

# Study Skills of Successful Students

GRCC Counseling Services

# Genius, Grinder, Clueless?

## ▶ Genius

- Items 1 – 4: If you answered yes to one or more of the questions.

## ▶ Grinder

- Items 5 – 7: If you answered yes to one or more of the questions.

## ▶ Clueless

- Items 8 – 10: If you answered yes to one or more of the questions.

# Objectives

- ▶ How to study smarter, not harder
  - Take smart notes
  - Reading & other assignments
  - Know what you're going to be tested on
  - Quiz & recall method

# But First, Set the Stage for Smarter Studying

- ▶ When to study?
  - Early in the day is better.
  - The time between waking up and eating dinner.
- ▶ Where should you study?
  - In isolation is usually better, avoid big, public study spaces, your bedroom, heavy traffic areas.
  - Where to go: less-busy libraries / small study spaces, your local public library.

- ▶ How long should you study?
  - No more than one hour at a time without a break.
  - 50 minutes of studying = 5 – 10 minute break. Do something totally unrelated to your task (e.g., walk to your mailbox).
  - Avoid getting on-line during your break, or starting anything that can eat up your time.

# Take Smart Notes

- ▶ Notes for nontechnical courses (e.g., English, history, psychology)
  - Identify the big ideas
    - Don't try to record everything the instructor says.
    - Format aggressively: bullets, indentations, underlining, drawing boxes, circles, starring.
    - Date each note.

▶ Use this structure to take notes

- Question
- Evidence
- Conclusion
  - Some instructors won't state the question or conclusion. Leave it blank for now (it's a great reason to go to office hours!).

- ▶ Notes for technical courses (e.g., math, science)
  - Record as many sample problems as possible.
    - Get the details.
    - Follow the instructor's examples with your book open.
    - You may not get it all. At a minimum, write down the problem statement and answer.
    - Ask questions if you don't understand.
    - If you have extra time in class, go back and write in the steps, any explanations.

- ▶ After class, take 5 – 10 minutes to review and edit your notes.
- ▶ Listen to clues from the instructor about what he thinks is important. Pauses, voice changes, if you're really lucky, he'll say, "This is really important for the test."
- ▶ In-class discussion: clearly label the topic of discussion. Make note of your instructor's additions.

# Reading & Assignments

- ▶ Do the reading and be working assignments constantly.
- ▶ Figure out what is important.
  - Discussed in class = high priority.
  - Favored sources: texts or course reader that show up on the reading list most days of class.
  - Supplemental sources: papers, articles, transcripts, chapters from a book.

- ▶ How to prioritize readings:
  1. Makes an argument
  2. Describes an event
  3. Provides context (e.g., speech transcripts)

Whatever you don't get to, bring to class so you can follow along if it is covered.

- ▶ Take notes, using the same Question, Evidence, Conclusion format.
  1. Skim the entire reading, don't take notes yet.
  2. Find the question and conclusion.
  3. Make checkmarks next to important paragraphs that jump out.
  4. Go back to the checkmarks and write a summary of the point, with page #.

- ▶ **Work problem sets constantly**
  - Collaborate with classmates.
  - Identify 1 or 2 students who have a similar skill set as you. Prior to meeting, think through the answers yourself. Meet up a few days prior to the assignment being due in case you get stuck.
  - Use office hours!

# Know What You're Going to be Tested On

- ▶ Here's what you want to know about the test:
  - Which lectures and reading assignments (or problem sets) will be covered?
  - What kind of questions? Multiple choice? Essay? Short answer? Definitions? And how many of each?
  - Can we use notes? Book?
  - Will formulas be provided or do they need to be memorized?
  - How much time do we have?

Never be afraid to ask these or other questions!

# Quiz & Recall Method

- ▶ Here's what we know:
  - Passive learning doesn't work.
  - Cramming doesn't work in the long term.
  - The most effective way to imprint an idea is to first review it, then try to explain it, unaided, in your own words.

► For nontechnical courses

1. Make a practice quiz from your class notes and reading notes (remember your notes are in Question, Evidence, Conclusion format so this should be easy).
2. Go through the quiz and answer the questions, looking at each question and coming up with the conclusion as well as some evidence. Don't just do this in your head, say it out loud.
3. If you get stuck, put a checkmark and come back to it.

4. Take a break at this point.

5. Go back and repeat this process, but only answering questions with checkmarks.

6. Repeat this process until there are no questions you can't answer.

You spend the most study time with questions that are harder for you, and less time with questions that are easier for you.

► For technical courses

1. Start with technical explanation questions. It gets you thinking about concepts.

2. Then do the sample problems.

Remember to say the solutions out loud or write out the answers.

3. Use the quiz and recall method so you focus on the more difficult problems.

If you can't explain how you got the solution to the question, make sure you thoroughly review the problem.

# Review

- ▶ When, where, and how long to study.
- ▶ Take smart notes: Question, Evidence, Conclusion format.
- ▶ Read (take smart notes) and do assignments constantly.
- ▶ Find out what you're going to be tested on.
- ▶ The quiz and recall method is efficient and will help you focus your studying on problem areas.

*Maintain balance in your life. Eat well,  
rest well, laugh, spend time with  
friends and family.*

School is a challenge, but it's also supposed to  
be one of the best times in your life!