

**How to Raise Your Grades
by Half a Point in One Semester**

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Companion manuals in this series are *College Pitfalls*; *Surviving College*; and *America's Lowest Cost Colleges: How to Earn an Accredited Bachelor's Degree for Pennies on the Dollar*.

This is a special edition for members of my on-line community forum, www.garynorth.com.

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Companion manual to *America's Lowest Cost Colleges*

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INTRODUCTION

(to be read)

Do you really want to raise your grades?

Here is the wrong answer: "Yes. That would be great."

Here is the correct answer:

"If you will teach me study techniques that will let me learn new material faster, remember it better, and understand it, that's what I want. My grades will rise. I'll be able to get into college and graduate. That's what I want. Give me the tools. I will put them to good use."

If this is your attitude, I will show you how to achieve these goals. As part of this process, your grades will rise.

THE FOUNDATION OF SUCCESS

Success in high school, college, and life rests on self-discipline. You must be willing to pay the price of whatever goals you have set for yourself. Be sure about your goals. Then pay the price.

If you aren't willing to pay the price -- and I don't mean money -- then my study habits course will not help you very much. A little, maybe, but not much.

I am not offering magic here. I am giving you a step-by-step 27-day program that will teach you what you can do to raise your grades.

But will you do what I say? That's the question.

What I will teach you will not be easy to implement in your life. My course requires considerable self-discipline -- more than most adults have, let alone most high

school students. This is the price of every path to success. There are no free lunches in life.

You must change your study habits. Productive new practices take about 30 days to become habits. Sadly, unproductive ones are usually quite easy to implement.

COLLEGE

Unless you already have very good study habits, your refusal to adopt the changes that I recommend will make your college years far more difficult. Over half of the freshmen who start college fail to earn a degree. Click here for the evidence:

<http://snipurl.com/8juk>

College is an expensive, high-risk venture. It costs over \$10,000 a year to attend most tax-funded universities and \$25,000 a year to attend most private universities. If you flunk out or quit, this money is wasted.

There are ways to cut these costs dramatically. It's possible to earn a bachelor's degree from an accredited university for under \$15,000, total. But 99% of students who sign up as college freshmen don't know about most of these loopholes and don't take advantage of most of them. They or their families pay far more than is necessary.

Whether you go to college my way or the conventional high-cost way, it will pay you to master the study techniques I present in this course. You have taken the crucial first two steps. I'm asking you to complete a one-month journey.

I assume that you plan to attend college. If you do, consider the following.

First, academic success in college requires serious personal commitment and self-discipline on your part. My course is designed to provide you with the study skills that will enable you to graduate from any college that will admit you.

Unless you internalize what I will show you, by disciplining yourself to do each of the daily assignments that I assign (which are really not difficult, intellectually speaking), my course will not help you much. A little, maybe, but not much.

The key to success in everything in life is this: self-discipline. If you don't have it, get it. If you do have it, exercise it. Self-discipline is like a muscle. It needs exercise.

Second, the improvement in your grades that this course will enable you to achieve will increase the number of colleges that will admit you.

Third, if you finish this course, you will be in a position to do an end run around the conventional collegiate system, earn an accredited degree for pennies on the dollar, and graduate at least one year early.

Here is my commitment to you. . . .

WHAT I WILL DO FOR YOU

I'm here to remind you of facts that you already know are true. You just haven't systematically done what you know to be true. I'll help you do these things.

I'll also give you information that you haven't even considered, but which will instantly be believable because it's so simple.

From 1930 to 1950, a man known as George Orwell (Eric Blair) was one of the world's most important journalists and novelists (*Animal Farm, Nineteen Eighty-Four*). He made a wise observation:

“To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle.”

My job here is to call attention to things that are right in front of your nose. In fact, as you read my lessons, you'll probably think, “I already knew that.” Yes, you probably did. But then you forgot about it. I'm here to remind you. I'm here to help you remember, and, once you remember, show you how put it to good use.

Lesson by lesson, I'll write some simple things, show you some simple techniques -- simple to describe, anyway -- and then review what I have just told you. I'll also give you a real-world assignment for the next day.

The next day, I'll remind you of yesterday's assignment. I'll tell you not to read today's lesson until you complete yesterday's assignment.

Will you then complete (or even begin) yesterday's assignment? Maybe. Maybe not.

Will you read today's lesson even if you didn't complete yesterday's assignment? Maybe. Maybe not.

This is a real-world course. Hardly anyone will do everything that I recommend, but I hope that you will make those changes where you are really weak academically, which are causing you your biggest problems academically.

There is one thing that you **MUST** do to maximize the benefit of this course. I will present it in Lesson #2: a memory-building technique that will completely change the way you learn difficult or unfamiliar new material.

This course is sequential. The lessons and the daily assignments are laid out with a purpose in mind: to help you change your study habits and thereby raise your grades.

These lessons add up over time. So do the habits they foster. The sum of the whole course is equal to its parts, but the usefulness of the whole course is greater than its parts. If you skip anything, you're cheating yourself. If you skip the daily assignments, you are really cheating yourself.

Lesson 1

HOW IMPORTANT ARE GOOD GRADES?

For graduating from college, your high school grades are probably the most important single indicator of your future academic success . . . or failure.

James Rosenbaum, writing in *The American Educator* (Spring 2004), a publication of the American Federation of Teachers, has issued this warning to high school students:

Let's start by getting the cold, hard truth out in the open: Less than 40 percent of students who plan to go to college actually earn a two- or four-year degree within 10 years of graduating from high school.

This means that college is a high-risk venture. It ends in frustration and a sense of failure for millions of high school graduates who start college. You had better decide today -- not tomorrow -- that you're not going to be one if these people. Rosenbaum continues:

Do you know what it takes to succeed in college? The simple answer is that if you take hard classes, do all of your homework, and get good grades in high school, you will be ready.

I am going to show you how to achieve all three of these goals. This doesn't mean that you will achieve them. That will depend on your willingness to follow my instructions. But if you do what I recommend, you will dramatically reduce the likelihood of not graduating from college. Rosenbaum warns:

GRADES MATTER. Your high school grade point average is a great predictor of whether or not you will earn a college degree. . . . Less than 14 percent of students with C averages or lower in high school earned a two- or four-year college degree.

Got that? Less than 14%. This means that 86% of students with C averages or lower in high school earned no college-level degree of any kind. You can get better odds in Las Vegas, where the games openly are rigged against you.

Even worse, 52 percent of college students who had a C average (or lower) in high school didn't earn even one college credit! What are they doing while they are "in college"? They are spending time and money on remedial classes that repeat high school work and earn no college credit.

Earning a two-year college degree or higher depends a lot on what your high school GPA is.

<http://snipurl.com/awwh>

HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

Unless you're a genius, you are going to have to work hard for every grade above a C. A high school grade of C will not do you much good. It's an indicator that you're going to have big trouble in college in that field of study. A C-average in high school is a drop-out indicator in 86% of the cases.

But . . . if there is evidence in your transcript of improvement -- rising grades -- then your earlier grade point average doesn't matter nearly so much. If a college entrance committee can see your improvement, it is much more likely to grant you entrance.

College is very expensive per year. Most college students today take more than four years to graduate. That runs up the bill even higher.

My manual, *America's Lowest Cost Colleges*, shows you ways to get through college without going into debt, without asking your parents to sacrifice for you, and without getting a poor education.

What if a B-average can get you into any of several accredited universities that have good academic reputations? What if your ability to get a B-average in high school is sufficient to get you through the rigors of college classrooms?

If the main barrier between you and a college degree is not monetary but academic, are you willing to commit to getting your grades up?

Are you? Really?

BUT WHAT IF YOU DON'T GO TO COLLEGE?

Most students who send for my study habits course are planning to go to college, but you may be an exception. It doesn't matter. Higher grades are very important as indicators of economic success without a college degree. Rosenbaum writes:

Even if you don't go to college, your high school grade point average is still important because it predicts future income. High-school grades do not predict income right after high school, but they do strongly predict long-term income. If you don't go to college, an increase of one letter grade (from C to B) in your high school grade-point average typically increases income by 13 percent by age 28!

This may not sound like a lot. After all, what's 13%? Amazingly, it is over half difference in earning power between someone with a college degree and someone without one. A college degree gives an estimated earnings advantage of about 23%, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education.

<http://snipurl.com/8jzp>

Rosenbaum then adds this astounding bit of information:

(Compared to people who haven't gone to college, a four year degree typically increases income by about 14 percent.)

Do you understand what this means? As far as your income is concerned at age 28, getting your grades from Cs to Bs in high school is equal in earning-power potential to graduating from college!

So even if you don't go to college, improving your high school grades from Cs to Bs improves the chances that you will be able to support a family.

<http://snipurl.com/awwh>

WHY ARE GRADES SO IMPORTANT?

They aren't. Grades are merely numerical evidence of what really *is* important: an

individual's habits of self-discipline and hard work. It's the person's commitment to academic success that makes higher grades possible, which in turn make economic success possible.

Your commitment to academic success in turn relies on your long-term goals: what you want to accomplish; the difference you want to make. Raising your grades is an indicator of **your commitment to excellence**. Your commitment to excellence is what counts.

What makes the crucial difference is your willingness to sacrifice less important things -- parties, television, ball games, telephone chatter -- for more important things: reading time, review time, class preparation in advance, and time-management in general.

Grades are indicators of a person's internal abilities -- not a person's intelligence alone, but the personal habits that put intelligence to productive uses. A person's grade point average is a numerical indicator of inner commitment.

How committed are you internally? Is the number-one nagger in your life your own conscience? It had better be, because in college, nobody else will nag you. Your professors won't care. I used to be a college professor. Trust me. Most of them don't care. No one pays them to care.

You must become self-motivated. You have to set your own schedule and then follow it.

Are you ready to do this?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

In scheduling your time, don't play off your school assignments against your household chores, except during academic emergencies -- and even here, get permission from the parent in charge. You owe your family before you owe the school or an employer.

Quit your after-school job before you try to trade off your grades with your household chores, unless half or more of your wages goes to your family. Quit the sports

team or extra-curricular activities. You owe your family first.

Life involves cutting corners. We are not supermen. We can't do everything perfectly. There are trade-offs in life.

You must allocate your time, one way or another. If you do what I recommend in this course, you will find enough wasted time to do your homework, do your household chores, and hold a part-time job. The smarter you are, the more easily you can attain all this.

Learn to work smarter. Begin learning how to work smarter with your household chores. Do what you're told when you're told to do it. Stop making excuses. This is the uphill path to adulthood.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to grades, you should regard good grades as a means to an end. If your end is merely making good grades, then you have your priorities mixed up. There are many things that are more important than making good grades. Making average grades without cheating is far more important than making good grades by cheating.

I can help you raise your grades. If you do what I say for the next month, you will get higher grades. But to do this, you will have to change your study habits. You will have to identify wasted time that you can apply to study. In other words, nothing of value comes free of charge. Somebody has to pay. The older you get, that somebody is you.

You can face this fact now and gain maturity, or you can postpone that day of acceptance and remain a child for a bit longer. But if you decide to remain a child, don't expect to be treated as an adult.

One lesson is designed to be read and implemented each day. I advise strongly against trying to implement more than one lesson a day. I also advise strongly against skipping a lesson or postponing its implementation.

Changing bad habits is a painful process. It requires attention to detail. It requires steady implementation.

At the end of each lesson is an assignment. Please do every assignment before reading the next lesson, let alone trying to implement the next lesson.

These lessons are cumulative. There is a reason for the sequence of these lessons. Please: read one lesson each day and then do the assignment. Trust me. I know what I'm doing. If you do one assignment per day, in sequence, in one month from today, you'll know what you're doing.

You will be tempted to read several lessons in advance. I can't stop you, but I advise against this. I don't want you to give up in advance. "I just can't do all this!" Yes, you can. You eat an elephant one bite at a time. You can fulfill the requirements of this course one day at a time.

REVIEW

Time-management is basic to success.

You must learn how to cut corners.

ASSIGNMENT

Write down the main reasons why you want to raise your grades between now and high school graduation. By putting your goals on paper, you will increase the likelihood of achieving them. The price of achieving them is getting better grades. Make sure you are willing to pay this price.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Your level of commitment

One more time: Do today's assignment. Don't read ahead. Don't spook yourself. Just do today's assignment. Keep it simple.

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you write down your list of goals? Have you committed to pay the price of attaining them?

Lesson 2

YOUR LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

I have said that this is a real-world course. It is aimed at real students with real goals and real limits on what they are willing to do in order to raise their grades. In this lesson, I will tell you what you can expect from me and what I expect from you.

How much do you care about your grades? How much do you care about your ability to learn new material? Before you can make a rational decision about how much emotional energy and time to commit to my program, you must decide for yourself how much your learning ability means to you.

In setting any goal for yourself, you must ask yourself three questions:

1. What do I want to achieve?
2. How soon do I want to achieve it?
3. What am I willing to pay (give up)?

Here are two worthwhile goals: measurably higher grades and an increased ability to learn new material.

What are you willing give up in order to gain these goals?

BENEFITS

You want to raise your grades. This is a good goal, but not all by itself. You had better have good reasons for wanting higher grades. If your goals are base, then your tactics could become base. Maybe you could cheat your way to higher grades. This is always wrong. There are no gray areas here. If you cheat, you have done the wrong thing.

Let's discuss a few goals that are legitimate.

You have set goals for yourself. One of them is personal achievement. You want to improve your self-confidence. If you follow my instructions, lesson by lesson, your self-confidence will increase. That's because your performance will increase. You will learn more, remember more, and understand more. Your grades will rise.

Another goal may be a reduction of fear regarding school. If you're afraid of something, this can be a benefit, if your fear leads you to take steps to overcome it. But constant fear is a terrible liability. It eats away at your self-confidence. It keeps you from making risky decisions that are important in life. If you are afraid to lose because you don't think you can ever win, this will paralyze you.

If you learn how to learn, which my course will teach you if you want to learn, you will never have to be afraid of school again. I'll even teach you how to avoid the courses that you just will not be able to pass with a grade above C.

You may be trying to prove something. That's all right, if what you're trying to prove is legitimate. You may be trying to prove to yourself that you're no dummy, that you have the brains to do better. You just don't know what needs to be done.

You may be trying to prove to your parents that you aren't a flake. You are more serious than your report card indicates. If you stick with this course, they will know this, even if your grades don't improve. The very fact that you started this course and stick with it will prove your case.

You may want to prove to your teachers that you are an achiever, not a loser. This course will give you the tools you need to make your point. You will visibly begin to achieve academic success.

You may also understand that the techniques that help you to learn in a classroom can help you learn things -- some kinds of things -- outside the classroom. You want to have a successful lifetime career. If you know how to learn, you can succeed in whatever career you choose.

You may be looking for respect. This is good, just so long as the thing for which you're respected is legitimate. I don't think you don't want respect because you are a successful cheater.

Your long-term lifetime goals should be more important to you than these short-term goals. Focus on the goals that define you as a person. Focus on lifetime goals. Your classroom work has meaning in terms of the doors your grades open up to you.

COSTS

Think of my course as military boot camp. Nobody likes boot camp. But when you ask a U.S. Marine if he is glad that he went through boot camp, he will say “yes.”

If you survive Marine boot camp, you prove that you’re tough. If boot camp weren’t tough, surviving it wouldn’t prove anything about a Marine’s toughness.

Boot camp involves doing things you hate to do. So does high school. You are asked to take courses you will never use. These courses take time away from courses that you might actually use after graduation.

I will show you how to get through high school boot camp.

What about costs? You don’t pay anything for this course, other than paper and toner to print it. The real cost is the cost of what you will be required to give up. You will be asked to give up the following, beginning in the next seven days:

1. A lot of extra time: 15 to 20 hours/week
2. A sloppy approach to time management
3. A sloppy approach to learning
4. An attitude of “I don’t care about school”

I will show you where to find the extra 15-20 hours without messing up your life. There are wasted hours hidden where you probably have not imagined.

You must learn to work diligently in a class that you hate, or that bores you, or that confuses you, or that you don’t think will do you any good, even if you receive an A. Everyone is asked to take classes he doesn’t like.

Super-smart students can get through such classes on their brains alone. You probably can’t. So, you will have to work harder. You will have to do what is really difficult: master material that is not only difficult but which actually bores you.

It is not easy to do well in a class that bores you. But never forget: it's not easy to get through Marine boot camp, either. But that's what people who want to be Marines have to do. It is a mark of their perseverance that they do get through.

You can do this. If you can read my daily lessons, you are intellectually capable of doing this. Whether you will actually do it is up to you. I can show you how. I can't do the work for you.

You aren't stupid. If you have read my manual so far, you aren't stupid. I don't write for dummies. I write for people who can think. I will now make a guess about you. See if I'm correct. There are some things that you learn fast and well. There are some subjects that you can discuss intelligently. You know a lot of facts about these subjects. They just may not be subjects that are taught in high school.

There are people who know all about fixing machines, reading repair manuals, and putting things together who are poor students in school. They aren't stupid. They just aren't skilled at passing written exams and writing term papers. High school is not designed for them.

The problem with high school is that it's mostly boot camp. The costs are immediate, but the benefits are distant.

Count the benefits. Then count the costs. When the benefits are distant and the costs are immediate, a lot of people quit trying.

Don't quit trying.

STAND AND DELIVER

There is a video you really need to see. It's called *Stand and Deliver*. It's a true story about a successful businessman, a Mexican-American, who quits his job to teach in a high school in the Los Angeles barrio district: Hispanic. He takes a pay cut in order to teach students who initially don't care about mathematics.

His fellow teachers aren't too thrilled with him, either. They had not been successful in motivating students. Why should he think that he will be successful?

He goes to work. He even adds a course in calculus. More than this: it is an AP course -- advanced placement. The students who pass a national exam with a 4 or a 5 can get college-level credit for the course.

Nobody on the faculty in that school had ever thought that these students would take a course in calculus, let alone an AP course. He received no encouragement, or so the movie indicates. Even some of the parents were opposed. One man wanted his daughter to work nights in the family restaurant. Why should she take calculus?

The movie is really about his students. Will they commit? Will they do what it takes to be a success? Will they stand and deliver?

You need to see it. I am asking you to see it. You need to assess your own motivation, your own hunger for academic success. Compare your situation to the situation facing those students. Compare your advantages to theirs.

Then make up your mind. Are you ready to stand and deliver?

There is a phrase people use to describe a person's commitment to something: "Fire in the belly." There is no source of success that rivals this determination to succeed.

I can't put this into you. You either have it or you don't. If you have it, my course can provide you with the tools and skills of academic success. If you don't have it, then all I can do is set the table. You won't come to the feast.

REVIEW

This is a real-world course. It acknowledges that there are limits on what students are willing to do.

There are legitimate goals for higher grades: getting into college, self-confidence, overcoming fear of school, overcoming your fear of losing.

You should review your lifetime goals. Remind yourself why you signed up for this course.

As a secondary goal, you may want to prove to yourself or others that you're not a dummy, that you're not a flake, that you are an achiever.

You may want to get the skills you need to graduate from college.

This course is like boot camp. It's a credit to anyone who survives it.

Do you have fire in the belly? Are you ready to stand and deliver?

If you are not willing to do well in courses that bore you, I cannot help you.

ASSIGNMENT

Write a revised list of your lifetime personal goals that are associated with raising your grades and learning how to learn. You need to do this exercise to prepare yourself psychologically for paying the cost of achieving these goals.

Second, rent the video, *Stand and Deliver*. Watch it tonight, if possible. Ask your parents to watch it with you. Tell them that it's for my course. Watch to the very end, when you read on-screen what happened.

Call to the video rental store first to see if it's there. Another student who is deciding whether to commit to taking my course may have rented it. Act fast. Call now. The movie will be in the cheap, 5-day rental section.

The movie may be in your local city library for free.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: The #1 study technique

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you write down a revised list of personal goals that are associated with getting better grades and learning how to learn? If not, make the list now. Don't go on to Lesson 3 until you have made that list.

Did you watch *Stand and Deliver*? If not, you can go ahead with Lesson 3 anyway. This is the one assignment in the course that I allow you to skip. But you really should view the movie. If you do what I recommend, step by step, you can have academic successes comparable to what the students in that movie had.

Lesson 3

THE #1 TECHNIQUE FOR RAISING YOUR GRADES

So, you want to raise your grades. Good for you. By beginning my course, you have made a commitment to yourself to make some necessary changes in your study habits, in order to achieve your goal of getting higher grades and attending college with less risk of dropping out or flunking out.

Your commitment, if it is backed up by specific actions, day by day, is even more important than your goal of higher grades. High grades are good; committing yourself to a program of self-improvement is even better.

Best of all is following through on whatever it is that you have committed yourself to do. As the old saying goes, "actions speak louder than words." Put differently, "talk is cheap."

You know the phrase, "put your money where your mouth is." I have a better one: "Put your time where your dream is." What I will show you in this course will cost you a little money. But the true "currency" of this course is time. To achieve your academic goal, you will have to budget your time.

Time is our only irreplaceable resource. When we waste it, it's gone forever.

Most of life is a **trade-off** between **time** and **money**. If you're short of money,

you had better be long on time. If you don't have any money to budget, then budget your time. You can buy money with time. But, ultimately, you can't buy time with money. If you could, very rich people would live to be five hundred years old.

There are lots of people your age who are richer in money than you are, and they will remain richer in money. But, statistically speaking, you have just about the same amount of time ahead of you that they do. So, pay close attention what you do with your time. It's where you have something like competitive equality with everyone else your age. Don't waste it.

WHY MY COURSE IS UNIQUE

This is a unique course. It's not like any other how-to-study course. Here's why.

There are a lot of books on how to study. Each of them offers a few good ideas. But the books I have read share the same defect: they are not realistic. They are like diets that really do work if you follow them, but the food is so awful tasting and the portions so tiny that overweight people cannot follow them for long. This is why 95% of dieters who lose weight put it back on within five years. This fact creates a large market for new diets. It also creates despair in the minds of those who have failed to lose weight.

When I read most of the "how to study" books, I get angry. I don't think they are very helpful to most of the students who buy them. Page after page, recommendation after recommendation, I think: "Almost nobody actually does this." I earned a Ph.D. at a good university. I have never known any A-level student who has used more than a handful of the recommended techniques in these books. Scholars don't study this way.

I'm not saying that the books' recommended techniques don't work. I'm saying that great students don't use most of them, and good students didn't learn them from a book.

My course is different. It's real-world.

STOP WORRYING AND START WORKING SMARTER

Maybe you haven't had much success in school. Can you do significantly better?

Yes. There is no question about it.

But WILL you do significantly better? The answer depends far more on what's in your heart than what's in your head.

In every required class -- not AP classes -- there are people who just don't care. They are content with D's when they could make C's or even a few B's. Or they are content to make C's when they could make B's and a few A's.

You don't have to beat all the super-bright people in your classes. There are only a handful of people like that. You only have to beat the flakes. There are always flakes in class -- and life.

There is a story about two hikers who come across a huge grizzly bear. The bear rears up. They figure that the bear is going to make a run for them. One of them reaches down and laces up his shoes. "Why bother?" says the other hiker. "You can't outrun a bear!" The first guy says, "I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you."

That's harsh. But let's face it: you have to go to class. You're facing the academic grizzly. You can't outrun a grizzly: a classroom genius. But you can outrun the students who just don't care.

If 10% of the students get A's, maybe you won't ever be among that elite group. So what? You don't have to be a straight-A student to be a success. (I say this as a successful person who was not a straight-A student in high school.) Colleges accept students who receive all B's in their senior year. College entrance committees want to see a student's improvement. If you now are getting C's, you can get half B's by the end of next semester. Or if you get B's, you can get maybe half A's by the end of next semester. Even if it takes two semesters, so what? You will show improvement.

PROFESSOR X'S TECHNIQUE

On my Website, I tell the story of Professor X's study technique, which he used to achieve academic success after a rocky beginning. His technique is not that complicated. In theory, it's easy. In practice, it's not. You have to be **highly motivated** to adopt it. I mean HIGHLY motivated!

But you want to know who he is. You may also want to know who the student is who scored so high on the Graduate Records Exam in chemistry after adopting this study technique. I also talk about him on my site.

As far as I know, there is only one reference to Professor X on the Web. There are many Web pages where the former student, now a Ph.D., is listed. The student's name is Noah Robinson. His father is Arthur Robinson. I co-authored a book with his father in 1986, a book on civil defense. The story of what Noah Robinson did to break through academically at age 16 is found in an old issue of his father's newsletter, *Access to Energy*. Here is his father's description of the problems that Noah was facing.

I noticed that Noah was experiencing a difficulty identical to my own experience when I was his age. One reads the book but doesn't really absorb it. Problem solving becomes an exercise in scrambling back through the text looking for formulas and combining these with computing tricks such as dimensional analysis. As the physics advanced, his error rate grew as high as 30%.

Then we read *The Overnight Student* by M. L. Jones, available from Louis Publishing, 1105 Inverness Lane, Bellingham, WA 98226. This book advocates that the student become an oral teacher of an imaginary class.

Noah tried this. Now, for about an hour each day, he closets himself in the press room where we have installed the equipment used to print and mail *Access to Energy*. There, he teaches the physics orally in small segments to an imaginary audience as he reads through the book. Students are naturally shy. None of us has heard him do this.

The result -- his study time is reduced; he understands the material better; and his problem solving error rate has fallen essentially to 0%.

<http://snipurl.com/ax34>

I guarantee you, you would never have found out about this technique or Dr. Jones' book if you had not seen this study course. His book out of print today. It's almost impossible to find. The publishing company is gone.

I call his technique "lecture to the wall." If ever a study technique is off the wall,

it's this one.

Read a passage in your textbook -- maybe only a page. Then close it. Lecture to the wall. You summarize in your own words what you have just read. If you can't remember what you've just read, re-read the passage. Then try again.

I'm not asking you to do this with every course today. I am asking you to do it with one page of a textbook in just one class. I am asking you to test the waters.

If you are unwilling to do this -- one page in one class -- then you will not maximize the benefits of this course. My other techniques will help you. But you will be missing out on the number-one technique in this course.

If you really do intend to do whatever it takes to do better academically, begin with just one page in one textbook in just one class. Lecture to the wall. Do it every day. It will get easier over time. Your rate of retention will climb.

The mental discipline of summarizing and explaining what you have read will drill the information into your memory. Somehow, the technique of verbally summarizing what you have just read with your eyes makes it easier for you to recall the information.

You will eventually discover sections of some textbook that baffle you. This is what you need to focus on -- not the things you already understand.

Lecturing to the wall will throw light on what you don't know and what you do know. This is exactly what you need to know before you take an exam.

Most students can't psychologically face the reality of their own ignorance until they are forced to: during an exam. This is the wrong time to discover that you don't know the material.

Here are the problems you must solve in order to adopt this study technique:

- Find a room where you can study alone.
- Do something that initially seems silly.
- Summarize and explain what you've read.
- Face the fact that in some areas, you're weak.

Be willing to re-read and then lecture again.
Practice until the technique becomes easier.

This is the single most important technique of rapid academic success. This is a technique that your fellow students do not know about. Most of them would not adopt it if they did know about it. It's an easy technique to describe, but it's very difficult to implement because it seems so silly.

The sooner you begin using it, the sooner your grades will rise.

I will show you other techniques, but no single technique is likely to raise your grades higher or faster than this one.

Do this for one month every day, and your grades will start going up. You will see the difference.

I am begging you to lecture to the wall for one page of one textbook in one class each day. It's not hard. It's merely different. But if you want to improve your grades, you must do things differently -- differently from the way you have been doing them, and much, much differently from the way most students, even excellent students, do things.

You must gain a competitive edge in your courses -- something that will enable your performance to stand out as exceptional. I am telling you that lecturing to the wall in your own words is going to give you a tremendous competitive edge.

I know this is difficult to believe. I am asking you to test me for the next month. See if I'm telling the truth. See if things get easier for you to remember. See if your comprehension is better after you have lectured to the wall. See if you discover gaps in your knowledge BEFORE the next exam. Then fill in these gaps by re-reading the material and lecturing again.

Technically, what I'm telling you to do is easy. Psychologically, it is a barrier that you will find very difficult to overcome. But find a way. This is the key to my program. It will make it far easier for you to raise your grades by half a grade point in one semester . . . and then do it again.

Why does this technique work? Because of this inescapable fact:

*If you can't put something in **your own words**, then you don't really understand it.*

Simple, isn't it? I think most people don't want to face the fact that they don't understand things. They don't want to be reminded.

Students would rather walk into an exam cold than face the fact before the exam that they just don't understand the material. They want to put off the day of judgment. They think -- or want to think -- that something will turn up, somehow, that will enable them to take that exam and do well.

Isn't it wise to take the exam early, in front of a wall? The wall can't flunk you. The wall can't laugh at you. The wall can't talk behind your back about how stupid you are.

Lecturing to the wall will let you **judge your own performance early**, before class time, before the next exam.

Do you really want to know in advance whether you are on top of the assigned material? If you do, then you can find out.

Lecture to the wall.

Why does this technique work? Because by reinforcing what you have just read by verbally expressing it, you drive the information deep into your mind. Your mind filters it, grabs hold of it, reworks it in a way that is consistent with you. After all, it's your mind!

The new information is transformed by verbalizing it. Without talking to the wall, the facts in your mind are like a jumbled mess. The theory and the facts just don't seem to fit. But by processing this information through speaking -- mentally putting things together so that you can verbalize them -- you convert chaos into order.

Why would you walk away from a learning technique so powerful that it transformed a mediocre student -- Dr. Jones -- into a straight-A student who later became a university professor? Why would you pass on a technique that will give you a tremendous competitive advantage, not just in school, but in whatever line of work you choose after graduation?

Will you at least try? Will you lecture to the wall every day for the next month, summarizing just one page of just one textbook per class? Will you test my proposition, namely, that this technique will give you a significant competitive edge?

It boils down to this. Professor Jones' technique is so crucial to my recommended strategy for raising your grades by half a point in one semester that I cannot pretend to guarantee this result if you don't adopt his technique for all of your courses. Follow the rest of my program, and you will do better in school. You will gain skills that will stay with you for the rest of your life. But I cannot legitimately assure you of half a grade point increase in one semester.

TAKE A DAY OFF EACH WEEK

Every week, you should take one day off. Don't do school work. Don't go to a job. Rest. Trust me on this: you must take off one day in seven.

On that day, don't read a lesson in this course. Skip it until the next day.

That's why this 27-lesson course is really a 31-day course. I am deliberately leaving out four days of rest.

REVIEW

My course is not like any how-to-study courses out there. It's a real-world course.

You don't have to beat the straight-A students. You will be successful when you beat the "don't care" students.

Adopt "lecture to the wall" as a way to spot your weaknesses.

ASSIGNMENT

Find a room where you can be alone. Get a textbook in history or English or social studies. Read the day's entire assignment, but read it fast. Skim

it. Don't read to memorize it. After you have done this, re-read all of it, section by section, more slowly than before, but speedily. Then select one page. Re-read that page carefully, take a few brief notes, close the book, and lecture on what it means. Explain it. You may use your notes. If you can't recall what you have just read, re-read it. Lecture again. Do this for one class. Of course, you should do it for all class assignments, but this is a real-world course. I'm trying to get you started. I'm trying to prove to you that you will remember more of the "lecture to the wall" page than anything else in the book that you read today.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Your home office

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you lecture to the wall for one class's daily assignment? If not, don't read this lesson until you do. You must complete each day's assignment before going on to the next lesson. You signed up for this course. You vowed to yourself that you would do what I ask and not quit. Please stick with me. I'm here to help you help yourself.

Lesson 4

YOUR HOME OFFICE

This lesson will cost you some money, but not much, if you buy wisely. If you just can't afford this, then make do with what you've got.

You should treat your school experience as an adult treats his job. You should take it seriously. You don't have to like it. Just do it. Consider school your job. You get paid in grades rather than money.

Because of homework, your home becomes an extension of your job. You therefore need a home office, just as any serious businessman does.

A person who earns a living at home needs an office. Maybe it's a separate bedroom room. Maybe it's in the garage. But you need designated work space.

I do most of my work in a room that is 12 feet by 10 feet. In it, I have the following:

1. Three desks.
2. Three computers, one on each desk: a computer on which I do my writing (safe from viruses and worms), an Internet computer, and an audio-visual multimedia computer.
3. A good lamp for reading.
4. Book shelves for my most-used reference books

In my office, I write two newsletters (“term papers”) each week. Each one is usually almost as long as this lesson. I also write one long newsletter each month -- three times as long as this lesson -- plus two or three more newsletters about the size of this lesson. I also write at least one book a year. I also write manuals like this one.

I try to write a daily 600-word essay for my Web site, www.garynorth.com.

This doesn’t require much space or equipment. It doesn’t take much money. It takes a lot of time.

You need a work place. If you are going to get your academic house in order, you must get your bedroom in order, or wherever you do your homework.

If you can’t do this in your home, then you must spend a lot of time in the local library. A library can become your place of refuge and place of production. But it would be better if you can work at home.

You must have the following:

1. Desk
2. Good reading light
3. A desk chair that supports your lower back
4. File cabinet or a box, plus hanging folders
5. Two card files for note cards:
 3" by 5" and 6" by 8"
5. 3-ring notebook(s) for holding class notes.
7. A large, 3-hole, wide-margin, spiral-bound notebook for taking class notes

What about a desk? First, it must fit in your room. Second, it should be cheap. If you don’t have a desk already, call local thrift stores: Good Will, Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul. See if they have a desk for sale. Ask the price. If they have one at a reasonable price, ask a parent to drive you to see it. Sit at the desk. Put your notebook on the desk and write in it. Make sure the desk doesn’t wobble.

It would be nice to have a computer. You can probably buy a functional used PC for under \$200. You don’t need anything faster than a Pentium II chip. In fact, you don’t need a computer at all.

Use a computer for writing term papers, writing up your notes, Web research, and e-mail, if you can afford access to the Web. A cheap service may be in your town, such as **Poetworld**.

<http://www.poetworld.net>

The key to your academic success is not a computer, except the one in between your ears. A computer can't do your reading for you or lecturing to the wall or test-taking. But you will need one for writing term papers. You can probably get access to one at the local public library or at your high school's library. The problem is, it may be in use when you need to write the final draft of your paper. It's risky not to have your own.

Check the classified ad section of your newspaper. Look at the weekly "thrifty nickel" paper. If you attend church, ask the pastor to see if there is anyone with a used computer lying around.

Businesses buy new computers all the time. They put old ones in a storage room. Call local computer repair stores. One of them may have a clunker that is two chip generations old (three years) that the boss would take \$200 for.

What about a word processor? The best deal for the money is to go on eBay and buy a new copy of WordPerfect for about \$25. WordPerfect is as good as Microsoft Word, but not equally popular. Of course, it's best to learn Microsoft Word, since that is what any future employer will probably use. It's also what a school's computer usually has. Maybe it will already be installed on the used computer you buy.

To buy on-line, you will need a spending card. There are three types:

1. Credit card, which I don't recommend because you may overspend beyond your saved funds. If you're under 18, you cannot get one, since they involve a legal contract every time you buy something.
2. Debit card, which limits your spending to the money in your account. It is issued to you by a local bank.
3. **Visa Buxx** card, which is issued to you by an on-line bank on your parents' authority (<http://www.visabuxx.com>).

Maybe you don't have a spending card yet. This puts you at a disadvantage.

You get Microsoft Word for free on the Windows XP operating system that comes with a new computer (not Macintoshes).

NOTEBOOKS

You need two types of notebooks: a 3-ring binder and a 3-hole, spiral-bound, lined notebook.

Take notes in the lined spiral-bound notebook. After class, make marginal notations and corrections before the day is over. Then tear out your notes and take them home. Leave the spiral-bound notebook in your locker. Insert the torn-out pages into the appropriate 3-ring binder, which you keep at home.

You could lose your spiral-bound notebook. So, never have more than one day's class notes in it. Every day, take the torn-out pages home and put them into the 3-ring binder. This way, you carry only one notebook to class. It's a lot easier.

At home, keep one large 3-ring binder with tab divisions for each class. Or you can use several smaller binders, one for each class. One binder with tabs is cheaper.

SAME TIME, SAME PLACE

At school, the ringing of bells keeps you on a time schedule. Everyone must adjust to the school day. It's an imposed routine.

Where many students -- millions -- lose out academically is after school. They refuse to discipline themselves to follow a productive routine. They are prisoners of the moment.

Your most important step in getting your grades up is to adopt a routine. The tighter it is, the better. Yes, you need some flexibility, but not much. You can add flexibility after you have become used to your own self-imposed study schedule.

It's like grammar. Sometimes it can be broken for stylistic effect. A professional

writer knows instinctively when he should do this for effect. He doesn't plan this in advance. It just happens as he is writing. But remember: he is a professional. He makes his living with words. He knows what he is doing. The beginner doesn't.

Any routine must be flexible, but you must learn when to be flexible from the routine itself, not from a non-routine. When you're setting up your routine, you must be tough on yourself. You must monitor your time.

A child gets an allowance and spends it the first day. This is a mark of his immaturity. Hopefully, he will learn better as he gets older.

What about you? Are you immature in your allowance of time? Do you need teachers and parents to nag you about your schedule?

Do you want to get them off your back? Just set up a time-and-place schedule. Show it to them. Ask for advice. Maybe they will have some. Then for one month stick to your schedule. They will be amazed that you did it.

You will be amazed that you did it.

Your academic work will get easier because your time management system will be tougher.

The routine of being at your desk at the same time every day will create a transformation in your life.

People get into habits by following a routine for 30 consecutive days. Bad habits are difficult to break, but 30 consecutive days in a new routine will do more to enable you to break a bad habit than anything else you can do.

Every day at the same time, you will be at your desk: the same place. Plan in advance for exceptions, such as going to the library. But wait for one month if you possibly can before you make any exceptions.

You need a home office. Your first step in your path to better grades is to get it set up.

Set it up by the end of the weekend.

NOISE

To study well, you must learn how to concentrate. You must focus your attention. To focus your attention, you must remove extraneous noise, either by learning how to block it out psychologically (not recommended) or blocking it physically (recommended).

Learning by reading is a skill that requires reduced auditory inputs.

The cheapest, most efficient way to get a noise-free environment is to buy a pair of wax earplugs and use them. You can buy a box of four pair for under \$2. They block out 90% of the noise around you. If you do nothing else that I recommend in this course except buy and use earplugs for two hours a day at your desk, your grades will go up. They may not go up a full grade in two semesters, but they will go up.

“But,” you may be thinking, “if I wear earplugs, I won’t be able to hear music.” Exactly. When you study, you should avoid listening to music, especially loud music, and above all music with mumbled lyrics that demand your attention in order to be understood. In my day, mumbled lyrics were called “Louie, Louie syndrome.” Avoid hearing them while doing academic work.

Unless you are 100% sure that the particular music you’re listening to helps to increase your output, don’t listen to it. Music is all right for accompanying low-concentration forms of physical labor. Prison chain gangs and railroad track-laying teams used to sing simple rhythmic songs to help keep the work going. Those were not high-income occupations. If you are waxing a car, shining your shoes, or washing the dishes, music may make things go faster. Don’t confuse that kind of work with memorizing the dates of major wars.

If you can’t get through the day without loud music, then you may be addicted. You think I’m kidding. I’m not. Some people really do get addicted to loud, pounding music. They cannot concentrate without it. When they don’t hear it, they suffer from what would otherwise be called withdrawal symptoms. An alcoholic says, “I can quit any time I want to. I just don’t want to.” Music addicts take the same attitude.

There is a book, *The Mozart Effect*, on the effects of different kinds of music on people’s psychology. It argues that music produces endorphins. Endorphins can become addictive, just as they do when joggers get high from them.

The subject of music and its effects on learning would make a good term paper.

BUDGETING FOR SLEEP

If your home office is in your bedroom, never study in bed unless you're trying to go to sleep for the night. There is something about lying in bed that tells your body, "sleep time." Large, low, soft chairs have the same effect.

If the big exam is the next day, or a term paper is due, don't lie on your side in bed, studying.

At the same time, if you're sleepy already, don't fight it. Sleep. Just don't lie down. Put your head on your desk, or on a book that's on your desk, and snooze. A cat nap will refresh you. The sleep demon won't keep pushing down on your eyelids.

Side note: if you're driving, and you start feeling sleepy, pull off the road somewhere and take a snooze. You are risking your life otherwise. Sleep can kill you or your crash victim. If you're driving with a friend, have the friend drive, or tell your friend that you're going to stop and take a snooze. Don't be a fool. Don't risk both of your lives for the sake of avoiding a little embarrassment.

You cannot concentrate when you're sleepy. If you need a nap to get back on track, then take a nap. But if you lie down on your bed, you will probably sleep twice as long as your body needs to refresh you. That wastes time.

Learn to cat nap with your head on a desk. This skill can help your career from now on.

Everyone's body has peak times and low times during waking hours. If your low time is in the late afternoon, take a cat nap in the late afternoon. If you fade after lunch, take study hall or physical education or your easiest course right after lunch. Don't take math. Or schedule this time for a typing class. Do something physical. Your brain won't cooperate otherwise. Your efficiency drops. There's not much you can do about this.

If you stay up late and wake up early, you should set aside time for a cat nap

during the day. Don't drive your body beyond its limits. It's not healthy to do this.

If you are a late-night person, then stay up. But you may be miserable the next morning. You must decide. If the price of staying up late is misery in the morning, then try to discover an alternative sleep pattern.

This is a suggestion. Maybe you should go to bed at 7 p.m. (earplugs again), wake up on your own at 3 a.m., and study until it's time to eat breakfast. The truth is, you probably should do this if your body allows it.

First, you would miss prime-time TV. That's a good thing: reduced temptation to waste time. Second, there is nothing worth watching on TV at 3 a.m. It's mostly infomercials. Third, you can't phone your best friend at 3 a.m. to chat for two hours. Fourth, study time from 3 a.m. to (say) 6:30 is high-efficiency study time. You're working at your maximum alertness with the fewest distractions.

You would probably make the honor roll next semester if you adopted this schedule. If your grades go up, your parents won't complain about your weird schedule, as long as you don't wake them up by cooking in the kitchen at 4 a.m. Put aside some low-calorie snacks (fruit, cucumbers) in baggies before you go to bed. Will you do this? Probably not. This schedule would mess up your weekends. But in an emergency period -- the week before finals -- it would be one way to reduce your academic risk.

REVIEW

A place to study efficiently is vital for academic success.

You need basic tools: desk, shelf, filing cabinet, hanging files, reading light, earplugs.

Set up a routine where you will be at your desk at the same time every day.

Reduce noise to almost zero when you are trying to learn anything new from a book.

Schedule your sleep. If you get sleepy, don't fight it. Cat nap at your desk.

Don't study in bed or in a soft, low chair.

Adopt a new sleep schedule if your body requires it.

ASSIGNMENT

Begin setting up your home office today. Anything you can't afford to pay for, start asking for: throwaways. The desk will be the hard item to get for free. A cardboard apple box may be sufficient for the filing cabinet.

Buy some wax earplugs today.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Following instructions

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you buy some earplugs? If so, insert them now. If you didn't buy them, skip this lesson until you do. You must complete each assignment before going on to the next lesson.

Lesson 5

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Follow instructions. This sounds easy enough. It isn't. For some people, it's the key to most of their academic problems. They read or hear one set of instructions, but their teacher has given different instructions.

Some students deliberately ignore instructions. They "wing it." They think they can scrape by, doing any old thing they choose. They're wrong. But they refuse to change.

It doesn't matter how good a job you do if you do the wrong job. You're going to get a bad grade.

Doing a job well begins with understanding exactly what the job is.

Instructions are most important in life-and-death situations. A military commander who cannot issue clear orders is eventually going to lose battles. In fact, he is unlikely ever to become a military commander over an entire army or fleet of ships if he cannot issue clear, unambiguous orders.

During the American Civil War (1861-65), General Ulysses S. Grant had a colonel on his staff. (English is sometimes very weird. "Colonel" is pronounced "kernel," as in corn.) The colonel was a dolt. (That's pronounced exactly as it's spelled: dolt, as in "dummy.") Grant knew this, which is why he kept him on his staff.

The colonel had one major responsibility: interpreting Grant's orders for Grant. Grant would write an order and hand it to the colonel. The colonel's job was to explain this order in his own words to Grant. If he explained the order wrong, Grant would re-write it. When, finally, the colonel could explain accurately what Grant was really telling

his commanders to do, Grant would issue the order. Grant knew his own limitations as a writer of commands. He compensated for this by using his dim-witted colonel.

A teacher may give poorly designed instructions once in a while. But if you keep getting your assignments confused, yet hardly anyone else in your class gets them confused, and this happens in almost every class, you should assume that your problem is you.

If there is one class in which you get instructions right most of the time, pay closer attention to the reasons why that class doesn't confuse you. Are you doing things differently in that class? Is it the material in the class, which just happens to be easier for you, or is what you're doing in some way different?

A MATTER OF CONFIDENCE

There are athletes who get poor grades in their academic subjects, yet they can follow a complicated playbook to the letter. They pay attention to the coach when he draws complex diagrams on the board. They learn to follow what he is saying.

I probably couldn't follow these instructions. I know I couldn't follow them well. That's because I'm not a coach, and I was never an athlete. I just don't care enough about the subject to follow all the lines and X's on a blackboard. But everyone on the team can.

An athlete cares about doing well. He knows that he has the physical ability to do well, if he can just master the playbook and the charts. He is confident that he is physically capable. He looks around him, and he knows that he is intellectually as sharp as most of the other people on the team. He has a positive mental attitude.

He wants to succeed. He is confident that he can succeed. So, he memorizes all of the plays. He practices, day after day. He studies the plays at home. Guess what? He doesn't get kicked off the team. He comes back the next year to play again. He probably becomes a leader after two seasons, because he knows the system, follows the instructions, and develops his skills. He learns how to succeed.

Then he walks into a math class or an English class, and he chokes. He gets scared. He has no self-confidence. He thinks he is going to fail. Maybe he will fail --

not because he can't compete in that class, but because he doesn't have the same determination to follow the instructions and apply himself.

It's not that he is stupid. It's that he doesn't make the connection between the basis of his success on the playing field and the basis of success in the classroom.

I'm not saying that he's smart enough to pass physics. I dropped out of high school physics in my third week. I have never regretted that decision. I know there are some subjects that I just can't handle. I'm talking about courses that everyone is required to take.

Any athlete who is smart enough to master a playbook and charts on a blackboard has the mental ability to pass any class that everyone is required to take. All he has to do is apply himself in each class with the same dedication that he brings into physical training.

What about you? Maybe you're not an athlete. Maybe there is no area of your life in which you are a success. You have no program of success in your life that you can adapt to your academic world. If this is the case, then you will have to change, beginning at ground zero. You will have to adopt the mental outlook and training schedule of a successful athlete. In your new life, there will be the academic equivalent of playbooks and push-ups and wind sprints and laps around the track.

Consider three questions:

What do you want to achieve?
How soon do you want to achieve it?
What are you willing to pay to achieve it?

Remember, there are no free lunches. Somebody has to pay for your success. Maybe your family will pay some of it. Maybe someone will pay a few dollars to buy you some inexpensive tools of academic success. But the big payments have to be made by you. Face the fact early: it's up to you.

Start paying attention to instructions. That's where to begin your program of self-improvement.

THINGS TO DO TO TOMORROW

You must take the following steps:

1. Make sure you know when every exam is scheduled. Write this down.
2. Make sure you know when every paper is due. Write this down.
3. Make sure you know exactly what your papers must cover: topics, length, materials you must read, and anything else that is required. Write this down.

To be 100% certain about all this, ask your teachers after class or before class. Write down the answers.

Maybe your teachers told you all this before. You should have paid closer attention earlier. Maybe you will look foolish if you ask again. So be it. You really were foolish. Deal with this now, before it's too late to recover.

In such cases, tell your teachers the truth: you failed to pay attention. Explain that you're taking my course in study habits, and you plan to do better in the future. I really mean this: tell them that you are taking my course. Your teachers will then recognize that you are trying to improve. They would like everyone in class to try to improve. Teachers will cooperate with any student who is making an effort to improve.

So will just about every adult. It is rare to see anyone who is seriously trying to improve himself. So, those few people who really are trying to improve can receive a lot of volunteer help. Trust me on this. If teachers can see that you are taking specific steps to improve your grades, no matter how minimal these steps are, they will help you.

So, how serious are you? Only you can answer this. Talk is cheap. Systematic actions are expensive. What steps are you willing to take today to prove to yourself that you are serious?

No matter how hard you try to do better work, if you get the instructions wrong, it won't count. If you don't pay attention from the very beginning, you will not see much improvement.

Sure, you can make a mistake. Anyone can make a mistake. You may occasionally read the instructions wrong. Your goal here is to break a bad habit.

There is an old rule of research: “If you ask the right question, you’ve already got most of the answer.” It is usually more important to ask the right question than to discover the correct answer. A researcher who has come up with the correct answer to a question that was not worth asking has wasted his time. So, be as sure as you can that you will be answering the question that has been asked.

From now on, pretend that you’re General Grant’s colonel. Go to your teacher, or raise your hand, even at the beginning of an exam, and tell the teacher what you think the question means. Unless it’s a trick question -- which is not a wise technique for teachers to use with high school students -- the teacher will tell you if you understand the question correctly or not. This is not the same as providing the answer.

REVIEW

There are no free lunches. You must pay the price.

It’s a waste of time to do a good job on the wrong assignment. Be sure you know what the assignment is.

To avoid confusion, write down the assignment.

Even if you aren’t in doubt, write it down anyway. Otherwise, you may forget.

If you aren’t sure, ask.

If you are sure, but you have a long history of getting your assignments confused, ask.

If you don’t understand a question on an exam, raise your hand and ask what the question means “such and such.”

ASSIGNMENT

On one sheet of paper, before you read Lesson 6 tomorrow, make a list of every assignment for every course. Record the deadline for each assignment. If you already have all this information in one place, then verify it, so that you don't skip anything by mistake. Write down everything.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Organizing your time

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

What was your assignment for yesterday?

Did you follow my instructions? If not, why not?

If you did follow them, what should you do next?

That's what Lesson 6 is all about.

Lesson 6

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR TIME

Writing things down takes a lot of practice. This discipline is not innate for most people. You must force yourself to do it.

The best way to learn anything new is to learn by doing. It's like a coach's new play. The team must practice doing it. It's not enough to read about it.

You're reading about how to get organized. Reading about this will not be sufficient. It's like trying to lose weight by reading diet books and eating the same old foods. Reading isn't enough. You must develop good habits. Most people can adopt a new habit -- whether good or bad -- by doing the same routine for 30 consecutive days.

Maybe you can keep all of your assignments on one or two sheets of paper in your regular spiral-bound notebook. Maybe. Probably not.

You take your notebook to school. What if you lose it? You're in big trouble. That's why you need to keep a separate time scheduler at home -- two of them, actually. Maybe three.

You must buy a DayMinder or some equivalent monthly scheduling book. There are dozens of brands. Any of them is better than none. I like DayMinder because it's designed for the academic year. You can probably buy one at a local community college book store. Maybe you can buy one at Office Depot. It costs under \$15.

<http://snipurl.com/e971>

There is a pocket weekly appointment version for \$5. Here is what one page in an appointment DayMinder looks like.

<http://snipurl.com/azdg>

[Note: sometimes Web links go dead. I included these links only because there are photographs of the products' pages. Unless you have high-speed Internet access, these pages take a long time to download because of the photos.]

Don't lose your time-scheduler. Keep it at home. You don't need a DayMinder at school. The school day is already organized by bells or buzzers.

To review: write down all of your assignments on one page in your notebook. Bring that page home. Then write down the assignments in a scheduler.

Who will pay for all this? Probably a parent, if you explain why you're doing it. Explain this course. If a parent won't do it, or can't afford to do it, then you must find a way to get money, soon. Do odd jobs. Baby sit. Shovel snow. Don't just sit there. If necessary, go to a relative and borrow -- BORROW!!! -- the money. (Pay back this loan.) No free hand-outs, please. Or go to your local church. Most churches have a board of deacons. They will probably pay to buy what you need to improve your grades, especially if you guarantee to work off the debt next summer. Bring them a receipt for every item. Let them know that you're spending the money wisely. Pay off the debt in time management by exchanging your time. Don't forget to pay it off. Write down the pay-back in your new time manager.

ESTIMATING YOUR TIME-COSTS

Bring home your assignment sheet for each course. Take out another sheet of paper. For each assignment, you must make a time estimate of how long it will take, in terms of hours, for you to complete the assignment.

Note: any estimate is better than no estimate. A bad estimate can always be revised later. If you stick to any schedule, you will get something done, even if you don't get enough done.

Estimating an assignment's time-cost is the hard part. I know how difficult this is. I do not minimize the difficulty of what I'm asking you to do. But if you refuse to do it, I can't help you much. Your academic success -- and much of your life's success -- depends heavily on your ability to estimate costs. The biggest single cost is your time. This is because time is your most valuable asset.

Why is your time so valuable? Because once it's gone, you can't get it back. An important sign of adulthood is the adult's realization that time is running out. Permanently.

Write down your time estimates in pencil. You may have to erase something later.

You must do this for each assignment. This gets complicated.

Part of your school experience is designed to help you learn how to juggle your schedule. Most students do this by instinct, which is why all but the very smart ones perform below par. Part of the academic learning process is to learn what you absolutely need to know and then learn it before you go to the next phase of your project (and your life's career). You must do your job within the time allotted to you.

Do you want to know the three keys to success in business? Here they are:

Do what you said you would do.
Do it on or before the deadline.
Do it for the price you agreed to.

Do you recognize these rules? They are variations of these questions:

What do you want to achieve?
How soon do you want to achieve it?
What are you willing to pay to achieve it?

Scheduling your time isn't easy, but if you learn how to do this, you will not be a failure in your field, no matter what you decide to do with your life. On the other hand, if you don't learn how to do this, you will struggle for the rest of your life, or else become satisfied with sub-par performance. Don't settle for less than you can achieve.

Success requires time-management.

An appointments scheduler lets you organize things weekly. You also need a monthly scheduler. You can use a standard calendar. Hang it on a wall next to your work desk at home. Write down every deadline.

You would be wise to buy a desktop calendar, too. It sits on your desk, filling most of it. It has one calendar sheet per month, which you can tear out and toss away at the end of each month, or you can put into a “How I Did It” folder. You can save these sheets for your own teenagers, to show them how you did it and how self-disciplined you were in high school. This will drive them nuts. I highly recommend it.

The daily boxes in these calendars are large. There is room for more detailed notes. Using a pen this time, write down not only your deadlines, but preliminary deadlines for meeting the final deadlines.

PROCRASTINATION

The biggest single mistake that most students make is to procrastinate. This is a very bad habit, and it is very difficult to break.

Here is my motto: “Procrastination kills.” You should not wait until the night before the deadline to begin working on any assignment.

Any assignment. This means . . . you may not believe this . . . every assignment. There is only one legitimate excuse for waiting until the day before an assignment is due to begin working on it: it’s a one-day assignment.

Here is where you can lap the competition. In a long race with a lot of runners, the front-runners will sometimes lap those runners who are at the end of the pack. They race ahead of the slow ones. The slow ones cannot hope to catch up.

If you will do what I say here, you will gain a tremendous advantage over most of your competition.

A, B, C

Unless you are studying for a big test, the last task of your work day is to identify

what you must do tomorrow. What three tasks must you get done, no matter what? Write them down, in order of their importance: A, B, C.

You must do them. So, do them. The three top things on your list of priorities must get done. Do A first, then B, then C, unless there is a chronology problem during the day which forces you to do B or C first.

There is only one legitimate excuse for not getting one of these tasks done: something unexpected forces you to replace one of the tasks. You still get three things done that are on the list. The day after you make a substitution, you must accomplish four things. Put the task you bumped back on your list at the top.

When you select these three things the night before, use your calendar system. That's what it's there for. Your calendar should tell you what you must get done every day. Until you can make this decision daily, based on your calendar system, your calendar system isn't finished.

You should get more than three things done. But if you don't get three things done, you will inevitably fall behind. Your procrastination will catch up with you.

REVIEW

One more time: write down all of your assignments for the entire semester on one sheet of paper. Take this paper home. (Lesson #5)

Buy a weekly time scheduler and a monthly time scheduler. (Maybe a desk calendar, too.)

In pencil, on a second sheet of paper, draw up a weekly and monthly estimate of what you must do, day by day (mini-deadlines), to meet each of the final deadlines.

Put these schedules together in one large plan.

When you've got your overall schedule on paper, write your weekly schedule in your weekly time manager. Write this in pencil. You may forget something and have to add it later.

Then write the monthly schedule in ink. Do this for each month in the semester.

Make a list the night before of the three things that you must get done the next day: A, B, C. Use your calendar to identify them.

ASSIGNMENT

Before you read Lesson 7, estimate the time required, week by week, for you to complete all of one class's assignments for the remainder of this semester. Put this time estimate on one sheet at home. When you're finished with this schedule, write it in pencil into your weekly schedule book and also your monthly calendar.

Do this for every class -- one class per day -- over the next week.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Identifying fun times

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

You should have completed step one in a multi-step strategy of estimating the time required to meet each of your assignments in all of your classes. The sooner you complete this entire assignment, the better. If I had thought that you would have followed my instructions to the letter, I would have told you to get the entire scheduling task done in one day. But I do my best in this course to keep my assignments realistic. It's real-world.

If you did not do even one class's time estimate, stop reading Lesson 7 now. I mean it. Quit. You're not ready. You aren't following my instructions. Don't come back to this lesson until you have finished Lesson 6's exercise. Get your time-estimate for one course finished.

You think I'm kidding. I'm not. Quit reading. Now.

OK, you say you have at least one course completed. I'll take your word for it. (What else can I do?)

Lesson 7

SCHEDULING FUN, TOO

I have told you to count the costs of success. There are no free lunches. Success is not free. It's not even cheap. But it is attainable. It would cost a lot more if most people knew what I will teach you in my 27 lessons -- knew, and then followed my instructions. But hardly anyone will hear about this course, let alone order it. And most people who order it won't finish it.

If you finish it, then you will have begun to lap the pack. Your grades will start going up.

When you count the costs, you must also count the benefits. Otherwise, you will get discouraged and quit. I don't want you to quit.

So, your task today is to make a time-estimate of the things you really want to do. Then enter them into your schedulers.

FATS GOLDBERG'S STRATEGY

This may be off the track, but I think it's time to tell you about Larry "Fats" Goldberg. Fats Goldberg was 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 160 pounds. That's not fat. But he used to weigh 320 pounds. That is fat. Really fat. Kills-you-by-age-48 fat.

He died in 2003 from complications associated with Alzheimer's disease. His weight did not kill him.

One day, decades ago, he went cold turkey from the foods he loved. He went on a rigorous diet. But he knew he couldn't stick with it if he could never again eat what he really loved. So, he made a deal with himself. He would stop eating anything but the usual low-calorie foods for three weeks. Then, with his appetite under control (he hoped), he would have one day when he would eat anything he wanted, in any quantity. Then he vowed to go back on the diet for another week.

He did it. It worked. He was able to get back on the diet after his one day of gluttony. He could go back onto it because he knew that one week later, he could again pig out, although this may be the wrong phrase to use for a Jewish guy.

Twice a year, he would fly from New York City to Kansas City, Missouri, where he had grown up. For seven days, he would eat. The word "eat" barely does justice to the quantity of food he would consume. One day's intake is described in Chapter 1 of a book by the humorist, Calvin Trillin, who in this case was not being funny. Here is a section from a review of Trillin's book, *American Fried*.

His friend Fats Goldberg (who owned Goldberg's Pizzeria in New York City, the neon sign of which is now in the Smithsonian) plays a large part in this book. Fats actually lost 160 pounds, and now weighs 160 pounds. He accomplished this by an extremely stringent diet, and allows himself to go all out only when he returns to Kansas City for a visit. He says that he can put on 17 pounds in one week. Here's some of their conversation:

" 'Just what did you eat on a big day in Kansas City the week you gained seventeen pounds?' I asked. I was prepared to make a list.

'Well, for breakfast I'd have two eggs, six biscuits with butter and jelly, half a quart of milk, six link sausage, six strips of bacon, and a couple of

homemade cinnamon rolls,' Fats said. 'Then I'd hit MacLean's Bakery. They have a kind of fried cinnamon roll I love. Maybe I'd have two or three of them. Then, on the way downtown to have lunch with somebody, I might stop at Kresge's and have two chili dogs and a couple of root beers. . . . Then I'd go to lunch.'"

<http://snipurl.com/axaz>

Then he would fly back to New York City and resume his diet. This strategy kept him going psychologically.

He owned a pizzeria, but he didn't allow himself the pleasure of eating his pizzas.

In 1985, he wrote a diet book, *Controlled Cheating*.

The secret of his diet, he said, is that it allowed him hope. He knew that he would be able to eat all he wanted. He just would not do this all the time. He paid the price of being slender by sticking to his diet. He paid the price of being able to stay on his diet by going off the diet for one day a week and then for one week, twice a year, separated by six months.

Fats said that on his "days off," he ate what he really loved. He allowed himself to eat anything, but he wouldn't eat marshmallows. He thought marshmallows are bland, even though sweet. He ate only what he really could not live without and still stay on his diet. If it was going to fatten him up for that day -- he sometimes gained five pounds -- he was only going to eat the good stuff.

I don't recommend Fats Goldberg's diet. That's for a fat person to decide, with a physician's advice (as Fats insisted in his book). But I do recommend that you do what Fats did -- with time, not food. You've got to go onto a **time diet**. You have got to stop wasting time. You have got to make the minutes count. But you don't have to make EVERY minute count. You must cut yourself some slack.

I recommend that you occasionally follow the state motto of Louisiana: "Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler"

“LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL!”

Fats loved hamburgers, but he ignored marshmallows. You must also learn to discriminate.

Get out a sheet of paper. If you can get a copy, look at your school’s social calendar for the year. What things do you really want to do? I mean, if you miss doing them, you’ll feel cheated.

Write them down. All of them. I’m going to show you how to do them.

Look, we both know that great times are scarce. Not every party is a winner. Not every sports event is worth attending. Some are; most aren’t.

Are you going to go to the major proms? If you think you might, then set time aside. Girls: this means scheduling a trip to the hairdresser’s and maybe the dress shop. It means a lot of preparation. Guys: this means a bath, a shave, and showing up on time.

Don’t assume that time grows on trees. Schedule the whole deal. That’s what this exercise is all about: scheduling whole deals.

Once you get your maximum time mapped out, record it in all of your calendars-schedulers. This, you should put in ink. This won’t change unless you don’t get a date.

If you don’t get a date, then schedule something else that would be special.

(If I could devise a system where I could guarantee every teenager that he or she would get dates to all of the Big Events, I sure wouldn’t give the idea away, the way I’m giving away this course. I could retire in luxury in a mansion with the income I’d receive.)

The point is, you have to determine in advance what is really important to you, and what isn’t so important. You are going to have to learn how to allocate your time. The best way I know to teach yourself how to do this is to set your own priorities. I won’t tell you what these are. You will tell you. On paper.

You’ve also got to identify your wasted time. The best way to do this is first to identify your most precious time.

Go through the semester's events calendar and block out sections of time that are for you and nobody else. These are what I would call non-negotiable events.

Just like Fats Goldberg and calories, so are you and time. You cannot afford to pig out uncontrollably on time, any more than Fats could afford to pig out uncontrollably on calories. But you are allowed to pig out controllably on time, just as he allowed himself to pig out controllably on calories. He called his plan controlled cheating. You can, too.

REVIEW

Before you count the costs, count the benefits.

Most people can't stick with any self-improvement program that denies them the things they love.

Identify the things that you really want to do in this semester, and write them down. Then enter them into your schedulers.

ASSIGNMENT

This is obvious. Identify your must-do events, and enter them in ink in your schedulers.

Don't forget to schedule another class's assignments/deadlines. Do one class per day, minimum.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Find a study partner

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Have you identified those key social events (or any other major events) for this semester that you are unwilling to skip? If not, do this now. Then block out how much time each will take, including travel time. Enter this in your schedulers.

How are you coming on your time estimates per assignment per course?

Lesson 8

STUDY PARTNERS

At Harvard Law School, students create study groups. The final exams are so detailed that the students must join together, assign specific assignments to members, and share their results with members of the group. You can see this system in action in the movie, *The Paper Chase*.

This is known as the division of labor. The Bible says this about the division of labor:

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

You need at least one study partner. It would be better to have more than one: a study partner for each class.

This study partner should be of the same gender. Don't confuse things and more than they are already. When you approach someone to be your study partner, the other person had better believe that this is all there is to it.

Study partners can remind each other of assignments and exams. It's easy to forget. It's even easier to procrastinate. A study partner will help you not to forget or procrastinate.

It is a well-known fact among teachers that you learn things best when you try to explain them to someone who doesn't understand them. (This is the basis of "lecture to the wall.") This is why you should not seek a study partner who is far smarter than you are.

It is also true that sometimes you get stuck and need help. A study partner may be able to explain something that you don't understand. This is why you should not seek a study partner who is way behind you in a course.

I could have told you to seek out study partners in Lesson 1, but I wanted you to gain confidence in what I have been showing you so far. Otherwise, you probably would have ignored this advice. People are usually embarrassed about asking other people for help, or to join them in some project. But by now you're "into the program," and you want to finish it.

You need to find one or more people to work with, preferably one in each course you take. But if you can recruit only one partner, this is way better than recruiting none.

Think about the class that scares you most. Try to recruit a partner in that class.

Maybe you already have a partner. Stick with this partner. But if you can find another partner, especially in a class that scares you, recruit one. Nothing says that you can have only one partner. This isn't the senior prom.

If you ride the bus to school, and there is someone who rides it with you who would be willing to study with you on the bus, this would make a good partner. You're both wasting time riding the bus. If you can sit together and study by asking each other questions, you're both better off.

SUMMARY

Two are better than one.

ASSIGNMENT

Speak to one person about becoming a study partner. Use the division of

labor to improve both of your grade point averages

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Identifying marshmallows

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Are you on schedule for listing all of the time estimates for your classes?

Have you made a list of possible partners in all of your courses? Have you spoken to at least one person? Until you do, don't read Lesson 9

Lesson 9

IDENTIFYING YOUR LESS IMPORTANT TIME

I call this marshmallow time. Fats Goldberg avoided marshmallows because they have nothing going for them except for being sweet. He wanted flavor.

You've probably got a lot of marshmallow time in your life. If you work after school, maybe not. But if you aren't on an athletic team, and if you don't have a job, then you've got a lot of marshmallows.

You need to identify them. They are going to pay for a big chunk of your academic success.

Time is passing. While you're awake or asleep or merely asleep at the wheel, time is getting away from you. You can waste it or make it work for you. It's your choice.

Ben Franklin wrote in 1746, "time is money." He was wrong. Time is far more valuable than money. If you lose money, you can work hard and make replacement money. You can't order another year of time -- or even a minute. When it comes to an hour of time, everyone gets the same amount of time per hour. When you don't, you die.

A warning: for some people, TV is addictive. There is a book about this: *The Plug-in Drug*. When you sit down to watch TV for a few minutes, you may find that hours have gone by before you turn it off. If you have this addiction, you must ration TV time as if it were a dangerous drug.

My father-in-law was a brilliant scholar. He read a book a day -- underlining and making notes -- for at least sixty years. But when he was over age 80, he got cancer. To ease the pain by distracting his mind, he watched TV all day long. Television served as a drug. That's all right if you have read over 15,000 books and have written three dozen

books yourself. It's not all right if you're in high school.

If you can't recall what the shows were about that you watched two nights ago, you are watching too much TV.

JUST SAY "NO"

Let me tell you my story. (Yawn. Snore.)

At age 14, in my sophomore year, I got a job in a record store.

(Records: round, black plastic disks with grooves imprinted on them, which, when a needle or stylus in a "tone arm" was placed in one of them while the disk was spinning, produced music, or at least what I thought was music. My parents thought otherwise. "Turn that stuff down!" Historical note: the first stereo headphones were introduced in late 1958, when I was a senior in high school. I bought a pair that year: Koss. The first commercial audio CD's arrived in 1982. Ancient history.)

I got on the school bus at about 7:00 a.m. I was at school by 7:30, when school began. We got out at 2:30. The bus dropped me off close to the record store at about 3. I worked until 6. Then I walked home. Unlike grandparents' mythical stories about walking to school in the snow, there was no snow where I lived: Manhattan Beach, California, south of Los Angeles. It was beach boy country. Surfing, USA. It never snowed.

(Side note: the kid brother -- he was about my age, actually -- of one of my best friends in high school really was a Beach Boy: Al Jardine. Al played lead guitar. He's the "Help Me, Rhonda" guy. The group was formed two years after I had graduated and moved away. They all lived in Hawthorne, which was five miles inland. If they had been honest, they would have called their group The Five Miles Inland Boys.)

On Saturdays, I put in a full day: 10 to 6.

In my junior and senior years, I was in the school plays. I was student body president in the second half of my senior year, so I had to cut back on my record store

time. I was also in charge of putting together Southern California's annual meeting of the California Scholarship Federation, which was like the National Honor Society. (The NHS is not prominent in California.) Over 1,000 students attended.

I wasn't a straight-A student. I got more than half A's. I received one C: trigonometry. I survived.

I studied in the evening. I didn't watch much TV. I went to bed about 11. I probably didn't get enough sleep. Most teenagers need at least eight hours of sleep. Don't cut corners on your sleep time. It's not healthy. But you may be able to use cat naps during the afternoon to compensate for late-night hours.

I learned how to cut time corners. I had to. So do you. You can do it if you really want to.

MARSHMALLOW TV

Get out a copy of *TV Guide* or whatever you use to find out which programs you want to watch this week. Mark the shows you really don't want to miss.

In pencil, list these in your weekly scheduler. If they begin to fill up your waking hours, you will have to cut out the junk shows. But get everything entered.

The must-see weekly shows should go into your monthly calendar.

Television may be causing you to short-change your academic career. This could cost you a college career, a good job, and a nice home in a good neighborhood. Or maybe not. Maybe you'll finally change your ways at age 20 or 30. But bad habits are difficult to break. That is Fats Goldberg's message.

Start erasing shows in your weekly scheduler. Count their cost: lost time. Then erase the low-return shows.

When I was first married, my wife and I agreed to pay 25 cents per half hour for any show we wanted to watch. The person who wanted to see a show would pay. The other one could watch for free. We exempted the evening news and documentaries. We then gave the money to charity. There was almost no money. At 50 cents per hour

(about \$1.75 in today's depreciated money), only two shows were worth watching each week. I paid for one (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*), and my wife paid for the other (*The Bob Newhart Show*). They were shown back-to-back on Saturday nights.

With our spare time, we started our home-based newsletter business. That business was the first step in our earning millions of dollars.

What if we had watched TV instead? What would "free" TV have cost us?

There are no free lunches. You must pay for your academic success. The place to start looking for academic currency is your daily consumption of TV.

Can you record your favorite shows? If so, you can watch them on your day off.

Yes, you are entitled to a day off. If you're Jewish or a Seventh-Day Adventist, it's Saturday. If you're a Christian, it's Sunday. If you're nothing in particular, I recommend Sunday.

Your day off is when you re-charge your emotional batteries. Working seven days a week is possible, but it's not wise. You should not treat yourself as if you were a machine. Work hard for six days, but on one day a week, you should relax.

I work 72 hours a week, but I do not work on Sunday. I relax on Sunday. I go to church, and I may go to the library or Barnes & Noble. I come home and usually take a long nap. I have done this consistently ever since my college days.

If I had cable, I might watch old movies or the History Channel. But that would be on Sunday or in the evening.

There is an old saying: "If you want to be successful, you should work half a day. It doesn't matter which half."

I have estimated that you must pick up an extra 15 to 20 hours per week from your existing schedule. See how many hours you can extract from the marshmallow part of your TV schedule. Can you find 10 hours? How much of this can you tape record and watch on your weekend's day off?

REVIEW

You have to pay for success with time.

Time's a-wastin'.

Time is running out, no matter how you allocate it.

If you work after school, you must give up most TV, except on your day off. Record your favorite shows for viewing on your day off.

If it isn't in your scheduler, don't watch any TV show. Or allow yourself one hour's leeway, maximum, per week.

ASSIGNMENT

In your weekly scheduler, write down in pencil what shows you want to watch. Be prepared to cut out a lot of them if you're addicted to TV. Keep an eraser handy.

List your must-see shows in your monthly calendar. These aren't marshmallows. Watch them. But if you can record them and watch them on your day off, do it.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Bus time

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

You should now know how much TV you can afford to watch this week. You should also know how much TV you simply can't do without over the next month. You have identified what really isn't worth watching.

Two lessons ago, I recommended that you recruit a study partner for each course, preferably someone a little better in each course than you are. Have you made a list of possible partners in all of your courses?

Lesson 10

CONVERTING A SCHOOL BUS INTO STUDY HALL

There may be somebody out there who has fond memories of hours spent riding on a school bus. I offer this suggestion merely as a theoretical possibility, along the lines of flipping a coin "heads" 50 times in a row.

Maybe you walk to school. You can still use the information in this lesson.

Maybe you drive to school. If so, you can skip this chapter. Go back to your scheduler. Work on that instead.

In this lesson, I'm going to show you some simple techniques to convert wasted time into higher grades.

THE CRUCIAL TOOLS

I have told you how important a scheduler is. Now let me tell you about another learning tool. It's cheap. It's sold everywhere they sell business supplies or school supplies. It's the 3 by 5 note card.

This tool is great for many uses, such as taking notes on a library book. (I recommend 5x8 cards for that purpose, however.) It can be used to compile a bibliography for a term paper. It is great for flash cards.

I recommend them mainly for flash cards. They are especially useful if you're

taking a foreign language. Write your assigned vocabulary words for the next three weeks, one word per 3x5 card. Always keep three weeks ahead of your class. Review all of them every day on the bus.

Write the English definitions (there will be more than one) on one side of a card and the foreign word on the other. If you do it this way, do it so that you flip the card over, top to bottom. The words are upside down if you flip them right to left. It's your choice as to how you prefer to flip them.

You can also use 3x5 cards for formulas of all kinds: mathematics, chemistry, physics. One education company has cards for several courses, including algebra.

There are even better tools for learning foreign languages: printed vocabulary cards. This company sells sets of 1,000 cards/words for about \$15.

Visual Education
581 W. Leffel Lane
Springfield, OH 45501
800-243-7070
<http://www.vis-ed.com>

Create your own cards for dates, names, definitions, formulas. Use them for English vocabulary practice. If you are studying for the SAT or ACT college entrance exams, you must build your vocabulary. Buy a copy of the book by Murray Bromberg and Melvin Gordon: *1100 Words You Need to Know* (Barron's). If it's at the library, you may choose to borrow it.

You will then have to find time to write down all 1100 words and definitions before it's due back. It's probably easier to buy it. Copy each word onto a 3x5 card, with the definitions, including the ways the word is used, on the back (the lined side).

Take 20 English vocabulary cards to school each day. Five cards should contain new words. This will add 20 words a week to your vocabulary. Keep reviewing old cards. Rotate old cards in and out of your stack of cards. The best way to do this is to shuffle them. Then deal the top 15 cards to yourself. Then add five new, unfamiliar words. In two years on the bus, you will memorize all 1100 words.

This will not only help you pass the SAT or ACT with higher scores in the verbal

section. It will make your reading time more efficient. Your papers will improve as these words become part of your working vocabulary.

Bus time is noisy. There is a lot of stopping and starting. Bus rides are not conducive to reading new material, tightly knit arguments, or doing math. Bus time is ideal for memorizing lists of things, or words, or anything else that doesn't involve long chains of reasoning.

Bus time is great for review. If the material is familiar to you, the noise probably won't matter.

If you can sit next to your study partner, the two of you can ask each other questions off of the cards.

What if you can't find anyone to sit next to who wants to help? What if the noise gets to you? Here is a solution: ear plugs. Carry a pair with you at all times. Put them in a baggy. This is easier for girls, who carry purses. Still, guys these days wear baggy pants with lots of pockets: useful space.

Chatting with someone on the bus is a waste of time unless it's a study partner. The odds against your meeting "that special person" on a school bus are very high.

Nobody really cares if you sit there flipping 3x5 cards. If you stick earplugs in your ears, so what? Someone may tease you the first day or two, but if you don't respond, the wise-guy will get bored. If he knows you can't hear him because of your ear plugs, what's the point of saying anything to you? Think of your earplugs as dork-busters.

There is another use for bus time if you own an iPod or other portable music system. The night before, you can record a foreign language news broadcast from the radio or the Web. Listen to it on the bus. If you are in your second or third year of a foreign language, you should be listening to a 15-minute foreign language news broadcast every day. The best time to listen is when you are doing chores at home. Wash dishes, iron, wash the car, or other mindless tasks while listening to something in a foreign language. Listen again on the bus. Here's a Web site with lots of choices:

<http://www.comfm.com>

Click the **Live Radio** button. There is a pop-down button for languages. There is also a choice for show types and for geography.

Note: You know that you have mastered a foreign language when you dream in that language. At that point, it's time to learn another language.

If you convert wasted bus time into useful study time, you can buy back at least five hours a week. That's a lot. This will free up study time for more complicated, more complex subjects.

I have estimated that you must find 15 to 20 extra hours each week to devote to study time. Count your bus time as part of this total. Anyway, count your earplug bus time.

WALKING YOUR WAY TO HIGHER GRADES

If you live too close to school to warrant a free bus ride, you can still use flash cards for memorizing things. You don't have to pay close attention to the sidewalk as you walk along. Pay attention when you cross a street.

I don't recommend earplugs for walking. Cars are a threat. Your senses are still operating even when you've got your mind on other things. Your ears serve as warning signals.

Note: this advice also applies to joggers who use iPods, Walkmans, or similar products. I don't think it's wise. If you jog on a school track or in a park, then a Walkman is all right. You probably prefer lively music to keep you jogging. If you do jog while listening, use "open-ear" earphones. You should be able to hear cars. Do not crank up the volume. It's bad on your ears. As it is, we lose too much high-frequency hearing after age 40.

REVIEW

Your time is too valuable to waste.

Riding a school bus is high on anyone's list of wasted time.

Use 3x5 cards to convert wasted time into useful time.

If you can find a study partner on the bus who will sit next to you every day, do so.

Use earplugs if you can't stand the noise.

ASSIGNMENT

Go to the store and buy two or three sealed stacks of 3x5 note cards. You may or may not prefer the cards that have lines on one side. Today, you must convert at least 20 cards into rote memory tools by writing something on them.

If you are taking the second or third year of a foreign language, order a box of vocabulary flash cards. The only excuse for not doing this is because you're out of money. Do what you can to earn some money. If you can get good enough at the language to pass an AP or CLEP exam, you can save a year of one course's tuition money and time in college. If you have vocabulary 1,000 words in your head, you can probably pass an AP or CLEP exam.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Study hall

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Have you finished with your course deadlines scheduling project? (Did you think I'd forget?) By now, you should have every assignment in every course recorded in such a way that your schedulers reveal the time that you must invest to complete each assignment. This means a specific time investment, allocated over several weeks, for every project. No cramming at the last minute!

If not, you're not ready to read Lesson 11. You're too far behind.

Next, did you create 20 note cards with a rote-memory item on each card?

Lesson 11

THE LOGIC OF STUDY HALL

Study hall can be a tremendous tool of academic success. Not many students know what to do in study hall. They don't see its possibilities. By the time you have finished reading this lesson, you will see them more clearly.

REVIEWING CLASS NOTES

This is the most important use of study hall. This is why you should try to schedule it at the end of the day.

There may be an exception, however. If you have one class that you absolutely must take to graduate, and you aren't willing to take it in summer school, then you should schedule study hall immediately after that class. The entire study hall period should be devoted to reviewing and organizing your notes of that killer course. I will cover note-taking and reviewing in later lessons. But if you are having a major problem with some unavoidable course, you had better go to your counsellor and explain your problem. If you don't have study hall, maybe you can schedule one, even if this means dropping a course.

You should never drop a class unless you have first discussed this with (1) the teacher whose course you want to drop, (2) the teacher who is in charge of the class you

want to get into, and (3) a counsellor. Then, if they all approve, ask your parents. Explain to your parents the logic of your decision. Tell them that you have the approval of everyone in charge. Do what your parents say you must do. If they merely recommend, and it's not what you want to do, make your own decision. It's your future.

WHY NOT WORK ON TERM PAPERS?

The main reason is your memory. The sooner you review your notes, the better. You can research a term paper when you have long stretches of open time. Don't write a paper in snatches. Go to the library and spend several hours.

Your memory fades fast -- within minutes. Your notes may not make sense to you the next day, especially if you're only now learning how to take notes. You must review your notes and add comments in the margin before you go to sleep at night. Don't allow your notes to fade overnight. You have got to get them into your memory.

But if you use study hall every year, doesn't this force you to skip important courses? Not if you're willing to bite the bullet and go to summer school. If you take a one-semester course in each of the two summer school terms, you can make up a one-year course. Concentrated time is best for learning anyway. It helps you to focus.

Your problem is your memory. You have to teach your memory how to work better. The best time to memorize new material is immediately after this information has been presented to you.

If you find in study hall that your notes are garbled, you may be able to contact the teacher before the school day ends, and ask for clarification. This way, you won't carry incorrect information home with you.

Don't use study hall to read magazines. Study hall is to be devoted 100% to review, preferably review of recently written down information.

WHEN IN SCHOOL. . . .

Those things that you can learn most easily in school should be mastered while you are at school. Those things, such as research or rote memorization, that can be done

off-campus should not be done at school.

Use your study hall time to identify anything that you need to verify at school, preferably from a teacher.

You should walk out of study hall with the most important question to ask any teacher whose notes you have just reviewed. If you can get an answer between classes, do so. If you can't, then write the question on a 3x5 card and hand it to the teacher, or put it on his desk, before class begins the next day. If he will answer it verbally in class, you don't have to sign it. But if he probably won't get around to it in class, then you should sign it. Maybe he'll jot a note on the back: the lined side. He'll give it back to you.

If he doesn't, ask your question in class at some point.

You don't have to keep raising your hand in class to get your questions answered. A 3x5 card works fine. If a teacher has a choice between a raised hand and a 3x5 card, he prefers the card.

SIT AT A TABLE

At a table, you must sit up. Read your notes and make revisions or additions. Do not sit in a deep chair to make such alterations.

Never sit in a soft chair unless you're trying to take a nap. A chair into which you sink will put you to sleep.

Your body may have its down cycle at study hall time. If this is the case, then you must find out if sleeping is allowed. If it is, find that soft chair, or else put your head down on the table. If you can sleep for 20 minutes and feel revived, then do it. Tell the study hall teacher that this is your down time. Explain that a nap now will let you work more efficiently when you get home. If she doesn't believe you, bring in your DayMinder the next day to show her how you allocate your time.

A filled-in DayMinder will convert adults' perception of you from a possible flake to a serious student. You may be able to work around the rules.

You can't learn well in your droopy-eyes time. That's the time to type or surf the Web if you aren't allowed to sleep in study hall. Do something physical to help keep your mind focused.

Most people have problems staying awake immediately after lunch. That's a reason for not eating heavy foods or any form of refined sugar at lunch.

If your killer course is an after-lunch class, you're in trouble.

I have estimated that you must find an extra 15 to 20 hours a week to convert to study time. If you are not yet taking study hall, you can pick up an extra four hours (five 50-minute study halls) a week.

LAST-MINUTE CRAMMING FOR AN EXAM

If you are facing an exam after study hall, structure your schedule in advance so that you reserve this period to reviewing your notes or your textbook. Use the flash cards on the bus or some other time. Use study hall for those academic exercises that are most efficiently conducted while you are sitting at a table.

REVIEW

Study hall is ideal for reviewing class notes.

It is best scheduled after an inescapable killer course or at the end of the day, when you can review several courses' notes.

Use each segment of your day to do whatever exercise that is most efficiently done at that time or in that place.

Sit at a table, not a soft chair. Stay awake.

Do at school those things which can be done best on campus.

If your down time makes you inefficient, schedule study hall then, unless you can schedule physical education. This assumes that you're allowed to

sleep, or at least cat nap in study hall. Otherwise, type or write.

ASSIGNMENT

If you're not enrolled in study hall, do you need to be? Can you get in by dropping another class? Find out.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Your killer course

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you find out about getting in to study hall?

Lesson 12

DEALING WITH A REQUIRED KILLER CLASS

You probably have several goals. First, you want to raise your grades. If you didn't, you would not be reading this manual.

Second, you want to take courses that will get you into college, or in some way help your career.

You may be facing a big problem: one class is giving you fits. You may get a bad grade. If you work hard and long to get a good grade, this may hurt your performance in other classes. You may not get a good grade anyway.

If you must have this class to graduate, ask yourself: "Should I take this class in summer school, when I can give it my full attention, and not hurt my other grades?"

If you don't have to take it this year, should you stick it out? Why?

If you aren't sure if it's necessary in your college plans, find out as soon as you can.

Are there other ways of fulfilling this requirement?

In my senior year, I dropped physics early in the first month and substituted a speech class. I was the best speaker on campus. I knew this. I planned to run for student body president the next semester. (I did, and I won -- based on my one campaign speech.) I had been elected to a state office at Boys' State, the American Legion program, the previous summer. Did I need a speech class? No. Was I wise to take it? Yes. I got an A in speech, doing no work to speak of, and I avoided getting a B or even a C in physics. No college except engineering and science schools such as CalTech and M.I.T. required physics. I got into one of the top colleges in the U.S., with a partial scholarship (discount). If I had received a C in physics, I might not have gotten in.

It's no disgrace to drop a class if you have a clear plan to compensate for your having dropped it.

Talk to the teacher of the killer course. Tell him or her that you're in serious trouble in the course. Tell the teacher your plan of action. Bring your now filled-in weekly scheduler. This will show the teacher that your decision to drop the course is part of your overall effort to reform your bad study habits. The weekly scheduler will serve as proof of your good intentions, but only if it is filled in. Next, talk to a counsellor. Explain your problem again. Show the counsellor your scheduler.

You're in a situation very much like a person who has run up a huge credit card debt. He doesn't want to declare bankruptcy. If he gets assistance from a credit manager, the credit manager can contact his creditors and negotiate a reduction in the interest rates. The person avoids bankruptcy. He has to pay for more years, perhaps, but he escapes.

If you show that you are serious about doing better academically, your counsellor may be able to negotiate a solution. You may be allowed to drop the course.

BUT WHAT IF YOU CAN'T DROP IT?

So, you can't drop that killer class. For whatever reason, you are stuck. You must sink or swim.

Swim. But not too hard.

Your time-management system had better be fine-tuned. You had better watch over your time like a mother grizzly watches over her cubs. Put very little slack in your plans.

Your first goal is to pass it with a C. Don't try to get a high grade. Just pass it. Treat it as you would treat your other courses. Don't take time from your other classes to get a grade above a C in this one. You're trying to raise your overall average. If you get a C- in this class, and you can get a B- in another, don't work to get a C+ in this one. You might drop to a C+ in the other.

If you get a grade lower than a C, take the class again in summer. (There are

many ways to skin an academic cat.)

Here is my advice. Do whatever you can with the techniques I teach in this course. Apply them first to your killer course. Let this be your guide. Keep from getting less than a C in this course. As you work hard to keep your C, you will find that you begin to master the techniques of academic success. This practice will help you in your other courses.

Fear is a great motivator. If I can prove to you that my recommended study techniques and test-taking techniques work in your killer course, maybe you'll believe in them enough to apply them in your other courses. Maybe. I hope.

Panic is **not** a great motivator. Panic is a paralyzer. Don't panic over a killer class. By the time you have completed my study habits course, you will be able to handle any class. If it's late in the semester, and you can't overcome your performance so far, then take the class in summer school. Your grade in summer school will replace your grade this term. So, make a decent showing in the class, but don't lose any sleep over it. You can overcome a D or an F next summer.

If you're looking at a D or an F, and you get a C- by following my instructions, that's a victory. If, in the meantime, you also master these study techniques well enough to raise your grades next semester by half a point above what they were last semester, that's also a victory.

Your first step is to take better notes. I'll cover this in a later lesson.

Your second step is to review class notes before the day is over. The sooner, the better.

Your third step is to make corrections in these notes, or at least to write clarifying comments and questions in the margins. Put question marks in the margins.

Your fourth step is to write each question on a 3x5 note card. Hand them to the teacher the next day. He can answer each question on the back of the card.

Your fifth step is to tear these now-corrected pages out of your spiral-bound notebook and insert them into a 3-ring notebook at home. Why? Because you might lose your school notebook. Take your note pages home and leave them at home in a

notebook.

Don't leave your original notes in the notebooks that you take to school. Tear out the pages every night. You can buy one large 3-ring notebook and some dividers. Put each course's notes into its proper section. Don't take this notebook out of your home.

REVIEW

A killer course can hurt your chances of learning better ways of studying.

It's easier if you can get on your feet academically, and then take the course over.

It's better to go to summer school than to get defeated this term by a killer course.

Drop it, but promise to take it later, after you're more sure of your abilities.

Substitute study hall if you can.

Don't stop working in the killer course until you are officially out of the course.

If you can't get out, pass the class with a C.

If you do worse than a C, take it again in summer.

Take better notes.

Review and revise your notes before the day is over.

Write questions on 3x5 cards. Hand them in.

ASSIGNMENT

Give the course a second try. Work harder. Talk to the teacher of the killer course today or tomorrow. Discuss your plan: to delay taking the course until next year or at summer school. You want to get your study habits reformed. Bring your filled-in weekly scheduler. Then schedule an appointment with a counsellor.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Summer vacation

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you speak with the teacher of your killer class, to drop it and take it in summer school?

Lesson 13

SUMMER VACATION

You want to have a good time next summer. You want to lounge around, watch TV, wander aimlessly, and generally goof off.

Forget about it. No more. Childhood ends now.

An adult goes to work every day, five days a week, eight hours a day, 50 weeks a year. A company owner goes to work five or six days a week, 12 hours a day, 50 weeks a year.

Kids play in summer.

Get used to thinking like an adult. This is crucial for your long-term academic success. The New Testament says:

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 13:11)

It's time to begin making your transition to adulthood.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Summer school allows you to do several things.

1. Take a class, such as typing, that you don't have time for in the school year.
2. Take a make-up class in which you are doing poorly

and should drop immediately.

3. Take a make-up class that you flunked or did poorly in, which you could not (or did not) drop.
4. Take a class early, such as algebra II, so you can get into a class where you need it, such as chemistry.

When you are not in a summer school class, you should be doing one of these things:

1. Doing homework
2. Working full-time
3. Relaxing after a full 8-hour work day

You will lose two hours in class, plus two hours of homework. That's for one class. Double this if you take two. That means a full 8-hour day.

If you take a typing class, don't worry about homework.

Note: if you want to type really fast without getting tired, don't learn to type on the standard QWERTY layout. Learn on a Dvorak (ASK) layout. The Dvorak keyboard option is in Microsoft Windows. You can easily select it. Dvorak reduces the movement of your fingers by 90%. No one has set a world speed record on anything but a Dvorak-type keyboard in two generations. For more information, see these sites:

<http://www.mwbrooks.com/dvorak>
<http://members.networld.com/arobinson>

For instructional material, visit

<http://www.gigliwood.com/abcd>

PASS A CLEP

Study for a CLEP exam in the same course as your summer school course. This way, your study time does double work. You will get a higher grade in the course, and you will pass the CLEP with a higher score.

If you pass one CLEP exam for a full year's course, you have just saved your parents (or yourself) the tuition cost of that course. Typical tuition for a state university is \$200 per semester unit for state residents. Multiply this times six. That's \$1,200. Some schools charge more. At an Ivy League university, it's \$800 per semester unit.

If you spend three hours a day for 30 days studying for CLEPs, you probably can pass a two-semester CLEP (two CLEPs). If you do this for three months, you can probably pass three one-year college courses by CLEP. Three six-credit hour CLEPS are the equivalent of over half of the freshman year. Do this for two summers, and you will walk into college as a sophomore. You have just saved tuition (\$5,000+), room and board (\$5,000), and incidentals (????).

There is no job you can get in summer that will pay you after taxes what passing three CLEPs will save you.

Or you can study for one CLEP and work full-time.

GET A JOB

If you decide to get a job, get a job with a local business that isn't a franchise. Your goal is to learn how that kind of business operates. Don't settle for flipping hamburgers unless you are willing to learn all about the franchise.

It's far better to work at some job where you can learn about business. Do the grunt jobs, but keep your eyes open. Take notes. Show up 15 minutes early. Leave 15 minutes after your shift ends. Don't charge for the extra work. When the manager or owner sees that you work really hard, start asking questions about how the business operates. Never work at a job where you aren't able to learn about the business. The extra money isn't worth the time wasted by not getting an education.

Get a job you can work at during the school year on a part-time basis; that's best.

SUMMARY

Forget about summer vacation. It's time to start converting summer into money.

Go to summer school to make up a class, take a class in advance, or learn a skill like typing.

Study for at least one full-year CLEP. Try to make it two full-year CLEPs.

Get a job if you aren't in summer school. Try to get one that will teach you about running a business. Try to get one where you can work part-time during the school year.

ASSIGNMENT

Find out which courses will be offered next summer. If you're not taking a make-up course, see if there is anything you can take for which there is also a CLEP exam. I recommend U.S. history or English. Better yet, take both, back to back.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Used textbooks

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Have you mentally given up the idea of summer vacation? If so, you have made a major transition to adulthood.

Did you check to see which classes will be offered in summer school?

Lesson 14

BUY YOUR HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS, USED

This lesson is short. You must buy your textbooks for every class in which you must write essays or take essay exams.

Don't buy them new. That would cost you hundreds of dollars. Buy used copies.

To buy used copies, consult with the person who is in charge of handing out the textbooks at the start of the academic year and collecting them at the end. Someone in the school office can tell who this is and where to contact him or her.

Go to that person and ask if there are any unmarked copies of the textbook that are so beaten up that the school won't distribute them. If there are a few copies, see if the person will sell them to you for a few dollars each. The person can check with the principal to find out if this is acceptable. Maybe you can get one for free.

Because there is no student demand for used high school textbooks, unlike used college textbooks, a book that is too beaten up to hand out is a throwaway book. Nobody wants it. It is taking up space. It is targeted for the dumpster. The only students who are interested in obtaining used high school textbooks are people who have read this lesson.

If there are no throwaway copies of the latest edition, maybe there are a few copies of earlier editions of the textbook now in use. If the book is written by the same authors and has the same title, buy it if the price is low. It doesn't matter if a book is one edition out of date. Most of the information will be accurate. The price is right; that's what matters most.

If your school doesn't have any used copies, maybe another school in the district does. Ask the person to phone his colleague at the other school and see if there are

throwaway copies of the textbooks you want to buy.

If school policy is that old copies not be sold, maybe you could swap some donated time for a donated copy of a book. If there is no work available now, write an IOU for X hours of donated time at the end of the year, when the depository person is buried in books to inventory. Then enter those hours into your scheduler.

Let the depository person know how serious you are about obtaining used books. This will be motivation for the person to find some way to get the books to you.

At some point, maybe you will have to go to your parents and ask for the money. Or you will have to borrow it from them. Tell them why you need your own copies.

Here's why.

MARK UP YOUR BOOKS

To read and (especially) review effectively, you must either mark up your books or take extensive notes. Note-taking takes a lot of time. Marking up books doesn't. Your time is valuable. To buy extra time, buy the used textbooks.

Then buy a **yellow highlighter**. Use it to mark key points in the books. This will save you time when you skim over the books in preparation for exams.

Write in the margins. Use numbers to do a margin-based outline. Circle key words. Make a useful mess of these books.

Don't bring these old textbooks to school. They stay home. You don't want to lose them. Your marks will be worth a great deal to you. Also, you won't have other students asking you why you're writing in your textbooks. They won't think they are yours. Unless you want to explain everything about this study course, leave the marked-up books at home.

Keep your new textbooks at school in your locker. You are less likely to lose them there.

If you can't buy an old textbook, the person at the book depository office may

have other suggestions. Ask.

If you're really a go-getter, at the end of the school year, after all the textbooks have been collected, you will go in again and buy battered copies of next year's textbooks. That will save you money next year.

If you are really, truly dead-serious about raising your grades, you will read next year's textbooks over the summer. Yes, even if you get a job or attend summer school. But if you're studying for a CLEP, don't.

What if you aren't able to obtain used copies? Then you have three choices: (1) become an expert note-taker; (2) use a lot of sticky-note sheets; (3) buy your existing copies, which won't be cheap.

Your academic future depends on developing good study habits, and marking up textbooks is basic to effective study. It's a matter of saving time. You must learn how to cut corners, especially time corners. The best students are so smart that they can master everything in one reading, usually at 600 words per minute. You can't do this. So, you have to find ways to make better use of your time. Writing outlines or detailed notes instead of using a yellow highlighter on a textbook is usually a poor use of your time. It's cheaper in time expended to work at odd jobs for a few hours each week and buy your textbooks.

If you can buy one of your textbooks by working at odd jobs for 10 hours, do this, or else spend 10 hours extra this year in taking notes of each textbook. But, in all likelihood, you cannot learn as much by spending 10 extra hours a year (20 minutes/week) to take notes on a textbook as you can learn by buying the textbook and marking it up.

REVIEW

It saves time to mark up a book rather than take detailed notes.

Your time is more valuable than a used book is.

Buy your books every semester or term. Don't buy them new.

ASSIGNMENT

Go see the book depository person before you read tomorrow's lesson. See what's available. If you can buy used books, talk with your parents about buying the books for you, or lending you the money to buy them.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: How to read a textbook

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you visit the textbook depository person? Will you be able to buy textbooks cheaply? If you can, then talk it over with your parents. If they will buy them, fine. If not, will they lend you the money? You can pay them back by going out and getting some odd jobs.

Lesson 15

HOW TO READ A TEXTBOOK

A textbook is a fat book that had to go through an editorial committee to get approved. Then it had to go through state textbook committees to get it approved by state departments of education. The big states are New York, Illinois, California, and Texas. If even one of these states vetoes a textbook, the publisher will drop it. These committees had to approve the textbook before it was bought by your school district. Then the school board got into the act. So did a committee of teachers.

Never forget this saying: “A camel is a horse built by a committee.”

Committees are why textbooks are so bland. Textbooks are not controversial. They convey the minimum amount of information necessary to enable students to go to college.

Textbooks in the social sciences (government, economics, history) and humanities (English) are designed to allow fast reading and pre-test reviewing. They are laid out to minimize confusion. Some critics say that the typical high school textbook is dumbed-down, written at a 9th grade level.

You shouldn't worry about this. It's not your responsibility. “Yours is not to reason why. Yours is but to read or fry.” Your job is to make the best use of your time in reading your assignments and then reviewing what you have read.

What I recommend here does not apply to mathematics textbooks.

When you buy a textbook of your own, read the first assignment as fast as you can. Do this at home. Why? Remember this rule: do only that work at school which can be done best at school. At home, read your cheap, battered used copy.

How fast should you read? You know how long it takes you to read an assignment. Block out that much time. Then schedule two readings and one “lecture to the wall.”

If you normally spend an hour on an assignment this long, spend ten minutes the first reading. This for overall content, not memorizing. You want to get the big picture.

When you skim through, pause at the headings, the subheadings, and any line that is in color or bold-faced. These are key sections. Then speed up again.

After you read the assignment as fast as you can, pausing only at headings and subheadings (which sometimes are in a different color than black), close the book. Sit and think about what you just read. How much can you remember? Jot down a few one-sentence notes. These are for only one purpose: to prove to yourself that you can recall a few things when you read very fast. Spend 5 minutes in jotting down notes. If you can't think of anything, try harder. It's only 5 minutes.

Now go back to the book. Read the chapter again, but more slowly this time. Read for general comprehension.

Finally, pick out a complex section that confuses you. Read it slowly. Highlight the important sections that you will want to review the night before the next exam.

Now close the book. Think about what you have read. Jot down a few more notes. Now give your lecture to the wall. See how much you remember. If you draw a blank, re-read that section. Close the book. Try again.

Go through the assignment section by section, lecturing to the wall. Then. . . .

1. Read the summary at the end of the chapter.
2. Read the study questions at the end of the chapter.
3. See if you can find answers in the textbook to the study questions. If you do, make a note in the margin: “Answer to study question #3,” or whatever number it was.

Are you reading this assignment mainly for preparation, so you that won't walk into that class cold (cold = having read nothing)?

Should you procrastinate for a day? Of course not! Will you? Probably, once in a while.

My study course is for the real world. I know that students get into self-made jams once in a while. You may be in several. So, cut yourself some slack, but only for one day per assignment. Don't push your luck. Don't make procrastination a habit.

You must learn to read faster and more efficiently. You will not initially trust yourself to read super-fast just once. But because you know there will be a second reading, with a highlighter in your hand, followed by lecturing to the wall, you will not be risking much by reading fast the first time.

Within two or three months, you will find that two readings, with just one underlining session, plus lecturing to the wall, will go faster than the time it takes you today to read the same number of pages only once.

Warning: your math textbook must be gone through slowly.

A science textbook can be read slowly for the first reading, then faster for two readings. It's the reverse strategy from social science and humanities textbooks. That's because science books are more complex. But the same rule applies: two readings per assignment: skim, mark, skim.

Maybe you absorb scientific information fast. If so, then adopt the schedule: fast reading, slow reading, fast reading.

PREPARING FOR LECTURES

If you don't do your homework reading assignment before you walk into class, you will find -- or may find -- the lectures difficult to follow. The number-one goal of reading your textbooks is to make it easier for you to understand classroom lectures. That's because most teachers give tests that are based more on their lectures than on the textbook.

Why? Because teachers lecture on what they think is most important. The textbook probably was selected by a school district committee. The choices allowed to the district were limited to those that had been approved by a state committee, whose decision was heavily influenced by whatever state committees had decided last year in Texas, California, New York, and Illinois. Your teacher probably had very little influence over which textbook got picked -- maybe no influence at all.

The textbook may be changed next year. I guarantee you, your teacher's lecture notes will not be revised in response to the new textbook next year.

When you walk into the classroom, you must know enough material to follow the lecture. Reading the textbook on schedule will help. Reading it two times, but at different speeds, will help even more. Lecturing to the wall helps the most.

Understand what I am saying. The initial readings of the assignment in the textbook are undertaken to prepare you to take lecture notes the next day. So is lecturing to the wall.

When you are at your desk at home, ready to begin study for a course, you must review your notes from today's lecture. Think about them. As you read, correct them. Add notes in the margin of your notebook.

Then . . . you will hate this . . . skim yesterday's textbook assignment to see if there is any connection between today's lecture and yesterday's reading assignment. There probably won't be, but check, just to make sure. Speed read yesterday's textbook assignment.

What if you find a connection? A-oogah! A-oogah! Red alert!

Whenever there is correspondence between a textbook's passage and lecture notes, there is a much greater likelihood that there will be a test question on this material.

Next, update today's lecture notes. Refer to the page number of the textbook that relates to the lecture notes. Later, when you prepare on the night before an exam, you will find this page reference in your notes. At that point, carefully re-read that page in the textbook.

Only after you have carefully reviewed and revised your notes from today's lecture, and after you have skimmed yesterday's reading assignment in light of these notes, do you go on to today's reading assignment.

Miserable, isn't it? I'm sure glad it's you who must go through this rather than me.

WHEN THERE IS A MAJOR TEST TOMORROW

Read the textbook for your test course last in the day. Your goal here is special. You must review the textbook until you just aren't learning anything new. Then you must read your lecture notes. Read your lecture notes even more carefully than you read the textbook. Then you must go to bed. I mean right after you close the book. No TV, no shower. Go straight to bed. Why? Because your brain may go over the material while you're asleep. It may not, but if it does, you're ahead.

On a major test day, carry your lecture notes on the bus. Carry anything else that is related to the test. You might even take your underlined used textbook. That's high risk, but it may be worth it if it's an important test. Wear your earplugs. Bus time is review time.

Take everything home the same day. Don't lose anything.

WEEKENDS

Whichever day you designate as your day of rest, the other day is mainly for researching and writing papers, unless you have a job.

(I'm assuming here that you always do your household chores first, without complaining, except in absolute emergencies, such as a major exam, when you can bargain with a parent, assuming that you have not complained constantly before the impending crisis.)

If you are on schedule by 4 p.m., and you think that you have a little extra time, get out a textbook in the course in which you are having more trouble, and review your yellow markings. Start at the latest chapter and work back for two chapters. Then do the

same with your other textbooks. Don't assume that just because you had an exam recently, the same material won't show up on a future exam.

This is real-world. I am not silly enough to believe that, in the courses you don't like, your goal is anything except passing the exam.

However, in the courses that you like, or at least can tolerate, your goal for reviewing the textbooks is to master the material, not merely pass the next exam. If you go to college, you are more likely to major in a field that is related to the courses you liked most in high school. So, you must make an extra effort in these classes.

Your main goal in the courses that you hate is to get through them. Your main goal in the courses you like is to get prepared for the next phase of your academic career.

If you are really ready to learn, you should know that you can get college credit for work that you do in high school. That's what *Stand and Deliver* shows. There are other ways to do this besides AP exams. Bear this in mind when you schedule time for your course work. You may be able to kill two birds with one stone.

The strategy of success in the courses you hate and the courses you like is the same: review material on the weekend, after you're tired of working on your writing assignments.

REVIEW

You must be prepared before you go to class, so that you can take better-informed notes.

You need to read all assignments twice in all courses except math (which takes line by line concentration): once fast, once more slowly.

You must then lecture to the wall, section by section, for anything that confuses you.

The last thing to read on the night before a major exam is the textbook and notes of the exam course. Then sleep on it.

ASSIGNMENT

Do your readings today: skim, mark, skim. Lecture to the wall as you go through the marker reading. If you don't own the book, take notes in a spiral-bound notebook. You will see why I recommend buying the textbooks. It takes too long to take detailed notes.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Loose ends

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you do your readings? Did you lecture to the wall? Speed reading with high comprehension is by far the most difficult habit to acquire in my course. Keep working on this. When you reach college, the reading load will go up drastically. You must increase your reading speed and your comprehension. You cannot do this unless you push yourself, day after day. This is like training for running a race. Start today if you did not start yesterday.

Lesson 16

“RECESS”: TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

You have learned that my course is no picnic. You are re-structuring your work day and work week, which means that you are re-structuring your life.

Like a new athlete in training, you're sore. You're not sure you can make the team, or in this case, make the grade.

If you stick with the program, you can and you will.

In grade school, you got a recess. They call it something different now, but it's still recess. Everyone needs an occasional break in the normal routine to get caught up.

I have asked you to do a great deal over the past two-and-a-half weeks.

You had better be taking that day off each week!

I assume that you didn't get it all done. So, in this lesson, I will review the basics. This allows you more time to get things organized.

COSTS AND BENEFITS

The original question remains: “How hungry are you?” How much fire is in your belly?

Here is what I wrote in **Lesson 2**.

How much do you care about your grades? How much do you care about your ability to learn new material? Before you can make a rational decision of whether to commit to my program, you must decide for yourself how much your learning ability means to you.

In setting any goal for yourself, you must ask yourself three questions:

1. What do I want to achieve?
2. How soon do I want to achieve it?
3. What am I willing to pay (give up)?

Here are two goals: measurably higher grades and an increased ability to learn new material.

What are you willing give up in order to gain these goals?

Later in the chapter, I wrote this:

What about costs? You don't pay anything for this course, other than paper and toner to print it out. The real cost is the cost of what you will be required to give up. You will be asked to give up the following, beginning in the next seven days:

1. A lot of extra time: 15 to 20 hours/week
2. A sloppy approach to time management
3. A sloppy approach to learning
4. An attitude of "I don't care about school"

I will show you where to find the extra 15-20 hours without messing up your life. There are wasted hours hidden where you probably have not imagined.

REVIEWING YOUR PROGRESS SO FAR

Do you have a desk at home? Do you have a good light?

Is there a shelf for your books and pens and note pads?

Do you have a cardboard apple box or a file cabinet for hanging folders, where you will put notes for term papers and other projects?

Do you have hanging folders with plastic tabs?

Do you have 3x5 cards filled with vocabulary, formulas, and anything else you are required to memorize?

Do you use wax ear plugs?

Have you begun to take brief catnaps at a desk during your downtime?

This was covered in **Lesson 4**. You should have all this finished. If not, get on it before the end of the day.

What about following directions? Have you made any really big mistakes since **Lesson 5**? If so, what did you do about it? Did you start asking directions?

Do you have the date of all of your assignments written down in these places?

1. Your daily time-management book
2. Your monthly time-management book
3. Your desk calendar or wall calendar

Have you broken each assignment into small steps, so that you can see each step in your time-manager? (**Lesson 6**)

Are you on-schedule so far?

Have you scheduled fun times? Remember Fats Goldberg. Let the good times roll, but not all the time. That's covered in Lesson 7.

Did you recruit any partners who will help remind you of your schedule? Did you write down your partners' assignments, so that you can remind them?

I know: the odds against locating partners are high. People don't normally help each other this way. But if you need nagging, you had better learn to get it from your peers, not your parents. All this is covered in **Lesson 8**.

Have you identified your less important time-wasters: your marshmallows? Have you written down in your time-management tools the handful of TV shows that you absolutely must watch? Do you record them, so that you can watch them on your day off? See **Lesson 9**.

What about school bus time? Are you studying on the bus? Are you reviewing note cards with rote memory items on them? That's in Lesson 10.

Have you signed up for study hall? Are you using study hall to organize your class notes and review them, especially your killer class? Are you using school time for projects that are best done at school? Read **Lesson 11**.

Have you dropped your killer class? If not, are you devoting enough effort to get a C? That's **Lesson 12**.

What about summer school? Can you make it part of your overall academic strategy? Read **Lesson 13**.

What about your textbooks? Could you locate used copies, cheap? If not, can you possibly afford to buy the ones in the courses that are reading intensive? If not, then are you taking very careful notes? That's **Lesson 14**.

Are you using speed-reading techniques for the first reading of your daily textbook assignments in the humanities and social sciences? Are you going to class prepared for the lectures because you have read today's assignment twice and lectured to the wall? Read **Lesson 15**.

Do you go to sleep immediately after reviewing the material for next day's toughest exam?

If you have done all this, you're on schedule. If you haven't, get with the

program. Start getting caught up. The most important single item is time-management. Get this taken care of today.

Don't do any more lessons until you're caught up. Tie up the loose ends before you resume this course.

ASSIGNMENT

Have you entered every assignment into your time-managers? Have you broken down each assignment into bite-sized tasks? Are these also entered into your time-managers? If not, get it done today.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: The number-one study technique

Lesson 17

LECTURING TO THE WALL, PART 2

Are you really doing this every day? Or are you procrastinating? This is the #1 study technique. It's the one that will give you a unique advantage. You should be using it. Are you?

In Lesson 3, I told you about Noah Robinson. When Noah took the Graduate Records Exam for chemistry, which is the SAT/ACT for graduate students, his scores were 800 (perfect), 800, and 770. As far as I know, in the year that he took the GRE, he scored highest in the nation in chemistry. CalTech granted him a full scholarship. He earned a Ph.D.

He had always been a very good student. He had not always been a great exam-taker. He got 1480 on the SATs -- very good, but not spectacular. His father describes how he became a great exam-taker. Let's review. (It never hurts to review.)

I noticed that Noah was experiencing a difficulty identical to my own experience when I was his age. One reads the book but doesn't really absorb it. Problem solving becomes an exercise in scrambling back through the text looking for formulas and combining these with computing tricks such as dimensional analysis. As the physics advanced, his error rate grew as high as 30%.

Then we read *The Overnight Student* by M. L. Jones, available from Louis Publishing, 1105 Inverness Lane, Bellingham, WA 98226. This book advocates that the student become an oral teacher of an imaginary class.

Noah tried this. Now, for about an hour each day, he closets himself in the press room where we have installed the equipment used to print and mail "Access to Energy." There, he teaches the physics orally in small segments to an imaginary audience as he reads through the book. Students are naturally shy. None of us has heard him do this.

The result -- his study time is reduced; he understands the material better; and his problem solving error rate has fallen essentially to 0%.

<http://snipurl.com/ax34>

Noah quizzed out of his first two years of college, saving his father \$20,000, minimum. Two years later, he blew away the GRE exam.

The problem with this technique is that very few students ever apply it, even when they know about it.

Have you begun to use it? You have known about it for two weeks.

Again, it's like a diet book. Knowing how to lose weight is not the same as actually losing it.

THE OVERNIGHT STUDENT

The book Dr. Robinson refers to, *The Overnight Student*, is a truly inspiring little book. Sadly, it is out of print.

The author was a slightly above-average student in high school: mostly C's and B's. At college, his first semester grade point average was 1.9 -- low C's. Then he hit a brick wall: straight F's. He was put on probation. He did it again: straight F's. They expelled him for two years.

Two years later, he got permission to re-enter, but only if he got a B-average in correspondence courses, which he did, barely. But he feared that he would hit the brick wall again when he re-entered as a full-time student.

In college one more time, he struggled. Then he met a girl who told him she rarely cracked a book, but she got good grades. She said she took good notes.

He became a great note-taker. I will cover note-taking in a tomorrow's lesson. But, in reviewing his notes, he stumbled onto the technique that turned him into a straight-A student.

He found that he could not remember all of his detailed class notes. His grades improved, but he was still not an A student. Then he adopted a new technique. He would read his notes silently to himself. Then he would turn his notes face-down, stand up, and begin lecturing. There was no one in the room except him. But he would give a

lecture, putting the notes in his own words. He found that he did better while walking or pacing.

He did not parrot the notes. He pretended that he was explaining his notes to a class. When he forgot his point, he knew where the gap in his knowledge was. He could review his notes, find the missing piece, and start over.

Wouldn't you like to be able identify whatever you don't know and then learn it before you take an exam? You can. Lecture to the wall.

From that day on, he never received any grade lower than an A. He graduated from college, went to graduate school, and earned a Ph.D. He never stopped using this technique.

Simply by putting his class notes into his own words, and speaking these words out loud as if there were an audience, the author transformed his academic career. His book has transformed other people's academic careers.

Maybe it will transform yours. Have you been doing this?

WHY NOT TRY IT? (FINALLY)

There are lots of reasons. The technique sounds goofy. Nobody else does this. Nobody teaches it in school. You don't have a deserted place to lecture to the wall. You don't want to be regarded as crazy.

But, if it would mean a college education for you, would you try it for a month?

If you have struggled with studying, why not see if this can help you? If you're embarrassed by your grades, why not try it? If you work really hard, yet you choke when you take exams, why not try it?

Is doing something new and strange so frightening to you that you would rather spend the rest of your academic career afraid of exams? If it would mean that you would no longer get scared before taking exams, would it be worth trying for a month?

I don't know for certain if this technique will work for you. I do know that if you

have tried everything else, and nothing has made you a good student, then it would be wise to try something that has worked for other people.

SUMMARY

Take better notes. Review them. Then lecture to the wall.

ASSIGNMENT

Re-read this lesson. Then turn the print-out face-down. Then whisper or talk to the wall. Explain to that stupid wall what the lesson means to you. I assure you, the wall can hear your whisper just as clearly as it can hear you shouting.

If the lesson doesn't mean anything, sit down, re-read it, and then lecture to the wall. The wall won't get any smarter, but your understanding of the lesson will get clearer.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Note-taking

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you lecture to the wall about the lesson on lecturing to the wall? If not, please give this a try. I am trying to help you. If I did not think this would help you, I would not ask you to do it. It's no fun for most people. But if it works for you, you will gain an enormous competitive advantage over other students who have never heard of this technique, and who would not try it out even if they did hear about it.

If you did do the assignment, do you believe your own lecture?

Lesson 18

TAKING NOTES

This is the other half of *The Overnight Student*. The author learned how to take good notes. Then he lectured to the wall to remember them.

Before we begin, let me tell you what your teachers never admit, even though they all know the truth: listening to lectures is not a good substitute for reading when you are learning complex material. When I say "lecture," I mean a speech. I'm not talking about a teacher at a blackboard who works out a math problem. I mean blah, blah, blah.

Most people read at 250 words per minute. Most people talk at under 125 words per minute. Only professional stenographers can take notes this fast.

You can read the same amount of words twice or more in the time that it takes to listen to the same number of words. Also, the words on a page stay there. The words in your ears don't.

You can review a book. If you own it, you allowed to mark it up: notes in the margins, underlines, highlighting. You can stop and think about what you have just read. (Yes, this is allowed. In fact, I am encouraging this.)

You can't write fast enough to transcribe a lecture. The lecture isn't laid out as carefully as a book. A lecture has not been screened by a committee for errors. If you slow down to think about the truth of any part of a lecture, you won't be able to write

down the next part.

There is only one significant advantage in a lecture. You can raise your hand and ask a question (if you get called on). But most lecturers don't like listeners to do this more than three times per lecture, if that many. If you keep asking questions, the other listeners will resent it. So, this advantage is minimal.

You can easily misunderstand and write down the wrong thing. You can miss the main point. All in all, lectures are not good for delivering complex information. They are all right for introducing a new idea or two. They are all right for reviewing what students read the night before. But did all of the students read the assignment the night before? Of course not.

Then there is this dirty little secret: nobody sits and listens to lectures, taking notes, except in high school and college. After that, nobody asks you to take notes. Rarely are you asked to sit through a lecture, except at church. Not many people take notes at church. You may be required to view a video or read a chapter or fill in an outline, but only in rare circumstances, such as a \$500 weekend seminar, does anyone expect you to take notes.

This is because we live 550 years after Gutenberg invented the printing press. Teachers lectured prior to Gutenberg because books had to be copied by hand. Students could not afford them. This has not been true for 550 years.

One of the greatest advantages of taking college courses by mail and locally administered exams is that you don't become dependent on note-taking in class. But, while you're in high school, you are supposed to learn how to take notes. If you attend college on-campus, you had better be a good note-taker on the day you arrive.

It's still a good tactic to lecture to the wall. That's the one place where lectures are effective in education. You give the lecture. But the wall doesn't take notes.

Then why do colleges still require lectures? Tradition. Why do high schools require them? To prepare students for college. Also, to fill up time.

Isn't there a better way? Of course. It's also a lot cheaper. But very few colleges admit that undergraduate education can be as effective and a lot cheaper without lectures. They get paid for providing what self-disciplined students really don't need. Only three

colleges have eliminated lectures 100%. They are all very low-cost schools. All are accredited. But you have never heard of any of them unless you have read my companion manual, *America's Lowest Cost Colleges*.

By the way, in graduate school, lectures are quite rare. Senior professors teach graduate students. They assume that their students are self-disciplined and can learn on their own. Lectures are for students who cannot be trusted intellectually.

NOTES FOR YOU, NOTES FOR ME

Students take notes in their own way. Some students can somehow sense the outline the lecturer is using. Others can't.

You don't need to do a detailed outline when you write. Your teacher probably didn't use an extensive outline. Why try to impose one?

I am a professional lecturer. I have been giving speeches since 1957 -- a long time. I use one sheet of paper for a one-hour lecture. I fold it into a 5½-inch by 8-inch sheet, with four panels. I fill the panels with notes, usually one idea per phrase. I use this paper just to keep from skipping anything.

I write a one-hour speech in about one hour or less. I don't use a detailed outline. I use brief phrases.

Now let's talk about you. Sometimes you're not sure when a lecturer moves to a new idea, which would mean a new paragraph. Don't worry about it. Just keep writing.

Your hand will get tired. Buy a pen that you think is comfortable. Write with it. If it's still comfortable a week later, buy another one just like it. You might lose one.

PENS

I can write more clearly with a fountain pen. (Blank stare.) A fountain pen has a metal tip and a rubber bladder that you fill with ink. Ink. You know: dark liquid in a bottle. (Blank stare.)

OK, so maybe most brands of fountain pens went out of production back in 1968. So what? I like mine. I buy cheap ones: about \$20. You can pay as much as (this, even I find astounding) \$5,000. (Some people have their priorities messed up.)

Here's why I like a fountain pen. Its tip offers resistance as I write. I have much better control over the shape of my letters. A ball point pen rolls too much. I lose control of my penmanship. It looks sloppy. A fiber-tipped pen can't maintain the width of the ink over time. Its tip keeps getting fatter and softer. Then I have to buy a new one. Ink in a bottle lasts a long time.

I buy my pens on-line from Swisher Pens. I like the Waterman.

<http://www.swisherpens.com>

If you can't read your own handwriting, this will mess up your pre-test reviewing. So, do whatever you can to write more clearly yet not slow down your transcription.

REVIEW YOUR NOTES, SOON

In a student guide on note-taking, Utah State University reports that within 24 hours, 95% of what you heard but failed to write down is forgotten. That's why you had better take very good notes. Even when you do, the study says, two-thirds of what you wrote down is forgotten by the next day. (The guide doesn't even bother to mention what you will remember a week or a month later if you didn't take good notes.) The report is posted here:

<http://snipurl.com/8u9o>

That's why note-reviewing before the day is over is crucial. You can organize your notes while you still recall more clearly what the teacher said. You can add clarifying notes in the margin. Then, if there is enough time, lecture to the wall.

I recommend last-period study hall for reviewing daily class notes. If you find something that you don't understand, maybe you can ask the teacher before the day ends. Or write down your question on a 3x5 note card and hand it in the next day.

NOTEBOOKS (ONE MORE TIME)

I recommend using a 3-hole, spiral-bound notebook.

Don't use a separate notebook at school for each class. You will be tempted to keep these notebooks with you. What if you lose one? You're a dead duck. Carry the same notebook to all of your classes.

At the end of each school day, tear out all of your pages of notes. Take them home. Carry them in a separate cheap notebook that will keep the rain off the pages.

At home, insert each page into a 3-ring binder, one binder for each class, or a large binder with plastic dividers/tabs for each class. Don't let these notes out of your home office, except to take on a school bus on the day of a major exam.

COMPARE NOTES WITH THE TEXTBOOK

As you know, I'm a fanatic about the necessity of reading tomorrow's textbook assignment the night before you go to class. The lecture will make more sense to you if you have read your assignment. But, more important, you may spot some correlations between the textbook's material and the lecture material. If the lecture repeats what is in the textbook, you can be sure this is **high-priority material.** Review it carefully before any exam.

If you hear in the lecture anything that you read the night before in the textbook, write **ST** in the margin of your notes. (ST = "See textbook.") This will alert you at home when you are reviewing your notes for the day to open the textbook and see if you can find the same material. You want to make sure your teacher's version is the textbook's version. If it isn't, then either you took faulty notes or else your teacher has a unique view, which he may use on a test. Get this discrepancy clarified before the next exam, either in a Q&A session or by means of a 3x5 card. Your teacher will be amazed that you paid sufficient attention to note the discrepancy. Or else he will think you are a poor note-taker. So, always ask a question. Don't say, "You don't agree with the textbook." Maybe he does. He just doesn't agree with your sloppy notes.

IT GETS VERY COMPLICATED

There is a summary of how to take notes on the Web site of Duke University. It is a Web page for athletes.

These note-taking rules are fairly standard. I reproduce some of them here. I don't want you to memorize all this stuff. I do want you to get an idea of the inefficiency of note-taking compared to speed reading, re-reading, highlighting, reviewing, and lecturing to the wall.

I strongly suggest that you select a college or university that doesn't emphasize lectures. That way, you can avoid the following. . . .

BEFORE THE LECTURE BEGINS:

Make some preparation for the lecture so that you will be more likely to predict the organization of the lecture. [Try to guess right.]

CHECK THE COURSE OUTLINE to see if the lecturer has listed the topic or key ideas in the upcoming lecture. If so, convert this information into questions to be answered in the lecture. [You may not have a course outline. It would be nice if you did.]

BEFORE THE LECTURE, complete outside reading or reference assignments. [Also, mow the lawn, take your baby brother out for a stroll, wash the car, and visit the old folks' home.]

REVIEW THE TEXT ASSIGNMENT and any reading notes taken.

REVIEW NOTES from the previous lecture. . . .

Copy everything that is on the blackboard or transparencies, especially the outline.

Have a proper attitude. Listening well is a matter of paying close attention. [In other words, stay awake, or at least don't snore.]

DURING THE LECTURE:

Have your lecture paper and pencil or pen ready. [Obvious, isn't it? But students forget.]

Write down the title of the lecture, the name of the course and the date.

Listen carefully to the introduction (if there is one).

Hear the lecture. By knowing his outline, you will be better prepared to anticipate what notes you will need to take. [Try to guess what's next. When you can do this a lot of the time, you know the course well.]

Try to recognize main ideas by "signal words" that indicate something important is to follow. Examples: "First, Second, Next, Then, Thus, Another important....," etc.

Jot down details or examples that support the main ideas. Give special attention to details not covered in the textbook. [This is good advice.]

If there is a summary at the end of the lecture, pay close attention to it. You can use it to check the organization of your notes. If your notes seem disorganized, copy down the main points covered in the summary. It will help in revising your notes later.

At the end of the lecture, ask questions about points you did not understand. [Do this. Don't be shy. Get things clear and on paper before you leave. Problem: some teachers lecture right up to the bell.]

Don't be in a rush. Be attentive, listen and take notes right up to the point at which the instructor dismisses you. If you are gathering together your personal belongings when you should be listening, you're bound to miss an important point--perhaps an announcement about the next exam! [This is good advice.]

AFTER THE LECTURE:

Revise your notes as quickly as possible, preferably immediately after the lecture since at that time you will still remember a good deal of the lecture. [Revise; don't re-write. Add notes in the margin. Add question marks where you don't understand. Be prepared to ask questions the next day: verbally or 3x5 card.]

Review your lecture notes **AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK**. Also, review the lecture notes before the next lecture. [Do it. Do it. Do it.]

TIPS ON TAKING NOTES:

Collect notes for each course in one place, in a separate notebook or section of a notebook. [Do this.]

Do not perform manual activities which will detract from taking notes. Do not doodle or play with your pen. These activities break eye contact and concentration.

Pay close attention to transitional words, phrases, and sentence which signal the end of one idea and the beginning of another. Listen for words such as "therefore", "finally", and "furthermore." They usually signal an important idea.

Take down examples and sketches which the lecturer presents. Indicate examples with "EX."

Review your notes as soon as possible. Read through the notes and improve the organization if necessary.

Your instructor is not going to send up a rocket when she states an important new idea or gives an example, but she will use signals to telegraph what she is doing. Every good speaker does it, and you should expect to receive these signals. For example, she may introduce an example with "for example" as done here.

Other common signals are:

“There are three reasons why....” (HERE THEY COME!)

“First...Second... Third....” (THERE THEY ARE!)

“And most important,....” (A MAIN IDEA!)

“A major development....” (A MAIN IDEA AGAIN!)

She may signal support material with:

“On the other hand....”

“On the contrary....”

“For example....”

“Similarly....”

“In contrast....”

“Also....”

“Further....”

“Furthermore....”

“As an example....”

“For instance....”

He may signal conclusion or summary with:

“Therefore....”

“In conclusion....”

“As a result....”

“Finally....”

“In summary....”

“From this we see....”

She may signal very loud with:

“Now this is important....”

“Remember that....”

“The important idea is that....”

“The basic concept here is....”

<http://snipurl.com/axeh>

[The person who designed the page forgot the rule: black print on a white screen. Use **File>Print Preview** to get a readable screen.]

SUMMARY

Pay attention. Don't let your mind wander. This is not easy. Taking notes helps you to do this. Keep writing.

Write down as much as you can, as fast as you can, as clearly as you can, but never without paying attention. If you miss something, raise your hand and ask for clarification. It's your grade. If you have to do it twice a lecture, do it.

Pay attention to any signal words. Write down everything that follows a signal word.

Review your notes as soon as you can after the lecture.

At the end of the school day, tear out the pages, take them home, and file them in notebooks. Leave your now-empty note-taking book at school.

Re-read your notes before you go to bed. Insert question marks or marginal notes.

Ask for clarifications the next day.

ASSIGNMENT

Lecture to the wall on this lesson. What are the main points on taking effective notes? What are the main points on why lecturing is inefficient?

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S ASSIGNMENT: Taking tests

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you lecture to the wall on Lesson 17? If not, do it now.

Follow directions -- especially mine.

Lesson 19

TAKING TESTS

I had a college friend in the 1960's who was a master test-taker. He would score 99 on any machine-graded exam that he took. But he was not that good a student. I asked him once what he wanted to do after he finished school. I shall never forget his reply: "I'm looking for a job that will pay me to take exams." That made sense!

I have also known very smart people who never do well on written tests.

What about you? How good a test-taker are you? If you usually get high grades, you are probably smart. If you don't get high grades, you may be smart. Or you may not be very smart. But if you have read this far, you're probably smart. Even if you're not, you're hard-working enough to get higher grades on tests if you will follow my instructions.

GENERAL MENTAL ATTITUDE

When the teacher hands you the test, and you read the first essay question, don't panic. If you're going to flunk it, flunk it with style.

I once gave a make-up exam to a college student. Half way through the exam, in panic, she handed it in. "I just can't do this." I told her that she had another half hour, so go back and write something. "Write anything that's accurate, and you'll probably get a D, which is a passing grade." She took my advice. She got a C+. That's a whole lot better than an F.

Never forget, there are people in the room who aren't so smart as you are, who are even more behind in their reading, who didn't crack a book, and who are going through a break-up with a boy-friend. These people will pick up all of the F's and most of the D's.

To get a B, all you have to do is beat the C students.

To get an A takes some doing. Forget about it . . . for this semester, anyway.

In other words, stop worrying about an F or a D. Stop worrying also about not getting an A. The field has now narrowed: beat the C crowd.

How many people in the C crowd taken this study course?

If you are A student, don't worry. You may think that someone in 20 years -- or 5 years -- is going to care whether you got an A or a B. You're wrong. Only you will care -- maybe.

You may imagine that some B+ student is on your tail ready to shoot you out of the sky. You have forgotten the obvious: the B+ student is worrying about the B- student who is trying to shoot him out of the sky. So, you will do just fine merely by showing up.

Why worry about not getting into Harvard? You're not going to get into Harvard. Really, you're not. OK, if you're a star athlete, get 1500 on the SAT, and read Mandarin Chinese, you might. But that's not you, is it? So, forget about it.

Be calm. Be cool. And be collected.

TRUE/FALSE TESTS

These are common for quizzes. They sometimes appear as part of a longer exam. But if this is the only kind of exam you ever get, you're being cheated. A T/F exam is too limited to reveal much about what you know or don't know.

Let us begin with some basics.

If the answer sheet is separate from the question sheet, meaning it's a machine-graded exam, the most important rule is this: be sure that your answers are in the correct box on the card. If you get these out of order, you will fail the exam. Check two or three questions and answers after you're finished. Make sure they match. Allocate time for

this final check.

Go through the exam fast, answering every question you're sure about. Skip any questions that stump you. Come back to them later. Go as fast as you can in the first run-through.

Monitor your time. Know how much time you can devote to any question. Look at the clock after your first run-through. Then look again after every question you answer when you come back to the tough ones.

Read each question carefully. There are probably more trick questions in T/F exams than on any other kind of exam. If your teacher has asked trick questions before, pay attention to the wording of the questions.

If you see the word "always" or "never" in the question, the answer is probably False. If you have to guess, guess False.

If you must guess, go with your instinctive answer when you first read the question. Don't second-guess yourself.

Don't leave any blanks. Guess.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS

We used to call these "multiple guess." These are more complex than T/F exams. They usually deal with objective facts: dates, sizes, names.

Here are the basics. They will sound familiar.

If the answer sheet is separate from the question sheet, meaning it's a machine-graded exam, the most important rule is this: be sure that your answers are in the correct box on the card. If you get these out of order, you will fail the exam. Check two or three questions and answers after you're finished. Make sure they match. Allocate time for this final check.

Go through the exam fast, answering every question you're sure about. Skip any questions that stump you. Come back to them later. Go as fast as you can in the first

run-through.

Monitor your time. Know how much time you can devote to any question. Look at the clock after your first run-through. Then look again after every question you answer when you come back to the tough ones.

If you must guess, go with your instinctive answer when you first read the question. Don't second-guess yourself.

But you already knew this.

On any question where you're not sure, mentally eliminate the obvious wrong answers. Then choose one. Mark it lightly, so that you can come back in the last 60 seconds and either change it or darken it. A light mark indicates "not sure."

ESSAY EXAMS

These are more difficult to grade. They are also more difficult to answer well. A T/F or multiple-choice exam is objective. A written exam involves rhetoric and style. A superior writer has an advantage over the competition, even if the competitors know the material just as well.

Get used to it. Or learn how to write.

Here are the basics of taking an essay exam.

Step one: time is of the essence. How heavily is the written part weighted in the overall exam? What percentage? You had better know in advance. Then you must allocate this percentage of exam time to this portion of the exam. (Who says fractions and percentages aren't important?)

You can't write much. There isn't enough time. On a sheet of paper, write down three or four important facts about the question. "What are important facts?" you ask. The ones you remember. You won't remember more than three or four. What if you don't remember the really important facts? Then you had better be a terrific writer, so you can fake it with style.

Unless you are really skilled in this class -- an A student -- don't start writing the first thing that pops into your head. If you do, you will fill up space with unorganized thoughts. This is what college professors call "dumping." The student dumps everything he knows into one unorganized paragraph. It's better to have three short paragraphs, well organized, than one long mess.

After you jot down the few facts that you remember, using a separate sheet, re-organize them in the order that you think is most important for the essay. If it's a history exam, use chronology. If it's a government exam, use whatever categories of government that seem to apply: branches of government, comparative power of governments, or size of the budget. Or use chronology. If it's an English exam, try to say something about the characters: interaction, development, believability. As for such things as "genre," "imagery," and "texture," you're on your own.

Then, looking at your very simple outline, divide the facts into three broad categories, if possible. These will be your paragraphs. Then start writing sentences. Try to write at least three sentences per paragraph. Write one paragraph per separate category on your outline sheet.

I don't know how your mind works under pressure. I would recommend dividing your time per essay question into one-half thinking, jotting, and organizing, one-half writing. If you are working from a coherent structure, your essay will come easily enough. In fact, you may go overboard. Things will pop into your head as you write. Resist the temptation to write down the new things until you are finished with the basics. You can always add a paragraph: "On the other hand...." "It could also be argued...." "There is another factor...." Don't write: "Hey, I just thought of something else."

Then close the essay with a brief summation. Wrap up what you have written in two or three sentences. Leave at least two minutes for this final addition, if possible.

SUMMARY

Time-management is essential. Be sure you spend your first two minutes allocating your time in terms of the percentage given to each section of the test.

Keep looking at the clock. Don't spend too much time on any one section,

and surely not on a low-weighted section. When a section's time is up, move on.

Read the questions carefully.

Make sure the answers correspond to the questions when there is a separate answer sheet.

Go through the objective parts of the exam as fast as you can. Then come back to think more carefully about the questions that stumped you.

When guessing, go with your first answer.

Don't write an essay before you think.

Don't write an essay until you have a short outline.

ASSIGNMENT

If you have a copy of your most recent exam, look it over to see how you could have done better. Write down the things you wish you had done differently, other than the fact that you didn't study for it.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S ASSIGNMENT: Cramming

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you look over one of your old exams? Did you write down anything that you wish you had done differently? If not, you have only one legitimate excuse: you do not have an old exam.

Lesson 20

CRAMMING FOR EXAMS

Studying for exams begins the day you walk into class the first day. Everything that you do in relation to that class is studying for exams, other than sleeping in class.

But you already knew this.

What you are probably looking for are some handy hints on how to cram for an exam when you procrastinated. After all, isn't this a real-world course?

It is, indeed. So, let an expert crammer cram some strategies into your head.

I have already told you about the biggie: lecture to the wall. If you're going to wait till the last day -- the night before The Big One -- do as much wall-lecturing as you can.

You may not believe me yet. But when it's panic time, you had better give it a try.

In cramming, spend more time on your lecture notes than you do on reviewing your textbook, unless you are an A-1 loser in note-taking. If you are, can you locate someone else who is a good note-taker who will help you?

If you really did locate a battered-up textbook, and if you have been reading it with a pen or yellow highlighter in hand, then review your underlining, highlighting, and notes in the margins.

If you did not buy your own textbook, then skim over everything that is in bold type or color.

If there are questions at the end of the chapter, get a piece of paper and jot down

one-sentence answers.

If your mind goes blank in panic when you read these chapter-ending questions, then don't read them. Panic is what you are trying to avoid.

But you should still read those questions, beginning the evening after the exam is over. You must learn to deal with the kinds of questions that are in the back of every chapter. Those are the kinds of questions that you will be asked from now until you finally stop going to school -- and after that, never again.

The questions at the end of the chapter are like running wind sprints if you're an athlete. They are supposed to limber up your mind. They are to get you to think in a certain way. What way? To answer questions on tests.

What are the test questions for? To enable a teacher to give you a grade.

What are the grades for? To enable a college entrance committee to determine whether you will get in.

What will you do if you get accepted? Take more tests.

And so on, until you finally decide, "I've had enough schooling. I'd rather make some money."

EXAMS CAN'T TEST EVERYTHING

True/False exams test very simple objective facts. Multiple-choice exams test somewhat more complex objective facts. T/F-MC questions will probably constitute 100% of a weekly quiz, 70% of a mid-term, and half of a final exam.

So, when you study, by which I mean cram, you should stuff all those dates, places, names, and assorted bits and pieces of bold-faced, colored sentences into your head. You won't recall most of it three days later, but you won't have to recall anything until the final exam.

I am not talking about math or chemistry. I'm talking about history, government, and English. Math and chemistry are cumulative. You must know the parts in order to

understand the whole. Teachers may tell you that the same thing applies in your other classes, but you know better by now. Teachers ought to know that you know better. When it comes time to procrastinate, the risk goes up when you skip math or chemistry. If you haven't figured this out about math by the fifth grade then, you're either a math genius or you have a serious learning disability problem.

Foreign language and biology are in between history and math, procrastination-wise.

If you get most of the objective facts correct, you won't get a D or an F. You don't have to panic. Cram. A lot of students won't cram. They will get the D's and F's.

If you freeze up with essay questions, spend less time in studying for them. Studying won't help. Freezing up has very little to do with what you know about the course. It has more to do with your priorities in life: fear of failure, fear of being exposed as an illiterate, fear of sounding like a doofus on paper. Cramming your head with facts won't help you with the essay questions. Thinking about what you're reading day by day might help calm your fears, but this lesson is about cramming.

Can you make cramming for essay questions into a mental game? Instead of worrying, "How is he going to trip me up?" why not think, "I'm going to beat him at his own game. I'm going to figure out tonight what he's going to ask."

Try to psyche out your mental version of the exam-giver. Try to get inside his or her head. Play Sherlock Holmes.

If you make cramming for essay questions into a mental game, you may not panic the night before the exam. If you don't panic the night before the exam, you may not panic during the exam.

SLEEP ON IT

The mind is weird. Sometimes it chugs along while a person sleeps.

You may recall Arthur Robinson, whose son learned the lecture to the wall technique. Dr. Robinson's wife, who died young, was a computer programmer. She was an old-time computer programmer: mainframes. She programmed in machine language:

1's and 0's only. Not many programmers can do this any more.

Dr. Robinson says that when she would work on a coding problem because her program did not work properly, she would think about it just before going to sleep. The next morning, she would wake up and announce, "I got the one and the zero reversed five digits into line 76." And so she had.

The author of *The Overnight Student* says that when you study for an exam the next day, go to sleep on it. Don't do anything else between the time when you put the textbook on your desk, walk across the bedroom, turn out the bed stand light, and put your head on the pillow. Think about what you have been reading as you drift off to sleep.

It can't hurt.

CRAM DURING THE DAY

On the bus, cram. Review the rote stuff on 3x5 cards. Play a mental game of "guess the essay question." Write down your guesses, so that you can compare your list with the actual questions. Then, if you don't panic, write down a few facts that you would use to compose your essay.

There are breaks during the day. If the exam is later in the day, concentrate on it. Skip the review of class notes today. If the exam is after lunch, don't -- do NOT, NOT, NOT -- eat sugar or drink a sweetened drink. Sugar stimulates your system in a short burst of energy, but this could cause a slow-down an hour later. Avoid anything that tends to make you drowsy.

If you have a partner in this course, get together at lunch. Go through the T/F-MC lists on your 3x5 cards. Each partner asks the other one a few questions. See if you both know the answers to the other person's cards. You can also exchange your lists of guesses about the essay question. See if you have guessed the same thing. If you have, there's a greater possibility that this will be on the exam.

This is another reason why you need a study partner for each class. On the day of a big exam, this person can get you through the final stages of the cram sessions.

SUMMARY

Spend more time on reviewing your lecture notes than the textbook.

Lecture to the wall: class notes.

Review objective facts, especially if the textbook puts them in bold face or color.

Write down objective facts on note cards for review if you have not already done so.

Read the questions at the end of textbooks chapters, unless you panic.

Play a game: "What will the essay question be?" Write it down. Write down 3-4 facts you would use to answer it.

Study right up until lights-out.

Review cards and essay question guesses with your partner, either on the bus or at lunch.

Review the cards right up until the exam.

Avoid sugar at lunch (or at breakfast, if the exam is given before lunch).

ASSIGNMENT

Review today's notes for one class just before you go to sleep. See how well you remember these notes the next morning.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Writing skills

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did “sleeping on it” help?

Lesson 21

HOW TO WRITE

Part 1: Book Report

This, I know something about. I write book reports all the time, except that they are called book reviews. A book review is a book report after you've graduated from college.

A completed book review is a written exercise that shows the teacher the following:

1. You read the book.
2. You understand the book.
3. You handed in the report on time.
4. You can write.

What if #3 is the only thing that is true? You didn't read the book. You read a Cliff's Notes or Monarch Notes version. You have no idea what the book is about. You can't write, and it shows.

But you handed it in on time.

You will probably get at least a C-.

So, don't panic. You won't fail.

If there is a Cliff's Notes version of the book you must read, should you read the book or Cliff's Notes? The correct answer is. . . .

You should read both.

OK, that's the official academic answer. What is the real-world answer?

Read the book. If you have to speed-read it, then do so. Your two-fold goal of school is: (1) learn something; (2) graduate. You can do the second if you just show up and do minimally. So, try to learn something.

The goal of education is to teach you how to think. Reading Cliff's Notes is not going to help you learn how to think. It will only help you cut corners.

It is better to read the book fast and get one good idea than to read Cliff's Notes and get a good grade, but then forget everything. If you don't learn how to think, you are wasting your time in school. School is bad enough. Having to attend school and then not learn anything worth remembering is even worse.

Should you read Cliff's Notes? Yes, but only after you have read the book. This way, you will pick up lots of things you missed. One of them might be important for your book review.

But your book review should be *your* review. What did you think of the book? Did you learn anything? If not, is this your fault or the author's? Prove this in your review.

WHAT A BOOK REPORT SHOULD ACCOMPLISH

Write the book report to keep in your files for your own future use. If it doesn't do you any good in a year, you wasted your time. Don't waste your time. Write for yourself, so you can recall later on what the book was and why it is worth re-reading or tossing out.

A book report should do the following for you, in order of importance:

1. Accurately summarize the important things in the book.
2. Explain why these things are important.
 - a. For the book's thesis or point of view
 - b. For the topic the book deals with

3. Compare the book with some other book or article that is better or worse.
4. Evaluate the book as far as it helped or failed to help you.

Step #1 shows that you read attentively. Step #2 shows that you read intelligently. Step #3 shows that you read widely. Step #4 shows that you can think for yourself.

Follow the instructions: length, spacing, margins.

After you have read the book, spend at least two hours reading other reviews of the book. See if other authors have spotted things you missed.

Go to the library. See if there are other reviews of the book. Look it up in the *Book Review Digest*, a very useful tool.

Search the Web. If it's a new book, there will be reviews on the Web. Search for the title of the book and "review."

Maybe there are reviews on Amazon. Amazon.com sometimes includes reviews. Read the one from the *Library Journal*, if there is one.

You do this to see if you missed something important, which is easy to do. This is the division of intellectual labor in action. You don't do this to get someone else to do your thinking for you.

WRITING YOUR REVIEW

Don't use a detailed outline. Jot down notes of things you think you should cover.

Have the four sections of your review in mind. (Remember them?)

Start writing. I hope you have a word processor. You will need to erase.

Tell a story. You are summarizing this book to your blind cousin. Pretend that you are trying to persuade your cousin either to get the braille version and read it or not to waste time reading it. Prove your case.

Write the way you would talk to your grandmother or someone in authority who has not read the book. You must write this from the heart by way of your brain. You must have an opinion. If you don't have an opinion, what good was reading the book? It made no impact on your thinking.

Now go back and clean it up. Insert any ideas you forgot. Clean up the grammar. Make sure it reads clearly. Here are the crucial two rules of writing:

1. Get it accurate.
2. Make it clear.

Anything else is extra credit. At the top of the list of extra credit is:

3. Don't be boring.

Write it. Then let it sit for a day. Re-read it. See if it needs revision. (It will need revision.)

Usually book reviews read like this. "The author said this. Then he said that. Then he said something else. The end." Teachers read reports like this all day long: C, C+, C, C-, B-.

Your review should be more like this. "The author says this. Then he says that. The problem is, the two arguments don't make sense. They're contradictory. The author ignores this over here. I can't imagine why anyone would believe this book." This will amaze the teacher. You'll probably get a B just for not being boring.

There is a book on how to read a book. It has a great title: *How to Read a Book*. It's by Mortimer Adler, who read a lot of books. He shows how much work it takes to read a book well. He says that most books are not worth this much work, but classics are.

I recommend this book for beginning writers. It's a great introduction on how to write a good book. It's also a great introduction on how to think.

If you read just one book carefully before you graduate, read *How to Read a Book*. Expect to take a week next summer. If you learn how to read a book Adler's way, you will be able to get a good education on your own with nothing except the World Wide

Web, a printer, some toner and ink . . . plus a lot of time, a pen, and some note cards.

SUMMARY

A book report is an exercise. By itself, it shows whether you did a minimal amount of work. As part of a series, it teaches you how to write.

You must start now because you will probably have to do book reports in college.

Write the report from your heart.

Write several drafts. Revise to include things that you left out.

Don't get tied to a detailed outline. Outlines inhibit feeling. A general outline is a good idea, but not a detailed outline.

ASSIGNMENT

Go to the public library and look for the *Book Review Digest*. Look through a few copies to see how it works. You will need it later in your college career.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Blogging

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you go to the library and look through one volume of the publication, *Book Review Digest*?

If not, why not?

Lesson 22

HOW TO WRITE

Part 2: Start a Blog

Blogging has become more than a fad. It is literally changing the way people communicate and learn.

One estimate is that 40,000 new blog sites begin each day. Maybe it's true.

Blogs are affecting politics. They are affecting businesses. They are creating whole new ways of communicating.

You had better start one.

It's free to begin. You can go to www.blogger.com and have your own site in a few minutes. Rivals: TypePad, MindSay, ModBlog, LiveJournal, and Xanga.

I like TypePad. It's free to start. Downside: Each site has mandatory ads. For \$5/month, you can get rid of the ads. Why do I like it? I like its software: MovableType.

There is blogging software that is powerful. There is blogging software that is easy to learn. It would be nice if there were one software package that offers both. I'm still looking.

Here is what I recommend. Focus. Narrow your topic to the topic that interests you most. . . other than yourself. Create a blog on this topic.

I don't like third-party comments on blog sites. Some people do, especially the people who post their comments. I think these comments are written by people who are

not dedicated enough to start their own blogs. Their comments are less valuable than the blogger's. But do it your way.

My point is, write every day. Develop your writing skills by writing. If you have something to say, then say it.

Maybe people will come to your site. Probably they won't. But it's there, just in case. Google will index it. If you write something of interest, people will find it.

Here are several uses of blogs:

- Master one narrow field.
- Establish yourself as an expert.
- Create a clearing-house site: links.
- Report on what experts are saying.
- Review new products.
- Save other researchers time or money.
- Impress a future college scholarship committee.
- Impress a future employer.
- Build a readership base.
- Sell readers your services.
- Get a summer job.

If you make it a commercial site -- take money for it -- be sure to use Google to find these sample documents: **Privacy Policy** and **Terms of Use**. The Federal Trade Commission can come down on you if you have a commercial site without these disclaimers at the bottom. It's lawyer stuff. Hardly anyone reads these disclaimers. You can use your favorite commercial sites to find and "creatively borrow" these documents. Post them as links. Learn how to post links, or find software that makes this easy.

Maybe you want a summer job that will pay more than minimum wage. Maybe you want to mow lawns. Create a blog tied to lawn care. Then create a business card that says **Lawn Care**. Be sure it refers to your blog site's address and your e-mail address. (If the blog site's address is too long for the card, use www.shurl.org or www.tinyurl.com to shorten it.) Skip your phone number. An e-mail is better: you get the sender's return address.

Find out all about lawn care in your area. Warn people about bugs. Warn them

about blight. Tell them what to do. People probably don't want to do all this. Your site tells them what to do. This positions you as helpful. It also gains their trust. Offer to come out and see their lawn free of charge. Do this after school or on the weekend. Your goal is to sell them a comprehensive weekly lawn care service -- not just mowing. If you can line up ten customers who will pay you \$50 a week to take care of everything, you will have a profitable summer. Spend three hours a day once a week per customer.

Better yet, hire your buddies at \$7/hour to do the grunt work -- mowing. Hire two per crew. You personally supervise each crew: one hour per crew, six crews. For this, charge \$100 per week. Do as many yards as you can. Your limit will be finding reliable crew members.

Ask for referrals and a personal recommendation from each customer. Tell each customer in advance that this is part of the deal. After a year, you will take new clients by referral only.

This is just an example. Think about how you can spend your summers more profitably. Create a blog site that will further your plans.

The main thing is to get going on a blog. It's fun. It's educational. Get the skills that you will put to commercial or professional use later on.

You have to start somewhere. You have to start sometime. Why not now?

Note: Your site should be clean and easy to read. Don't get colorful. Use black print on a white background. If you feel compelled to post a photo, make it small. The site had better not be about you.

Don't put anything on your site that isn't true and provable.

Don't write anything that will hurt the feelings of a non-public person. You are legally entitled to write anything you can to make a politician look stupid, silly, or corrupt . . . if it's true. But newcomers' opinions are more likely to be taken seriously if they are positive, helpful, and backed up by facts.

If you can save someone time or money, do it.

ASSIGNMENT

Look at various free blogging sites. Test the software. See if you like one program better than the others. Then think about a one-word or two-word name for your site, a name that offers the reader a clear idea of exactly what the site is all about. If the software offers space on the masthead to describe the site, think "big benefits to the reader." Then put in one sentence what the biggest benefit is.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: The term paper

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you go to some free blog sites? Did you select one? Did you decide on a name for your site?

Lesson 23

HOW TO WRITE

Part 3: Term Paper

I know a lot about writing term papers. I have been writing term papers every year since 1955. I write at least two a week.

Doubt me? Take a look at my term papers for just one outlet, Lew Rockwell's Web site. Some of these reports are very controversial. You don't need controversy. You just need to raise your grades. But I want you to see what I do.

These are all "extra credit." I don't get paid for them.

Here are some of my less controversial topics:

Gary North's Big Mistake [wrong role model]
Gary North and Linda Ronstadt [true confessions]
Your Clock Is Ticking [high school graduation]
The Horror of Being a Billionaire [on Oprah]
The Elements of Leadership
Advice to a Young Scholar
That's All Right (Mama) [on Elvis]
Down from the Mountain [a great video/DVD]
Ray Bradbury's Virtual Reality Universe
The Greatest Movie Action Scene of All Time
A Female Athlete Who Could Compete With Men
Ode to a Dead Tree
Blacks, Whites, and Blues

<http://snipurl.com/axfm>

Most of these I wrote in three hours or less. The first one, on my big mistake, took almost a day. Maybe that was a big mistake, too.

I write a book a year, usually. The long ones are over 1,000 pages, although they take me longer than a year to write.

I am making a point. I know what I'm talking about when it comes to writing.

THE CASE AGAINST OUTLINES

Don't use an outline unless it helps you get started.

The how-to-study books tell you to use an outline before you write a term paper. But most writers don't use outlines. The number of outlines that I have used in my life is probably under 200. I have written 37 books and thousands of articles.

For normal people in normal courses, outlining is a skill that is rarely used by successful students, and surely not the tightly structured outlines that the how-to-study books recommend.

Instead, write reminders on note cards or in a computer data base program like the free one from Evernote.

<http://www.evernote.com>

When you type your notes, stick in keywords after any paragraph, so that you can search for these keywords and be taken right to the paragraph.

Say that you are reading a Web page on-line. You save it for future reference. Click **File**. Then click **Save As...** This will download the page to your hard disk. You must type in a name for it before you can save it to your hard drive. Use keywords that will help you retrieve it later. Evernote will search for the words in the title you assign to the page and also in the text of the article.

If you read a book and type notes that summarize the page, or if you type in direct quotations, do this. Either immediately before or immediately after the paragraph, type in keywords. Evernote will search for these. It will highlight these words. You will be

able to locate the paragraph when you are writing your first draft.

I have said that you don't need to make an outline. All right, maybe a C-average student needs to use an outline for writing a term paper that he doesn't want to write in a course that he really hates. He should go to the library and read a how-to-study guide with a chapter on outlining. Maybe his word processor has an outlining feature. Mine does, and mine is vintage 1990. I have used this outlining feature on a few occasions, but not very often.

An outline assumes that you know the material in extreme detail. You don't know this when you begin. After you have done your research, the outline forces you into a mental box. Your term paper may be detailed, but it will be dull. Who wants to read a dull paper? Who wants to write one? Nobody. You should feel strongly about your topic, and an outline strips you of your passion. It's a killer.

You can make a list of things you want to cover, so that you won't forget. Put them in a loose order. If that's what you mean by "outline," fine. Use an outline. But don't use the detailed, multiple indented lines format that you learned -- or were told to learn -- in the seventh grade.

The word processor has made outlining an obsolete skill, and it was never a very useful skill or widely used skill. A word processor lets you add things you forgot, blip out things that are wrong, move sentences and paragraphs to where they belong. It lets you revise. Who needs a detailed outline? Only someone without much passion.

ENERGY, NOT INITIAL PRECISION

You want to write something worth reading? Pour your heart onto a computer screen. Put on the screen whatever you feel. Make it passionate.

Then revise it. Fill in the gaps. Provide support material. Put it aside for a week. Come back. Revise it again. Tone down your emotional language. Don't make it sound as though you are shouting.

Eventually, the essay will achieve whatever goal you have for it: make people laugh or cry or vote differently or give you an A or send you money.

Tell a story. Share a piece of your mind. Offer your opinion. But let it come from inside you. If it doesn't, it won't be worth reading.

Here is what matters in effective writing: the words must read as though they were being spoken. Does the essay sound right when you read it out loud? Reading is a unique skill. We "hear" through our eyes. Does your term paper sound right visually?

Here is a writing technique that can work, but it's not real-world. Get a partner who also has a term paper to turn in. You are both in the final stages of the process. The papers are due in two days.

Print out two copies of each paper. You read his aloud to him. He reads yours aloud to you. Whenever either of you says or thinks these words, "What I mean by that is. . .," the explainer marks his copy of his paper. That section has to be revised. Your paper should never require you to be there to explain what you mean.

Fact: you can hear what's wrong even when you can't read what's wrong.

Why isn't this joint reading a real-world technique? Because you won't schedule enough time. You should budget time for a joint reading, but you won't, and even if you did, your partner won't.

If you ever do adopt this technique, your papers will improve. It's a good technique. It just isn't realistic. I mention it, but I don't require it as part of my course.

If your mother has time to read your paper to you, have her do this. Print out two copies: one for her and one for you. She reads; you mark your copy. When your words sounds lumpy, mark them. When they sound confused, mark them. This is a kind of real-world technique. You really can do this. You really should do this. But I don't require it.

When I say that words sound lumpy, you know what I mean. Words aren't lumpy. Gravy is sometimes lumpy. Words aren't. Yet you know what I mean. "Lumpy" is a metaphor.

Do you really want to learn how to write? I can't teach you this. No book can teach you this. Three years on the student newspaper can begin to teach you this, by forcing you to teach yourself.

I'll bet you already knew this.

ESTIMATE YOUR TIME

If you estimate that you must spend two hours of research budget for each 250-word page of a term paper, you had better budget your time.

You must also schedule at least two preliminary drafts for the paper. Two. Not one. Two. Minimum. Then write the final draft.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Use a good encyclopedia for two things: (1) overview; (2) bibliography. You're looking for leads. The best encyclopedia to begin with is Microsoft's *Encarta*. Then go to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Both are on CD-ROM.

Warning: quoting directly from a general encyclopedia is considered bad form academically. The higher in academia you go, the truer this rule is. Quoting from specialized encyclopedias is acceptable, but only for summarizing, rarely for direct citation, unless you know that the author is a well-respected expert.

Be ready to drop the topic if you hit a brick wall. So, begin research early -- almost from the first week. This is so you have time to drop the topic.

Use the footnoting style that your teacher requires. If you aren't sure, ask. If your teacher doesn't care, I recommend *The University of Chicago Manual of Style*. It may be in your high school library. I don't like the Modern Language Association (MLA) approach. (Example: the MLA footnote doesn't tell you what company published a book, only the city where it was published. Who cares where it was published if you don't know the publisher? I say this as an author and a publisher.)

The standard work for college research papers is by the University of Chicago's Kate L. Turabian. A Web guide for footnotes and bibliographical entries is found here:

<http://snipurl.com/axfr>

THREE DRAFTS

Am I serious? Yes!

Warning: if you write with a computer, do not revise an early draft. Instead, download the earlier draft onto your screen. Save it with a new name: [title].2. Then revise [title].2. You may decide at some point that your first draft is better. If you have revised it into oblivion, you won't have a back-up copy.

There is another consideration. If your paper is really good, your teacher may think you copied it from another student or bought it on-line. If you have two earlier drafts to bring in, this will end all suspicion.

Back to the real world. How many preliminary drafts will you actually write? Maybe one. Maybe none. Don't kid me. But at least let's both clear what we both know to be true. To do a good job on a term paper, you need two drafts, a cooling off period, and a final draft, written two days before it's due.

Why two days? Because if you write the final draft the night before it's due, at 2 a.m., when you re-read it the next morning -- which you had better do -- it will read like a 2 a.m. term paper.

You need one full day to let it sit. Your mind will then percolate on the final revision day. When you read the final draft on the afternoon (not the night) before it's due, you will see errors, and you will have time to correct them. What you thought was a final draft will turn out to be your next-to-the-final-draft. I guarantee it.

Here how your schedule should look in the week that it's due:

Tuesday: your mother or partner reads it to you.

Revise it to improve its style.

Wednesday: nothing.

Thursday: Re-read it. Make emergency revisions. Print it.

Friday: Turn it in.

You have heard from adults about how tough it was in their day. You know: they walked five miles to school in the snow, and it was uphill both ways. Well, there really

are two ways in which you have it a lot easier than my generation ever did: (1) hand-held calculators instead of slide rules; (2) word processors instead of typewriters. Your word processor has a spell-checker, and you can revise in a flash -- no erasing, no complete re-writes to fix one page.

Since you've got it, use it.

Do your preliminary scheduling for a term paper on a separate sheet of paper: this much time at the library on this day, this much time for writing an outline, this much time for going back to the library, this much time for a hand-written first drafts, etc. Get clear in your mind and on a sheet of paper (in pencil) what you have to do in order to stay on schedule.

When you think you know what you have to do, week by week, before each final deadline, enter the mini-deadlines in your weekly DayMinder. Write the final schedule on your desk calendar and/or your monthly DayMinder. (Again, I don't care which brand you buy. Just buy something.)

This is an aspect of counting the cost. Each mini-deadline is like a preliminary heat in a race. To win the race, you must run the heats.

CUT, CUT, CUT

I regard the British historian Paul Johnson as the greatest historian of my generation. He writes well. He writes fast. He includes the relevant facts. There are few history books as good as *Modern Times*. His *History of the American People* comes close. He is a great lecturer. He is, in short, a master. Here is what he wrote in 2004, after three decades of success.

In the art of writing, one of the central problems is what to put in and what to leave out. In the past, I have always been one for putting in. I felt myself full of good things I did not want the reader to miss. So my books got longer and longer. This gigantism spent itself, and from the gross satisfaction of putting everything in I turned to the more delicate pleasure of deciding what to leave out. I discovered I could write down everything a reasonable person needed to know about the Renaissance in 40,000 words, and I have since done Napoleon and Washington at the same length.

It has proved to be great fun.

<http://snipurl.com/b0iy>

SUMMARY

If you want to write well, write often.

Tell a story.

Energy is better than precision. (Not in chemistry, of course.)

Don't use a detailed outline. Use a loose outline, so you won't forget.

Use note cards or a data base program.

Write three drafts.

With draft #2, have your study partner read your paper to you. (Optional.)

If necessary, revise the third (final) draft the day before it's due.

Allocate your time weeks in advance.

ASSIGNMENT

Read one article in an encyclopedia dealing with the topic for your next major term paper assignment.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Student newspaper.

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you read an encyclopedia article in preparation for your next term paper?

Lesson 24

HOW TO WRITE

Part 4: Join the Student Newspaper Staff

If you want to learn how to write, you must do more writing. You must do writing that is not graded, since grading puts you under too many psychological constraints. There is more to writing than writing term papers and book reports.

On a newspaper staff, you will be around people who want to write. This will be good for you.

A newspaper has a deadline every week (or whatever). This is good discipline because it's meaningful. You have an assignment, and others rely on you to complete it on time and competently. You need discipline of a meaningful kind.

If they let you put your name on the article (by-line), you can get some recognition for what you do.

This is an extra-curricular activity that is higher on the college admissions committees' list than most other activities. (Running the hundred-meter dash in 10.3 seconds is higher on the list.)

If your high school offers a credit-granting class in journalism, take it if you find that you like working on the newspaper.

I regard journalism as one of the best college majors in the humanities. It teaches you research skills. It teaches you to write concisely and clearly. It teaches you about deadlines. These skills are useful in almost any job. They are not common skills.

The fact that you have read this far in my course indicates that you are serious. Every student newspaper needs serious workers who can meet a deadline.

Who knows? Maybe you can write an article on how this course has helped you. That would be newsworthy!

ASSIGNMENT

Read the student newspaper to see if there is any section that you would like to write for.

If you don't want to write, is there some other aspect of putting out a newspaper that interests you?

If you decide to get involved, talk this over with the teacher who is in charge of the staff.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Daily newspaper

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you make a decision about joining the staff of the student newspaper?

Lesson 25

READING THE DAILY NEWSPAPER

For your civics class, you will be expected to know about current events. The best way to keep up is by reading the daily newspaper.

In college, you will be expected to be familiar with daily news and recent history. If you cannot discuss such matters intelligently, you will be regarded either as a dope or a science major.

It is time for to begin making the transition to informed citizenship. This means that you must read the daily newspaper.

If you have a computer, I would recommend that you read the *New York Times* on-line. This is the “newspaper of record.” This is mainly because it has a great index. Everyone footnotes it. In college, a citation from the *New York Times* is considered reliable. If you’re a political conservative, you should also read the *Washington Times*. Become familiar with the news sources and some of the columnists on Matt Drudge’s site:

<http://www.drudgereport.com>

The best foreign newspaper in English is the *Times* of London. Also good is the *International Herald Tribune*. Both are on the Web.

Save all articles that seem important to you. Don’t just save them as “Favorites.” Save them to your hard disk, so that you can retrieve them: File>Save As.... For indexing and retrieving Web pages, I recommend the free program, **Evernote**. Download it here:

<http://www.evernote.com>

If you don’t go on-line, you can’t store articles on your disk. Then you should start clipping stories from your local newspaper. Here’s my recommended strategy.

Cut them out with scissors or a Clip-It tool.

Use tape them to a piece of standard white paper. The paper should be wider than tall: 11 by 8½ inches.

Choose a general category for filing the clipping.

(Note: I have 11 filing cabinets, 4 drawers each, legal sized, each stuffed with folders, with I don't know how many hundreds of categories. When I used it regularly, I could usually locate a clipping. Somehow, I could recall where I filed it. I have not used this physical system since about 1996, when I went onto the Web. But I have three decades of clippings. My father-in-law did this for four decades. But I am finally tossing out half of the clippings.)

Add subcategories -- key words -- on the page for future computerized filing and retrieval. You will search for multiple key words. Your entry will say which general category you used to file the clipping.

Put the clipping into a hanging folder with a tab label for the category.

If you have a civics term paper coming up, look for articles related to that term paper. Clip them. File them.

This is all very old-fashioned. The Web has changed the way we do research. But it's good mental discipline to keep up with the news. If you don't use the Web, use the local newspaper.

There is a title box for the "Save As..." option. Use it to type in retrieval key words about each digital clipping. This way, you can retrieve your filed clippings rapidly.

SUMMARY

Read a newspaper daily.

If it's your paper, clip it. File the clippings. If you read on-line, save the pages to your hard disk. (I mean "Save As..." I do not mean "Favorites.")

ASSIGNMENT

Read today's paper. After everyone in your family is finished with it, clip at least two articles. Label them and file them. Or go onto the Web and read a paper. Save two articles.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S ASSIGNMENT: Magazines

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you clip and file at least two articles from the daily newspaper?

Lesson 26

READING NEWS MAGAZINES

You may read magazines aimed at your age group. You are being hit with ads to get you to buy stuff aimed at your age group.

As you read these magazines, think: "In five years will I even read this magazine, let alone clippings from old copies?"

If your answer is "no," then start reading magazines that you will be reading in five years . . . or fifty-five years.

If a magazine is aimed at teenagers (probably girls), don't spend much time on it.

Teenage boys have one big advantage in magazines compared to teenage girls: if they read magazines, the magazines tend to be written for male adults. I have in mind *Sports Illustrated* and *Car and Driver*. (There are other adult magazines -- less famous for their writing, more famous for their illustrations.)

It is time to make your transition to news magazines.

I think the best news magazine is *The Economist*. It's British, but the American edition contains a great deal of information on the United States. It covers far more than economics. If you were to read only one news magazine for the rest of your life, it ought to be this one. But it's advanced, so it may take you a while to get used to it. You probably won't do this until college.

The famous triumvirate of American news magazines are *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. They are pretty much the same.

If all you like is *People*, then read it.

Do with magazines what you do with newspapers. Clip them.

If you can access them only at the library, then be ready to photocopy key articles.

Skim the table of contents. Read anything that interests you. The idea is to get used to reading news magazines regularly.

If you are interested in some specialized field, subscribe to a magazine in this field. The discipline of systematically keeping up with one topic is worth so much to you intellectually that any magazine, if you read it carefully and clip key articles, is a good exercise for your education.

SUMMARY

None needed.

ASSIGNMENT

Pick up a news magazine today or go to its Web site. Read at least two articles.

Don't forget to lecture to the wall: one page, one class.

PREVIEW OF TOMORROW'S LESSON: Wrap-up

YESTERDAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Did you read at least two articles in a news magazine?

Lesson 27

WRAP-UP

If you have printed out these lessons and put them into a 3-hole binder, you have the equivalent of a medium-sized book.

If you have read my reports, you have done what very few students in America have done. You have read a book on study skills. By sending you these lessons, one day at a time, I made it possible for you to do what you probably would not have done otherwise.

That wasn't so difficult, was it?

You ate the elephant, one bite at a time.

If you have done what I recommended, you are on track to raise your grades by half a point by the end of next semester, at the latest.

I have two questions for you: (1) Have you done what I recommended? (2) Will you stay with the program?

In other words, have you internalized these study methods? Have they become habits? If so, you will probably stick with the program. If not, then you had better review the entire course. See what you just could not bring yourself to do. Then start doing it.

Time-management is the most important general skill that I have tried to impart to you. This is the skill that will pay off the highest through the rest of your life.

For purposes of improving your grades, one technique stands out above the rest. Which one do you think it is? If you guessed, "lecture to the wall," go to the head of the class.

Lecturing to the wall is the little-known, spectacularly effective study technique that almost no one will use, even those few who know about it. Now you know about it. And you're in a position to put this knowledge to work.

If you get this one study technique internalized, you almost cannot fail to graduate from high school and college with good grades.

But there were other techniques that you learned:

End each day by scheduling tomorrow's tasks

Use this: A, B, and C

Locate a study partner.

Convert bus time to review time.

Don't read in a soft, deep chair.

Use 3x5 cards to ask questions after class.

Use vocabulary cards for foreign language.

Use earplugs when doing homework.

Budget time at the beginning of an exam.

Follow instructions.

Write down instructions.

Schedule fun times.

Cut back on TV.

Buy used (battered) textbooks.

Mark up these textbooks at home.

Drop a killer class for study hall.

Take that class in summer.

Read a chapter fast the first time.

Review chapter-end questions.

Then read it slowly, with a highlighter.

Lecture to the wall.

Review class notes on the day you take them.

Don't use detailed outlines.

Write from the heart; then revise.

Read and clip the daily newspaper/news site.

Read and clip a magazine/site.

TEST-TAKING

This skill is crucial until you leave school. After that, you will rarely use it again. The same is true of note-taking.

If you can get the knack of taking machine-graded exams, you can save thousands of dollars on college. That's because of the CLEP and AP exams. Some of you will save tens of thousands of dollars by passing these exams -- or your families will. I hope your parents will share some of that saved money with you on the day you receive your bachelor's degree.

If you learn how to take CLEP exams, you can walk into college as a junior, having saved up to \$70,000 in tuition, room, board, and books. Saving \$20,000 is duck soup -- nothing to it.

If you take my advice and skip walking into college, you can earn a bachelor's degree from an accredited university for an additional \$7,500 or so.

This brings us to the next stage of your self-education. You have now finished my study skills course. Maybe you have not internalized all of my recommended techniques, but you have probably become a better student than you were a month ago.

Yes? No? Or aren't you sure yet?

No matter. Your grades will soon tell the truth.

WHAT NEXT?

Apply what you have learned.

Day by day, keep working on what you have learned. Practice will make you a much better student. You have worked hard to gain some good habits. Don't lose your advantage. Your grades will start moving up. You may even get two semesters where your grades move half a point. That would be significant on your transcripts when you apply to college.

When they do move up, why not send me a brief testimonial? Be specific about

what you have learned and what difference it has made. Other students may believe you if you don't claim miracles. If you allow me to use your name and the year you are in -- freshman, sophomore, junior, senior -- I'll post your testimonial on my Web site. Send it to:

garynorth@garynorth.com

Now it is time for you to apply *America's Lowest Cost Colleges*. I have shown you how to maximize the use of your time. Now you must learn how to maximize the use of both your time and your money.