STUDY SKILLS

Reports on learning and instruction inform us about how students learn, about the organization of instruction, and about how to teach.

In this “What Works!” column, you will find practical approaches concerning a major topic. The current topic is *guiding students in how to study*.

If you would like to see a special topic reported in upcoming newsletters or expanded into a workshop, please send your suggestions to lgoodson@georgiasouthern.edu, 681-0068.

GUIDING STUDENTS IN HOW TO STUDY

Question: If you guide students in how to study, will it make a difference?
Answer: Yes. You can influence the ways in which students study and this can change what and how much they learn.

Students can learn to use study strategies that “higher-achievers” already use. Study skills become even more important for “independent learning” in online sessions (WebCT). Yet students often do not know how to study online even when they are proficient in using computer operations.

WHAT WORKS

Use of directions, lecture formats, handouts, online postings, assignments with textbooks and other reading materials, tests, and study skills resources can improve how students study and how much they study. Suggestions from research and reports are given below.

Directions
- Give students explicit goals.
- Give clear expectations.
- Guide students in overcoming procrastination.
- Teach students to take responsibility.
- Tell students to take notes.
- Tell students to review their notes.
- Tell students what and when to study.
- Encourage students to compare notes.
- Give explanations of the best strategies (actions, behaviors, steps).
- Give explicit directions and examples about how to mark assigned readings for best learning.
- Give guidance in how to use a combination of strategies that work best for what you are teaching.
- Encourage students to distribute their learning and practice over time.
- Give periodic and clear deadlines for assignments.

Handouts and Online Postings
- Post lecture notes and outlines at an online course site.
- Use handouts with space for students to add notes.
- Give prepared notes to students.
- Use technology to allow students to compare their notes.
- Provide lecture summaries.
- Give students organizational structure with outlines, headings, overviews, topical summaries, multimedia summaries, elaborative questions, and/or imagery.
Lectures
- Keep organization clear.
- Give pauses and rest breaks in lectures.
- Integrate study skills tips in lecture sessions.
- Help students recognize key points.
- Add verbal/nonverbal cues to lectures.
- Avoid information-overload on slides.
- Use questions to direct attention to important information.
- Give students in-class time to start a reading.
- Give short in-class assignments that require use of assigned readings.

Textbooks and Other Reading Materials
- Select text and readings with a strong relationship to what you are teaching.
- Choose fewer more carefully selected reading materials.
- Assign readings within two weeks of their expected use (not too early).
- Provide study questions to use with readings.
- Use tests that cover assigned reading materials (more testing increases achievement).

Study Skills Resources
- Choose one or two study skills links and post them for your students.
- Post study skills unique to your own discipline.
- Give tips or links on study skills that match different learning styles.
- Show students your own note taking and responding processes.
- Give students more learning strategies (“more is better”).

EXAMPLES – GUIDE THEM IN LEARNING HOW TO
- draw pictorial representations of ideas and concepts
- use images to relate words and meanings
- visualize personal patterns of thinking
- make a network map of the information studied
- summarize and paraphrase text material

- Involve students in selecting computer-based material to support their notes.
- Give students practice in using online tools and study skills together.
- Give students practice in taking notes from videos.

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