best supports learning. This book is not a book simply to read – it is a book to use, write in and tear apart. It is an interactive book filled with practical hints, methods, tips, procedures, resources and tools that will help students succeed in school and in life. Care has been taken to omit any “educational jargon” and to present the material in a straightforward manner.

The format of organised step-by-step procedures has been broken down into manageable blocks that can apply across the content areas. Throughout the book, the main concepts are stressed with a positive attitude, a feeling of accomplishment and self-worth and a sense of humour. Good ideas are easy to find, digest and put to immediate use.

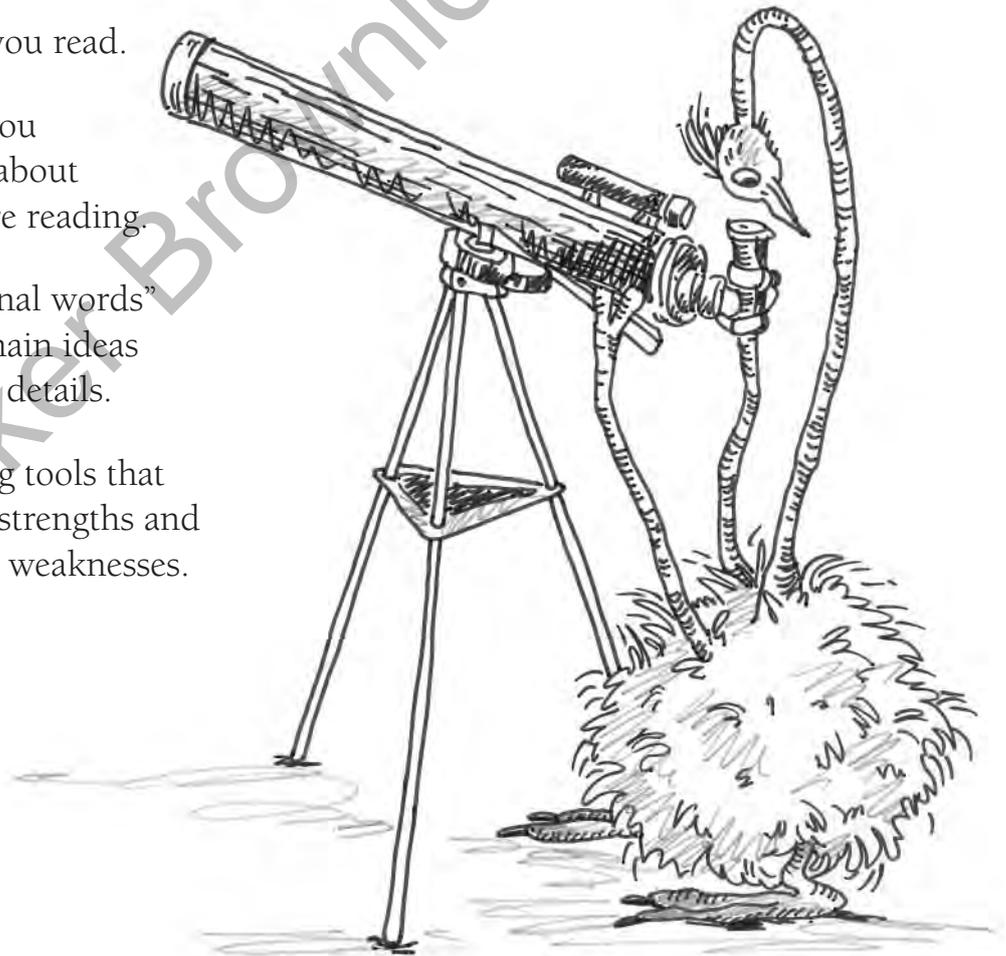
Begin today to fill those backpacks with terrific lifelong learning skills and climb any “learning mountain” with confidence!



FOCUS ON

READING Skills

1. Determine reading purpose and rate before beginning.
2. Intend to remember what you read and take notes.
3. Use SQ3R.
4. Know your textbook and how to use it.
5. Learn to predict, clarify and summarise.
6. Question while you read – read to answer the questions.
7. Read, then recite what you read.
8. Discuss what you read.
9. Review what you already know about the topic before reading.
10. Watch for “signal words” that indicate main ideas and important details.
11. Choose reading tools that focus on your strengths and minimise your weaknesses.



READING

Reading is a primary method for gaining information and learning. Just as there are any number of ways and reasons to do anything, so it is with reading. To learn, apply and master specific reading strategies is to make study time more efficient and effective. It is time well spent. In fact, it is guaranteed to save you time in the long run.

There are numerous aids that you can use to increase your reading “brain power”. Pre-reading techniques give you an “overview” and help you determine the importance of the materials as well as your purpose and rate for reading. Flexible reading habits lead to quality study skills and increased memory. Learning how to survey textbooks, skim, spot “signal words”, find main ideas, check for comprehension and read illustrations will help to improve your understanding and overall marks. So, give the following reading hints, tips and methods a try, and soon they will become habits you’ll want to keep.

As you review these reading techniques, focus on the elements that best fit your learning modality. A learning modality is the way in which you best take in and process information. You can learn more about learning modalities in *Learning to Learn, Learning Styles and Memory Techniques*.

A few suggested reading aids for the three modalities are:

VISUAL:	AUDITORY:	KINESTHETIC:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form pictures in your mind. • See parts of words. • Look for context clues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud. • Have discussions. • Teach someone the new information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace/walk as you read. • Role play. • Take notes after reading each paragraph.



HOW TO SKIM

PURPOSE

As quickly as possible, selectively read the material to find specific information and to survey for general ideas.

WHEN

- you are not responsible for details or in-depth comprehension
- you want/need a pre-reading exercise to familiarise yourself with the material

WHY

- to avoid reading what you don't need to read
- to save time
- to get an overall view ... in a hurry
- to determine if you need to read further

HOW

Do not read every word, just ...

- read main titles.
- read subtitles – look for specific names, dates, lists, etc., in each paragraph.
- glance at any illustrations, pictures, charts, etc.
- read first and last sentences of each paragraph if time permits.
- read the questions at the end of the paragraph/chapter.

Always know why you are skimming the material, and what specific things you are looking for in the material.



POWER-READING

“Brain power” is significantly increased with the use of some type of “power-reading strategy” or method. Like a finely tuned machine, your mind will work much more efficiently and effectively with a warm-up, rev-up, pace and cool-down plan.

When you reuse a successful method of study consistently, your brain becomes accustomed to a specific pattern; therefore, you are able to increase your time effectiveness. By making a regular habit of successful study habits, such as power-reading strategies, studying should take less effort and time and should produce more focused, quality results. Additionally, these results are more likely to be permanent in your memory.

Be willing to give the following power-reading strategy a try for three weeks – see whether it really makes a difference!



SUPER NOTE-TAKING SYSTEM

Memory and comprehension greatly improve when you listen 80% of the time and write 20% of the time.

You remember more topics, sub-topics, details and examples when you group information together when you read and take notes.

Your mind remembers horizontal and vertical space on a paper as well as what is written on it.

Taking notes from one margin to the other across the page is the least effective way to remember what you just wrote.

Why Use This System?

The basic structure of this Cornell note-taking system has been used for many years. It is modified here to include more details so that you will know specifically how and why to take good notes and make life much easier for yourself! This super note-taking method is a great way to:

- reduce major stress when taking class notes by taking previously written text notes back into class as a listening guide.
- simply underline repeated information the teacher says in the text column.
- increase your memory by listening more and writing less.
- combine text and class notes with important vocabulary words.
- group information around words listed in a separate column.
- save time by writing brief and concise notes in the margins.
- distinguish the source of information quickly (text or class notes or both).

Refer often to *Sample: Note-Taking Form* on page 51 for a better understanding of the following steps.

**YOU CAN LEARN TO TAKE NOTES
THE EASY WAY!**

**IDENTIFY TEXT NOTE-TAKING PROBLEMS
THEN FIND SOLUTIONS HERE:**

PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
When is the best time to read the textbook?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Text Note-Taking</i> on page 53
I can't tell what's important when taking text notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Text Note-Taking</i> on page 53 • <i>Determining Reading Purpose</i> on page 11
I have trouble grouping all the details around a main topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Note-Taking Form</i> on page 52
I don't know how much to write when taking text notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Instructions for Super Note-Taking System, Text Notes Column</i> on page 49 • <i>How to Edit and Review Notes</i> on page 68
I have trouble staying focused and have to re-read the text often.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Text Note-Taking Steps 2–3</i> on page 53 • <i>Reading</i> on page 10
I have trouble understanding and remembering what I read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Text Note-Taking Steps 2–3</i> on page 53 • <i>Reading</i> on page 10
I don't understand how all the information fits together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sample: Note-Taking Form</i> on page 51 • <i>Creating a Graphic Organiser</i> on page 71 • <i>Reading</i> on page 10
I'm overwhelmed by the number of pages I need to study for a test!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Constructing Study Sheets: Dump & Pile System</i> on page 69