

STUDY SKILLS

Text of the A.S.P.I.R.E. exercise:

A: Approach/attitude/arrange

- Approach your studies with a positive attitude
- Arrange your schedule to eliminate distractions

S: Select/survey/scan

- Select a reasonable chunk of material to study
- Survey the headings, graphics, pre- and post-questions to get an overview
- Scan the text for keywords and vocabulary: mark what you don't understand

P: Piece together the parts:

- Put aside your books and notes
- Piece together what you've studied, either alone, with a study pal or group: summarize what you understand.

I: Investigate/inquire/inspect:

- Investigate alternative sources of information you can refer to: other text books, websites, experts, tutors, etc.
- Inquire from support professionals (academic support, librarians, tutors, teachers, experts,) and other resources for assistance
- Inspect what you did not understand.

R: Reexamine/reflect/relay

- **Reexamine:**
What questions are there yet to ask? Is there something I am missing?
- **Reflect:**
How can I apply this to my project? Is there a new application for it?
- **Relay:**
Can I explain this to my fellow students? Will they understand it better if I do?

E: Evaluate/examine/explore:

- Evaluate your grades on tests and tasks: look for a pattern
- Examine your progress: toward achieving your goals
- Explore options: with a teacher, support professional, tutor, parent if you are not satisfied.

Index study system

Here is a method of studying that gives you an accurate perception of how well you know the material, and forces you to think about it, rather than just look over it.

Review your notes and readings frequently, so the material is "fresh"

- As you're reading your text or reviewing your notes, write down questions about the material. Imagine you're teaching the course. What questions would you ask on the exam?

Keep track of any terms you need to know

Try the index card system:

- Write each question or term on the back of an index card.
- On the front of each index card, write an answer or an explanation for the question or term on the back.
- Use your notes and text for a reference, but put the answer or explanation in your own words whenever possible.

Shuffle the index cards

so you can't figure out any answers based on their location in the deck.

Look at the card on the top of the deck:

- Try to answer the question or explain the term.
- If you know it, great! Put it on the bottom of the deck.
- If you don't know it, look at the answer, and put it a few cards down in the deck (so you'll come back to it soon.)
- Proceed through the deck of cards until you know all of the information.

Some Tips:

- **Carry your cards with you everywhere.**
Take advantage of little pockets of time.
Test yourself while you're waiting on line, riding the bus, etc.
- **If you think you know an answer**, but can't put it into words, you probably don't know it well enough.
Explaining the information is a good way to be sure that you know it.
It's also a good way to prevent test anxiety.
- **Test yourself someplace where nobody can see you** and recite the answers out loud.
That's the best way to be sure that you can explain them.
- **Study with a friend from your class.**
You can share ideas and help each other out with concepts.
You can use each other to make sure that you're explaining your answers adequately.

American classroom learning

Compared to classrooms in some countries, United States' classrooms tend to be informal. There are, however, some very important basic rules:

Before class:

- **Do your homework!**
Read critically; form your own opinions
- **Review your notes**
from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- **Communicate immediately with professors**
about any study problems
- **Focus on the task at hand before class:**
take a moment of silence to gather your thoughts and mentally prepare yourself to the topic
- **Write any objectives**
that come to mind at the head of your notepaper:
 - preparing for an up-coming test,
 - understanding a particular concept,
 - gaining a good foundation on a topic
 - understanding or reviewing the readings

In Class:

- **Arrive on time for class.**
Professors do not take lateness lightly
- **Position yourself in the classroom**
to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for:
 - listening
 - asking questions
 - seeing visual materials
 - discussing--not only with the teacher but also your classmates
- **Avoid distractions**
that may interfere with your concentration
(daydreaming, looking around the room, talking to a friend, passing notes, dozing)
- **Evaluate as you listen:**
 - Decide what is important and should be placed in your notes and what can be left out;
 - Listen long enough to be sure you understand what was said before writing.
 - *Ask clarifying questions* (but wait for "breaks" in the instructor's stream).
- **Review your class objective(s)** throughout the class period

- Did your objective(s) mesh with the instructor's introductory remarks?
- Has the class digressed from stated objectives, yours or the instructor's?
- **Make a to do list including**
 - assignments;
 - reviewing difficult concepts;
 - joining study groups;
 - making appointments with a study pal, tutor, or the instructor.

One resource often overlooked is a classmate who seems to have a good grasp of the material. If it seem appropriate, seek the individual out for help.

Periodically ask yourself if the course is meeting your objectives. If you find yourself dissatisfied with a particular class or the course in general, make an appointment with the instructor to discuss your expectations. The earlier, the better.