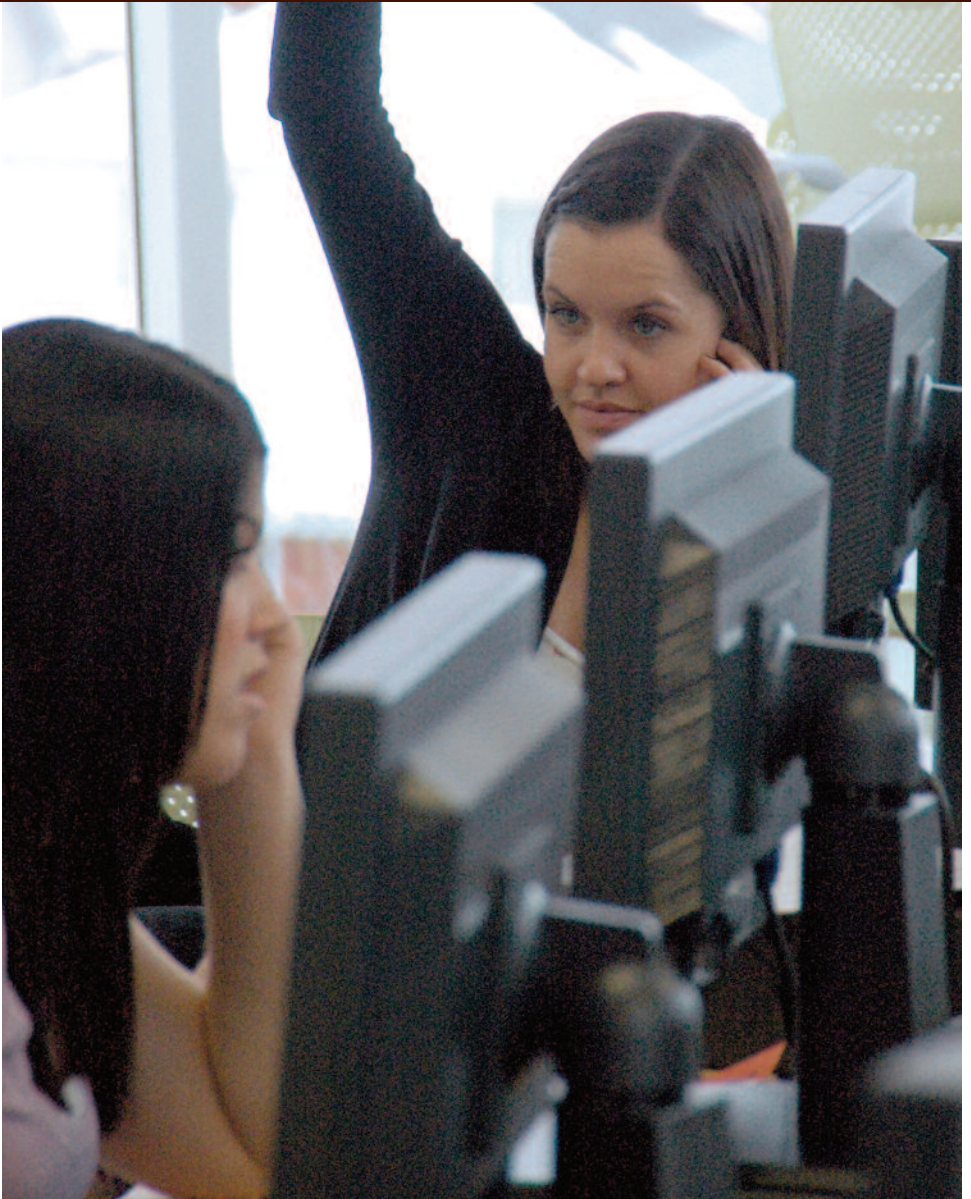




Keys to SUCCESS



What are learning skills?

Learning skills are skills and strategies that you can use to improve your academic performance in college. They are explained below:

Time management and organization: start off organized!	Do you have trouble keeping track of your assignments and getting them in on time? The more organized you are, the easier it is to meet assignment deadlines and improve your marks.	Page 2
What is your learning style?	Do you know how you learn best? Knowing how you learn will make your learning more productive and successful.	Page 2
How to listen and take notes from a lecture	Do you have trouble paying attention in class? Are your notes difficult to study from because they are unorganized and messy? Practice strategies to get more out of your lectures.	Page 3
Memory	Do you have trouble remembering what you have learned? Use strategies to improve your ability to remember what you study.	Page 4
Study strategies: the do's and don'ts for studying	Do you study for three hours but only remember what you studied in the last 40 minutes? How you study is just as important as what you study.	Page 4
Thinking and reading	Are you overwhelmed by the amount of reading? Is it difficult to find important points? Use the SQ5R method to help you think logically and read critically.	Page 5
Strategies for success on tests and exams	How do you prepare for tests? Improve your test marks by knowing how to prepare for and write tests.	Page 5, Page 6

Time management and organization: start off organized!

- Learn and practice organizational skills;
- Create routine and order for yourself because it gives a sense of predictability;
- Turn organization into habit through repetition; and
- Take control of things such as the organization of class notes, binders, backpacks, lockers, homework, and spare time.

Tools for organization include:

- Semester timetable (a schedule for all your class times);
- Course outline for each subject (a description of each course you are taking);
- Binder for each subject (divided into sections for notes, assignments, and tests); and
- Agenda (your main tool for time management).

Organize your binder:

- Put timetables and course outlines in each binder; and
- Use labeled dividers to separate notes, assignments, and tests.

Organize your time:

- Label the weeks in your agenda and mark due dates for all your work;
- Mark reminders for each one of your tasks; and
- Make time for work and play in your schedule.



What is your learning style?

Make your learning experience more productive and successful by determining your learning style. Complete the online questionnaire at www.vark-learn.com to understand what kind of learner you are.

Visual learners: learn through seeing

- Learn best by looking at graphics, charts, and diagrams.

Auditory learners: learn through listening

- Need a quiet study space and prefer listening to reading.

Tactile learners: learn through moving, doing, and touching

- Sitting still might be difficult when studying; and
- Record lectures and listen to them while exercising.

How to listen and take notes from a lecture*

*Taken in part from <http://www.landmarkoutreach.org/TwoColumnNote-takingMethod.htm>

Anticipate what the lecturer will discuss:

- Check course outline for lecture topics;
- Complete all related readings before you go to class; and
- Look to see if the lecture notes or PowerPoints for the lecture have been posted and are available for you to read.

Use the two-column format and make organized notes:

Column 1	Column 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen for main ideas by asking yourself, "What is the main point of this lecture?"; and• Write main ideas and sub main ideas here.	<p><i>Write your name, date, and page number here</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen for details by asking yourself, "Is this information connected to and supporting the main point of the lecture?";• List all the details here;• Use as few words as possible;• Use abbreviations and symbols;• Use coloured markers to connect details; underline and/or highlight important information;• Leave spaces so that you can add information later; and• Leave empty space to separate topics.

- Make a note of the information you do not understand in this space;
- Write study questions here; and
- The focus of this area is for the information you do not understand completely.



Look for cues from the speaker:

- Important information will be repeated or stressed by the speaker; be sure to make note of comments that are repeated or emphasized.

Be an active listener:

- Sit close to the speaker so you can see and hear well;
- Leave space in your notes for information you miss; and
- Ask questions during or after the lecture.

Memory

- Using imagination and creativity is an effective way of memorizing information;
- Memorizing information is not the same as understanding it;
- Acronyms use the first letter of each word in a list to form a new word;
- Acrostics use the first letter of each word in a list to form a sentence; and
- Review your notes daily because the key to memorization is repetition.



Study strategies: the do's and don'ts of studying

The do's (things you should do to improve your studying)

- Review your notes daily;
- Study in an environment that resembles the test environment (sit at a desk in a quiet place);
- Study during the time of day when you work best;
- Control the flow of information;
 - » Break your time into chunks (10 min for memorization and 45 min for intensive review, 5-10 min pause, repeat);
 - » During study pauses, think of what you just studied. Give your brain time to process the information;
- Recite information aloud;
- Create a picture, chart, or graph to summarize material; and
- Review key terms and special vocabulary before reading.

The don'ts (things you must not do when you are studying)

Do NOT...

- Study while listening to music;
- Study on your bed, at the kitchen table or in front of the TV;
- Study in large groups;
- Leave all your studying until the night before the test;
- Stay up all night studying; and
- Discuss the test with classmates just before the test.

Thinking and reading

Preparing to read

- Be alert and ready to learn;
- Know your purpose. When you have a purpose for your reading in mind before starting, you are better able to focus on, comprehend, and retain the content;
- Have a positive attitude. Deliberately tell yourself, “This is important for me to learn”; “I will understand and remember this”; and, “I can improve my reading skills”;
- Clear, achievable reading goals will also help you focus on the task of reading; and
- Choose a place to read that you can associate with academic work, has few distractions, and has good light.

SQ5R

- Use the SQ5R system of reading. Visit the Student Academic Learning Services Centre in Student Services Building, room 204 for more information.



Strategies for success on tests and exams

Arrive on time

- Avoid the “brain pickers” (other students who ask questions to which you may or may not know the answers) who can create anxiety right before the test.

Do a memory dump

- As soon as you can, write down any information that you can remember about the subject.

Read directions carefully

- By reading the directions and questions very carefully, you will ensure you are doing what you are supposed to do.

Budget time wisely

- Quickly review the test to determine its format and the value of each question before you begin; and
- Allow enough time for sections that may take more time or are worth more marks.

Do the easiest questions first

- Doing the easiest questions first will increase your confidence and decrease your anxiety.

Practice relaxation

- Sit with proper posture;
- Slowly breathe air deep into your lungs; and
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine or energy drinks.

Strategies for success on tests

– types of questions

Different types of test questions require different approaches. Here are some techniques to keep in mind.



True/false

- The statement must be 100% true to be marked true.

Multiple choice/objective tests

- Cover the options before reading the question/statement, think about the answer, then uncover the options;
- Eliminate any answers that are obviously wrong;
- Choose the best answer, which may not necessarily be the most familiar answer; and
- If you are stuck, select, “all of the above”.

Short answer

- Decide how much time to spend on these questions based on how many marks are associated with them; and
- Short answer responses should be brief and to the point.

Essays

- Underline or circle the important words in the essay question. Are you asked to analyze, interpret or describe in your answer?;
- Think before you write. Take a moment to construct a brief outline of your response;
- If the essay asks you to answer multiple questions, number them on the sheet and be certain to address each in order;
- Be concise, and avoid wordy sentences;
- Depending on the type of essay, you may want to avoid personal opinions. Often, your answers should be factual and cite supporting evidence;
- If you are running out of time, outline the remaining points you need to make in your essay;
- Check your spelling and grammar when you are finished; and
- When proofreading, ask yourself, “Did I answer the question(s)?”.

Open-book exams

- Open-book exams are sometimes given when a student needs to refer to charts or other materials in the text. You must prepare for an open-book exam as thoroughly as you would for a closed book exam. You won’t have time to re-read and look for formulas during the test; and
- Number and index your textbook so that the parts that you need are easy to find.



Student Academic Learning Services

www.durhamcollege.ca/sals

Student Services Building (SSB), room 204

905.721.2000 ext. 2491

