



Study Skills

The Skills You Need
Guide for Students

SKILLS YOU NEEDED
Helping You Develop Life Skills

The Skills You Need Guide for Students

STUDY SKILLS

Skills You Need

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most frequent complaints heard from students is that nobody has ever taught them to study.

Wherever you live or go to school, learning at school tends to be very structured: you attend lessons, taught by teachers working within a clear curriculum of subjects. You are likely to be given assignments to be completed independently, particularly as you get older and move through the school system, but deadlines are often firmly fixed, and schools try to timetable work to avoid putting too much stress on their students with competing deadlines.

Contrast this with college or university, where learning is expected to be student-led. After all, you chose to be there, so you must know what you want to learn, or so the thinking goes. Study subjects are often optional, and many students are expected to pick their own courses and decide what they want to study when.

No wonder that many students find the move from school to university or college a challenge.

This guide from Skills You Need is designed as a practical help to students, both at school and beyond, to help them to develop the skills to study effectively. It is aimed at learners across all disciplines and in different life circumstances: full and part-time students, those returning to education later in life, those engaged in professional development and anybody who wants to learn how to learn effectively.

From basic organisational skills like time management and self-motivation, through to effective reading and note-taking techniques and essay-writing, it provides help and advice on how to manage both yourself and your studies.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is divided into sections covering different areas of skills that you will need to develop for successful study: getting organised, staying organised and motivated, reading and thinking, problem-solving and analysis, note-taking, writing, research and revision.

It contains information to help you understand why particular skills are important and how they can help you, and advice about how to develop them.

Practical advice can be identified by the use of the 'toolkit' logo next to the section, and is often contained in text boxes.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

THIS BOOK COVERS A VARIETY OF SKILLS RELATED TO STUDY, INCLUDING:

1. STUDY SKILLS AND LEARNING STYLES

This first chapter introduces the idea of study skills, and also learning styles. Each of us has a preferred learning style, and this chapter explains two models: Honey and Mumford's learning styles, and the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic model very popular in schools.



This section explains how to use different experiences and types of learning to improve your learning experiences, and get more out of your study.

2. GETTING ORGANISED TO STUDY

Getting organised is an important first step to effective study. You need to consider some basic organisational skills – fundamentals such as where and when to study, and the importance of developing a network of contacts who can help you when you need it.

You also need to find time to study. We discuss the basic principles of time management with reference to study. If you manage your time badly, you will be less productive, which can lead to stress and anxiety.



This section will help you by outlining the importance of a personal study timetable and how to set goals and prioritise your time.

3. STAYING ORGANISED AND MOTIVATED

It is one thing to get organised, and quite another to remain organised and motivated throughout a course of study, especially one lasting several years. This section discusses some useful ideas to help with ongoing time management and prioritisation, together with how to minimise distractions and avoid procrastination. It also discusses possible motivations, as it may be easier to stay motivated if you understand why you are studying.



This section describes the Priority Matrix, a very useful time management tool, and also a list of things you can do to avoid procrastination.

4. READING AND THINKING

You may think that you know how to read and think. After all, you have been doing this since you were tiny. But there is a huge difference between simply allowing your eyes to pass across words, and critically examining their content. When studying, it is likely that you will need to read a lot of information – and you will wish to use this time as effectively as possible by developing your reading skills.



Discover ways that you can engage with your reading, form links, understand opinions and put ideas and research into perspective. In short, develop your reading skills.

This section also discusses the importance of critical reading and thinking, and explains why these skills are fundamental to true learning, personal development and advancement.



This section covers how to develop a personal reading strategy and use it to help you manage your reading.

5. PROBLEM-SOLVING AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Being able to solve problems, including analysing situations, and also to use analytical skills to critically examine your reading, are crucial skills for students. Problem-solving will be useful both in and outside the classroom.



This section provides a framework for problem-solving which can be applied to any problem, and also outlines the essential questions to consider when reading and analysing information.

6. MAKING NOTES

Whatever your course of study, being able to make effective notes will enable you to review and, later, recall what you have read and heard about the subject. You will probably need to make notes from both your reading, and from lectures, seminars and classes.



This section explains how to take notes effectively from reading, or from lectures and classes, to enable you to refresh your memory later.

7. WRITING

As a student, you will almost certainly have to submit written assignments, including essays and reports, and possibly a longer piece of work such as a dissertation or thesis.

It pays to think carefully about and plan an essay or other piece of written work before you start writing, and the writing process itself can also be a challenge. Many students also struggle to reference correctly.

This section discusses how to choose a suitable writing style. It also provides a framework for planning and writing assignments that will help ensure your work is relevant, well-constructed and produced efficiently.

It explains how to find style guides, and work out how to format your references.

Finally, we provide a checklist to use before you submit your assignment to help you avoid potentially embarrassing or costly mistakes and increase the credibility of your work.

You should not regard submitting your work as the end of the process. You can learn a lot by engaging with the feedback you receive from a marker when your work is returned.



This section helps you to develop habits of reflecting on your marked work. It is important not just to look at the bottom line, the mark, but also to understand the comments and feedback and learn from any mistakes.

8. RESEARCH

Your course of study may or may not require you to do any 'new' research: that is, research on a new area which has not previously been studied. However, you will be required to do extensive research to learn more about subjects which you are studying.

As a learner you will be required to engage with theory, but exactly what is a theory? A theory is an attempt to provide understanding - theories attempt to answer the question 'why?' and therefore satisfy curiosity.



This discusses sources of information for study and how you can source such information in a library or online. It provides a brief introduction to some of the ideas behind research design.

9. REVISION SKILLS

Revising for examinations can be a real challenge for many people. Regardless of how many exams you have taken in the past, there are always new techniques that you can try to help with your revision process.



This section provides some key skills to make your revision time as productive and effective as possible, leaving you better prepared for exams and tests.

We hope that you will find this book useful in helping with your learning process.

The Skills You Need Team.

The full book is available in the [SkillsYouNeed Shop](#)

Part of The Skills You Need Guide for Students

