College Tutor Study Guide

Acquiring Effective Study Habits in Five Easy Steps

by

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On the Lighter Side

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Acquiring Effective Study Habits in Five Easy Steps

"I studied all day and night and now I don't remember a thing!', or "Where are my car keys now? I just put them down an hour ago. Sounds familiar? When something 'slipped your mind', you are not alone. Lost your memory? Not at all. Memory is made to forget, *not* to remember. In fact, we know less what makes us forget than what causes us to remember.

Stress and fatigue play a role, so does a lack of interest. "But, I *am* interested in this subject, that's why I signed up for it." Probably so. But chances are that you are slightly disappointed with this introductory course which throws many definitions and basic concepts at you and only little of the "meat" that you were hoping for. In fact, you are slightly bored. Which is the same as a "lack of interest' and causes you not to remember. Frustrating!

Over 50 and Over the Hill?

Not according to Fred Gage at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, CA. He proved that fresh neurons are being produced in the human hippocampus, which is the region of the brain responsible for learning and memory. However, they do not stick around for more than two weeks unless they are being used with engaging and challenging problems. The old proverb holds true: "Use it or lose it". Learning a manual task like how to ride a bicycle or to swim is not challenging enough. To prevent new neurons from dying off dive into your school subject with repeated exercises or get into computer games as described at the end of this article.

Memory Boosters:
Exersice brings more blood to the brain, and eating deep-colored fruit such as Blueberries

Memory Blockers:
Alcohol and Nicotine.

Faced with a constant barrage of facts, figures, images, impressions and the like, our memory is constantly rejecting, sorting, ordering and generalizing in ways we don't know much about. What is left over after this process is finally "saved". What we do know is that memory is, first and foremost, a faculty for forgetting. And, while we may complain about it, it's actually a good thing. One has to forget in order to remember.

How do we remember things? There are two ways: First, when we encounter something that is new, unexpected or exciting. Second, when it stirs the emotions. It could be a "*wow*' episode, or it could be an "*oops*' blunder.

Either way you have a good chance to remember for a long time if you had any interest or stake in the matter. Hearing that this famous baseball player had a thousand home runs in a year is exciting news for baseball fans. But perhaps not for others and they will forget. These are the two extreme cases.

What about the normal middle ground, the "blahs' cases? When you have seen 30 baseball plays in which nothing spectacular happens, no 12 home runs in-a-row, and the stadiums, the diamonds and the spectator stands look essentially the same, and the games follow identical scripts, it is small wonder that we cannot remember what happened in the 5th inning of x-team vs. y-team. They were too much alike. The brain is made to forget these uneventful episodes. But, if you *must* remember, what do you do? It is not easy. In essence, one has to fake interest and become artificially very exited about something (very few people can actually do this) and dwell on it at length, or, we can force the information past our brain's sorting- and storing faculties as explained in the 5 sections that follow.

Since you are reading this essay you are one of the students who want to learn more effectively to gain a better retention of the material information and, thereby, to earn better grades. This will help in five easy lessons.

Reading a textbook is not the same as reading the newspaper or a novel and still, most students do it just that way. No wonder they get too little out of their time and efforts spent. No wonder the learning process may quickly become boring even with a student's best first intentions.

Do you know a writer, instructor, teacher, professor, or PhD candidate who would like to write a textbook?
We would like to have a talk about *making a difference*. Many subjects still available. Click on Jobs

Look at the main title above. Titles have significance and the first thing a good student must do is carefully look at the book title, chapter headings and all the subheadings in a chapter. This is called *making a survey*, an overview of what to expect.

How good is Digital Learning?

In a nutshell: Better than most people think and less expensive.

Number of students taking at least one online course in 2011: 6.7 million, a 32% increase.

San Jose Mercury News, February 24, 2013

The biggest problem is the acceptance of the very concept of online learning. So often one hears people snicker when an online university is mentioned. But this is not a fair characterization of online learning, nor of the vast majority of institutions that provide online courses.

A meta-analysis published by the US Department of Education reviewed more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning and concludes that, "on average, students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction." Yet, the public largely continues to assume online learning is of inferior quality. A recent Pew survey (Click on TOPICS and EDUCATION.) reports that while 51 percent of university presidents (themselves a bit of a skeptical bunch) believe online courses provide equal educational value compared to face-to-face instruction, only 29 percent of adults among the general public believe this is true. Why is this the case?

The answer is actually quite simple: consumers of higher education use prestige as the signal of higher quality because commonly accepted measures of actual student learning do not exist. Since we have no way of knowing if students at "University A" learn more than those at "University B," we use institutional prestige as a proxy for the quality of instruction to differentiate the schools. Ignoring the fact that prestige may be a poor proxy in the first place, the problem for online learning (and new universities primarily offering online courses) is that building prestige takes a long time and requires considerable resources.

Partial reprint from Forbes Magazine, 9/26/2011

To this we like to add that at a prestige university you have only a 1% chance of being instructed by a renowned professor. They are too busy doing research and advising doctoral candidates. The actual work of instructing, testing and grading of undergraduates is done by low-paid Teaching Assistants (TA).

The above article talks about universities. Then what about high school? Do you believe that one can only learn when listening to the teacher in class? Think again. Starting from the 5th grade on, a teacher becomes less and less important for *the learning process*. The teacher introduces a new subject, shows an example or two – the bell rings. That is not learning. *Learning* takes place when the student studies at home using his textbook and does practice problems. And not too few of them.

So many schools are now using video in the classroom or for watching at home. Does anybody ever question these assumptions? Ask yourself: Can you learn how to ski by watching a video, or learn the multiplication table, or a foreign language, or ? The actual learning of physical or mental endeavors required repetitive training. And the training resides most effectively in textbooks.

Of course, the textbooks also have to be suitable for that task. It turns out that digital textbook are best because of their ability to present media in various forms in addition to the text. What about the new eBooks? If you want to read a novel, go for it. If you want an interactive textbook with practice questions all worked out in detail akin to a personal tutor, then Amelox is your answer.

Click video to see how the College Tutor works.

With keeping the above in mind you may want to take a good look at the course offerings listed on the next page. Perhaps your high school or college does not offer these courses. Now you are in luck.

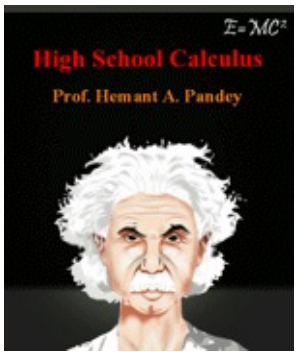
From your sponsor:

The Amelox **College Tutor** textbook and lesson series provides you with textbook, lessons, private tutor, assessment, and indication of future success –all rolled into one. **These offerings are very unique and come at low cost to you.** Calculus conforms to Common Core State Standards 2012**.**

Medical Terminology

Mental Health Nursing

High School Calculus



Real Estate Agent

Real Estate Broker

Real Estate Trainer

Titles in the works: Both will conform to Next Generation Science Standards.

High School Chemistry: Summer 2013

High School Biology: Summer 2014

Quality high school student resources that are convenient and highly recommended:

Aspire Online High School

LESSON #1 ***Survey*** the material and the information contained therein.

Time required: At least 30 minutes for a decent job.

Textbook authors go to great pains to select appropriate titles for their books and chapters. Also to make the information flow in the most logical and natural way. Still, most students give it no thought whatsoever. Don't skimp on this survey!

- Read all the headings and subheadings in the book. Try to absorb.
- Read the Preface. It often contains hints on why the book was written, what the author thinks is important for you to know and how the information is organized to get you from point A to point B.
- Read the Table of Contents. Reading this imparts what is required to pass the final test for this course. Look at the Table in some detail. Every line in here is important. Are there words, phrases, concepts you do not know the meaning of? Make a note of them. They are the ones you need to concentrate your subsequent study efforts on. And you thought the content table was there just to find something in a hurry?
- Browse through the Index in the back. Again, look at words you do not know and make a mental note of them. It would not hurt to write down at least a few of them, those that stand out as exciting.

All done? Do you get the feeling that you actually learned something important about the subject matter already? You are right.

LESSON #2 *Motivation*

Time required: 30 minutes per chapter, 15 minutes/sub-chapter.

No, it is not time yet to read the first chapter. First you have to become properly motivated. Huh? Yes, I know you want to learn as much as possible. But — what? What, exactly, is it that you are looking for, you and your teacher? To find out, one has to be motivated to find the answers. Just reading one paragraph after another, with tidbits of information strewn here and there, wastes a lot of time and at the end you say to yourself:

Now what? What is the important information to be retained?

Luckily it is a textbook you are supposed to read, not a novel. Unlike novels, modern textbooks give sample questions at the end of each chapter or near the end of the book. Look them up now. Those are sample questions you are required to answer correctly as affirmation of your learning progress. Of course you do not know the answers to them, mostly, but that is not the purpose. Make a mental note of the questions or write some down, whatever your modus operandi.

Now comes the fun part: Take wild guesses at what other questions might be asked about the subject matter in this chapter? Don't be shy. Take hints by also looking at the contents table. Ask others. As an Amelox College Tutor owner you are particularly blessed: Browse through the Tutor's questions! This will definitely arouse your curiosity and *that* assures that you become properly motivated. Having questions in your mind which need answers you are now ready to read with purpose, you stay alert, you empower the learning process. Then, and only then, are you ready to start the textbook with chapter one.

LESSON #3 *Reading*

Time required: Depends on chapter length and subject matter.

College professors are clever people. They usually write from outlines which were carefully crafted and edited beforehand. Remember, a textbook is not a novel where the plot or character develops as the author sees fit at the time of the writing. You can make the outline process work for you.

- Carefully read the first and last paragraphs in a chapter or sub-chapter. They contain most of the information in a somewhat condensed form. Go back and ..
- Carefully read the first and last sentences in each paragraph. Every good speaker first tells the audience what will be covered in the speech, then the speech follows with further explanations given, sidelines added, etc. Thereafter the speech content is summarized. A good textbook writer at least attempts to follow these same rules as well. See if it holds true overall for your textbook. Not every paragraph may be laid out that way, but the long ones should be.
- Remember Lesson #2? Never begin the detailed reading of a textbook without having in mind a set of questions that you want answered. You want to become an active researcher instead of a passive browser. Browsers waste time and energy, learn almost as if by accident. Researchers get something accomplished. You want to be a researcher. When reading sit upright at a table, never lie down; it puts you to sleep. Count on it.
- Now read your entire assignment carefully. Look up words you do not know in the dictionary. Write them down, read them aloud several times for retention. When you come across an important concept also write it down, then read those lines aloud several times. Ask yourself: What does this mean? Why is this important? To who? When? Under what circumstances?
- What about the common practice of highlighting important passages in the book? Studies have shown that highlighting and rereading text is among the least effective ways for remembering the content just read. A far better technique is for students to quiz themselves. That is what the College Tutor does for you. In one study, students who read a text once and then tried to recall it on three occasions scored 50% higher on exams than students who read the text and then reread it three times.

Cram Sessions

A concentrated effort, using lots of repetition,

just before the test would do the most good?

NO !

Jan Born and his scientists group at the Universität in Lübeck, Germany, demonstrated for the first time that our sleeping brains continue working on problems that baffle us during the day, and the right answers come more easily after 8 hours of deep sleep. Volunteers taking a simple math test were three times more likely than sleep-deprived participants to figure out a hidden rule for converting numbers into the right answer if they had eight hours of sleep.

"It's going to have potentially important results for children for school performance and for adults for work performance."

Dr. Carl E. Hunt, Director,
National Center on Sleep Disorders
January 2004

Cram sessions are counter-productive

Concentration

To concentrate properly on a subject matter and keep paying attention is vital to the learning process. It certainly takes willpower and persistence. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to concentrate. In those cases it is beneficial to study only in short bursts. Don't waste a whole day or evening to accomplish little. Try 10 minutes at first, concentrating as hard as you can, then gradually build up to one- and two hour sessions. Less study time is not effective. Do *not* day-dream. If you catch yourself day-dreaming **STOP** it immediately. Take a 3-minutes break to clear your head. Stand up, walk around, think of something else but then get right back to the job at hand. It is not going to go away and you might as well tackle it now; bite the bullet, so to speak.

Study Breaks

Every 15 to 20 minutes schedule a 2-minute Study Break (not a relaxation break with snacks) to recall what you have studied and to check through it once more. Vocalize important parts. It provides a feedback as you literally hear (in addition to seeing) the words. It also forces you to organize the material in a way that is natural for memory improvement. If you made question notes, look at them now and see if any questions were answered by this time and how. If not, the material may be covered later. Do not worry about it at this time. But

in the end *all* questions must be answered before going on.

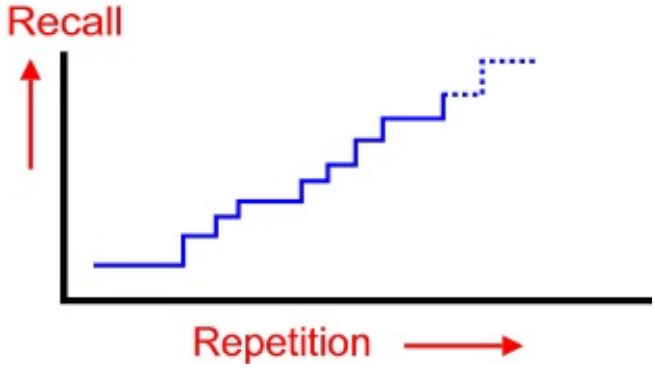
Ending A Study Session

Do not stop a study session at a tough spot in the subject matter. It becomes discouraging and you are less eager to return to it. Your aim should be to pause at a point of interest. That way you'll be glad to get back.

LESSON #4 *Recall*

Recalling a fact is what studying is about. Remember, though, that *knowing* something also means being able to predict a previously unknown outcome from a collection of other, sometimes non-related facts. But for our purpose, remembering and recalling the subject matter and concepts in the textbook will tell your teacher how much you have learned in class.

As much as you may dislike it, recall is best accomplished by *REPETITION COMBINED WITH SELF-TESTING*. Sorry about that. Drumming a fact into your head repeatedly is still the best and fastest way to remember something. As far as we know, remembering is a process in the brain which sprouts dendrites, like branches on a tree, to grow connections between synapses. To physically grow a connection takes time and is facilitated by repetition. The learning process proceeds in a 'stairway' fashion. At first there is a long plateau with little learning taking place and people become discouraged. Then, suddenly, progress is made in numerous little steps. This is followed by another plateau and further little progress steps thereafter. It may look akin to this:



This is a completely natural process which cannot be changed. Observe a plant leaf very closely under a microscope and you will find that it grows in little steps at a time, with longer pauses in-between, until the maximum size is reached. Only you know where your maximum potential lies.

As the owner of our Amelox College Tutor program you have it easier, of course. The recalling burden is greatly minimized by using your computer program which is infinitely patient, never loses its temper, does not scowl or make snide remarks, is always ready to serve you tirelessly — and does not tell others. You are completely safe. Also, the Tutor is so fast you hardly notice the time go by. No searching for the correct answers, no marking up the book, no adding up the score. With every session being different to add spice and variety.

For the Recall sessions go back and go through all of the previous topics to reinforce what you learned before. This fires up the old synapses in the brain

and strengthens loose or brittle ends. There is some evidence indicating that items learned just before sleep are retained better. That is why you should schedule your study sessions for the most important subject in a way that it ends just before bed time .

Practice, Practice

That is what counts most! Don't believe it? Give it one (1) honest, complete try and you will be convinced for life. At least you will have reached your full potential. Recalling is not only a mental process but also a physical one. Scientists observed that fine filament-like structures grow between brain synapses to make physical connections. It takes time, energy and **REPETITION** to keep those filaments growing. Without reinforcement through repetition the connections may be too few, may never be completed, or will eventually break apart again (forgetting). **But** — before you make it a marathon session of Olympic proportions, consider that moderation is also called for. See further on below.

How does good practice work?

You start reading the first chapter. Go back and forth to reread certain portions. Test your comprehension using the questions provided. If you are below 95% correct go back and read that chapter over again. Test yourself. Repeat until you get over 95%. Start on the second chapter. Do as before until you reach 95% correct. But now, instead of starting chapter three <u>you go back to chapter one</u> and study it until you reach 95% or better. When done, do chapter two again until you reach 95% or better. Only then go forward to chapter three. You get the drill. Finish chapter three until you reach 95% or better, then <u>go back to chapter one</u> to make certain that you still have it in your head, then repeat chapters two and three until you get 95% correct <u>for all three chapters</u>. Only then are you allowed to proceed to the next chapter. Sounds boring? Actually it becomes fun after a while and you will be amazed at how fine you feel when you realize that you can do it all. That is the power of repetition. Every athlete does it to compete. So must you. "Average" no longer does it in this world. Nowadays, you must be an A^+ student to succeed with the American Dream.

What else might be useful? Physical exercise. Yes, the sweaty kind. No, slow walking and most garden work will not suffice. We are talking aerobics. High impact for the under-30 set, low impact for the over-50 students. To be useful, the exercise has to raise heart- and breathing rates. The goal is to increase the blood oxygen level reaching the brain. Research has found that exercising mice have brain cells growing at *twice* the rate of non-exercising mice and that definitely improves learning and memory. Try it! So, physical exercise not only keeps us in good shape and muscle tone but probably also decreases

depression. Who says that we humans have no 'muscles' in the brain for extra brain power?

Read what the experts say:

"It's not only Johnny's getting fat, and heart disease down the road — all that's true. But it's also that he might not do as well in school," says James Pivarnik, president-elect of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and a professor of kinesiology at Michigan State University in East Lansing. In one of the latest studies in this field, Pivarnik and colleagues found that middle-school students who performed best on fitness tests — which gauged aerobic capacity, strength, endurance, flexibility and body composition — performed better academically as well.

Results from the study, which included 317 students in grades six through eight, showed that **the fittest group of students scored almost 30 percent higher on standardized tests than the least fit group**. And the least fit students had grades in four core classes that were 13 percent to 20 percent lower than all other kids, according to findings presented at a recent ACSM meeting.

Experts speculate that exercise boosts academic performance in various ways, including: burning off pent-up energy and allowing kids to pay attention better and focus on their work; boosting self-esteem and mood; and increasing blood flow to the brain, helping with memory and concentration. August 2008

College Tutor Session Length

At first, one hour each day per subject. That includes weekends and holidays! The Tutor is fast; you get much work done. Three to four text questions per minute is not too much once you know your stuff. That makes it about 200 to 250 questions per hour. And all those questions are presented in the same way as they would be in regular in-class exams.

During the second half of the semester you may want to increase your session lengths gradually to two-to-three hours since there is more and more material to be recalled and old memory connections have to be reinforced.

Learning In Your Sleep

Well, almost. But not in the old fashioned way by putting a book under the pillow or by listening to a tape recording of the subject matter. That does not work. There is still time and effort required. But, and this is quite pleasant:

According to the scientific publication Nature Neuroscience, in its August 1999 issue, scientists found that regions in the brain being used while learning a new task, were also the same regions that light up on brain imaging instruments during dreams the following night. This was observed during the short but active REM (rapid-eye movement) periods. Dr. Pierre Marquet of the University of Liè in Belgium was the principal researcher.

For the study, groups of 18 volunteers aged 18 to 25 learned how to recognize symbols on a computer screen and to press a corresponding key on the keyboard. They did this for several hours of concentrated learning. Afterwards the groups were tested in several ways. Result: Those who took the computer test for several hours, then slept and retook the test after they woke up, scored the highest – with even faster reaction times *after they slept*. It stands to reason that the brain kept on learning that task while its human owner was asleep.

Study Effort

How much effort should be put into studying? How much time is required?

As a general rule you should schedule about three (3) hours of study time for every hour in class. Therefore, if you spend 12 hours for in-class instructions at school per week you should spend an additional **36 hours of study at home**, for a total of 48 hours per week. It may vary a little by subject.

Multi-tasking hurts learning.

The 7/24/2006 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences provides a clue as to why it happens. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation last year found third-graders through 12th-graders devoted, on average, nearly 6½ hours per day to TV and videos, music, video games and computers. That could affect a lot of young people. "What's new is that even if you can learn while distracted, it changes how you learn to make it less efficient and useful", said Russell A. Poldrack, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

If you are (or were) like most high school students, that required amount of time is *like, totally awesome*. You are in college or the university now — times are very different. You may have been used to doing 45 minutes of homework per night and still received a B average in honors–level classes. Unless you are the rare genius (in which case you would not be reading this article), those 45 minutes no longer suffice by a long shot.

Dr. Drew Altman, the president and CEO of the Kaiser Foundation reports "The amount of time young people spend with electronic media has grown to where it's even more than a full-time workweek." That is a sure-fire description for economic disaster in the future.

On January 20, 2010, the New York Times reported the following average time spent with each medium in a typical day among 8-18-year olds in 2009:

Activities	Hours
Watching TV	4:29
Music	2:31
Computer	1:29
Video Games	1:13
Print (reading)	:38
Movies	:25

* Half of American teenagers (ages 12 through 17) send 50 or more text messages every day, and one third send more than 100 a day.

* In 1960, students at four-year colleges in the U.S. studied 24 hours per week. Today, the average is 14 hours per week, 42% less.

* Over the past decade, American youth are spending much more time watching TV, listening to music, using a computer, and playing video games – a total of 7½ hours *every day* in front of a screen.

So what happens? The OECD reports that American STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) graduates among 25-34 year-olds for 2009 per 100,000 employed are now in 24th place, with Korea in first place. "We are number one" as we like to shout at sport games? No way! Source: www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011

Do you think that our recommendation is too much? Only in America! Consider your competition. European and Asian high school students have longer hours and shorter vacations. Result: When a German student graduates (Matriculation) from high school he/she has the equivalent education of the first two years of college in the USA! But that is not the end. The German student is fully qualified to enter college or a university at that moment while *all* the universities in America complain that fully 52% of entering freshmen need remedial courses first. In half the cases, therefore, that puts a student in the U.S. another full year behind. I understand that the situation in Japan is on a par with Europe or even further ahead. Currently the U.S. is not globally competitive and if we do not change our attitude about studying then our economy and *your* personal earning power fall further and further behind.

Brain Fatigue?

Can there be such a thing? **YES!** The latest research bears this out.

Researchers Sara C. Mednick et al. write in *Nature Neuro-science* on the psychological sensation of 'burnout' in an article called *The Restorative Effect of Naps on Perceptual Deterioration*. They found that too much effort on the same day is harmful to learning. After six long repetitions the recall was actually lower than after the first try. The brain starts to shut down to protect itself from overload.

What can be done? Take a nap for an hour. How about just resting with shades drawn and eyes closed? **NO**. That does not help. If it is already late, call it a night. What is required is deep, restful sleep. ***Real sleep*** of at least six to eight hours.

The brain requires sleep to sort things out, put learned material into perspectives, and to make the synapsis connections we talked about earlier that constitute long-term learning.

There is a great debate raging about Affirmative Action. Particularly if it should be abolished at the University of California at Berkeley. Many people are against it since the admission of black and Hispanic students would dramatically decline. Surprise: So would the admission of whites! Some people fear that UC Berkeley will turn into an all-Asian institution.

Are Asian students really that much smarter than all others? I do not think so, nor has research shown a connection between IQ and race. But, there is a correlation between academic achievement and country of origin. How is that so? In the humble opinion of this writer the difference lies in parental attitudes. Parents of Asian and European students *want* their students to learn and to get ahead in the world. They *expect* their students to apply themselves with many hours of study and to *defer* pleasures until a more appropriate time later. A German proverb proclaims that *study years are not master years*. The Germans do make up for it later, though. Just consider their world-famous Carnival– and Fasching festivals and the many beer hall songs which attest to a jolly disposition. The Japanese also invented a study method suited for younger teens, the Kumon method. It works so well that many study centers have opened in the U.S. They are called Kumon Math- and Reading Centers.

For more information call 1-800-ABC-MATH and ask for the nearest center.

In a word: The difference between American and non-American students lies in the number of hours devoted each week to studying.

However — perhaps this is only the lonely opinion of this writer and what does he know about today's young people? Read on! A three-year study of 20,000 California and Wisconsin high school students just recently concluded showed these trends which you may want to read about in *Beyond the Classroom*, by Dr.Laurence Steinberg:

Most American students do not take school seriously. They prefer to do a minimum, just enough to get by to receive their diploma.

1. As teachers try to make the classroom experience fun and easy for slackers, the standards set are in a 'race to the bottom'.
2. The future earnings consequences for this low performance are not felt by, nor immediately clear to, students.
3. Doing well academically often leads to being downgraded by fellow class-mates as being nerds, grinds or psychological stress victims.
4. In minority circles a high-achiever may also be accused of 'acting white' and/or having to choose between doing well in school or having a circle of friends.
5. The general level of student achievement can be directly correlated with the level of expectations the parents placed on their children.
   On average (there are laudable exceptions),

   a. African-American and Latino parents are satisfied with any grade above a D and their students return mostly C's;
   b. White parents are satisfied with anything above a C and their children earn mostly B's; while
   c. Asian parents accept as the lowest grade an A- and their children bring home mostly A's. Students deliver what their parents ask for! If you happen to be an adult student reading this, sorry, you have to be your own parent and push yourself to excel in this world.

6. Immigrant children of any ethnic background tend to do better than native born students but — the achievement level diminishes steadily over time. The longer a student's family has lived in this country, the lower the youngsters' school performance and mental health.
7. It is a myth that high achievers in school are stressed out and unhappy kids. As a matter of fact, Asian students report the lowest rates of depression, headaches, drug and alcohol use, and also maintain their circle of friends.

ATTITUDE is the mind's paint brush, it **Colors** any situation.

As we have seen, Asian parents have high expectations about their children, while white parents are more "forgiving". What about the other ethnic minorities? Recently, General Colin Powell, former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff of *Desert Storm*, is raising the expectations for black kids. We hear that he is quite successful in the places where he is active. (How much can a single man do if the vast majority of African-American parents are not participating?) For the Latinos we once had Jaime Escalante, a high school teacher who taught Advanced Placement Calculus to students in a Los Angeles barrio who had just finished algebra. He succeeded brilliantly to the point that the national testing service thought that everyone was cheating. The film *Stand and Deliver* from Warner Home Video may be rented from many video stores. It is a classic. And what about our native Americans? Sadly, apparently nobody cares. There are very few teachers of the caliber of Mr. Escalante. A friendly classroom demeanor alone does not count. You are probably better off with a gruffly teacher who drives you to your highest achievement than one who coddles you.

For further enlightenment on the subject of parents' expectations and desires for their children we encourage you to go to the *Great Expectations Report* by Public Agenda, a non-profit research group in New York. You'll find it at www.HigherEducation.org and www.PublicAgenda.org . Just click on the URLs and they'll take you there.

"All this sounds nice, but *when* do ***I*** find the time?", is the question one always hears. Is it a legitimate question? NOT ALWAYS. If you stop reading now and dismiss the rest of the paper as nonsense, you only hurt yourself.

The *Being-Too-Busy* syndrome is a self-serving crutch which serious research does not bear out. It appears to relate more to status than to time expended since *being busy* makes one appear important. Overall, **people have now *6 hours more time*** per week than they did 10 years ago. The general perception by women is that they spend about 8 hours more at paid work than they actually do (32.0 hrs vs 40.4 hrs) and by men about 6 hours (40.2 hrs actual vs 46.2 hrs perceived). This notion was so preposterous to some editors that for some time the researchers, John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey, the authors of *Time for Life* (Penn State Press), were unable to have their findings published. They had asked 10,000 people for 10 years to write down how they spent each

minute in a day. So people work 6 hours less and still are too busy for a few other, usually minor, tasks? What happens to all that lost time? Could it be? No! it cannot be. Yes, it is true! You knew it all along, didn't you? Watching television for 15 hours per week on average. See also: Newsweek magazine, May 12, 1997, page 69.

A Summer-1999 study is even bleaker. African-American families have their televison sets on a full 76 hours per week (10.5 hours per day) according to Nielsen Research Media and TN Media, Latino families 60 hours, while White/Asian families do it 40 to 50 hours per week. Mind you, this statistic is for families, not particular individuals, and hopefully, not you? Also, the National Assessment of Education, Progress Tests, found that 34 percent of the poor readers watched six hours or more of television a day. Only 6 percent of the best readers watched that much television.

"I am a full-time student, study hard, do not watch much TV and I still do not find the time." Interesting. Perhaps that too is more perception than reality? Another study found out recently that students spend a total of 29.5 hours per week in and out of class on academic pursuits. That compares with sixty hours per week in the early 1960s. Your parents worked harder and longer hours for their grades and degrees than you do. For today's students, the study found, the time lost was spent mostly on

1. getting into trouble (when the parents paid for tuition, etc.)
2. working extra hours to pay for college expenses.

LESSON #5 *Review*

Your Midterm-, Final-, or State Exam is just around the corner. We are in the end-stretch now. The Do-or-Die Situation.

Using the College Tutor , go through every topic by itself until you are in the 95%-plus score range. Do that 5 to 10 times. For every score below 95% go through it two additional times. You should hit over 95% at least eight times in-a-row. Then go to the next topic and repeat. How boring is that? Remember that only the missed questions are repeated. Therefore, each practice session becomes shorter and shorter.

After you went through all topics with the good scores hit many times consecutively, go to the FINAL test. Go through it as often as is necessary to hit at least seven (8) 95%-plus scores successively. Keep this up until two (2) days before the test. **Then STOP**.

If you do not have the College Tutor for a study aid then do the same for each chapter in your textbook. Review chapter 1, then chapter 2; go back to

chapter 1 followed by chapter 2; then advance to chapter 3. Back to chapters 1, 2, then 3. Advance to chapter 4, etc., you get the idea. REPETITION is still king and always will be when combined with SELF-TESTING.

Never test yourself the day or the hours before the test. An accidental lower score may only confuse and upset you. It would be counter-productive. Take a rest, you *know you are good*, you have all the topics down pat. Relax and be confident in having done all that was humanly possible.

Finals with the College Tutor

The College Tutor allows you to evaluate yourself with a simulated Final. It presents a very good idea to test where you stand when the real Final- or State Exam comes up. While the total questions for a study subject can amount to 1000 or more, a Final consists usually of 100 questions, only sometimes more.

That means that less than 10% of all available questions come up in a Final. Therefore, trying it only once or twice can lead to erroneous results, big time! We recommend that you repeat our Finals at least 8 times, better yet 12 times. All questions come up in random order, therefore 12 repetitions allows to review 97% of all available questions. Only then can you be sure.

To help you along, the Accomplishments panels of the College Tutor features an Exam Readiness meter. Every Final with a score of 85% or better advances the meter by one slot. A lesser score removes one slot. That is a better indicator than the customary school averages. Scores of 75%, 85%, and 95% give an average of 85%. So would consecutive scores of 95%, 85%, and 75%. Our Readiness Meter keeps you on your toes and is a better predictor.

EXAMINATION DAY

Some people (perhaps yourself?) take an examination two or three times. Once on the ride to school, once during the exam proper, and once on the ride back home. Unfortunately you get credit for only one of these.

Make an effort to avoid 'previewing' on the way over and especially avoid talking about your prospects with other students. You can only get depressed and dispirited by recalling the topics you should have paid more attention to but for some reason have not. Keep to yourself and remain confident that you have done everything possible. It is much too late now to worry about anything except getting to the test on time. You know that you have prepared and prepared well, that should be enough.

Spend at least the first three to five minutes reading through the exam paper to get a feel for it. First look at the instructions. What, exactly, is required of you? Even if you think you know what is coming, sometimes an instructor changes the format just enough to cause the unwary to fall off the edge. This was not done to you on purpose, mind you, the instructor assumes that you read *all* the instructions carefully first and act accordingly. Your own presumptions have no place here.

Some people develop a mental block when the exam paper hits their hands. I know, it happened to me once. For at least 15 minutes I was unable to solve a single simple problem (algebra), nothing on the first two pages made sense. I was in shock, ready to give up and go home. In desperation I thumbed through the other pages and there, on page 5, one problem looked familiar. I solved it right away, and the next, and next. What a relief! Then I went back to the beginning and through the entire test. Result: a solid "A".

Therefore, the first order of the hour is to relax. Close your eyes and recall how well you did on your homework, in your test preparation studies. Remember how confident you were two days ago. Let that feeling flood over you. Visualize how well you are doing (***DOING!*** not going to...) on this test. Draw yourself a mental picture in which you go through the exam with deliberate haste (not in blinding speed, that is unrealistic!). Then give yourself the 'go ahead' signal. You can do it! Now open your eyes and start.

GOOD LUCK and yes, *we care* about your success!

Are you are slow learner?

There may be something you can do. Careful! Are you sitting down? Hold on to the table; the answer may shock you! Nothing is for free, of course. This may take 6 to 18 months, but it can be done. Are you ready? *Video games*. Yes. Playing video games on your computer. Not the ones you see in video arcades where quick hand-eye coordination is required. No, the slow ones that require mental skills. The latest research according to Ames Gee, Professor of Learning Sciences at the University of Wisconsin, shows that with practice the brain is able to learn deep into the later years. Just keep at it and don't give up.

You may want to start with something really easy that is a favorite by preschoolers: *Pajama Sam: No need to hide when its dark outside*. Don't denigrate the title, this game may throw you for a while. Or, if it is too hard try *Tetris*. It is almost like the classic *Pong* but increases in speed and complexity as the player progresses. The best-selling game of all time, *The Sims*, involves almost no hand-eye coordination or quick reflexes. You manage a household of people, each endowed with distinct drives and personality traits, each cycling through an endless series of short-term needs (companionship or food, for instance), each enmeshed in a network of relationships with other people, according to *Your Brain On Video Games* in Discover Magazine, July 2005, by Steven Johnson. Our favorite is *Myst* where one is stranded on a mystical island and tries to fly off to other worlds even more mystical.

But how does this relate to you learning something else? The premise that games teach skills that apply in real-world situations has been corroborated by recent studies. A book published by the Harvard Business School Press looked at studies of three distinct groups of white-collar professionals: hard-core gamers, occasional gamers, and non-gamers. The research contradicts nearly all the preconceived ideas about the impact of games. The gaming population turned out to be consistently more social, more confident, and more comfortable solving problems creatively. They also showed no evidence of reduced attention spans compared with non-gamers. The U.S. military has its own game: *America's Army*. Modern warfare requires quick decision making of the correct kind or else one becomes a casualty.

Why not give it a try? At a minimum it is a lot of fun.

On the lighter side

Relax and think like a Rat

Don't feel guilty about the breaks you've been sneaking at work - they could be helping you to learn. Neuroscientists at MIT find that rats take a similar break after exploring an unfamiliar maze. During that break the animals' brains repeatedly review a backward version of the route they just took, most likely cementing memories of the steps needed to reach the goal.

> David Foster and his team zeroed in on this process by placing tiny wires into the rats' brains and then eavesdropping on individual brain cells. The neurons that light up during the experiments lie in the region known to form short-term memories. But those cells play the memory again and again — 10 times faster than the original experience — giving the rest of the brain lots of opportunities to absorb the information and to place it into long-term storage. "This implies that it's not just during an experience that learning occurs", Foster says, "if we are right, the period *after* the experience is just as important, maybe more important."
>
> Elise Kleeman, *Discover*, May 2006

The results may explain previous studies showing that people and animals learn best when given breaks between tasks — and provide a persuasive new justification for office daydreaming.

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about us writing jobs

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