

The following is taken from the www.how-to-study.com website.

Preparing to Study: A Good Study Place

You need a good study place to be prepared to study. You should be able to answer YES to all of the following questions:

1. Is my Study Place available to me whenever I need it? Your Study Place does you little good if you cannot use it when you need it. If you are using a Study Place that you must share with others for any reason, work out a schedule so that you know when you can use it. Or else find a space you can use!

2. Is my Study Place free from distractions? Research shows that most students study best in a quiet environment. If you find that playing a CD, or MP3 improves your mood, keep the volume low. Leave the radio off! You may have to hang a DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door or turn off the mobile phone.

3. Does my Study Place contain all the study materials I need? Be sure your Study Place includes reference sources and supplies such as pens and pencils, paper, ruler, calculator, and whatever else you might need. If you use a computer for your schoolwork, it should be in your Study Place.

4. Does my Study Space contain a large enough desk or table? While working on homework or studying for a test, use a desk or table that is large enough to hold everything you need. Allow enough room for writing and try to avoid clutter.

5. Does my Study Place have enough storage space? You need enough room to store your study materials. Be sure you have enough storage space to allow you to keep your desktop or other work surface clear of unnecessary materials that can get in the way.

6. Does my Study Place have a comfortable chair? A chair that is not comfortable can cause discomfort or pain that will interfere with your studying. A chair that is too comfortable might make you sleepy. Select a chair in which you can sit for long periods while maintaining your attention.

7. Does my Study Place have enough light? The amount of light you need depends on what you are doing. The important thing is that you can clearly see what you need to see without any strain or discomfort.

8. Does my Study Place have a comfortable temperature? If your Study Place is too warm, you might become sleepy. If it is too cold, your thinking may slow down and become unclear. Select a temperature at which your mind and body function best.

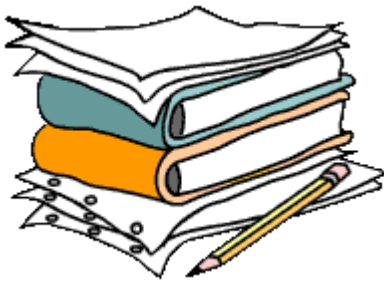
Taking Notes in Class

In classes, your teachers will talk about topics that you are studying. The information they provide will be important for you to know when you take tests. You must be able to take good written notes from what your teachers say.



Taking good notes is a three-stage process in which there are certain things you should do **before** class, **during** class, and **after** class. Here are the three stages of note taking and what you should do during each stage.

1. Get Ready to Take Notes (Before Class)



- Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and get you ready to understand new information your teacher provides.
- Complete all assigned readings before you come to class. Your teacher will expect that you have done this and will use and build upon this information.

Bring all notetaking materials with you to class. Have backup pens and pencils as well as your notebook or copybook.

2. Take Notes (During Class)

- Keep your attention focused on what your teacher is saying. Listen for “signal statements” that tell you that what your teacher is about to say is important to write in your notes. Examples of signal statements are “The most important point...” and “Remember that . . . “ Be sure to include in your notes information that your teacher repeats or writes on the board.
- Write quickly so that you can include all the important information in your notes. Do this by writing abbreviated words such as fm for formula, using symbols such as % for percent, and writing concise sentences.
- Place a ? next to information you write in your notes, but about whose meaning you are not sure.

3. Rewrite Your Notes (After Class)

- Rewrite your notes to make them more complete by changing abbreviated words into whole words, symbols into words, and shortened sentences into longer sentences.
- Make your notes more accurate by answering any questions you had when writing your notes in class. Use your textbook and reference sources to obtain the information you need to answer your questions. If necessary, ask your teacher or other students for help.

Having good class notes will help you to be better prepared for tests.

A Strategy for Reading Textbooks

SQRW is a four-step strategy for reading and taking notes from chapters in a textbook. Each letter stands for one step in the strategy. Using SQRW will help you to understand what you read and to prepare a written record of what you learned. The written record will be valuable when you have to participate in a class discussion and again when you study for a test. Read to learn what to do for each step in SQRW.



Survey.

Surveying brings to mind what you already know about the topic of a chapter and prepares you for learning more. To survey a chapter, read the title, introduction, headings, and the summary or conclusion. Also, examine all visuals such as pictures, tables, maps, and/or graphs and read the caption that goes with each. By surveying a chapter, you will quickly learn what the chapter is about.

Question.

You need to have **questions** in your mind as you read. Questions give you a purpose for reading and help you stay focused on the reading assignment. Form questions by changing each chapter heading into a question. Use the words *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how* to form questions. For example, for the heading "Uses of Electricity" in a chapter about how science improves lives, you might form the question "What are some uses of electricity?" If a heading is stated as a question, use that question. When a heading contains more than one idea, form a question for each idea. Do not form questions for the Introduction, Summary, or Conclusion.

Read.

Read the information that follows each heading to find the answer to each question you formed. As you do this, you may decide you need to change a question or turn it into several questions to be answered. Stay focused and flexible so you can gather as much information as you need to answer each question.

Write.

Write each question and its answer in your notebook. Reread each of your written answers to be sure each answer is legible and contains all the important information needed to answer the question.

As you practice using SQRW, you will find you learn more and have good study notes to use to prepare for class participation and tests.



Good Listening In Class

It is important for you to be a good listener in class. Much of what you will have to learn will be presented verbally by your teachers. Just hearing what your teachers say is not the same as listening to what they say. Listening is a cognitive act that requires you to pay attention and think about and mentally process what you hear. Here are some things you should do to be a good listener in class.

▶ **Be Cognitively Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.**

Make sure you complete all assigned homework work and readings. Review your notes from previous classes. Think about what you know about the topic that will be covered in class that day.

▶ **Be Emotionally Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.**

Your attitude is important. Make a conscious choice to find the topic useful and interesting. Be committed to learning all that you can.

▶ **Listen with a Purpose.** Identify what you expect and hope to learn from the class session. Listen for these things as your teacher talks.

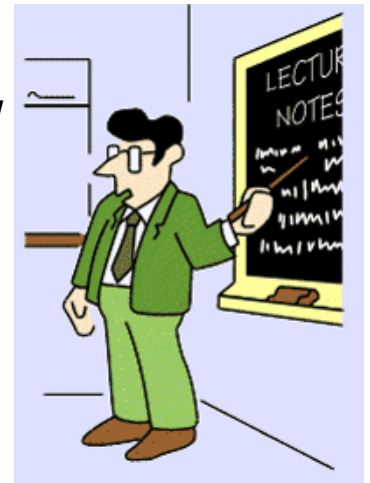
▶ **Listen with an Open Mind.** Be receptive to what your teacher says. It is good to question what is said as long as you remain open to points of view other than your own.

▶ **Be Attentive.** Focus on what your teacher is saying. Try not to daydream and let your mind wander to other things. It helps to sit in the front and centre of the class, and to maintain eye contact with your teacher.

▶ **Be an Active Listener.** You can think faster than your teacher can speak. Use this to your advantage by evaluating what is being said and trying to anticipate what will be said next. Take good written notes about what your teacher says. While you can think faster than your teacher can speak, you cannot write faster than your teacher can speak. Taking notes requires you to make decisions about what to write, and you have to be an active listener to do this.

▶ **Meet the Challenge.** Don't give up and stop listening when you find the information being presented difficult to understand. Listen even more carefully at these times and work hard to understand what is being said. Don't be reluctant to ask questions.

▶ **Triumph Over the Environment.** The classroom may too noisy, too hot, too cold, too bright, or too dark. Don't give in to these inconveniences. Stay focused on the big picture - LEARNING.



Direction Words In Essay Test Items

Most exam test items are not presented in the form of a question. Instead, they are often presented as a statement that includes a **direction word**. The direction word tells you what you should do when you write your answer to the item. Look for the direction word and be sure to do what it tells you to do.



Here are the direction words that are most frequently used in exam papers. The meaning of each direction word is provided and is followed by an example of a test item using that direction word. Get to know what each of these direction words tells you to do.

▶ **Analyse** - *Analyse* tells you to break something down into its parts and show how the parts relate to each other to make the whole.

Analyse the factors that contributed to the downfall of Fascism.

▶ **Compare** - *Compare* tells you to show how two or more things are BOTH similar and different.

Compare the forms of government found in the United States and in Ireland.

▶ **Contrast** - *Contrast* tells you to show how two or more things are different.

Contrast the Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael political platforms.

▶ **Define** - *Define* tells you to explain the meaning of something in a brief, specific manner.

Define what is meant by “living life to the fullest.”

▶ **Describe** - *Describe* tells you to present a full and detailed picture of something in words to include important characteristics and qualities.

Describe what it was like to live in ancient Rome.

▶ **Evaluate** - *Evaluate* tells you to present both the positive and negative characteristics of something.

Evaluate the impact of rap music on Irish youth.

▶ **Explain** - *Explain* tells you to provide facts and reasons to make something clear and understandable.

Explain why the Civil War occurred.

▶ **List** - *List* tells you to present information about something as a series of brief numbered points.

List the ingredients needed to bake bread.

▶ **Outline** - *Outline* tells you to present the most important information about something in a carefully organized manner.

Outline what it takes to be successful in school.

▶ **Summarise** - *Summarise* tells you to present the main points about something in a brief form.

Summarise how Thomas Edison's inventions have made our lives better.

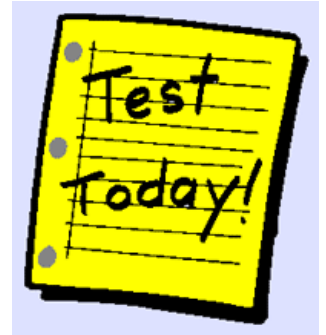
▶ **Trace** - *Trace* tells you to present the order in which something occurred.

Trace the major events that led to U.N.'s Declaration of Human Rights.

Test Anxiety

▶ WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY?

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety. It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test. In fact, a little anxiety can jump start your studying and keep you motivated. However, too much anxiety can interfere with your studying. You may have difficulty learning and remembering what you need to know for the test. Further, too much anxiety may block your performance during the test. You may have difficulty demonstrating what you know during the test.



▶ HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TEST ANXIETY?

You probably have test anxiety if you answer YES to four or more of the following:

1. I have a hard time getting started studying for a test. I expect to do poorly on a test no matter how much or how hard I study.
2. When taking a test, I experience physical discomfort such as sweaty palms, an upset stomach, a headache, and tension in my muscles.
3. When taking a test, I find it difficult to understand the directions and questions.
4. When taking a test, I have difficulty organizing my thoughts.
5. When taking a test, I often “draw a blank.”
6. I usually score lower on a test than I do on homework and classwork.

▶ WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT TEST ANXIETY?

Here are some things you can do *before*, *during*, and *after* a test to reduce your test anxiety.

1. Use good study techniques to gain cognitive mastery of the material that will be covered on the test. This mastery will help you to approach the test with confidence rather than have excessive anxiety.
2. Maintain a positive attitude as you study. Think about doing well, not failing. Think of the test as an opportunity to show how much you have learned.
3. Go into the test well rested and well fed. Get enough sleep the night before the test. Eat a light and nutritious meal before the test. Stay away from junk foods.
4. Stay relaxed during the test. Taking slow, deep breaths can help. Focus on positive self-statements such as “I can do this.”
5. Follow a plan for taking the test. Don’t panic even if you find the test difficult. Stay with your plan!
6. Don’t worry about other students finishing the test before you do. Take the time that you need to do your best.
7. Once you finish the test and hand it in, forget about it temporarily. There is nothing more you can do until the graded test is returned to you. Turn your attention and effort to the next test.
8. When the graded test is returned to you, analyse it to see how you could have done better. Learn from your mistakes and from what you did well. Apply this knowledge when you take the next test.

You have to know the material to do well on a test.

The DETER Strategy for Taking Tests



To do well on a test, you must have good knowledge of the information that is being tested. But you must also have a strategy for taking the test that allows you to show what you know. The DETER strategy can help you do your best on any test. Each letter in DETER reminds you what to do.

D = Directions

- ▶ Read the test directions very carefully.
- ▶ Ask your teacher to explain anything about the test directions you do not understand.
- ▶ Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the test.
- ▶ If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.

E = Examine

- ▶ Examine the entire test to see how much you have to do.
- ▶ Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.

T = Time

- ▶ Once you have examined the test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.
- ▶ Plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
- ▶ You must avoid spending so much time on one item.

E = Easiest

- ▶ The second E in DETER reminds you to answer the items you find easiest first.
- ▶ If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that test things you know.

R = Review

- ▶ If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- ▶ Make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Using the DETER strategy will help you do better on tests and get better grades.

Managing Your Study Time

There are only so many hours in a day, a week, and a term. You cannot change the number of hours, but you can decide how to best use them. To be successful in school, you must carefully manage your study time. Here is a strategy for doing this.

At the beginning of a term, prepare a Term Calendar. Update it as the term goes on. Here is what to do to prepare a Term Calendar.

- ▶ Record your subject projects with their due dates and your scheduled tests.
- ▶ Record your planned school activities.
- ▶ Record your known out-of-school activities.

Each Sunday before a school week, prepare a Weekly Schedule. Update it as the week goes on. Here is what to do to prepare a Weekly Schedule.

- ▶ Record your daily classes.
- ▶ Enter things to be done for the coming week from your Term Calendar.
- ▶ Review your class notes from the previous week to see if you need to add any school activities.
- ▶ Add any out-of-school activities in which you will be involved during the week.
- ▶ Be sure to include times for completing homework, working on projects, and studying for tests. These times may be during the school day, right after school, evenings, and weekends.



Each evening before a school day, prepare a Daily Organiser for the next day. Place a ✓ next to each thing to do as you accomplish it. Here is what to do to prepare a Daily Organiser.

- ▶ Enter the things to do for the coming day from your Weekly Schedule.
- ▶ Enter the things that still need to be accomplished from your Daily Organiser from the previous day.
- ▶ Review your class notes for the day just completed to see if you need to add any school activities.
- ▶ Add any out-of-school activities in which you will be involved the next day.

Your Weekly Schedule should have more detail than your Term Calendar. Your Daily Organiser should have more detail than your Weekly Schedule. Using a Term Calendar, a Weekly Schedule, and a Daily Organiser will help you make the best use of your time.