

Student Success Guide

Study Skills

Robert Todd Carroll

Student Success Guide – Study Skills

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Other books by Robert T. Carroll

- *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-1699.* (1975). (International Archives of the History of Ideas / archives internationales d'histoire des idées). Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague
- *Student Success Guide: Writing Skills* (1990).
- *The Skeptic's Dictionary: A Collection of Strange Beliefs, Amusing Deceptions, and Dangerous Delusions.* (2003). Wiley and Sons.
- *Becoming a Critical Thinker – A Guide for the New Millennium.* (2005). 2nd edition. Pearson Custom Publishing.

Preface

The purpose of the ***Student Success Guide: Study Skills*** book is to provide a systematic approach to learning the skills needed by every successful student: skills such as vocabulary building, time management, listening and concentration, reading and studying textbooks, taking notes, reviewing and preparing for tests.

The ***Student Success Guide*** may be used independently by the student who wishes to improve his or her chances of success in humanities and social science courses. The book could also be used as the sole text in a Study Skills course or as an adjunct text in an English or Humanities course.

The driving idea behind the ***Student Success Guide*** is that methodical and purposive studying is the most effective and efficient. I don't claim that my method is the only one. In fact, I can't even call it **my** method, since very little of it has been originated by me. I have taken the work and suggestions of many people and applied them as I saw fit. What has resulted is a work unified by the idea that **purpose, method, practice, and a way of measuring achievement** are central to any effective and efficient learning.

The ***Student Success Guide*** is easy to use and understand, but it does not make studying effortless. Any method which promises amazing results but requires no work is a sham. I can't promise that if you follow the program here you will be able to learn Mandarin Chinese in a week during your sleep (as one text I reviewed promised!). The successful student will have to work hard. If you do, I can promise that you will not be uncertain about the payoff for the work put in. It has been said before, but it bears repeating: you will get out of it what you put into it.

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The material used for the activities on taking notes in a textbook is taken from ***Living Issues in Philosophy***, 8th edition, 1986, by Titus, Smith and Nolan, published by Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., Belmont, California.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
1	Two Essentials
4	Vocabulary
11	Motivation
13	Study Skills
13	Time Budgeting
15	Concentration
15	Listening
19	Reading and Studying
19	Reading Skills/Effective Studying
19	Textbook Orientation
21	Previewing Textbook Chapters
22	Focused Reading: The Structure of a Chapter
24	Focused Reading: Types of Questions
26	The Language of Questions
41	Taking Notes
42	Taking Notes: Marking Your Text
47	Taking Note of Relations
51	Using a Notebook
53	Taking Visual Notes: Mapping
55	Taking Notes in Class
62	Critical Reading & Note taking
68	Reviewing
64	Memory
64	Declarative Memory
67	Procedural Memory
68	Reviewing Daily
70	Taking Tests
70	Preparation for Taking Tests
70	Kinds of Tests
71	Reading Tests

INDEX OF ACTIVITIES

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
2	1. Vocabulary Cards
3	2. Vocabulary: Prefixes
5	3. Vocabulary: 14 Master Words
6	4. Vocabulary: Building Words from Prefixes
7	5. Vocabulary: Building Words from Roots
8	6. Vocabulary: Combining Prefixes and Roots
9	7. Vocabulary: Prefixes and Roots
10	Independent Activities: Vocabulary Building
12	8. Motivation
13-14	9. Time Management
16	10. Concentration
18	11. Listening
19	12. Textbook Orientation
21	13. Previewing a Textbook Chapter
23	14. Focusing on the Structure of a Chapter
25	15. Identifying Types of Questions
29	16. Anticipating Questions After Previewing
29	17. Anticipating Questions: Making Study Cards
36	18. Anticipating Questions: Marking Your Book
43	19. Taking Notes: Marking Your Text
51	20. Taking Note of Relations
53	21. Using a Notebook
55	22. Mapping
61	23. Taking Notes in Class: Paragraphs, Maps & Key Phrases
61	24. Taking Notes in Class: Paragraphs, Maps & Questions
62	25. Taking Notes in Class: Emphasis on Mapping
64	26. Critical Reading: Questions & Comments
66	27. Memory: Acronyms, Nonsense Sentences & Visualization
66	28. Memory: Visual Connections
68	29. Reviewing a Text Book Chapter
69	30. Reviewing Lecture Notes
69	31. Reviewing Text Notes
69	32. Skimming Your Text for Review
70	33. Skimming Your Text Notes for Review
70	34. Skimming Your Lecture Notes for Review
72	35. Preparing for Tests
73	36. Taking Tests

Two Essentials: Strong Vocabulary and Motivation


VOCABULARY

The good college student--the one who can read, write and study well--must have an adequate vocabulary. Since a vocabulary cannot be inherited, it must be earned. We are all born equally ignorant in this respect: even the one with the biggest mouth was born with no words.

As you read for your college courses, you will find that at times you do not understand what the author means. Sometimes this will be due to poor writing. Even the greatest thinkers sometimes write poorly. Very often, though, your lack of understanding will be due to your weak vocabulary or your lack of background knowledge. In such cases, you may be tempted to throw up your hands in disgust and quit reading. Alternatively, you might set aside the book for a while to do the research needed to understand the author. However, a reasonable alternative would be to continue reading. Admit that you cannot understand this part of the book; but move forward, trying to understand as much as you can.

If you cannot understand something in your text due to obscure writing or due to lack of knowledge or experience, skip it and move on to what you can understand. Of course, before you begin reading an assignment, you should read any introductory material that your book provides. Also read any comments, notes or outlines provided by the author or editor. Introductions, notes, comments, outlines and summaries can provide vital information. They can help you understand the meaning and significance of the material.

Above all, keep a good dictionary at hand while you read. Of all the books you will purchase in your college career, none can be as useful as a good dictionary. A good dictionary provides more than synonyms or lists of meanings; it will give examples of words used in sentences and describe subtle differences of closely related words. Not only should you look up the meaning of any word you do not know and which hinders your understanding, you should keep a notebook or card file of new and important words or expressions and their definitions. Every day you should study your word list. Set a goal to learn one, two, five, or even ten new words a day or week.

If, after having read the introductory material to a written work and after looking up unfamiliar words in your dictionary, you still do not understand a sentence or passage, skip it. Don't worry about it any further. You have done your best. If, after finishing the whole reading assignment, you still think you should understand a sentence or passage which you had to skip, ask your teacher what it means or go to the library and do some research [see Appendix A: Using the Library]. 

[The hand icon is used to indicate that an activity follows. You should finish the activity before proceeding.]

Activity 1 - Vocabulary Cards

1. While doing a reading assignment, use 3 x 5 index cards (or pieces of paper) to record any words you are unfamiliar with or whose meaning you are not sure of. Put one word or expression on a card. Look up the meanings of the words and write them on the backs of the appropriate cards. After the definition, give an example of the use of the word.
2. Review the cards for about 5 minutes each day for five days.
3. Test yourself at the end of the week by looking at each word and giving its meaning (without looking at the other side until ready to check your answers).
Repeat the test until you know each word.

fulsome

offensively flattering or insincere Example: "Mrs. Bistro is always the first with a word of praise but her manner is fulsome."
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Activity 2 - Vocabulary: Prefixes

Dr. James I. Brown of the University of Minnesota put together a list of 14 words, which he claims can be used to build a super vocabulary. Each of the 14 basic words consists of a prefix and a root. The 14 master words are: **detain, intermittent, precept, offer, insist, monograph, epilogue, aspect, uncomplicated, nonextended, reproduction, indisposed, oversufficient, and mistranscribe.**

Since six of the words have two prefixes each, the list which follows consists of 20 prefixes rather than 14. Your task is to look up each prefix in a dictionary and write down its meaning. (Note: if your dictionary does not list prefixes, you need a better dictionary.) Alternative spellings of the prefixes are also given.

The first one is done for you as an example.

PREFIX	ALTERNATE SPELLING	MEANING
1. DE-		<i>down or away</i>
2. INTER-		
3. PRE-		
4. OB-	OC-/OF-/OP-	
5. IN-	IM-/IL-/IR-	
6. MONO-		
7. EPI-		
8. AD-	AC-/AG-/AL-/AN- AP-/AR-/AS-/AT-	
9. UN-		
10. COM-	CO-/COL-/CON-/COR-	
11. NON-		
12. EX-	E-/EF-	
13. RE-		
14. PRO-		
15. IN-	IR-/IL-/IM-	
16. DIS-	DI-/DIF-	
17. OVER-	SUR-	
18. SUB-	SU-/SUC-/SUF-/SUG- SUM-/SUP-	
19. MIS-		
20. TRANS-	TRAN-/TRA-	

Vocabulary: Roots of the 14 Master Words

Below is a list of the 14 master words described in activity 2. Included is a list of their roots, their other spellings and their meanings. Look them over carefully.

MASTER WORD	ROOT	OTHER SPELLING	ROOT'S MEANING
DETAIN	TAIN	TANT/TEN/TIN	to have, to hold
INTERMITTENT	MITT	MISS/MIS/MIT	to send
PRECEPT	CEPT	CAP/CAPT/CIP	to take, to seize
OFFER	FER	LAT/LAY	to bear, to carry
INSIST	SIST	STA/STAT	to stand, to endure,
MONOGRAPH	GRAPH		to write
EPILOGUE	LOG	LOGY	science or body of knowledge;
ASPECT	SPECT	SPEC/SPI/SPY	to look
UNCOMPLICATED	PLIC	PLEX/PLY	bend, twist or interweave
NONEXTENDED	TEND	TENS/TENT	to stretch
REPRODUCTION	DUCT	DUC/DUIT/DUK	to lead; to make, shape or fashion
INDISPOSED	POS	POUND/PON/	to put or place
OVERSUFFICIENT	FIC	FAC/FACT/	to make or do
MISTRANScribe	SCRIBE	SCRIV/SCRIP/ SCRIB/SCRIPT	to write

Activity 3 - Vocabulary: 14 Master Words

INSTRUCTIONS. 1) Look up each master word in the dictionary.
 2) Write down its meaning.
 3) Use the word or one of its cognates (a related word) in a
 The first word is done for you as an example.

MASTER WORD WORD	MEANING	SENTENCE USING THE MASTER WORD
DETAIN	to keep from proceeding	The police <i>detained</i> the suspect for questioning.
INTERMITTENT		
PRECEPT		
OFFER		
INSIST		
MONOGRAPH		
EPILOGUE		
ASPECT		
UNCOMPLICATED		
NONEXTENDED		
REPRODUCTION		
INDISPOSED		
OVERSUFFICIENT		
MISTRANScribe		

Activity 4 - Vocabulary: Building Words from Prefixes

- 1) Find three words beginning with each prefix listed in activity 2.
- 2) Write down each word's meaning.
- 3) Use each word in a sentence.

PREFIX	NEW WORD	MEANING	SENTENCE USING NEW WORD
DE-	defend	to ward off attack from	"A good vocabulary can help defend me from ignorance."
	default	failure to act; neglect	"He lost a friend by sheer default ."
	derive	to receive or obtain from a source or origin	"He derived his income from an inheritance."

Activity 5 - Vocabulary: Building Words from Roots

For each of the roots listed on page 4, column 2:

- 1) Come up with three words which use the root.
- 2) Write down the meaning of the word.
- 3) Use it in a sentence.

ROOT	NEW WORD	MEANING	SENTENCE USING NEW WORD
TAIN	maintain	to keep in existence or continuance; preserve	A strong defense helped us maintain our position."
	sustain	to support, hold or bear up from below	"His faith sustained him in his time of need."
	retain	to keep possession of	"Though he lost all his money, he retained his dignity."

Activity 6 - Vocabulary: Combining Prefixes and Roots

- 1) Construct as many new words as you can by attaching different prefixes from the list on page 3 to different roots from the list on page 4.
- 2) Write down the meaning of the new word.
- 3) Use the word in a sentence.

(Use your own paper to complete this exercise. Some examples are given.)

NEW WORD MEANING		SENTENCE USING NEW WORD
DECEIVE	to mislead by a false appearance or statement	"This looks difficult, but looks are deceiving ."
DEFER	to put off (action, consideration, etc.) to a future time	"I will defer my decision until I have considered all the evidence."
DESIST	to cease, as from some action or proceeding; stop	
DEDUCT		
DEPOSE		
DEFICIT		
DESCRIBE		

Activity 7 - Vocabulary: Prefixes and Roots

- 1) Go through a page or two of one of your textbooks and highlight each use of the 20 prefixes or 14 roots listed on pages 3 and 4.
- 2) Write down the words and their meanings.

Independent Activities - Vocabulary Building

In addition to the suggestion made earlier that you keep a notebook or card file of new words and their definitions, which you should study and add to each day or week, the following activities should help you build your vocabulary as you progress through college.

1. **Read books on vocabulary building.** Your college or local library should have several such books.
2. **Purchase a vocabulary calendar.** Most major bookstores carry small, tear-off calendars, featuring a new word each day.
3. **Create your own glossaries or dictionaries** for each chapter of your text books.


MOTIVATION

You may have a rich vocabulary, but it won't do you much good if your attitude toward studying is poor. To be a successful college student, it is not enough just to want to be successful. Nor is it enough merely to have the skills necessary for success. Desire and skill are necessary, but they aren't sufficient. You will need *motivation*, also.

WHAT IS MOTIVATION? Many people confuse drive or energy or commitment with motivation. But, having a strong desire to learn, or putting a lot of energy into your studies, is not the same as being a highly motivated student. *Motivation has to do with setting goals and moving toward them.*

Each of the following is essential to being a highly motivated student:

- 1) *Knowing what you want from college;*
- 2) *Planning how to achieve what you want;*
- 3) *Knowing what aids and hindrances there are to achieving your goals;*
- 4) *Committing yourself to a plan of action which takes advantage of the aids and deals intelligently with the hindrances; and,*
- 5) *Coming up with a meaningful way to measure your successes, short term as well as long term.*

Motivation, like vocabulary, is not something you are born with. You can develop and systematically improve your motivation. In short, a motivated student has *a purpose, a plan and a yardstick*. You must know what you want out of college, how to get it and how to measure your progress. It is as simple as that. 



Activity 8 - Motivation

The following activities are designed to help you focus on your purpose, plan and yardstick. Each question should be answered in a careful, reflective manner.

1. What do you want to achieve by going to college?
2. What are you doing or planning to do to succeed at achieving your college aims?
3. What aids does the college provide to help you achieve your aims?
4. What hindrances are there which may make achieving your aims difficult?
5. What *can* you do and what *will* you do to overcome these hindrances?
6. How will you measure your success in college? Do you have short-term as well as long-term goals? How will you evaluate your attempts to achieve both kinds of goals?

STUDY SKILLS

A successful college student must possess a number of skills. You must be able to read and write well, to listen and take notes well, to concentrate and take tests well, to participate in class and manage time well. The better developed these skills are, the better able you will be to achieve the goals you have set for yourself. Each of the following sections aims at helping you develop one or more of these skills.


TIME BUDGETING

Time management may not seem to be a study skill, but effective studying requires that you spend time studying before and after class. Effective studying also requires that you preview and review material, and that you be as wide awake as possible while studying. To accomplish all these tasks effectively, you must manage your time.

Generally, the day before a class meets is the best time to prepare for the class. Since most classes meet on a regular basis, your pre-class study should be on a regular basis also. (What to do during this study time will be discussed later.)

You also need to study after each class meets. It is usually best to review what went on in class just after the class has met, when it is fresh in your mind. If possible, review class notes just before the class meets.

How much time you should spend studying depends on many things. Typically, a full-time student should plan to put in about 30 hours a week studying outside of class, roughly two hours out of class for every hour in class.

Effective study requires that you study your most difficult subjects when you are most alert, and that you not spend too much time at one stretch studying any subject. The most careful schedule will be of little value if you can't concentrate on what you are studying. Don't try to study when you are tired or agitated. Don't study in a place where you are likely to be distracted. (Turn off the music. Concentrating on two things at once is for jugglers and magicians!) If you must plaster your wall with alluring and inviting photos and posters, make sure that your back is to that wall while you study. 

Activity 9 - Time Management

Design a weekly schedule. Begin by marking off the hours of each day you are in class. Next, schedule pre-class study times for each of your courses. Try not to schedule more than an hour at a stretch for any one subject and don't schedule more than three consecutive hours for studying. Include a five to ten minute break every hour.

Schedule about 15 minutes as soon as possible after class for reviewing material. (How to effectively review material will be discussed later.) Schedule your time to study your most difficult subjects when you are most alert.

Finally, try to schedule your studying so that when you switch from one subject to another, you change to a dissimilar subject.

Activity 9 - Time Management

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
8 am							
9 am							
10 am							
11 am							
12 pm							
1 pm							
2 pm							
3 pm							
4 pm							
5 pm							
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							
9 pm							
10 pm							
11 pm							
12 am							

CONCENTRATION

The ability to concentrate, to focus your attention on the matter at hand and to ward off all distractions, is the basis of effective studying. Unfortunately, paying attention to anything for more than a few seconds at a time seems to be an extremely difficult thing for most human beings to do. Observe yourself being distracted while studying or listening to someone speak. You will probably find that you can't pay total attention to anything for more than about 20 or 30 seconds at a stretch.

How can you improve your ability to concentrate? The first thing you can do is remove obvious distractions. Study somewhere quiet, where you won't be disturbed or interrupted, where there are no pictures or sounds in the background. If there are, you can be sure that from time to time they will slip into the foreground and the subject you are supposed to be studying will slip into the background.

Another thing you can do to improve your ability to concentrate while studying is to get your life in order. Get your priorities straight. You are not going to be able to devote yourself to studying if your life is an emotional shambles or if you are usually exhausted from working on a job or exercising or playing. If your health is a mess, if you don't eat or sleep properly, you won't have any energy left to focus.

In addition, the ability to concentrate is directly proportionate to one's preparation. Both good listening and good reading require good preparation. (How to prepare to listen and to read will be discussed in later sections.)

Finally, concentration is a matter of will. You must consciously choose to concentrate on what you are reading or on what someone is saying. And, you must **practice** focusing your attention.



Activity 10 - Concentration

1. Write a list of the main distractions which affect your ability to concentrate while you study or are in class.

2. Suggest ways to minimize the distractions you listed.

3. Are you a distraction to others? Do you come late to class or do things in class that distract others? If so, why?

LISTENING

Effective listening requires concentration and preparation. Motivation is also a key factor in good listening. The motivated student, remember, is one with a plan, a purpose and a yardstick. The unmotivated student is generally bored. Boredom is as much internally as externally caused. Almost anyone will be bored by a lecture or a reading that he or she doesn't understand. If you haven't studied the material to be lectured on, or if you've studied it ineffectively, chances are good that you will not understand the lecture and that you will be bored. But, if you are prepared to listen and to be informed you will rarely be bored, even by the speaker who is not entertaining, dynamic, or charismatic.

If you become a good listener, it will assist you in becoming a good note taker. Note taking is an essential skill of the successful student. (Taking notes from lectures and from readings will be discussed later.) You must come to see clearly the relationship between good studying, good listening, and good note taking. They do not exist as independent skills, but as mutually supportive skills.

If you have read the assignment and taken good notes on it, then you are prepared to listen to the class lecture and discussion. If you have no idea of the significance of what the speaker is saying, then most likely you are not prepared to listen.

Now, assuming that you are prepared to listen, what can you do in the classroom to improve the effectiveness of your listening?

PREPARE TO CONCENTRATE. In addition to reading and studying the assignment, select a seat in the room which promises the least distraction. Sit away from known busybodies and prattlers. Get a seat with a good view----of the speaker!

CONCENTRATE. Force yourself to pay attention. When you find your mind wandering, catch yourself and refocus your attention on the speaker. Focus and refocus. Unless you are very special, you will have to do this for the rest of your life no matter who the speaker is and no matter what the subject.

ATTEND. Pay attention to the speaker's *pattern of organization*. Use handouts, blackboard outlines, pauses or shifts in emphasis to try to figure out the form of the speaker's lecture. Separate the main point from supporting facts, examples or illustrations. Try to understand general ideas rather than individual facts. Above all, try to measure the significance of what is said.

Obviously, attending to the speaker's pattern of organization, picking out the main ideas and seeing the significance of what is said are the most difficult listening tasks. But if you have not prepared well, these tasks become impossible. And if you do not master these tasks, you will never become an effective note taker. Remember: studying, listening and note taking go hand in hand. ☞

READING AND STUDYING

READING SKILLS

Different kinds of written works require different skills to read them. To read a philosophical or historical essay, for example, usually requires skill at identifying, analyzing and evaluating arguments and explanations. To read a lyric poem, on the other hand, requires skill at recognizing and appreciating mood, tone and rhythm.

In order to read well in your college courses, you will need a basic understanding of the essential elements of the different kinds of writing you are likely to be asked to read. The key to effective reading is knowing the *purpose* of the writing. For the sake of simplifying matters, I will divide written material into two kinds: **text books** and **primary source materials**. In the *Student Success Guide, Part III, Reading Primary Sources*, I try to guide you through the specific purposes of certain kinds of writing (e.g., philosophy, Greek tragedy and epic poetry). Here, however, the focus is on reading text books.

Text books are quite varied in style, but they all share a common purpose--to convey information about an entire field of study. **Primary sources**, on the other hand, either are themselves only a part--often a minute part--of a field of study, or they focus on only a part of a field of study. In short, the text book is a book *about* philosophy, economics, history, etc., while a primary source *is* a philosophical treatise or essay, an analysis of an economic system, a history of Greece, etc. Because of this difference between text books and primary sources, you must use different skills when reading text books and

when reading primary source materials. But, since text books share much in common regarding their purposes and methods of writing, we can consider the text book as if it were a single kind of book.

EFFECTIVE STUDYING

Of course, reading is only the beginning of studying. But the more effective you become as a reader of a subject, the easier it will be for you to 1) listen effectively to lectures and discussions; 2) take worthwhile and useful notes, and 3) outline and review your texts and notes. Effective and efficient studying requires that you become skillful at each of these activities.

Knowing how to read well should make it easier for you to understand lecture material, since you will have a *focus* and will know the *significance* of the lecture material. It will also be clearer to you what the main point of the lecture is. You will be more interested in the subject when you understand it better and you will come to understand the material better as you become a more effective reader.

Becoming a more effective **reader** should help you become a more effective **listener**. Becoming a more effective listener should help you become a more efficient **note taker**. You won't try to write down everything, but only such notes as will help you remember certain key points. Because of your effective reading and listening, you will be better able to recognize key points.

Outlining and reviewing will also become easier as you become a more effective reader. An outline is simply a short summary of the most significant aspects of what you've read. Doing an outline will help you understand the material better, and it will aid you in reviewing for tests or papers. Doing an outline is also a good way to exercise your logical, organizational and writing skills.

Finally, the better you have read the material, listened to the lectures and the discussions, taken notes and outlined the material, the better prepared you will be to review for a test. Remember: a review is not *original* studying or learning; it is going over again what has already been learned. **Re-viewing is really relearning.** Both learning and relearning are done most efficiently and effectively by those who are skilled at

reading.

TEXTBOOK ORIENTATION

There are several steps to reading a text book well. First, you must **orient** yourself to the text. Then, before reading a chapter you should **preview** it. While reading the chapter you should take notes and mark or highlight your text. You should create your own study questions in addition to those provided by the author. (See Activities 16-18, below.) Finally, you should answer your study questions, as well as do any assigned exercises. It is generally a good idea to do exercises even if they are not assigned; at least do enough of them to give you confidence that you understand the material. ☞

Activity 12 - Textbook Orientation

1. Textbook preview checklist:

	YES	NO
	----	----
PREFACE	—	—
TABLE OF CONTENTS	—	—
NUMBER OF CHAPTERS	—	—
ANSWERS TO EXERCISES	—	—
INDEX	—	—
GLOSSARY	—	—
APPENDICES	—	—
BIBLIOGRAPHY	—	—

Activity 12 (continued) - Textbook Orientation

2. What is the TITLE of your text? Briefly describe what you expect to find in the text.

3. Who wrote the text? List names, qualifications, potential biases, etc. (Does the text have a section About the Author(s)?)

4. When was the text written? Does it matter to you when it was written?

5. If the text has a GLOSSARY, skim through it and state what kind of information it provides.

6. If the text has an INDEX, skim through it and state what kind of information it provides.

7. If the text has any appendices, what are their titles and what kind of information do you think they will provide?

8. If the text has a bibliography, skim through it and state what kind of information it provides.

9. Examine the table of contents and answer the following questions:
 - a. What kind of structure does the text have? (Chronological, Problems, Topics (simple to complex?, pros and cons? parts of a whole?), etc.)

 - b. Can you tell from the structure of the text what the author's purpose is? Is there any evident bias revealed by the structure of the text?

10. Look through several chapters. Is there a consistent pattern of presentation? (e.g., title, subtitles, marginal notes, boxed off definitions, cartoons, summaries, study questions, exercises, answers to exercises, etc.) If there is a consistent structure to the chapters, describe it.

PREVIEWING TEXTBOOK CHAPTERS

Before reading a textbook chapter, spend ten to fifteen minutes previewing it. Previewing will give you a general idea of the content and organization of the chapter. Previewing is something like reading a guide book before setting out on a trip: knowing the landmarks and having some idea of where you are heading makes the trip more interesting and meaningful by giving your trip a focus. ☞

Activity 13 - Previewing a Textbook Chapter

1. Preview Checklist:	YES	NO
a. INTRODUCTORY SECTION	___	___
b. CONCLUDING SECTION	___	___
c. SUMMARY	___	___
d. GLOSSARY OF TERMS	___	___
e. STUDY QUESTIONS	___	___
f. EXERCISES	___	___
g. CHARTS OR DIAGRAMS	___	___
h. OTHER _____	___	___

2. What is the title of the chapter?

3. Read the introduction, outline and summary, if your text has them. Try to get a feel for the **topics** brought up. Don't try to understand the material yet. Write down what you think are the major topics of the chapter.

4. Write down major headings and subheadings in the order they appear in the chapter. Indent subheadings. (Major headings are often indicated by bold type. Sub-headings should be smaller. Some texts use a numbering system. Some use italics or various indentations of heads to indicate their relationship to one another.)

5. If there are any charts, diagrams or illustrations, try to figure out their purposes and briefly state them.

6. Look at the instructions for any exercises at the end of the chapter (or section). Briefly state what you think the purpose of each exercise is.

FOCUSED READING: THE STRUCTURE OF A CHAPTER

After you have previewed a chapter, you are ready to begin reading in a focused way. Now you have some idea as to the purpose and content of the chapter. You have something you can FOCUS on, and something around which you can direct your reading.

One way to help focus your reading is to become aware of the **structure** of the author's writing. You have already begun doing this by previewing the overall structure of the chapter. Now we must focus on the structure of the **parts** of the chapter.

Most textbook chapters are divided into sections which are further divided into subsections which may be divided into subsections themselves. Each section and subsection will have a structure, and the body of the chapter, made up of all its sections, will also have a structure. Think of the structure as the relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole that they comprise. To understand the structure of the chapter is to see how the parts of a section fit together and how the sections are related to each other. Each section or subsection is likely to have

- A. AN INTRODUCTION
- B. A MIDDLE PART (or BODY)
- C. A CONCLUSION, OR A TRANSITION.

Each section or subsection is likely to have

- A. A MAIN POINT AND MINOR POINTS
- B. SUPPORT FOR THE MAIN OR MINOR

The support for main or minor points will generally consist of

- A. BACKGROUND MATERIAL and/or
- B. EXPLANATORY MATERIAL and/or
- C. EVIDENCE OR PROOF and/or
- D. SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Background information and explanatory material clarify the **meaning, function** or **significance** of the material.

Evidence and proof are given to support the truth or reasonable certainty of claims. Supplementary material relates the main or minor points to other material, either directly by mentioning it, or indirectly by referring you to other information or sources.

TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

While the sections or subsections of a chapter have their own structure, they must be connected together to give the whole body of the chapter its singular structure. To indicate a shift from section to section, or subsection to subsection, or a shift from one idea to another supporting or contrasting point, writers use **transitional expressions**. These expressions not only mark shifts in ideas; they also **relate** ideas. They connect what comes before them with what comes after them. Recognizing transitional expressions will help you see the structure of the chapter. It will help you focus on the relationships of the various parts of the material you are reading.

Transitional expressions are phrases such as the following:

...on the other hand....
...while...but....
...by comparison....
...as we have said....
...in contrast....
...nevertheless....
...yet....
...but....
...again....
...also....
...besides....
...consequently....
...finally....
...for example....
...hence....
...however....
...in conclusion....
...likewise....
...moreover....
...on the whole....
...similarly....
...still....
...that is....
...therefore....
...thus....
...so....
...too...

POINTS.

There are, of course, many more transitional expressions than are listed here. Any expression which serves to relate previous to later material is a transitional expression. ☞

Activity 14 - Focusing on the Structure of a Chapter

For an assigned chapter which you have already previewed, do the following for a single section of the chapter:

1. At the end of each paragraph, stop and state to yourself the main idea of the paragraph. Underline or highlight any statement in the paragraph which expresses what you think is the main idea of the paragraph.

2. Circle or box any transitional expressions. Draw lines from the circle or box to lines you put under the statements which express the ideas that are connected by the transitional expression.

In the margin, next to the transitional expression, indicate what kind of connection is being made.

A. Contrast or comparison;

B. Example or illustration;

C. Explanation or proof;

D. Addition

E. Sequence.

F. Emphasis

3. Stop after reading all the subsections of the section to review the statements you have underlined or highlighted as main points. Try to identify what topic the main ideas deal with, and write that topic (in a word or phrase) in the margin of your text next to these paragraphs.

4. Repeat the above three steps for other sections of an assigned chapter. and topics. How are the sections related?

FOCUSED READING: TYPES OF QUESTIONS

It will help you focus your reading even more if you take a moment to consider why you are reading the chapter. Besides the fact that it has been assigned, let's assume that you are reading the chapter in order to gain knowledge and to prepare for tests.

If so, then the way you study the chapter should provide you with (1) a way of figuring out what questions are likely to be on a test, (2) the answers to those questions, and (3) a way to help you remember those questions and answers.

Two skills are needed to be good at answering listing questions: (1) the ability to figure out which facts or ideas should be remembered and which need not be remembered (i.e., the ability to distinguish the significant from the trivial fact or idea), and (2) the ability to remember what needs to be remembered!

2. SEQUENCE QUESTIONS. An exam question might ask you to present a sequence of ideas, events, etc. The sequence may be a *time sequence*, in which events are to be presented in *chronological* order. Or, the sequence might be a *logical sequence*, as in ordering ideas from the simple to the complex, the particular to the general, the general to the more general or the general to the more specific, etc. Often, sequence questions are *process questions*. They ask *how* did an event or idea 'X' come about? What was the process that began it and by which it developed to become 'X'? *To do well on sequence questions the ability to see the connections between ideas and events is essential.*

3. RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS. There are many kinds of relationship questions. Four of the most important types of relationship questions are:

A. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST QUESTIONS. These questions require you to

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

While it is true that there is no limit to the number of questions that teachers or text book authors can devise, there is a limit to the *types* of questions that can be asked about any material. Most questions you will be asked on tests will fall into one of the following four categories:

1. LISTING QUESTIONS. An exam might require you to *list facts*. These are the *who, what, when or where* questions. They may require very short answers--a list of one item, for example.

Identify significant similarities and/or differences between facts, ideas, events, arguments, etc. The ability to identify what might be compared or contrasted and how they might be compared or contrasted is essential to doing well on this type of question.

B. CAUSE/EFFECT QUESTIONS. These questions ask you to describe causal relationships. The ability to identify causal relationships and to distinguish significant from trivial ones is essential to doing well on this type of question.

C. PREMISE/CONCLUSION QUESTIONS. You might be asked questions which require that you have understood an argument which has been presented. An argument occurs when reasons are given to support a conclusion. To do well on questions concerning arguments you need the ability to identify arguments and the ability to recognize and evaluate premises with respect to their conclusion.

D. CLASSIFICATION QUESTIONS. You might be asked questions which ask you to define or classify items. To do well on classifying questions you need the ability to identify what kind of thing something is. When an example or item is given, you need to be able to identify what kind of thing it is an example of. ☞

Activity 15 - Identifying Types of Questions

Study the questions asked at the end of a chapter of your text. Classify the questions as either listing, sequential, relationship or classifying. Specify whether it asks for facts, similarities, arguments, explanations, definitions, etc.

(Before starting, look at the examples.) If your text does not have questions at the end of the chapter, borrow one that does or ask your teacher to provide you with a set of the kinds of questions you will be required to answer on exams.

QUESTION #	TYPE OF QUESTION	SPECIFICALLY
example 1	listing	name of person
example 2	sequence	how does it work
example 3	relationship	causal
example 4	classification	type of thing or process

THE LANGUAGE OF QUESTIONS

Certain words are likely to recur in test questions, especially in essay exams. You can anticipate what questions will be asked about a chapter by becoming familiar with the language of questions.

1. WORDS THAT INDICATE LISTING QUESTIONS. The following words are frequently used in listing questions:

list....enumerate....state....define....describe....

For example:

List the causes of the civil war.

Enumerate and describe the bones of the hand.

Define fascism.

State Thales' belief about the nature of reality.

2. WORDS THAT INDICATE SEQUENCE QUESTIONS. The following words are frequently used in sequence questions:

trace... describe... explain...summarize

For example:

Trace the development of socialism in France from 1848 to 1954.

Describe the process of osmosis.

Explain how the ignition system of a 1965 Chevrolet works.

Summarize the events leading up to Socrates' trial.

3. WORDS THAT INDICATE RELATIONSHIPS. The following words are frequently used in relationship questions:

relate...compare....contrast....discuss....evaluate
criticize....analyze....justify....prove....argue
refute....explain....review....interpret....outline
summarize....diagram....what caused....

For example:

"*Relate* (or, *what is the relationship between*) Plato's idea of the just person and his idea of the just state." In a question asking you to relate items or show the relationship between them, your answer should focus on making connections and associations, such as similarities and dissimilarities or causal

connections. Usually, your answer should stick to being descriptive, rather than critical or analytical.

"**Compare** Plato's idea of virtue with that of Aristotle." In a question asking you to compare items, your answer should point out similarities and differences.

"**Contrast** the notions of justice presented by Hume and Aquinas." In a question asking you to contrast items, your answer should point out differences.

"**Discuss** the criticisms Nietzsche makes of Christianity." In a question asking you to discuss an item, your answer should look at the item from various sides and consider it from different viewpoints.

"**Evaluate** Spinoza's argument for determinism." In a question asking you to evaluate an item, your answer should present both good and bad points, advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses.

"**Criticize** Sartre's idea of freedom." In a question asking you to criticize an item, your answer should give your own or others' opinions as to the merits or demerits, advantages or disadvantages, strengths or weaknesses of the item.

"**Analyze** the arguments for the existence of God presented in the text." In a question asking you to analyze an item, your answer should distinguish the separate parts of the item (such as premises and conclusions, presuppositions and stated assumptions), and describe their relationship. (**Note well:** some teachers use the words 'evaluate', 'criticize' and 'analyze' interchangeably, and when they use one of these words they mean do all three of these things!)

"**Justify** (or, what is the justification for) preferential treatment of women and minorities." In a question asking you to justify an item, your answer should give reasons sufficient to support the rightness of a position or action.

"**Prove** (or, what is the proof) that there cannot be more than one omnipotent being." In a question asking you to prove an item, your answer should give reasons sufficient to warrant accepting the truth of that item.

"**Argue** for (or give the argument for) the position that in a state of nature there would still be moral obligations." In a question asking you to argue for an item, your answer should either prove or justify that item.

"**Refute** (or give so-and-so's refutation of) the theory of the origin of the planet Venus given by Velikovsky." In a question asking you to refute an item, your answer should show that the item is false or badly argued for.

"**Explain** why the concept of civil liberty must entail a limitation of freedom in order to be meaningful." In a question asking you to explain an item, your answer should provide sufficient reasons for understanding why that item is as it is or happens as it happens.

"**Review** the arguments for making abortion illegal." In a question asking you to review an item, your answer should focus more on what it is you are asked to review than on the act of reviewing itself. To review is to look at again or go over. You may be asked to review arguments, explanations, refutations, proofs, etc. (Of course, if you are in a film class and asked to do a movie review or in an English class and asked to do a book review, then 'review' means something different. In those cases, a review is a critical examination, i.e., an analysis, criticism and evaluation.)

"**Interpret** Plato's myth of the cave." In a question asking you to interpret an item, your answer should enable the reader to understand the item better. The fact that something must be interpreted implies that its meaning is not to be taken literally. Your job as an interpreter is to aid in the understanding of the item at a non-literal level.

"**Outline** the differences between Hobbes's view of the state of nature and that of John Locke." In a question asking you to outline an item, your answer should focus more on what it is you are asked to outline than on the process of outlining itself. To outline is to describe in an organized way, focusing on main points and omitting minor details.

"**Summarize** the main arguments for and against the legalization of marijuana." In a question asking you to summarize, your answer should focus more on what it is you are asked to summarize than on the process of summarizing itself. To summarize is to condense, to briefly state main points.

"**Diagram** the process of photosynthesis." In a question asking you to diagram an item, your answer should consist of a drawing, chart, plan or other graphic representation. You will be expected to label your diagram and give a brief description or explanation of it.

"**What caused** (or, **were the causes of**) the Civil War?" In a question asking you what caused an item, your answer should state those factors which brought the item about or made the item happen.

4. WORDS THAT INDICATE CLASSIFICATION QUESTIONS. The following words are frequently used in classification questions:

define... identify...what kind...what type

For example:

Define 'distributive justice.'

Identify three *types* of metaphysical theories.

How many *kinds* of evil are there, according to St. Augustine? ☞

Activity 16: Anticipating Questions After Previewing

Before you read an assigned chapter, and using only the information you have gathered by previewing the chapter, write three *relationship* questions you expect the chapter to answer. ☞

Activity 17: Anticipating Questions: Making Study Cards

As you read each section of an assigned chapter, turn the section heads and subheads into questions and write them down on index cards or 3x5 pieces of paper. Read the section to find the answer to your question. Write your answer on the other side of the card. Try to make the subhead questions relationship questions, relating subheads to main heads or other subheads. As you work your way through the chapter, try to ask primarily relationship questions.

The next few pages are taken from a text book; read them and look at the examples of question/answer study cards which follow.

Activity 18 - Anticipating Questions: Marking Your Book

As you read each section of an assigned chapter, turn the section heads and subheads into questions. This time, however, instead of writing down the questions and answers on a separate sheet of paper *mark your text in such a way that you rewrite the heads and subheads so that they become questions. And, box off parts of the text that best answer the question.*

The next few pages are the same ones from the text book used to exemplify activity 17. Here, however, the pages are marked.

(After using both the study card and the book marking methods, you should decide for yourself which you prefer and use your preferred method when you study in the future.)