

10 Study Tips for Students with Learning Disabilities

©2010 Joan M. Azarva, MS.ED

It is not uncommon these days for students to enter college lacking effective study skills. The sooner one acquires the habits below, the easier it will be when the time comes to cross the college threshold.

- ◆ **DO NOT miss class.** Continuity is essential to your success and skipping classes is the quickest road to failure. If you *must* miss a class due to illness, be sure to get the notes from a responsible classmate and come back prepared with the required homework. **DO NOT FALL BEHIND!**
- ◆ **Review your class notes within 24 hours of taking them.** Reading or re-copying your notes within 24 hours starts the material on its journey to your long-term memory. When you go back to class, the material will be fresh in your mind, and the new lecture will make more sense.
- ◆ **Identify what's important while you read, and either highlight and mark in the margins of you textbook, or take notes on a separate page.** This makes you an "active" reader. You can't daydream while you're writing. A chapter should be read only once, at which time you extract everything important. When the time comes for a test, study your highlighted and marked material as well as your class notes.
- ◆ **Translate terminology into *your own words* as often as possible.** Think about what you are reading and write it in your own words in the margin of the textbook or on note paper. Since it's now in *your* language, you're more likely to be able to understand and remember it.
- ◆ **Study in short, frequent sessions.** Study for 20 minutes at a time, take a five-minute break, study another 20 minutes, etc. The operative words here are *short* and *frequent*! This method assures that your attention will be 100% when you study.
- ◆ **Start studying a week before a test.** Give yourself plenty of time for the information to enter your long-term memory
- ◆ **Make flash cards.** Flash cards are effective for several reasons: they are portable, they involve writing the material (which helps you learn it), and they give you immediate feedback. When you practice with flashcards, separate the ones you know from the ones you don't. Concentrate on the "no" pile, until you are able to put all the cards together. Now, review them all. If you get them all right 3

consecutive times, you have *over-learned* the material and can feel confident going into the test.

- ◆ **Ask your instructor for a copy of an old test on which to practice.** You won't always receive a "yes" on this request because some instructors re-use tests year to year. Regardless, you must take *some* kind of practice test as a rehearsal. It is likely your textbook has a companion website with end-of-chapter interactive exercises.
 - ◆ **Most importantly, STUDY ACTIVELY!** Active studying involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, and doing—as well as frequent review. When you engage all your senses, it takes the tedium out of studying. Try to vary your technique each session. For example, study with a tape recorder, make up your own practice test, teach the material to a classmate, form a study group, recite the material while on a treadmill, etc.
-

Joan M. Azarva, Ms.ED, an expert college Learning Specialist, received her Master's degree in Reading from the University of Pennsylvania and has been working with students with learning differences for over three decades. Since 1993, due to the well-documented low post secondary success rate of this cohort, Joan's exclusive focus has been on proactive measures—that is, teaching high school students what they need to know in order to achieve college success. You can view her blog and subscribe to her list serv at: <http://www.conquercollegewithld.com>. You can e-mail Joan at: info@conquercollegewithld.com