

The 5 Types of Studying

By Dennis Congos, University of Central Florida

Many learners don't realize that there are *5 Types of Studying* needed for academic success. As a result, many learners are not able to use their full potential to learn and earn higher grades. Using the 5 types has the advantage of keeping studying time to a minimum to earn whatever grades for which one chooses to work. The *5 Types of Studying* are most effective when used regularly from the day of the 1st assignment or lecture in each class.

If lack of knowledge about the subject matter has held your test and final course grades down, maybe it's because you haven't been using All 5 Types of Studying in your learning.

Type #1. Studying to Gather Information.

The purpose is to **formulate a complete and accurate set of textbook and lecture notes**. This requires a means to determine if notes are complete and accurate. Some ways to do this are:

- a. **Identify the information to be learned** in classes and text books using the clues to main ideas and details that are given in lectures and textbooks.
- b. **Organize, condense, and record** information in a format that promotes learning such as using notecards, the Cornell System, or outlines. Many other formats inhibit learning.
- c. **Verify the completeness and accuracy of your notes**. Simply thinking, assuming, feeling, or believing notes are complete and accurate doesn't make them so.

Too many students erroneously believe that they learn from lectures and textbooks. In reality, it is what is done with the information from lectures and textbooks that results in learning.

Type #2. Studying to Learn Information.

The purpose is to **move information from short-term memory into long-term memory**. This requires a means for repeated recitation of material to be learned. Some ways to do this are:

- a. **Make times in your schedule** to do repeated recitations of your lecture and textbook notes.
- b. **Make a notecard** with the details on one side and the main idea on the other.
- c. **Look at a main idea with the details hidden from view and recite aloud**, as if lecturing a class, all the details you can remember, without looking.
- e. Then, **look at the details to check** for accuracy and completeness of your recall.

- f. **If you recited completely and accurately** on the 1st try, put that card in the "I know this" pile or mark that material as learned and review this material 2 or 3 times per week to prevent the normal process of forgetting.
- g. **If your recitation was incorrect or incomplete**, read the details aloud to yourself until you "think" you can recite the details correctly from memory and then repeat steps c - g. Once you can recite the details completely and accurately from memory, place that card in the "not yet learned" pile and move on to the next notecard or mark the material as "not yet learned" and move on to the next idea.
- h. **Recite material in the "not yet learned" pile, at least, every other day** until details can be recalled completely and accurately on the 1st try that day.

How many total recitations are needed to learn information varies with each learner. Some may need 3-4 times while others need 6-10. This is normal and has no correlation with intelligence.

Type #3. Studying to Check for Learning.

The purpose is to **identify what has and has not yet been learned before a test is taken when something can still be done about it**. This requires a means for self-testing. One way to do self-test is to recite 2 to 3 times weekly on your own or in a studying group. Go over material you "**believe**" has been learned as follows:

- a. **Look only at a main point** and hide the details. This is easy with notecards.
- b. Recite **aloud** the relevant details without looking, as if lecturing a class.
- c. Look at the details to **check for accuracy** and completeness of the recitation.
- d. If all the details are **recited correctly on the 1st try**, you know immediately that the **material has been learned**.
- e. If the details are **recited incorrectly or incompletely on the 1st try**, you know immediately that the **material has not been learned**. In this case, go to step "c" in *Studying to Learn Information*.

Type #4. Studying to Refresh.

The purpose is to **prevent forgetting**. This requires a means for **regular recitation of material already learned**. Two ways to do this are:

1. **Make** regular times in your schedule to review material already learned. This combats the Fading Effect. Fading occurs when knowledge is not used or repeated often enough to prevent normal deterioration of the memory of that knowledge.
2. **Regularly review** material already learned at least 2 or 3 times per week individually or in a study group.

Type #5. Studying to Improve Learning Skills.

This is the most neglected and overlooked type of studying. The purpose is to **identify learning skills that worked** so they can be repeated and identify learning skills that didn't work well so that they can be modified or replaced. This requires analysis of returned tests and quizzes. Unless this analysis is done, grade raising studying skills may remain a mystery and grade limiting studying skills will likely be repeated. Four ways to improve learning skills are:

1. **Use each quiz and test as feedback** on the effectiveness of your learning skills. Grades are feedback on how effective the learning skills were that you used on each quiz or test. Meet with your instructor or a campus learning skills staff member for help with this, if you need it.
2. **Evaluate the effectiveness of your learning skills** by identifying: (1) answers that were totally and determine which learning skills were used to learn this information; (2) answers that were totally incorrect or where you lost points and determine which learning skills or lack of them led to a loss of points.
3. **Modify/replace learning skills that resulted in lost points.**
4. **Use the resources that improve learning skills** such as:
 - find an "A" learner and do what s/he does,
 - consult learning skills books,
 - take a learning skills class and attend learning skills workshops,
 - get advice from instructors,
 - utilize the expertise of a campus learning skills counselor.

A Word About Cramming.

Cramming as a primary means for learning rarely attains desired grades and **nearly guarantees performance below potential in college for most students.**

A **few people are fast learners** and have the ability to cram and recall facts fairly well. This is so because some faster learners don't require an understanding of facts and ideas in order to commit them to memory. Consequently, facts and ideas can be memorized quickly and repeated back in a short period of time. The drawback here is that fast learning frequently limits understanding and the ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas or recall much about the information in 6 months or so.

Most people learn more slowly than these faster learners do. This can be an advantage because slower learners often require an understanding of facts or ideas in order to learn and commit them to memory. Because understanding is essential for these slower learners, they are better able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate facts and ideas. Slower learners commonly out-perform faster learners when it comes to remembering information weeks, months, or years later.

Questions or comments? Contact the author at dcongos@mail.ucf.edu.