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How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed to provide UTurn students with a background of the UTurn program, as well as the strategies, resources, and tools they will need to help them succeed academically.

Through one-on-one work with an advising mentor, UTurn students will receive guidance, support, and accountability. In addition, monthly group meeting and presentations along with supplemental resources from the Sanger Learning and Career Center (such as academic counseling, tutoring, and supplemental instruction) will allow students to tailor the UTurn program’s resources to their own academic needs.

UTurn cannot require a student’s participation; it is an optional program. UTurn students’ participation should be based on their own desire to succeed at The University of Texas at Austin.

This handbook provides a general outline on academic issues students commonly face and should not be considered a manual or rulebook. It is simply another mechanism for support.

As students utilize this guide, they may have questions (or suggestions for the program). Please do not hesitate to contact the program coordinator for UTurn, Ben Burnett, by phone (512-232-3816) or email (bburnett@austin.utexas.edu).
Program Information

The Goal of UTurn

In an effort to help Liberal Arts students in academic difficulty and reduce the possibility of academic dismissal, the college has created the UTurn program. This academic program is designed to create a support network to help students realistically assess their academic goals, study habits, and time management skills and then implement an effective plan for improvement. By creating this network, UTurn can help students connect with advisors and learn to utilize university resources in their effort to become academically successful. The mentoring aspect of UTurn will provide students with a positive role model whose knowledge and insight they will respect. In addition, to encourage students to utilize the resources provided by the university, UTurn has partnered with the Sanger Learning and Career Center.

Student Responsibilities

STUDENTS WILL

• Attend the UTurn orientation.
• Schedule the initial UTurn appointment with their advising mentor.
• Meet with their advising mentor every other week for approximately 30 minutes.
• Meet with the Sanger Learning and Career Center learning specialist.
• Complete any “homework” given by their UTurn advising mentor.
• Complete the mid-semester evaluation with their advising mentor before deadline day.
• Utilize Sanger Learning and Career Center resources appropriately.
• Attend monthly UTurn program presentations.

Advising Mentor Responsibilities

ADVISING MENTORS WILL

• Expect their students to contact them and come to their first meeting with their academic concerns and goals for the semester.
• Be available to meet with each of their UTurn students at least every other week.
• Give their students “homework” when appropriate and expect that each student will complete it by the deadline set.
• Review the mid-semester evaluation with each student before deadline day.
• Submit a mid-semester evaluation of their student’s progress. Topics of consideration could be (but are not limited to): attendance, initiative, assignment completion, and progress made.
Meeting Expectations

GETTING STARTED – After completing the UTurn application, you will attend an orientation for the program at the beginning of the semester. You will need to contact your advising mentor within the first two weeks of class. Be honest and direct with your advisor. Establish a set meeting time for the semester and a preferred method of communication.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM – Be yourself and share your experiences. Celebrate successes and discuss any obstacles. Remember it is your responsibility to stay in contact with your advising mentor (students are expected to meet with the advising mentor at least every other week). Alert your mentor of any difficulties you are experiencing. Become familiar with university programs and resources. Revisit your academic goals for the semester. Be patient and persistent.

PROVIDING CLOSURE – Be reflective about your experience in UTurn. Commit to setting future goals. Plan solutions for future challenges.

Suggested Topics of Discussion

1st meeting (2nd – 3rd week of semester) – Initial intake (getting to know one another), SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

2nd meeting (4th – 5th week of semester) – Exam preparation, study skills

3rd meeting (6th – 7th week of semester) – Time management, exam review

4th meeting (8th – 9th week of semester) – Goal setting: short and long-term

5th meeting (10th – 11th week of semester) – Mid-semester review, university deadlines

6th meeting (12th – 13th week of semester) – Major selection and spring registration

7th meeting (14th – 15th week of semester) – Preparing for finals

Additional topics of discussion include, but are not limited to the following:

- Major/career exploration
- Adjustment to college
- Health and wellness
- Stress
- University resources
Grades

CREDIT
Students must receive at least a D- in a class to receive credit toward their degree. A higher grade may be required in an individual class if it serves as a prerequisite or if it is a major requirement.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)
Your GPA is based on courses you take at UT Austin and via University Extension. Transfer grades are not calculated into your GPA.

Grade points are assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points Assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To calculate your GPA, first determine the number of points earned for each class. Do this by multiplying the number of credit hours for a course by the number of points earned for the grade. For example, an A- in SOC 302 would earn you 11.01 points. Do this for each class, then add them all. Divide that number by total credit hours and you will have your GPA.

To be in good academic standing, a student must have at least a 2.0 GPA.

PASS/FAIL
An undergraduate who registers for a course on a pass/fail basis and earns a grade of D- or better is awarded a symbol of CR for the course. This credit does not factor into the student’s GPA, but does count toward total degree hours. An F received in a course taken pass/fail is calculated into GPA and hours undertaken. Courses taken on a pass/fail basis can only count as electives. Only students with 30 or more credit hours can take a course pass/fail. For more regulations on taking a class pass/fail, please see the General Information Catalog.

INCOMPLETES
Under certain circumstances, an instructor may temporarily delay reporting a grade for a course, resulting in an incomplete (X) for the course. Incompletes must be resolved by the end of the long semester following the one in which the X was recorded. See the General Information Catalog for more information.
Scholastic Probation

To remain in good academic standing at the university, students must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0. If a student’s GPA drops below 2.0, the student is placed on scholastic probation. Probationary status is reflected on the student’s permanent academic record.

While on probation, students must be enrolled in 12 hours during the fall and spring semesters. If they need to take fewer than 12 hours, they must speak with an academic advisor. No minimum course load is required in the summer.

In addition to the course load minimum, students must maintain a minimum GPA to avoid dismissal. The university GPA guidelines for avoiding dismissal are based on total number of hours undertaken, including coursework taken in transfer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Hours</th>
<th>Cumulative GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 15</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-44</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or more</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students on scholastic probation are required to meet with their academic advisors for SUCCESS advising. The SUCCESS consultation details the GPA required to avoid dismissal. In addition, this advising serves as a tool to discuss factors contributing to the student’s academic status as well as identifying appropriate university resources.
habits of effective students

adapted from Stephen Covey’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

1. Be proactive
   You always have the freedom to choose! Rather than reacting automatically to a situation, take a moment to decide how you want to respond. Realizing what you're in control of and focusing on those things can empower you.

2. Put your big rocks first
   It's okay to say no sometimes in order to focus on your highest priorities. What matters most to you? Tackle those things first. You'll manage your time better and feel more fulfilled at the end of the day.

3. Begin with the end in mind
   Start each day, task, or project with a clear vision of the end result. You might realize that what you're striving for is a bit unrealistic or maybe too easy to accomplish. Setting SMART goals can help guide you in this process.

4. Become a groupie
   Get more involved in groups. Everyone stands to benefit when people bring different experiences and expertise to the table. If a group is hard to find, a partner will do just fine. This applies not only to academics, but also to organizations and extra-curricular activities.

5. Find a balance
   To stay happy and healthy, it's important to balance various areas of your life. Whether it's joining an intramural soccer team, seeing a concert with friends, visiting Barton Springs, or making a biology study group, all students have their own ways of getting physical, social, spiritual, and mental fulfillment. Finding an equilibrium among all your interests can be hard, but it will keep you from burning out.
The Study Cycle: study smart, not hard

A strategic approach to learning

Prepare for Success

Test

Distribute practice

Identify and correct misunderstandings

Consider a note-taking system

Consider a note-taking system

Students; text

Student resources include your TA, professor, other students; text

Fill in gaps and correct misunderstandings

Your own words;

Create main ideas of lectures and readings into

Incorporate lecture and reading material

Synchronize lecture and reading material

Read Class; Read

Attend Class; Read

How are you learning in information (by listening to lecture; reading material; text)

How do you practice for the actual test

writing, speaking, drawing? That will give you practice for the actual test

you practice for the actual test

balance input/output

Test

Balance input/output

more frequent sessions to work study material;

Consider a note-taking system

Test

Analyze returned tests

Answer questions and generate your own responses

For multiple choice questions, cover 3-4 times the number of questions.

For free response questions, cover 2-3 times the number of questions.

Analyze test results

Write free response questions

Analyze test results

Write free response questions

Possible test questions: keeping

Save 2-3 hours studying outside of class for every hour in class

Distribute practice

Analyze returned tests

Answer questions and generate your own responses

For multiple choice questions, cover 3-4 times the number of questions.

For free response questions, cover 2-3 times the number of questions.

Analyze test results

Write free response questions

Analyze returned tests

Answer questions and generate your own responses

For multiple choice questions, cover 3-4 times the number of questions.

For free response questions, cover 2-3 times the number of questions.

Prepare for Success

Test

Distribute practice

Identify and correct misunderstandings

Consider a note-taking system

Students; text

Student resources include your TA, professor, other students; text

Fill in gaps and correct misunderstandings

Your own words;
How to develop better focus while studying

Think of it as a three-step process:
1) Learn the causes of poor focus and decide which apply to you.
2) Understand what you can do to manage/control these factors.
3) Develop the habit of focusing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LEARN THE CAUSES</th>
<th>CONTROL THE CAUSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Causes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Environmental distractions:</strong></td>
<td>Leave or rearrange a distracting environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV, chairs that are too comfortable, snacks,</td>
<td>Go to a library or a classroom when you can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other people, etc.</td>
<td>be less distracted by elements of the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noise:</strong></td>
<td>music with words, conversations</td>
<td>Train yourself to study away from others and in silence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Causes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical distractions:</strong></td>
<td>Plan to study when you’re most alert. Eat a high-protein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hunger, drowsiness</td>
<td>snack. Do five minutes of light exercise to wake-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boredom, dislike, disinterest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Find a good reason for taking the class—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>something that motivates you and sustains your interest;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>talk with other students and the professor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety about studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure you know how to study effectively. Put the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>course in perspective. *(Talk to a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Specialist at the SLCC for assistance with this!)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intimidating study tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Break up large tasks into smaller, achievable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tasks. Do the most intimidating task first. Give yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rewards for progress and “punishments” for avoidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daydreaming</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Separate daydreams from studying. When your mind starts to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wander, write down the interrupting thought and continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>studying. Or, turn away from your book and continue to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>daydream. When you’re ready to read again, do so. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trick is not to try daydreaming and reading at the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal worries</strong></td>
<td>Identify and define the problem and develop a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concrete, specific plan to resolve personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>worries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk with someone who can help: a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>friend, a counselor, a specialist.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Develop the Habit of Focusing
Even if you lapse into old patterns of feeling distracted, keep requiring yourself to concentrate (using the controls outlined above) until you can routinely focus for fifty minutes of every hour when you study.

You may also want to start a mindfulness practice. The improved focus you experience with mindfulness meditation can be applied to other situations, including studying.

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**Finding the best place to study:**

Analyzing distractions

List three places where you usually study, in the order you most use them:

A. ____________________  B. ____________________  C. ____________________

Is the following true (T) or false (F) for each place you study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place A</th>
<th>Place B</th>
<th>Place C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Other people often interrupt me when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Much of what I can see here reminds me of things that don't have anything to do with studying.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can often hear radio or TV when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can often hear the phone ringing when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think I take too many breaks when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I seem to be especially bothered by distractions here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I usually don’t study here at a regular time each week.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My breaks tend to be too long when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I tend to start conversations with people when I study here.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I spend time on the phone here that I should be using for study.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. There are many things here that don't have anything to do with study or schoolwork.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Temperature conditions here are not very good for studying.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Chair, table, and lighting arrangements here are not very helpful for studying.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When I study here, I am often distracted by people-watching.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add up the total “T” for each study location. The place that has the most "true" may have too many distractions and would not be the best place to study. Alternatives are provided on the other side >>

*(Adapted from Raygor and Wark, *Systems for Study*)
UT has some great places to study, so don’t feel stuck in the first spot you try. Explore the campus and find a study environment that suits you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Planning Library</td>
<td>Battle Hall 200</td>
<td>Physics Mathematics Astronomy</td>
<td>RLM 4.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kuehne) Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson Latin American Collection</td>
<td>SRH 1.108</td>
<td>Public Affairs (Wasserman) Library</td>
<td>SRH 3.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical (Mallet) Library</td>
<td>WEL 2.132</td>
<td>Center for American History</td>
<td>SRH 2.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering (McKinney) Library</td>
<td>ECJ 1.300</td>
<td>Flawn Academic Center (FAC)</td>
<td>West Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts Library</td>
<td>Doty Fine Arts Building 3.200</td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td>24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and Guadalupe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology (Walter) Library</td>
<td>JGB 4.202</td>
<td>Reliant Productivity Center</td>
<td>CBA 4.112A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Science Library</td>
<td>Tower, 220</td>
<td>AIM Reading Room</td>
<td>CBA, 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry-Castañeda Library (PCL)</td>
<td>Speedway &amp; 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>School of Nursing Learning Center</td>
<td>NUR 5.102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other study spots that students recommend:
- Nice coffee shops, including one at the Alumni Center and a couple on the Drag.
- Outdoor areas on campus, such as the patio area between the Union and the FAC, on the lawn in the Six-Pack, or near one of the many campus fountains or statues.

What about good places to nap?
Aside from the standard 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Union, here are a few other spots to try:
- The Six-Pack
- The Architecture courtyard
- Beside the turtle pond
- On the long cushioned benches on the bottom floor of the Business School

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Getting Things Done with SMART Goals

I want to ...

- Experience less stress and anxiety
- Concentrate and remember more effectively
- Experience greater self-confidence
- Perform better and achieve more
- Be happier and more satisfied

SMART goals can help

What makes a goal SMART?

You do! By thinking carefully about what you want to achieve and determining a clear course of action, you’ll have a better understanding of what your goals really are and how you can achieve them.

Here’s how to make SMART goals:

**S**

Specific
State exactly what you want to achieve. Can you break a larger task down into smaller items?

**M**

Measurable
Establish clear definitions to help you measure if you’re reaching your goal.

**A**

Action-Oriented
Describe your goals using action verbs, and outline the exact steps you will take to accomplish your goal.

**R**

Realistic
Give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you’ll actually be able to accomplish. Be sure to consider obstacles you may need to overcome.

**T**

Time-Bound
Now much time do you have to complete the task? Decide exactly when you’ll start and finish your goal.

example
I’m going to read Chapter 5 and answer the ten practice questions at the end of the chapter. This assignment is due on Thursday, so I’ll preview and read the chapter by Wednesday. This will give me enough time to work on the homework from 7-9 p.m. so I can watch a movie with my friends at 10 p.m.

Now take a goal of your own and make it SMART
Be Strategic with Your Time

STEP 1: Start thinking about time strategically.

How much time do you actually have to manage? It’s not really a full 24 hours, since there are some activities that need to happen every day, such as eating, sleeping, and going to class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Per day</th>
<th>Total per wk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sleeping</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>56 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eating</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>21 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attending class/lab</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So each week: sleeping + eating + class = 97 hrs
Total available hours each week: 24 hrs/day × 7 days = 168 hrs

168 available hrs – 97 fixed hrs = 71 hrs to manage each week
That means it’s up to you to manage about 10 hours a day.

And those 10 hours are broken up throughout the day, so they’re not in one large block. That makes it more challenging!

STEP 2: Observe how you’re spending your time.

Use the chart on the other side of this page to record what you do over the course of a week. Then tally activities in the categories of class, studying, eating, sleeping, recreation/social, working, and other.

Are you happy with what you were able to accomplish this week? If it seems that there’s just not enough time to get everything done, it may be that you’re not spending your time on what really matters to you.

STEP 3: Make a plan that works for you.

☐ Schedule your week at a regular time. Spend 5 or 10 minutes at the beginning of the week to lay out a plan and then follow up on the plan each day. Modify or add activities through the week as needed.

☐ When you make a schedule, first record activities that remain the same for each week (e.g., classes, regular meetings). Then schedule activities that are subject to change each week (e.g., assignments).

☐ Reserve large blocks of time—such as an hour or more—for working with new material or learning complex concepts.

☐ Figure out how long you’re able to concentrate, and divide large blocks of time into smaller blocks of that length. Be sure to give yourself breaks.

☐ Use short periods of time—15 to 30 minutes—for preview and review.

☐ Don’t overdo it; leave some blank space on your schedule for spontaneity and the unexpected.
Setting Priorities: how to get the most out of your time

It can be difficult to juggle many different tasks throughout the course of a day, and it can seem like there’s not enough time to get everything done. Here’s a 3-step approach to feeling good about how you spend your time.

Make a list of everything you want to accomplish in the day.

Example:
- Complete scholarship application
- Respond to Facebook wall posts
- Do laundry
- Finish Calc homework
- Read chapter 6 for history class
- Go to Dr. Smith’s office hours
- Clean apartment
- Go out for dinner with friends

Categorize each item according to its urgency and importance.

- Urgency is about how time-sensitive the task is.
- Importance has to do with a task’s value to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important and Urgent</th>
<th>Important but Not Urgent</th>
<th>Not Important and Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a crisis or pressing problem (e.g., overflowing toilet)</td>
<td>• planning and preparation (e.g., researching a paper that’s due in 3 weeks)</td>
<td>• reading junk mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• impending deadline (e.g., test tomorrow)</td>
<td>• true recreation/relaxation (e.g., dinner with friends)</td>
<td>• time-fillers (e.g., channel surfing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• most interruptions (e.g., phone calls)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• many popular activities (e.g., responding to an IM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tasks usually get our attention – but if most of your day is spent here, it can be stressful!

These tasks are time-sensitive, but don’t matter that much to you.

If you find you’re not getting enough done, you may be spending too much time here.

At the end of the day, time spent here is the most gratifying.

These tasks tend to become urgent if you procrastinate.

Spend as little time on these tasks as possible.

Prioritize tasks to get the most out of your time.

Are you spending the bulk of your time on activities that are urgent, but not important? These can be time black holes – periods of time that just seem to disappear, without much to show for them.

See if you can shift your priorities to activities that are not urgent, but important. These tasks don’t seem as pressing, but they represent the things that you really care about. At the end of the day, you’ll feel that your time was well-spent.
How to use this handout:

1. Collect all the things you need to do. It's easier to get a handle on everything if it's gathered in one place.
2. Take each item through the process.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 regularly. Do a weekly review of what you need to get done.

STUFF YOU NEED TO DO

What is it?
Do I need to take action on this?

NO
trash

someday/maybe
list or folder

YES

What's the next action?

When do I need to do it?

NOW
just do it

SOON
schedule it

To do lists tend to roll forward from one day to the next. If you map things you need to do to a particular time on your schedule, you'll get more done.

If you're finding it difficult to prioritize, see Setting Priorities.
What does it mean to be motivated, and how can you positively impact your own motivation?

It may seem elusive, but being motivated really just means to want something. Academic motivation is the “wanting to” of learning.

We want things for many reasons. Food is necessary to life, so our motivation to eat lunch is usually very strong. Other things have perceived value (such as what kind of car we drive), and we’re generally willing to work harder for the things we value more.

First, think about what it is that you want. Learn more about the subject? Get a good grade? You may even want both. And, face it – you may just want to get through the class. What you want is also influenced by your specific expectations for success. If you believe that you’re just not very good at math, for example, you may focus on just getting through the class rather than excelling in it.

For more information about how beliefs impact goals and motivation, see “Motivation & Beliefs.”

Next, think about why you want that something. If the course is part of your major, you might want to learn about it because you know it will enhance your future career plans. If you want to get a good grade – even if the material is not particularly interesting to you – it may be because you have your eye on going to graduate school. If the course is just a requirement that seems meaningless or purposeless right now, then focus on just getting through it because you have to! A clear purpose is important because it gives you a motivational anchor point that you can refer to again and again.

If you’re having trouble finding a clear purpose, see “Setting SMART Goals.”

Think about how you can motivate yourself to get the things you want. More specifically, think about what you’ll do when you find your motivation diminished. Motivation is situational and changeable, so make specific plans now for maintaining motivation. These plans are sometimes referred to as reinforcers – in simple terms, rewards that you can use as carrots.

The worksheet on the back of this page has some ideas you may be able to use.

Motivation + Action = RESULTS

Think of it as a two-step process: motivation is the “wanting to,” and “self-regulation” is the “doing.” All the motivation in the world won’t do you any good unless it translates into behavior.

If you have any doubt that motivation is meaningless without self-regulation, think about everybody you know (maybe even you?) who has made a New Year’s resolution.
A SYSTEM FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING
AND NOTE TAKING

You can think about 4 TIMES FASTER than a lecturer can speak. Effective LISTENING requires the expenditure of energy; to compensate for the rate of presentation, you have to actively intend to listen. NOTE TAKING is one way to enhance listening, and using a systematic approach to the taking and reviewing of your notes can add immeasurably to your understanding and remembering the content of lectures.

BEFORE CLASS
- Develop a mind-set geared toward listening.
- Test yourself over the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
- Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new terms
- Enhance your physical and mental alertness: eat a snack before class, sit in the front and/or center of the room, focus your attention on the speaker.
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note-taking: a separate notebook with full-sized pages is recommended for each course. You might wish to mark off the pages into one of the formats shown on the reverse of this sheet.
- INTEND TO LISTEN.

DURING CLASS
- Listen for the structure and information in the lecture.
- Resist distractions, emotional reactions or boredom.
- Pay attention to the speaker for verbal and visual clues to what’s important.
- Label important points and organizational clues: main points, examples.
- If your lecturer has an accent you find hard to understand or has mannerisms you find distracting, relax and attend even more carefully to the content of the lecture.
- When possible, translate the lecture into your own words, but if you can’t, don’t let it worry you into inattention!
- Be consistent in your use of form, abbreviation, etc.
- If you feel you don’t take enough notes, divide your page into 5 sections and try to fill each part every 10 minutes (or work out your own formula).
- Ask questions if you don’t understand.
- Instead of closing your notebook early and getting ready to leave, listen carefully to information given toward the end of class; summary statements may be of particular value in highlight main points; there may be possible quiz questions, etc.

AFTER CLASS
- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking the teacher or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Make note of your ideas and reflections; keep them separate from the speaker’s.

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• Edit your notes, labeling main points, adding recall clues and questions to be answered. Key points in the notes can be highlighted with different colors of ink.
PERIODICALLY
- Review your notes: glance at your recall clues and see how much you can remember before rereading the notes.
- Look for the emergence of themes, main concepts, methods of presentation over the course of several lectures.
- Make up and answer possible test questions.

The Cornell Note Taking System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edit and summarize your notes here</th>
<th>Text of Notes Recorded Here</th>
<th>Your reflections, ideas, and relevant questions here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air pollution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Air pollution - world prob.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Effects examples</td>
<td><strong>Smog - fumes - disaster</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. cause: &quot;man&quot;</td>
<td><strong>Muse Valley - 63 killed, many sick</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. &quot;cures&quot; 4.</td>
<td><strong>London - 4,000 killed</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. m, an, vg, art</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles - $5 million crop damage / yr</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Affects</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>man, animals, veg., art works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Cause --- man</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;industrial progress: -- coal, motors, waste materials, smoke&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What's being done?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia -- clean air act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trash disposal changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pittsburgh -- city laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Britain -- clean air act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>international controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Formats to Enhance Notes and Study

Take class notes on one side only and leave space on the other side of the page.

### 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Notes</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Class Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Notes</th>
<th>Class Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Notes</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Class Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Notes</th>
<th>Rewrite Class Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All of these approaches are effective, but you will have to personally find the way that works best. The important thing is to take an **active** role in note taking. Don’t just write down what the professor says, think about it. After class, look at the notes, and answer any questions that you have about them by consulting the book, your SI Leader or the professor. Rewriting is an excellent device for analyzing and synthesizing the class material. It is also great for retention. Add to the class notes with your own comments (I like to use different color ink), fill in any steps that were skipped in class, and integrate the text into your notes. Make sure to review or rewrite your notes as soon as possible after the lecture, when you still remember what happened in class.

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EVALUATING AND SUMMARIZING YOUR LECTURE NOTES

You should be able to answer the following questions by looking over your lecture notes from a previous class:

- What was the main point of the lecture? Can I summarize this in my own words? (Write a brief summary {1-2 sentences} on a piece of paper.)

- What were the key points, concepts, details, problem types or examples that supported this thesis? (Pull the most important of these out and place some key words in your marginal notes.)

- What were the important terms (or events or people) that were introduced in this lecture? (These may be details related to the main points above. Annotate them (or add them to your marginal notes) so that you can see the relationship to other information.

- How does this material relate to the text or supplemental reading material?

- What are some remaining questions that you have about this material? What do you not understand? How will you clarify these points?

- If your professor were to pose a test question or questions (or problems) over this lecture, what would those look like? Write one or two good test questions over this lecture.

- How will you prepare for lectures and/or take notes differently as a result of what you've learned?
SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING SPEED AND EFFECTIVENESS OF READING

CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS
Slow, word-by-word analytical reading is an essential part of some reading tasks. Often, however, when time demands and purpose permits, the reader must possess the capacity to “switch gears” — i.e., to absorb the ideas and information in books at more rapid speeds. By no means should this high-level “speed reading” be interpreted as applicable to all types of reading situations. Its development will, however, enable the mature reader to add an additional dimension to the scope of his/her current reading skills.

CAUSES OF SLOW READING SPEEDS
- Individual variables — intelligence, motivation, physiological and psychological traits.
- Deficiencies in vocabulary and comprehension levels required by the particular reading material. A student who has difficulty understanding what he/she reads will not be helped by learning to misunderstand faster. A student who is hampered by an inadequate vocabulary will not be helped by learning to skip any faster through unknown or vaguely defined words.
- Most frequent causes of unnecessarily slow speeds when the causes listed in A and B above are at adequate levels:
  - Inflexibility — the tendency to read everything the same way regardless of what it is, why it is being read, etc.
  - Passivity — the failure to become involved with the material being read, the failure to interact with the author and to anticipate his next thought, his conclusions, etc.
  - Unnecessary and habitual regression or re-reading — because of lack of concentration.
  - Habitually slow “reaction time” to reading material — a general “rut” which makes attempts at faster reading extremely uncomfortable at first.

WHERE TO BEGIN ... with your next reading assignment.
- Be FLEXIBLE. Difficulty and purpose determine how to read a selection. College students (especially) must realize that there are reading speeds, not just one reading speed. Speeds must vary with the nature of the reading task and the reader’s familiarity with the materials.
- Determine PURPOSE for reading this particular selection ... What type of information do you have to learn from it? ... How long do you have to retain the information? ... How does this selection fit into the whole course? ... Why has this reading been assigned? ... To what use will the information be put?

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• PREVIEW the selection to determine its difficulty... How familiar are you with this field of study? ... How many unknown and essential words are in it? ... Read the introduction, subheads, italicized sentences, marginal notes, and conclusion. Try to grasp the general thought structure by integrating these isolated clues.

• READ
  – Make use of the head-start you got during your preview.
  – Read for ideas and concepts, not for isolated words. Pace yourself fast enough that you have to read concepts ... not words.
  – Concentrate — if you push your rate up to capacity, you won’t have time to think about other things. Set reasonable but stiff time goals and race the clock.
  – Think, interpret, analyze the FIRST time you read — avoid unnecessary re-reading.
  – Note key words (subjects, verbs, objects) — TELEGRAPH the message to yourself.
  – Pace yourself — as fast as your purpose will permit. Pacing will discourage the tendency toward habitual and unnecessary re-reading and helps to keep your attention focused on the page. Try one of the SELF-PACING METHODS listed below ... perhaps uncomfortable and unnatural at first, but most effective after the “newness” wears off.
    • Use an index card, a ruler, or any other straight-edge and move it rapidly down the page as you read. Move it lightly, fluidly, with one hand only. Move it either ahead of you down the page to act as a pace-setter OR let it fall along behind you, covering up what you have read and therefore forcing your initial concentration.
    • Move the edge of your hand or the spread fingers of your hand down the page, reading the lines as they pop up from underneath your hand.
    • Move your finger or pencil point lightly down the margin beside the lines you are reading.

• STRETCH when your momentum seems to be slowing down. Stop, close your eyes and squeeze them together tightly for a second, then open them wide. Play around for a few minutes by pacing yourself through “simulated” reading of a book held upside down, page by page, at extremely rapid speeds JUST TO GET THE FEEL OF rapid, rhythmic movement down the page again. With new momentum established, turn the book right-side up and continue reading at your fastest possible speed.

• TEST yourself. Stop at the end of each “section” of material and recall periodically what you have just read. Especially in material which you must remember for a period of time, practice reading quickly and efficiently with the intent to recall the important information at the end of each chapter or section or paragraph — depending upon the difficulty of the material. Make notes or underline if appropriate.
Mark Your Books

WHY?

It's important because ...

You COMPREHEND better:
• You decide what's important, how ideas are related...a process which teaches you to read analytically.
• You test your understanding by putting ideas into your own words.
• You concentrate better because you read actively rather than passively.

You create an effective REVIEW tool:
• Use markings to trigger recall; before a test, glance at your notes to see how much you can remember.

WARNING

Don't use underlining as an escape tactic to delay the inevitable work of learning. If you can't concentrate, take a break ... then come back ready to attend.

WHEN?

Annotate your book AFTER you have read part of it. Only after reading can you decide what's important. Mark after reading a few paragraphs if the material is dense with detail you must know, or after a section or a chapter, as you judge best.

HOW?

ACTIVELY — use your margins to summarize key ideas in a few words, outline a passage, write comments to yourself. Make connections with lectures, other readings … get involved.

ECONOMICALLY — underline as little as possible. Make your markings concise indexes to content. Underline key phrases (subjects, verbs, etc.), and occasionally whole sentences, if needed. As a guide, ask yourself, "What will this page look like a month from now, when I'm reviewing it for a test?"

CONSISTENTLY — be sure that you locate all significant ideas, details, etc. Enumerating them helps you to remember. Use various marks — brackets, circles, etc., — consistently (for instance, you may choose to circle all new terms).

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Before you tackle the reading, get a general framework of main ideas to better comprehend and retain details you’ll encounter later. Spend about 10 minutes familiarizing yourself with the text as a whole.

**Preview**

Check out the following elements:
- Title
- Author’s Biographical Info.
- Publication Information
- Table of Contents
- Introduction or Preface
- Index
- Glossary

**Preview individual chapters,** looking for the following:
- Introduction
- Subheadings
- First sentence of each section
- Diagrams, charts, etc.
- Conclusion

**Make some concrete projections:**
- What’s the main idea?
- How is the text organized?
- How difficult is it?
- How long will it take to read?

**Read**

Being an active reader helps you understand the material, combats boredom, and increases retention.

- Set realistic goals for how long, and how many pages, you’ll be able to read.
- Don’t try to read the entire chapter non-stop. Instead, divide it into small sections—such as a half-page, or a column— and read them individually.
- Ask yourself a question before each paragraph or section, then try to answer it as you read.
- Take short breaks when you find your mind wandering.

**Recall**

Research shows that we forget about 40-50% of what we read within about 15 minutes unless we take measures to recall it immediately.

- Recall mentally or recite orally the highlights of what you’ve read.
- Ask yourself questions as you read and answer them in your own words. These questions can be the same as those you asked before each section.
- Underline key words or phrases in each section, and write notes in your margins. Both will help you decide what you need to remember.
- See if you can recast the material as a story or narrative; then imagine yourself retelling or explaining it to a friend.
PPRRR: Preview, Participate, Read, Recall, Review
A strategic and systematic approach to reading in Natural Sciences courses

**Preview**
Take some time before each class – the night before, or morning of – to preview the day’s lecture material. You might be surprised how much 10 minutes of previewing will dramatically affect your level of understanding during lecture.

Look over sections of the text to be covered in the next lecture. Read the introduction, sub-headings, words in bold-faced type, first sentences of each paragraph, diagrams, charts, and conclusion or summary.

After previewing, ask yourself:
What is this mainly about? What do I expect to be the main points brought up in lecture?

If time allows, look over the previous lecture’s notes. You can do this while waiting for class to start.

**Participate in class**
Participate during lecture by actively listening and taking notes. Consider this time to be a time for learning – not just a time for recording notes that will be studied later.

Carefully listen and take notes on what the prof says, not just what he/she writes down.

Leave space between topics or leave the opposing page blank to add notes from the textbook and discussion sessions.

Put question marks beside items you need to look up or ask about in the next discussion section.

Try not to be frustrated or resigned if you don’t understand what’s being presented. Do your best to stay with the lecture, but when you get lost, shake it off and regain your focus.

**Read**
After each class, and as soon as possible (at most, within 24 hours), review the lecture notes and read sections of the textbook that were covered in the recent lecture.

Read sections of the text with lecture notes available, referring to specific parts of your notes when possible.

Read only one small section at a time, in an active mode. Ask yourself at the end of each reading, “What was that about?” or “What new information did that give me?”

Follow each section with a recall exercise.

**Recall**
Immediately after reading each small section of the text, practice recalling that information. Research shows that we forget about 40-50% of what we read within about 15 minutes unless we take measures to recall it immediately.

Add information from the text to your lecture notes to fill in gaps from lecture, clarify definitions & concepts, and elaborate on points brought up in class. Add diagrams, charts, and figures from text to your notes when appropriate. Use different colored pens for lecture and text notes.

Keep an ongoing collection of flash cards or a list of key terms and their definitions and add to it immediately after readings.

Highlight main concepts and key terms in your text.

Select practice problems from the text pertaining to the reading. Work through these to test your understanding of the material.

**Review**
Set aside time each week to review and summarize the course material you’ve been reading and notes you’ve been taking.

Review your lecture/text notes, flashcards, lists, charts, diagrams, and problem sets.

Reorganize the material so that it makes sense to you.

Talk over concepts with your study partners. Ask questions, but also state your interpretation of the material. Listen to their descriptions to see how their details differ from yours.

Synthesize material from different chapters before the exam by making concept maps, charts, and creating difficult test questions.

Visit your TA/professor’s office hours to clear up questions.
Critical reading is really critical thinking. It’s about bringing a healthy skepticism to any reading which is open to interpretation and evaluation.

Many things you are assigned to read will of course not be open to debate (the periodic table of elements, for example). But other texts, frequently in the liberal and social sciences, will represent a particular author’s point of view at a particular point in time. It’s your job, while respecting the author, to also push back on his assumptions if you feel the need to take issue with them. Or demand additional support if you remain unconvinced by his arguments.

Some students may feel they don’t have the credentials to challenge authorities in this way. But the kind of inquiry we are talking about here is not hostile; it is simply questioning. And all authors welcome that kind of engagement with the reader. By reading critically, you are really saying that these ideas are worth thinking about.

Posing some of the following questions may help you unpack the assumptions, biases and context implicit in the authors you read:

**Consider the source**
- What kind of publication is this?
- What is the author’s background in the subject?
- To whom is the author writing? Why is he writing? (This kind of information is frequently available in the preface of the book or the introduction.)

**Recognize assumptions & implications**
- What kind of prior knowledge does the reader need?
- What assumptions does the author make? Are those assumptions justified?
- Is there adequate support for the author’s arguments?
- Does the author pursue the logical implications of his argument?

**Recognize intent, attitude, tone & bias**
- What attitude does the author adopt towards the material? Is the tone matter of fact, respectful, sarcastic, dismissive, etc.?
- How does the author use language? Objectively, or in an emotionally charged manner?
- Does the author appeal to the reader’s emotions, prejudices or biases?

**Analyze arguments**
- Which of the author’s statements does he support? Which does he leave unsupported?
- What conclusions does the author reach?
- Of the author’s conclusions, which are justified? Which ones are not justified?
Overcoming Writer’s Block

Are you struggling with writer’s block? It may be because while writing you are trying to be both creative and critical simultaneously. These two thought processes are very different—the creative arising from the right-brained mode of thinking, and the critical from the left-brained mode. You don’t want these impulses to compete with one another as you write, so it is best to separate them out by function.

The steps listed below explain how you can break down the writing process into discrete elements. Make note of the alternating sequence; the idea is to alternate between thought processes. First, do something creative, then complement that creativity with something critical.

To get started, formulate a plan. Work backwards from your paper’s due date and create a customized calendar or time line for your project. Follow the steps listed below in the sequence given, and set a target date for each step.

NOTE: in this case, critical doesn’t mean “harsh” or “disapproving;” it means “analytical.”

1. **Creatively choose a topic**
   - Pick something that interests you, or to which you have a personal connection.
   - To generate ideas, review the indexes and bibliographies from class readings, talk to your instructor, and brainstorm with classmates.
   - If your instructor chooses the topic for you, make sure you understand it thoroughly, then see how you can personalize it. Figure out what about the topic interests you.

2. **Critically refine your topic**
   Choosing a topic that has a narrow scope can make the writing process far more manageable. Think about moving from the general to the specific, as in the example below:

   - history of French art → history of 19th century French art → history of French art from 1895 to 1900 → comparison of impressionism and symbolism in French art from 1895 to 1900

3. **Creatively collect your ideas**
   - Scan a wide variety of sources about your topic, including Wikipedia and Google Scholar, to develop an overview.
   - Based on that overview, start reading and taking notes from the sources most relevant to your topic.
   - Take advantage of Noodlebib (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/noodlebib) or other bibliographic citation software to keep track of your sources and simplify documentation issues.
Critically organize your ideas
- Make an outline. There’s no better way to put your thoughts in order.
- Look for patterns in the ideas, notes, and sources you’ve collected.
- If you can’t find any patterns, try to at least block your ideas into a sequence that would make sense to a reader.
- Use a thesis statement as a magnet. Once you create a thesis, you can direct everything else towards it.

Creatively put your ideas on paper
- Start writing anywhere in the paper you feel you have something to say. It doesn’t need to be the beginning. Work diligently to get something down and set a goal for each writing session.
- Work quickly. Don’t fret over selecting the perfect word or phrasing the most elegant sentence; allow yourself to edit and revise later. This is only a draft.
- Use the outline you’ve already established but be prepared to modify it if necessary; it is not cast in stone.
- If you get stuck, talk about your ideas—with a friend, with an instructor, or just out loud. The act of selecting words to voice your ideas can translate to selecting words to write.
- Imagine a real reader for the paper; think of yourself as telling a story to an interested audience.

Critically revise your rough draft
- Give yourself time to edit. Make sure you finish your paper at least 24 hours before it’s due. Is it…

☐ Organized? Does one paragraph follow another logically? Look for good transitions between sentences and between paragraphs.
☐ Unified? Do all the paragraphs support and develop your thesis? (Don’t forget to make sure you’ve stated your thesis very clearly at the beginning of the paper). Is each paragraph unified around a topic sentence?
☐ Grammatically correct? Are sentences varied in length and structure, and designed to emphasize key ideas? Do they indicate relationships clearly and express ideas economically? Are they punctuated correctly?
☐ Well-worded? Are your words concrete? Appropriate? Use a thesaurus for new ideas, but make sure the words are contextually appropriate.
☐ Flowing? Read the paper aloud. Does it sound awkward? Do you stumble in certain places or have to reread particular passages? Ask a friend—ideally someone who knows nothing about the topic—to read your paper, and see if makes sense.
TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

1. Get enough sleep!!

2. Be early. While the tests are not designed to be overly long, neither are they overly short. Sit near the front; since tests tend to be distributed from the front of the room to the back, this gives you more time to work.

3. Be prepared to take the exam. For example, sit every other seat, bring extra pencils and erasers, place notes, books, and backpacks under your seat, remove baseball caps or turn them backwards, etc.

4. Glance over the whole exam. Do first the problems that you can do quickly.

5. Read over each question carefully. Underline key words. Write helpful notes in the margins. Give the question your best shot — if you aren’t sure, you can go back to the question later.

6. Don’t panic. If you start to panic, look up from the exam, take 3 deep breaths, and then go back to work.

7. If you don’t understand a question, ASK! The worst we can do is to say we can’t answer your question.

8. Especially for essays, attempt some kind of answer.

9. Go through questions a second time and force yourself to read every word. If you can’t do a problem, leave it and go on. This is a much better use of your time.

PROBLEM SOLVING SCHEME

1. Read through the problem twice
   a. first, get an overview of the problem
   b. next, underline key words and phrases

2. Restate what the problem is asking
   a. what is going on? Can you draw a diagram of it?
   b. specifically, what is the problem looking for?

3. Devise a plan
   a. have you done a problem like it before? If so, how did you do it?
   b. think about solving the problem backwards; i.e. what do you need to know to get the answer?

4. Implement your plan

5. Check your answer
   a. did you answer the question being asked?
   b. is your answer reasonable?
   c. does your answer satisfy all the specifications of the question?
Problem-Solving Tests

The single best way to prepare for problem-solving tests is to solve problems—lots of them. Be sure to work problems not previously assigned. Another important part of preparing involves reviewing class material ...

Review

Go over class notes & reading
Identify the major concepts and formulas from both.

Highlight topics/problems your instructor emphasized
Note why these points are important.

Look for fundamental problem types
Typically a course has recognizable groups/types of problems. Make sure you can tell them apart and know how to approach them.

Solve a Few

Analyze problems by answering the following questions
What concepts, formulas, rules and methods can I apply? How do I begin? Have I seen this problem before? Is it like other problems? Could I work this problem another way or simplify what I did? How does my solution compare with examples from the book and class?

Next to each problem-solving step, write what you did
Spell out what you did and why in your own words. This will make problem-solving techniques more concrete in your mind.

Practice working problems out of sequence
For example, work a problem from Chapter 7, Chapter 5, then Chapter 10. This will reveal how problems relate to each other and simulate the test-taking experience.

Work with a time limit
Aim to solve as many problems as you will have on the test within the test time limit (i.e., 30 problems in 50 minutes).

Create a practice test
Try cutting and pasting a test together using homework as a source for questions, as well similar problems from your textbook.

Taking the Test

Write down what you need
Before starting the test, turn it over and jot down all the formulas, relationships, definitions, etc. that you need to remember.

Review the test
Skim questions and develop a plan for your work. If any thoughts come to you immediately, write them in the margin.

Start with easier problems
Begin with those for which you can identify a solution method quickly. This will reduce anxiety and facilitate clear thinking.

Watch the clock
Allow more time for high point value problems, and reserve time at the end for reviewing your work and fixing any emergencies.

Try all test problems
If your mind goes blank, relax for a moment and contemplate the problem. Or mark it and return to it later.

For more difficult questions, have a plan
Be certain that you understand the problem. Mark key words, identify the givens and unknowns in your own words, sketch a diagram or picture of the problem, or try to anticipate the form & characteristics of the solution.

For complex problems, list the formulas you consider relevant to the solution, then decide which you will need to get started.
If you still have no solution method, try these tips

- If possible, write out an equation to express the relationships among some/all the givens and unknowns.
- Solve a simpler form of the problem or substitute simple numbers for unknowns; try to reduce the amount of abstract thinking required.
- Break a problem into a series of smaller problems, then work each part.
- Think back to similar practice problems.
- Work backwards. Ask yourself, "What do I need to get the answer?"
- Guess an answer and then check it. The checking process may suggest a solution method.

If all else fails, mark the problem and return to it later.
You may find clues in subsequent problems that will help you find a solution.

If you’re running out of time and still have problems remaining, try to set the problem up in a solution plan.
This means you’ll have a chance of receiving partial credit.

Analyzing Returned Problem-Solving Tests

1. Read the comments and suggestions from your professor.
2. Locate the source of the test questions. Did they come from the lectures, the textbook, or homework?
3. Note any alterations. How were the problems changed from those in the notes, text, and homework?
4. Determine the source of your errors and make a plan for next time.

- Did your errors result from carelessness? For example, did you fail to carry a negative sign from one step to another?
- Did you consistently miss the same kind of problem?
- Did you have difficulty on the test because you were too anxious to focus on the questions?
- Were you unable to finish the test because you ran out of time?
- Could you produce the formulas, or did you recall them incorrectly?
- Were you unable to solve problems because you didn’t practice similar ones?
Written Tests
Learn how to prep for your short answer & essay exams

Long-term preparation
- Read the course syllabus
- Make note of any themes or connections you notice
- Check with your instructor to see if he/she agrees with the
  connections you have made
- Learn from instructors and other resources about the form
  and content of upcoming tests, including grading criteria

Short-term preparation
- Review your notes and reading assignments 1-2 weeks before the test
- Make a list of main ideas or themes that your instructor covered in class
- Note the relationships between these ideas. (They may be clues to
  possible essay questions!)
- For each idea or concept, create a summary sheet of relevant data
- Review the topics actively by integrating notes, text, and supplementary
  information (i.e., diagrams)
- Show your review sheets to your instructor to make sure you are on the
  right track
- Generate a list of possible questions using your relationship charts and
  summary sheets
- Outline answers to as many of these questions as time permits
- Create a chart similar to the one found below before tackling compare
  and contrast questions that are typically found on essay tests

---

**Example:**
*Compare and contrast President Bush’s proposed private accounts for Social Security and the current system*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Private accounts</th>
<th>Current System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Individual assumes risk</td>
<td>Society assumes risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Potentially gaining higher investment yields</td>
<td>Risks of the marketplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before you write

**budget your time**
- Spend more time on questions that are worth more points
- Allow time for reviewing & proofreading at the end
- Ask your instructor for clarification if you don’t understand a question

**read carefully**
- Read all essay questions before you start to write
- Pay attention to key words such as compare, explain, justify, and define
- Be sure to distinguish main topics from supporting examples

**start off easy**
- Quickly list the ideas and facts you want to include
- Number the points in the order you want to present them
- The grader might be able to give you partial credit for it

**make an outline**
- Be sure to distinguish main topics from supporting examples
- This might seem obvious, but it can help you manage your time

While you write

- Write on every other line
  - This will leave space for any additions you may want to make to your answer

- State a definite, clear thesis
  - Include it within the first few sentences of your answer

- Follow your outline
  - Be specific with examples and details

- When time is up for a given question, move on to the next one
  - Partially answering all questions is better than fully answering some and not answering others at all

- If you’re running out of time, write an outline for the rest of the answer
  - The grader might be able to give you partial credit for it

- Brainstorm if you don’t know much about a question
  - Relax and try to recall your reading, lectures, and discussions; this may trigger memories relevant to the question

- If your mind goes blank, don’t panic
  - Think about something pleasant, unrelated to the test
  - Take some deep breaths
  - If you’re still blank, move on to a different question

After you write

- Read through your answers proofread
- Make any necessary additions
- Check for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation
HOW TO STUDY MATH AND SCIENCE

PREVIEWING

Before class briefly preview the text material that will be covered in the lecture.

1. Get an overview of the material by reading the introductory and summary passages, section headings and subheadings, and diagrams.
2. Look at the problems at the end of the chapter.
3. Make note of new terms and theorems.
4. Review (if necessary) old terms and definitions referred to in the new material.
5. Formulate possible questions for class.

Remember, the purpose of previewing is not to understand the material but to get a general idea of what the lecture will cover. This should not be a very time-consuming process.

NOTE-TAKING

When taking notes in class, listen actively: intend to learn from the lecture.

1. Write down the instructor’s explanatory remarks about the problem.
   a. Note how one gets from one step of the problem to another.
   b. Note any particular conditions of the problem.
   c. Note why the approach to the problem is taken.
2. Try to anticipate the consequences of a theorem or the next step in a problem. During a proof, keep the conclusion in mind.
3. Note any concepts, rules, techniques, problems that the instructor emphasizes.
4. Question your instructor during class about any unclear concept or procedure.
5. If you miss something in the lecture or don’t understand what’s being presented, then write down what you can catch—especially key words. Be sure to skip several lines so you can fill in the missing material later.
6. As soon as possible after class, summarize, review, and edit your notes.
   a. Quickly read through your notes to get an overview of the material and to check for any errors or omissions.
   b. Fill in any information—especially explanatory remarks (see #1 above)—that you did not have time to write down or that the instructor did not provide.
   c. Use the margin or the back of the opposite page to summarize the material, list key terms or formulas, and rework examples. You can also use this space to take notes from the textbook.
   d. Note any relationship to previous material; i.e., write down key similarities and differences between concepts in the new material and concepts in previously learned material.
7. Review your notes at regular intervals and review them with the intent to learn and retain.
TEXT READING

If your class lectures provide a good overall structure of the course, you can use your text to clarify and supplement your lecture notes. In order to create a single study source, insert the notes you take from the text into your lecture notes themselves as well as in the margin or the back of the opposite page.

If your text provides the best overall structure of the material, then you can use your lecture notes as the supplementary source. In either case consider the following procedures:

1. **Briefly preview the material.** Get an overview of the content and look at the questions at the end of the chapter.

2. **Read actively and read to understand thoroughly.**
   a. Formulate questions before you read (from lecture notes or from previewing) and read to answer those questions.
   b. Know what every word and symbol means.
   c. Translate abstract formulas to verbal explanations.
   d. Analyze the example problems by asking yourself these questions:
      i. What concepts, formulas, and rules were applied?
      ii. What methods were used to solve the problem? Why was this method used?
      iii. What was the first step?
      iv. Have any steps been combined?
      v. What differences or similarities are there between the examples and homework problems?
   e. Further analyze the example problems by using the following procedures:
      i. Explain each step using your own words. Write these explanations on paper.
      ii. Draw your own diagrams to illustrate and explain problems.
      iii. For practice, write down example problems from your book, close your book, and try to work the problems. Check your work with the example to find what concepts, rules, or methods you are having trouble with.
   f. Check to see how the material relates to previous material. Ask yourself these questions:
      i. How was the material different from previous material?
      ii. How was it the same?
      iii. What totally new concepts were introduced and how were they applied?
      iv. Where does this material "fit" within the overall structure of the course?

3. **Stop periodically and recall the material that you have read.**

4. **Review prerequisite material, if necessary.**
ESSAY TESTS

Preparing for Essay Tests

Long-term preparation

- Read the course description and syllabus. Write down the course goals and topics and any repeated themes. Write down any assumptions and biases that may be either stated or implied. As you read assignments and listen to lectures and discussions, ask yourself how the ideas presented relate to these themes.
- Learn as much as you can about the content and grading criteria of upcoming tests from your professor. For example, how important is style and grammar?

Short-term preparation

- A week or two before the test, look over your notes and the chapter headings of your readings, and from this generate a list of major topics for the material covered. Note any relationships among the topics — these are often good material for essay questions. In a history course, for example, you might find that two political movements are similar. Your instructor could easily ask you to compare and contrast these movements on an essay test. It sometimes helps to picture such relationships by creating a chart of the related elements as in this example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Issues:</th>
<th>Cause: Problems of Industrialization</th>
<th>Effect: Progressive Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Urbanization</td>
<td>Muckraking — Spurge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in family</td>
<td>Settlement House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Conditions</td>
<td>Labor Laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Conditions</td>
<td>Brandeis Brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Growth of Bossism</td>
<td>Muckraking — Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tweed</td>
<td>LaFollette Reform Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>platform: 1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Trusts — Standard Oil</td>
<td>Muckraking — Tarbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wealth Distribution</td>
<td>Anti-Trust legislation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- For each major topic, create a summary sheet of all the relevant factual data that relates to that topic. Review actively: integrate notes, text, and supplementary information into diagrams, charts, outlines, tables, or simply written paragraph summaries of the information. Use your own words: make these summary sheets personally meaningful. Show them to your professor to make sure you're on the right track.
Use these relationship charts and summary sheets to generate a list of possible essay questions. Outline answers to as many of these questions as time permits.

**TAKING ESSAY TESTS**

**Before you write**

- Budget your time according to the point value of each question, allowing time for proofreading and any unexpected emergencies (such as taking longer than you expected on a question or going blank for a while).
- Read all essay questions before you start to write. As you read the questions, underline key words (e.g., compare, explain, justify, define) and make sure you understand what you are being asked. See UTLC handout “Key Words in Essay Questions” for further clarification of the meaning of these words).
- Begin with the question that seems easiest to you. This procedure reduces anxiety and facilitates clear thinking.
- Simplify the relationship implied by the question. For example, if you were given the question, The Progressive Movement was a direct response to the problems of industrialization. Discuss.”, you might narrow your response to a more specific cause-effect relationship such as, “What were the problems of industrialization that caused a response that we label the Progressive Movement?” This focuses your attention on causes as a basis for recall and discussion.
- Before actually writing, jot a rough outline on your test answer sheet: list quickly, as they come to you, as many ideas and facts as you can remember by recalling your relationship charts and summary sheets. Number your points in the order in which you want to present them, discriminating main issues and supporting details and examples.
- As you are writing on one question, if you think of ideas and examples that you can apply to other questions, jot them down on the test answer sheet so you won’t forget them.

**While you write**

- Come up with a definite, clear sentence that directly answers the question. State your thesis within the first few sentences of your answer.
- Leave space for additions to your answer by writing on every other line and on only one side of each page.
- Follow your outline: provide specific examples, substantiating facts, and relevant details.
- Use the technical vocabulary of the course. Write legibly.
- When you reach the end of your allotted time period for a given question, move on to the next item; partially answering all questions is better than fully...
answering some but not others. The instructor can’t give you any credit for a question you haven’t attempted.

- If you find yourself out of time on a question but with more to say, quickly write on your test answer sheet an outline of what you would write if you had time; perhaps your grader will give you partial credit for it.
- If you don’t know much about a question, relax and brainstorm for a few moments about the topic. Recall pages from your texts, particular lectures, class discussions to trigger your memory about ideas relevant to the question. Write these ideas down as coherently as you can.
- If your mind goes blank, relax: take some slow deep breaths and, just for a moment, think about something pleasant that’s unrelated to the test. Then, let your mind recall through association or redirect your attention to a different question.

After you write

- Re-read your answers and make any additions that are necessary for clarity and completeness.
- Check your response for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

ANALYZING RETURNED ESSAY TESTS

- Read all comments and suggestions. Be sure you understand the grader’s criticisms. Write out questions you have so that you can discuss them with your grader. Be tactful and assertive; you need to understand your grader’s expectations!
- Determine where your weaknesses lie:
  - Evaluate your understanding - Did most of the information your instructor expected in your essay come from the lectures? From the texts? From outside readings? Was there any course content tested which you did not anticipate? Did your grader want more detailed information than you had expected? Did most of the questions come straight from the material covered, or did the instructor expect you to be able to analyze and/or evaluate the information? Do you realize now that you have significantly misunderstood some of the important ideas in the course?
  - Evaluate your test-taking procedure:
    - Did you wait too long to begin to prepare for test? Did you only memorize when the test required that you analyze or synthesize ideas Did you misread or misunderstand any of the questions? Did you run out of time? you fail to write down anything on a question you knew little about? Did you fail to organize your ideas before you began to write? Fail to proofread?
  - Evaluate your anxiety level.
- Did you have any problems with anxiety or during the test? Were you too anxious to concentrate on the questions and your responses? Did you forget ideas and information which you studied well?
- Reorganize your study approach on the basis of your evaluation of your weaknesses. Ask yourself what you would have had to do—how you would have had to prepare, to think, to behave, to feel - to do well on this test. Then develop a study plan which incorporates these insights.
- Get help if you need it. Arrange to talk to your instructor, hire a tutor, join a study group, visit the writing tutors at the UTLC—whatever seems most useful to you.
Strategies for Avoiding Careless Mistakes on your Exam

1. **USE YOUR TIME WISELY.** This does NOT mean to run through the problems at the highest speed possible. You must work quickly in order to finish the exam, but it won’t benefit you to work so quickly that you make many careless mistakes. You must weigh your problem-solving skills against the time available. If working too quickly causes you to miss five problems due to careless errors, perhaps you would have been better off working more carefully, even if this causes you to not finish one problem.

2. **PRACTICE.** The less time you need to spend figuring out how to solve a particular problem, the more time you will have to work through the math carefully. Additionally, if you have a clear grasp of the concepts, you will need to spend less time on some of the conceptual multiple choice questions, leaving you more time to work problems or sort through possible answers for difficult questions.

3. **USE YOUR UNITS!** When working out any math equation, even if it looks very simple, use your units. This will catch many common mistakes. Many problems look simple, yet by using your units you will realize that it is actually more complex than you originally thought or that another step is needed to arrive at the requested answer.

4. **MAKE SURE YOU ANSWER THE RIGHT QUESTION.** Read the problem carefully and make sure your answer is what the problem asked for. (Did you give the freezing point or the freezing point depression?)

5. **DOES YOUR ANSWER MAKE SENSE?** If not, double check your problem-solving procedure and your math. Do NOT change your answer randomly, however, just because your answer doesn’t make sense to you. If you are sure of your procedure and math, leave it alone. Keep in mind that you may not know some information that would make it make sense and that the numbers in these problems are generated randomly, within some parameters. Usually these parameters are set so that your numbers will make sense, but in a few cases they are not. Your answer will still come out mathematically correct.

6. **KNOW WHAT TYPES OF MISTAKES YOU MAKE.** As you work the homework and other problems, keep a list of the mistakes you make. Being aware of common mistakes will help you avoid them on the test.

7. **IS YOUR ANSWER ONE OF THE CHOICES?** If your answer is close to a choice, but not so close that you think the difference could just be due to rounding error, recheck your math and especially your procedure before you choose that answer.
HOW TO KEEP CALM DURING TESTS

• PREPARE WELL IN ADVANCE. Keep up day to day, if you can; but don’t judge yourself harshly if you don’t. Avoid last-minute cramming. Don’t go without sleep the night before (though 4 or 5 hours may be enough). Stop studying an hour or so before the test and relax and compose yourself.

• KNOW TIME AND PLACE of the test and what you need to bring. Be on time, neither too early nor too late, with blue books or supplies. Don’t rush.

• DON’T TALK ABOUT THE TEST with classmates immediately beforehand, if you know it raises your anxiety level. To do so may nourish group paranoia.

• Read over the test and PLAN YOUR APPROACH. Ascertain point values per part, time limits for each section, which question you’ll start with, etc.

• Don’t hesitate to ASK FOR CLARIFICATION from the professor, teaching assistant, or proctor if you have questions about directions, procedure, etc., rather than letting anxiety build up because you aren’t sure about what you are expected to do.

• DEVELOP AN AGGRESSIVE, YET REALISTIC ATTITUDE. Approach the test vigorously determined that you will do your best; but also accept the limits of what you know at the moment. Use everything you know to do well; but don’t blame yourself for what you don’t know.

• ACTIVITY REDUCES ANXIETY. If you go blank and can’t think of anything to write, go on to another question or another part of the test. On an essay, jot down anything you can recall on scratch paper to stimulate your memory and get your mind working.

• RELAX YOURSELF PHYSICALLY during the test, if you notice that you are not thinking well or are tight. Pause, lay your test aside, and take several slow, deep breaths. Concentrate on your breathing. Do this if you notice that you are worrying excessively about one problem, not reading carefully, forgetting information you know.

• PAY ATTENTION TO THE TEST, not to yourself or others. Don’t waste time worrying, doubting yourself, wondering how other people are doing, blaming yourself, etc. Don’t worry about what you should have done; pay attention to what you can do now.
Suggestions for Talking to a Professor

The purpose of this suggestion sheet is to encourage each of you to talk to your professors when you have difficulty understanding the material presented in class or when you have constructive feedback you would like to share with the professor. Please use this sheet as a guideline in deciding when and how to approach your professors.

The Dos

- Have an open, friendly attitude when you visit your instructor. Use a confident and constructive tone, but be sure not to sound aggressive.
- Take advantage of office hours or schedule an appointment if you cannot make the regularly scheduled office hour times.
- Prepare your questions, thoughts, and discussion points before going to see your instructor.
- Listen to what the professor has to say to you.
- Be specific with your questions/concerns (e.g., say that you are having trouble with elasticity, not that you don’t understand economics).
- Use examples to demonstrate your point.
- If your issue is personal, go by yourself. If the issue is common among several people, then e-mail the professor with the group’s concern and request a time to meet either individually or as a group.
- When a professor makes changes because of something you suggested, be sure to acknowledge how the changes have benefited you so he/she knows the change was received positively.
- Follow up with what the professor suggests, even if you are not sure it will work or is right for you.

The Don'ts

- Do not show up at the professor’s office expecting that their schedule will match yours (this is why you schedule an appointment if you can’t attend office hours). You can stop by and see if the professor has time to meet with you.
- If your issue is in-depth and complex, do not talk with the professor immediately before or after class. Only simple questions are appropriate before or after class time.
- Do not talk to the professor when you are upset. Likewise, don’t talk to the professor if he/she is upset. Wait until you are able to think calmly and clearly before meeting.
- Do not talk to a professor about an exam immediately after getting it back. Take time to go through the exam, see where your mistakes are, and then see the professor to discuss your responses.
- Do not expect the professor to implement everything you suggest. Each professor must balance the interests of all students.
- Do not expect immediate changes. If the professor likes your ideas/suggestions, then he/she may choose to implement the changes slowly.
College Life: How to set goals and achieve more

by Gavin Ingham

We have all felt the frustration of wanting more in our lives -- perhaps it is a desire to change a habit or weakness, or maybe it involves a life long dream of traveling the world. Wishful thinking or mere resolutions isn't as practical or useful as goal setting is in helping us move forward.

**What are goals?**

Quite simply put goals are targets or objectives that we want to achieve. They are different in their intensity than wishes or wants and as such are more tangible, more actionable, more measurable and more achievable. Having clearly defined and written goals will help us all to be more successful.

**Why have goals?**

People with goals achieve more than those without goals. We can all think of examples of highly successful people such as a successful sports personality. Do you think that any of them have succeeded without a clear and specific goal of what they want to achieve?

People with goals are more likely to achieve their goals than those without clear goals. It seems obvious that if you know exactly what you want it is far easier to achieve it than if you are vague or ambiguous but the truth is even more pronounced than that. Think of all of the people that you know who would like to achieve something but their goals are not big or clear enough and thus they constantly end up failing?

If you have a clearly written and specific goal it is relatively easy to create a structured action plan to achieve it.

In the 1950's a Yale University study did some research on the results of goal setting. The results they discovered over a 20 year period were astounding. 20 years later when they investigated the success of the graduates they found that the 3% of graduates with clearly written goals in the 1950's were worth more in terms of wealth than the other 97% put together.

They also had better health and relationships. It is worth noting that there were no other discriminating factors obvious.
How To Rid Yourself of Bad Habits
by Ginger E. Blume, Ph.D.

We all have habits---some good; some bad. What qualifies as a habit? It is a routine practice that is done in the same way for the same reason, over and over again. A habit becomes second nature and is intrinsically neither good nor bad. When a habit is negative, it hinders or harms and when a habit is positive, it fosters health, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships.

You may be wondering why we develop habits and whether habits are important or not? Habits help us establish order and allow us to do things automatically, with little thought. This in turn, allows us to focus on other areas of our lives that demand our immediate attention. Originally, our habits are developed because they meet a perceived need. When they no longer meet a need, they continue on automatic and may be reinforced by people around you.

Stages of Change

Typical bad habits include drinking alcohol, smoking, using drugs, gambling, nail biting, lying, procrastinating, cursing, cheating, etc. Like most people, you probably have at least a few bad habits you’d like to change. How do people change their habits? After all, change is not easy. First, if you want to stop a bad habit, decide on one habit you personally want to change (not should change). Also, make sure you don’t choose to change a habit just because it will please someone else. Next, explore your readiness to change. Psychologists, Prochaska and DiClemente have studied and described the process of how people change a negative behavior or habit. They have portrayed the following five stages people usually go through in their mind before they actually effect a change. When successful, these stages are progressive, building toward an eventual commitment to change:

The Five Stages:

- PRECONTEMPLATION – the person sees no need to change
- CONTEMPLATION – the person recognizes the problem
- PREPARATION – the person plans for change, but tomorrow (not now)
- ACTION – the person admits to having a problem and starts taking positive behavior/action
- MAINTENANCE – the person continues the new, positive behavior for more than 6 months
Planning for Change

Once you've reached the Preparation Stage, you can plan to change in the following way:

1. Make a list of what you'll gain or how you'll benefit from accomplishing your goal.
2. Break it into small doable steps and brainstorm multiple ways to achieve those steps.
3. Choose 3-4 action steps that are objective and measurable.
4. Set a timeline with a set date to re-evaluate your progress.
5. Decide on some immediate rewards you'll use for positive steps you accomplish.
6. And finally, don't forget to enlist the support and encouragement of others and remember to remind yourself of previous successes.

“The 5 Stages of How People Change” indicate that “action” or external change only occurs after a person has fully engaged in the preparation stage. By engaging in this process, one becomes a “change manager” rather than a “change victim.

If you have a goal to break a bad habit, first identify when you do the negative behavior and second, analyze what is triggering this behavior. You'll also want to evaluate the benefits and dangers of changing. Consider the following:

- What pleasure or release of tension does the habit produce?
- What harm is the habit causing?
- What will improve by breaking the habit?

Action: Making a Change

Once you've explored these questions, you'll need to prepare for action. Begin this process by removing any temptations associated with your bad habit. You can also create obstacles to interfere with past things that maintained your bad habit. Next, try to reduce your overall stress level since stress is often a trigger for engaging in a bad habit. I also recommend you enlist the support of your friends and family. Find valuable reinforcers and rewards and then commit and act. Throughout the change process, maintain a log of your habit behavior - when, where, what feeling, and any obstacles. Be fair to yourself and remember this: the bad habit was not “built in a day” and neither will it be destroyed or replaced in a day. Research shows that the average smoker attempts to quit approximately seven times before s/he is successful. So no matter how slow, keep trying. “People do not fail; they only give up trying.”

Bad Habit or Addiction?
Sometimes, after numerous attempts to change a bad habit, a person may want to consider if s/he is dealing with more than just a bad habit. Sometimes, repeated failure is indicative of a serious addiction. An addiction results in a loss of control and usually involves a compulsive use of a mood or mind altering chemical(s), along with the inability to stop the use in spite of the fact that such use is causing problems in one’s life. The person may have a physical and/or psychological dependence on a substance. Some experts also apply this term to compulsive behaviors that produces chemical changes in the brain, such as gambling or compulsive sex. Unlike something that is simply a bad habit, an addiction, such as taking a substance becomes the sole focus of one’s life.

If you’re not sure whether you’re dealing with a bad habit or an addition, the following signs may suggest that you need professional help with an addiction:

- Multiple tries to break the bad habit have been unsuccessful.
- You give up other things that are important to you in order to indulge your habit.
- You continue the negative behavior even though you know it’s damaging you and your relationships.
- You have symptoms of withdrawal or overwhelming feelings of sadness, anxiety or depression when your stop.
- You need more and more of the substance or behavior to obtain the same level of pleasure or satisfaction.

**Summary**

If you believe you’re ready to make a change, remember these tips: 1) Give yourself sufficient time to change. 2) Set realistic expectations and goals 3) Focus on 1-2 change strategies at a time. 4) Think in terms of small steps. 5) Review and reward your progress daily. 6) Seek help when needed.
How to Change Your Behavior

(From Secrets to Winning at Office Politics by Marie G. McIntyre, Ph.D.)

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To become more effective at work, we often need to change some longstanding habits or behaviors. The acronym AMISH sums up the five steps required to accomplish any personal behavior change: Awareness, Motivation, Identification, Substitution, and Habit Replacement. Even though this process has nothing to do with religious communities in Pennsylvania, perhaps the label will help you remember the steps.

- **Awareness:** If you don’t know that a problem exists, how can you fix it? Without feedback to the contrary, most of us believe that we’re doing just fine. So occasionally soliciting feedback from your manager, staff, customers, or colleagues is a good idea.

- **Motivation:** The fact that someone else has issues with your behavior doesn’t necessarily mean that you agree. If you don’t believe it’s a problem, you certainly won’t be motivated to change anything. When someone indicates that your behavior is an issue in some way, don’t automatically reject that possibility. Instead, try to understand how your actions may be affecting other people. Then perhaps you will be motivated to try some new approaches.

- **Identification:** If you believe that you should make some changes, then you have to identify exactly which behaviors you need to work on. If your problem behavior has been described in broad, fuzzy terms – like “bad attitude” or “poor communication” or “lack of initiative” – you need to get more specifics. Then you can decide what to do differently. “Poor communication” could mean that you don’t listen, don’t write clearly, are not sufficiently assertive, or make boring presentations. Very different problems with very different solutions.

- **Substitution:** Stopping one behavior automatically implies that you will replace it with another. If you stop speeding, you will start driving more slowly. If you stop yelling, you will start speaking more softly. In fact, any behavior change has a greater chance of success when you define it in positive terms instead of negative ones. Saying “I have to stop getting angry” doesn’t tell you what to do instead. But saying “When I feel angry in meetings, I’m going to take deep breaths and speak calmly” will give you a positive goal. If you want to eliminate a troublesome behavior, you must decide what helpful behavior to substitute.

- **Habit Replacement:** A successful behavior change means that new habits have been developed. You have permanently adopted more effective ways of acting and interacting. But old habits don’t vanish overnight, so don’t be surprised if you have a few relapses.

Finally, remember that others will not immediately notice the change in your behavior. If you’re waiting for the applause, it may seem awfully quiet for awhile. So when you are trying to change, be patient. There is always a gap between change in behavior and perception change.
University Resources

College of Liberal Arts
Student Division
GEB 2.200
512-471-4271
www.utexas.edu/cola/student-affairs

CLASS Center
UTurn
CLA 1.304
512-232-3816
classcenter@austin.utexas.edu

Sanger Learning & Career Center
JES A115
512-471-1217
www.lifelearning.utexas.edu/

University Writing Center
FAC 211
512-471-6222
uwc.utexas.edu/

UT Counseling and Mental Health Center
SSB, 5th floor
512-471-3515
cmhc.utexas.edu/

University Health Services
SSB, 1st floor
512-471-4955
healthyhorns.utexas.edu/

Services for Students with Disabilities
SSB 4.206
512-471-6259
www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/index.php

Student Financial Services
SSB 3.200
512-475-6282
finaid.utexas.edu/

Housing and Food Services
KIN (200 W Dean Keeton St)
512-471-3136
www.utexas.edu/student/housing/