

**Supplemental Instruction**  
**Biology 1441**  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Handout 1A. Successful Study Skills**

Welcome to Supplemental Instruction! By attending these sessions, you have already taken the first steps towards your eventual success both in this class and beyond. Always remember that you are all very intelligent students, and that you can achieve the success of your dreams if you put your mind to it. Through my college experience, I have learned that successful study skills are essential to achieving the desired academic victory. Therefore, I have decided to devote the first few handouts of this semester's SI towards helping you to develop a basic set of successful study skills, which you can have at your immediate disposal throughout your academic career. There are many books and resources devoted to developing your study skills, especially at the UTA Central Library and many other locations. In addition, the Counseling Services at UTA offers many free and excellent seminars on improving your study skills. I would encourage you to please take advantage of these many resources, so that you may be able to make the most of your academic career. As for this initial series of handouts, I have called upon the assistance of a prominent college learning text, as well as my own personal experience with studying, to help me develop these handouts for you. Any book that you may find on study skills is valuable. Please take the time to study this handout at your convenience.

I. Concentration

Successful learning comes through concentration and focus. Concentration is not some kind of hereditary gift that only a lucky few possess, but a skill that can be easily learned and enhanced through positive thinking and hard work. Students often find it difficult to concentrate on their assignments. The reason for their difficulty is that they may be distracted either externally or internally. Let's take a closer look at what these distractions are and how they may be resolved.

A. External Distractions

External distractions are those that come from your physical environment, such as a messy room, the television, your friends and roommates, etc.

## Steps to Reduce External Distractions

1. *Create an academically positive environment.* In order to create a place for successful studying, you need to create a place that says “study.” Choose a place that is neat and quiet, for example, the library or your bedroom.
2. *Use an assignment calendar or book.* An assignment book allows you to organize and prioritize your assignments, papers, examinations and other obligations according to date and time. This helps you to keep track of your tasks and maximize your success.
3. *Use a weekly schedule.* In this series of handouts, I have included a handout entitled 1B. Time Management Schedule. I have produced this handout to help you plan out your week efficiently, and maximize the time available for studying.
4. *Maintain a healthy lifestyle.* Your physical health and well-being are also very important to your academic success. Maintain a healthy diet and regular exercise to help you focus your mental energies on your assignments.

## B. Internal Distractions

Internal distractions come from within. They may be caused by worries and tensions that continuously bother you while you try to study. Some examples may include bills to pay, phone calls to make, laundry to do, papers to complete, and exams to study for.

## Steps to Reduce Internal Distractions

1. *Make a list.* Make a list of your immediate concerns and write some possible solutions for them. This will help clear your mind further.
2. *Think positive.* A pattern of negative thinking can prevent you from making good grades. Positive affirmations, such as “I will make an A,” and “I will succeed” can help you to promote more better thought patterns and increase your performance. Believe in yourself.
3. *Improve your self-esteem.* The way you feel about yourself can impact how you approach studying and examinations. If you are not confident in your abilities, then you might find it difficult to summon the motivation and effort to study. Therefore, it is vital to improve your self-concept, or the way you perceive yourself. The following are some ways to make you feel better about yourself:
  - a. Remind yourselves of past successes. When you feel slightly depressed about an approaching exam, remind yourselves of past achievements, and know that you have been successful in the past and will be in the future.
  - b. Take an inventory of your positive traits. Take some time to have an inventory

of your positive traits and how they can help you in being academically successful. All human beings are blessed with many qualities and we are all capable of great success.

c. Reward yourself after every accomplishment. Always be sure to reward yourself whenever you make a good grade on a test, finish reading a difficult chapter, or complete a research paper. Spend some recreational time with your friends, go out to the movies, have some pizza, or whatever your heart desires. These activities, however modest they may seem, can have extensive rejuvenating properties, and will help boost your self-esteem. Do not be concerned as to whether the accomplishment is important enough for you to deserve a reward, reward yourself nonetheless.

## II. Effective Textbook Studying

Reading a science textbook is obviously a unique experience. Reading a science textbook is different than reading a novel, for example. Science textbooks require concentration and a systematic approach to successfully extract the relevant information and absorb it efficiently. In this section, I will discuss with you how to successfully make the best of college science textbooks.

### Steps to Effective Textbook Studying

1. *The Concept Of Schemata.* Students are often unfamiliar with the concept of schemata. A schema is basically the existing framework of knowledge we have on a particular subject. For example, if someone were to say “photosynthesis”, you would probably think of plants and how they get energy. As you learn more and progress through your academic career, your schema of any topic grows. The first time you study through a topic is difficult, but the second time is much easier. So always remember that the more you study and learn, the smarter you become.

2. *Preview.* Previewing the textbook helps you familiarize yourself with the content of the chapter. It makes reading a lot easier because your brain has already been exposed to the material and thus, expanded your already present schema. Let’s take a look at the basic ways to preview.

a. Open to the first page of the chapter, and just casually flip through the pages looking at the words, the layout of the page, any charts, pictures, diagrams, titles, and bolded words.

b. Now return to the first page of the chapter and let’s go deeper into the previewing process. After having glanced through the chapter, now again go through the chapter and this time read the titles, subtitles, bolded words, sentences in italics, and captions.

c. Now read the summary. Reading the summary at the end of the chapter introduces you to the main concepts of the chapter.

3. *Make a time and amount goal.* Now that you have successfully previewed the chapter, take a moment to make a time and amount goal. From your previous experience with reading, determine an amount of pages that you can read with reasonable effort. Along with this, estimate how much time you might need to read the pages. Always remember to be reasonable and realistic.

4. *Create some enthusiasm.* Now that you have previewed and decided how much you would like to read, you may sometimes find yourself without a decent level of interest in the material. There is nothing to worry, since this a common feeling for all students. Just sit back a moment and ask yourself “what would I like to learn about this topic?” Write down some questions that came to you while you were previewing the chapter. This will help you to focus your mind and make the reading more interesting. Reading a college-level science textbook is an active process.

5. *Start reading.* Now you are finally ready to start your reading. By this time you may have realized that the task is not as daunting as it may have seen before. You have already done a great deal of the work. But the question comes about what should I do while I am reading? There are many activities that have been recommended by learning experts, which include note-taking, annotating, and outlining. All of these are beneficial, but I believe that it is better to do these activities after you have read a certain amount.

6. *Take breaks.* The importance of this point cannot be emphasized further. Taking breaks give your body a chance to relax and refresh. Most importantly, it gives your mind a chance to subconsciously organize the material and store it.

7. *Review.* When you have completed your reading goal, you can review. There are many ways to review. A very good way to review the chapter would be to write your own brief summary. This helps you to exercise your mind and organize your knowledge.

8. *Reward yourself.* You have succeeded in your reading goal, and you deserve a reward. Be proud of yourself and appreciate all of your accomplishments.

This brings to conclusion our first series of handouts on study skills. By reading and studying this handout, you have acquired a very powerful set of tools that will open many doors of success and progress, as you continue through your academic career. Always remember to be positive and believe in yourself.

### Bibliography

Smith, Brenda D. Bridging the Gap: College Reading. Addison Wesley Educational Publishers: 2000.