

## **TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY SKILLS**

### **I. Be Responsible and Be Active--For There Is No Other Road to Academic Success!**

Responsibility means control. Your grade in a class is relatively free of any variables other than your own effort. Sure, you may have a lousy professor. It happens. But remember: you are the one who has to live with your grade. It goes on your grade report, not your instructor's.

If you are seeking a way of increasing learning and improving grades without increasing your study time, active classroom participation is your answer. Look at it this way: classroom time is something to which you are already committed. So, you can sit there, assume the "bored student position"--arms crossed, slumped in the chair, eyes at half-mast--and allow yourself an "out-of-body" experience. Or, you can maximize your classroom time by actively listening, thinking, questioning, taking notes, and participating totally in the learning experience.

### **II. Know Your "Hot Buttons" and Push Them Regularly!**

The next time you seat yourself in class, ask yourself these questions:

- What am I doing here?
- Why have I chosen to be sitting here now?
- Is there some better place I could be?
- What does my presence here mean to me?

Your responses to these questions represent your educational goals. They are the "hot buttons," and they are, without a doubt, the most important factors in your success as a college student.

College is not easy. Believe it or not, there will be times when you tire of being a student. And that's when a push or two on the hot buttons can pull you through!

### **III. If You Have Questions, Ask Them. If Not, Make Some!**

Just as a straight line usually indicates the shortest distance between two points, questions generally provide the quickest route between ignorance and knowledge. In addition to securing knowledge that you seek, asking questions has at least two other extremely important benefits. The process helps you pay attention to your professor and helps your professor pay attention to you.

### **IV. Know That You and Your Professor Are a Team-- Be a Team Player!**

Most instructors want exactly what you want: they would like for you to learn the material in their respective class and earn a good grade. After all, successful students reflect well on the efforts of any teacher; if you learned your stuff, the instructor takes some justifiable pride in teaching.

### **V. Don't Park Your Butt in the Back!**

Suppose you pay \$50 to buy concert tickets for your favorite musical artist. Do you choose front row seats or the cheap seats at the rear of the auditorium? Why do some students who spend far more money on a college education than on concerts willingly place themselves in the last row of the classroom? In class, the back row gives invisibility and anonymity, both of which are antithetical to efficient and effective learning.

**VI. Don't Write in Your Notes What You Don't Understand!**

Avoid the "whatinthehellisthat" phenomenon experienced by most college students. This unique reaction occurs when students first review their notes for a major examination. Being unable to read, decipher, or comprehend the mess that passes for notes, students are likely to utter the expression that grants this particular phenomenon its name.

**VII. If Your Interest in Class Is Gone, Fake It!**

If you are a good actor, you may even fool yourself into liking the lecture. How do you fake interest? You simply assume the "interested student position": lean forward, place your feet flat on the floor in front of you, maintain eye contact with your professor, smile or nod occasionally as though you understand and care about what your instructor is saying, take notes, and ask questions.

**VIII. Know That If Silence Is Golden, Then Recitation Is Platinum!**

Recitation is not only good for checking whether or not you know something, it's perhaps the best method for learning it in the first place. Reciting unquestionably provides the most direct route between short-term and long-term memory.

**IX. Remember That Cram Is a Four-Letter Word!**

If there is one thing that study skills specialists agree on, it is that divided periods of study are more efficient and effective than a single period of condensed study. In other words, you will learn more, remember more, and earn a higher grade if you prepare for Friday's examination by studying one hour a night, Monday through Thursday, rather than studying for four hours straight on Thursday evening

**X. Don't Procrastinate—and Start Not Doing It Right Now!**

An elemental truth: you will either control time or be controlled by it! There is no middle ground. It's your choice: you can lead or be led, establish control or relinquish control, steer your own course or have it dictated to you. When I ask students which they prefer, choosing their own path or having it chosen for them, they almost uniformly select the first option. In spite of this response, however, failure to take control of their own time is probably the no. 1 study skills problem of college students.

So, these are the Ten Commandments for Effective Study Skills. They work, but don't take my word for it. Try them! Use them! Make them your own. What have you got to lose except poor grades and sleepless study nights?

--by Larry M. Ludewig, Kilgore College, in the Kennesaw State College (GA) newsletter, *Reaching Through Teaching*, Spring 1991