

# FOCUS

## Challenge? Reaction? Insight? Action

### Chapter Nine – Reading and Studying

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#### Challenge Case - Katie Alexander

Chapter 9 begins with the Katie Alexander's case on pages 196-197. Read Katie's story then review the *REACTION – What Do YOU Think?* questions. Does Katie's story relate to your own experience in some way?

What basic academic skills do most students need in order to be successful in college? Hopefully you answered, reading, writing, and math. Of these three, which one do you need for the other two? **READING** is the key to academic success. This chapter will provide you with important techniques that can help you improve your reading and study skills.

#### **12 essential points to help you tackle college reading assignments. (Staley, 199-200)**

1. Understand what being a good reader is all about. Learn where your “comprehension check out” is when you are reading. This will take some practice. Start with reading a page then stopping and asking yourself what you just read. If you can't answer your question, then reread.
2. Take Stock of your own reading challenges
3. Adjust your reading style
4. Have a conversation with the author

5. Dissect the text
6. Make detailed notes
7. Put things into context
- 8. Don't avoid the tough stuff (Refer to the SQ4R attachment found in the Learning Module)**
9. Learn the language
10. Bring your reading to class
11. Ask for a demonstration
12. Be inventive

Reading skills are not only important in school, but also in getting a job and keeping a job. Many employers today require job applicants to take a reading, writing, and math evaluation. Developing effective reading strategies may give a competitive edge in the job market.

Developing effective reading strategies may take time. Have patience! Evaluate which strategies work best for you and which do not. Eventually you will become a proficient reader. Remember the old saying, "practice makes perfect!" Your instructor is always a valuable resource. Don't hesitate to stop by your instructor's office for help with understanding the reading material. Instructors typically welcome questions.

Don't read when you are hurried ... you won't retain what you have read. Plan quiet time to read. If you have children, plan to read when they are napping or have gone to bed for the evening. When I went back to school to work on a master's degree, I worked full-time. My studying and reading time was after work in the evenings and on the weekends. It takes dedication and commitment.

As Staley states on page 205 "one way to become a better reader is by gaining a deeper understanding of how English works." What are specific challenges of understanding how English works?

- Sounds
- Syllables
- Spelling
- Vocabulary

*Tip for the day ...* if you come across a word or hear a word that you do not know the meaning of, look it up and begin using it in your vocabulary. For example, "I hope you are taking copious notes in your classes." If you don't know what *copious* means ... look it up! Expanding your vocabulary by learning new words and using them will help you become a better communicator. When you have enhanced word power, you read, write, speak, and understand others better.

## **Reading Pyramid Plan** (Santrock and Halonen (p. 167))

preview

skimming

active

analytical

Preview – Find out what is expected of the reading assignment. Then review the length and difficulty of the assignment. For instance, you have a reading assignment to read *Who Moved My Cheese?* When you first purchased this book, you should have opened it to see the number of pages and style of the book. *Who Moved My Cheese?* is a short book of 93 pages; however, if you had been assigned *Harry Potter* to read, then your reading plan would be different.

Skimming – Skimming is a great way to get a grasp of what the reading assignment is about. When skimming a chapter, you are looking at titles, words in bold, etc. to get a gist of what the reading is about.

Active Reading – ask questions as you are reading and make notes

Analytic Reading – Question the author and yourself as you are reading the assignment intensely.

## **KNOW HOW TO READ PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES**

Primary source – “is material written in some original form such as autobiographies, speeches, research reports, scholarly articles, government documents, and historical journal articles.” (Santrock/Halonen pg169)

Secondary source – “summarize or interpret primary sources.” For example, magazines and textbooks

Scholarly Research – “articles in academic journals” (Staley, p 199)

## **MASTER READING IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES**

For this section, I have attached in the Chapter 9 Learning Module tips from several Greenville Tech instructors; Dr. Kevin Morris, English; Patty Amick, Math and Dr. Norm Raiford, History. Pay close attention to their tips for studying their discipline.

Literature

- Use your imagination
- Look for connections
- Make the author real
- Make a chart
- Predict what will happen
- Read aloud

History

- Put yourself in the picture
- Change history
- Imagine or draw the timeline
- Make it into a movie

- Don't forget the big picture  
Natural and Social Science
- Keep a running glossary of terms
- Accept the role of numbers
- Think practically
- Look for links in the news
- Cruise the Internet
- Look for overlaps

### **TAKE GREAT READING NOTES**

Highlighting ... DO NOT highlight every word/sentence on the page! If you do this you have made no study trail to return to later. If you highlight every word, you will only have to read the passage again. Instead, highlight the "lightbulb" sentence, vocabulary words, bold print.

### **Metacognition**

"**Metacognition** is "thinking about your thinking and learning about your learning. It is about knowing yourself as a learner and about your ability and motivation to control your own learning." (Staley, 212)

Master Study Plan Tips (Staley, pgs 214-215) Be sure to refer to your text for examples

1. Make sure you understand the assignment
2. Schedule yourself to be three places at once
3. Talk through your learning challenges
4. Be a stickler
5. Take study breaks
6. Mix it up
7. Review, review, review
8. Find a study buddy
9. Estimate how long it will take
10. Vary your study techniques by course content
11. Study earlier, rather than later
12. Create artificial deadlines for yourself
13. Treat school as a job
14. Show up

### **Plan a Study Attack!**

First step of the plan of attack is "**Where to Study?**" .(Sanrock/Halonen,p. 187)

First visit the <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html> Take the *Study Environment Analysis*.  
Review the *Control of the Study Environment*.

Where to study begins the plan of attack. The place you study may not be the best place for your friend to study and vice versa. How many of you think you need background noise? The type of background noise you choose is important. If you have your favorite TV show on as

“background” noise, you are not giving your full attention to your studies. If you have the radio on your favorite station, you are not giving your full attention to your studies. The television is probably not the best place to study even for those who prefer some type of background noise. Find something that fills the silence but does not take your thoughts away from your studies.

Some of you prefer total silence. That can sometimes be challenging. The library has study rooms that can be reserved to study. If you have children and you need silence to study, plan your study time after the children go to bed. Actually, for anyone who is a parent of small children, studying is more productive after the kids are in bed.

Now, let’s discuss where the best place for you to study might be. What were your results from *Study Environment Analysis* (<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html>)? Probably the best place to study is not the comfy recliner, which is probably in front of the TV. Also, studying on your bed will encourage naps while studying. Find a comfortable spot and room and study at the same place each day. Studying at a desk or table is one of the best places. However, the key to where you study is what is going around you while you are studying.

The second step of the plan of attack is **“When to Study”** (Santrock/Halonen, page 188)

You should make a commitment to review your notes after each lecture. As you review your notes each day, begin making “note cards” or flash cards. Making note cards begins the study process for your test. Also, making the cards is a study process.

You now know you should review your notes each day; however, when is the best time to study for a test? Have you ever heard the phrase your “biological rhythm?” ... not to be confused with your biological clock. What is a biological rhythm? When asked the question are you a day or night person, what is your response? Understanding if you are a day or night person is huge when determining the best time of day for you to study. If you are a morning person, then you would want to plan study time when you first get up. If you are night person, your best studying is going to be in the evening.

The third and final step of the plan of attack is **“What to Study”** (Santrock/Halonen, page 189)

Go back to Chapter 4 – Time Management. Time management is an important factor to determine what to study. Remember the word prioritization. Prioritization is key when determining what to study. The bigger projects require taking small steps to accomplish. Use your term planner that you completed for chapter four to schedule your study plan for each day.

You will find documents in this learning module from professors of several different disciplines. I have asked Dr. Kevin Morris, English faculty, Dr. Norm Raiford, history faculty and Patty Amick, math faculty to list tips for studying for their particular discipline.

### **JOIN A STUDY GROUP**

I didn't learn the true benefit of a study buddy or study group until I went back to graduate school. The benefits of a study buddy or study group are grand. First, if your "light bulb" did not shine bright in class maybe your study buddy's bulb did. Same with a study group, it is a place where you can discuss the lecture or project. Second, if you miss a class, then you have someone designated to get notes and handouts for you.

There will be times when you are assigned to work in groups on projects and assignments for different classes. Some instructors assign group grades; some may assign individual grades for each group member.

### **OVERCOME LEARNING DISABILITIES**

If you know or think you have a learning disability that could require accommodations in your classroom, please visit Sharon Bellwood in the Student Disabilities Office.

### **EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS**

Again, another tip from my graduate school days is making your own test. To define how well you have mastered the information create your own tests. Make the test fill-in-the-blank or short answer. Actually, creating the test is a study process because you are reviewing the material as you are creating the test. Once the test is completed, print about 5 copies of the test. (you should begin studying 3-5 days prior to the test) Take the first test then grade yourself critically. Study, then take the test again the next day and so on. By testing yourself you are taking away the "deer in the headlight" moment that sometimes happens when taking a test. You know ... the feeling of I remember the question and know the answer but just can't recall it during test time. Sometimes when studying, your mind will play tricks on you. As you review the material, you assume that you know it because it is familiar and you understand it. However, to have to recall it verbatim without the text or your notes may be another story. By using a practice test, you are verifying what you know and what you still need to study.

### **STAYING ORGANIZED**

Another tip, as you begin a new test block on the first page of your notes in big print should be TEST 2 BEGINS HERE! By doing this, you will not have to locate where studying should begin. Each set of lecture notes should be dated. Also, any hand-outs you are given, write on the top

of the page, TEST 2 and the Date. I am using Test 2 as an example. Of course, you would write the current test period you are studying.