**Day to Day**

**A*. Review your notes every day.*** This suggestion is one which we have all heard a thousand times. Unfortunately, most of us never really believe it until we actually try it. Spend 30 minutes or so each evening going over the notes from each class. There are at least two tremendous benefits to be gained from this discipline.

1. Research has shown that reviewing new material within 24 hours of hearing it increases your retention of that material by about 60%. This means that you will be 60% ahead of the game the next time you walk into class. If you want to significantly reduce

the time necessary to prepare for exams, this is the way to do it.

2. Reviewing material before the next class period enables you to identify points of confusion or omission in your notes, which prepares you to ask the questions you need to ask before the next lecture. Again, confusion is your worst enemy.

B.

It is excellent policy to give high priority to new ***vocabulary.*** Language is the most fundamental tool of any subject, and it can seriously handicap you to fall behind in this.

C.

***Keep up on your reading.***

1. When you first approach a chapter, page through it fairly quickly, noting boldface headings and subheadings, examining figures, illustrations, charts, etc., and thinking about any highlighted vocabulary terms and concepts. Also take note of the pedagogical aids at the end of the chapter--study questions, summary, etc.

2. When you have finished surveying the chapter, return to the beginning and read in more detail. Remember to concentrate upon ***understanding***. Don't simply read through the words. Any words which you don't understand you should look up.

3. On this first trip through the chapter, you should concentrate upon catching the major subjects and points of the material. Also take note of those things which you don't understand. If the lecture on the material doesn't clarify those points, you should ask your instructor to explain.

4. Following coverage of the chapter's material in class, you should go back to the book and read it again. It will probably be helpful to skim through it first, as you did when you first looked at it. The tables and figures should be more readily read in detail. If you are a truly conscientious student, you will outline the chapter and prepare a vocabulary list of the terms which are pertinent.

**Preparing Assignments**

A.

Here's another thing we have all been told thousands of times: ***Don't leave assignments until the day before they are due!*** If you have a paper to write or a lab report to prepare, begin it as soon as possible. In most cases, instructors will be delighted to receive work early. Remember that many papers or projects require quite a bit of research before you can even begin writing. In most cases, it is impossible to accomplish the necessary preparation in one day or even one week.

**Preparing for Exams**

A.

Keep in mind that you want to be an ***active*** learner, not a passive one. The more you use and manipulate the information, the better you will understand it. Using and manipulating information in as many ways as possible also maximizes your ability to access your memory.

B.

***Do not wait until the night before an exam to study!*** Of course, you should be regularly reviewing your notes, but the preparation still takes time.

C.

A good first step in preparation is to read through your notes a couple of times. While you are doing this, you might also

1. ***Highlight*** major topics and subtopics, with the goal of generating an outline of your notes. Even if you take your notes in outline form, this is a good practice. Major topics often extend through more than one day's lecture, and it is easy to lose track of the overall picture from day to day.

2. With a second color, highlight all vocabulary terms.

D.

Outline the entire set of notes. When you study a large body of information, you should study ***from concept to detail***, not the other way around. It will, in fact, be much easier to learn the details if you take the time to learn the concept and theory first. ***The least efficient approach to studying is to attempt to memorize your notes from beginning to end. It's not the words which are important--it's the ideas.***

E.

Consider ways of dealing with the information other than those used in class. the more ways you can manipulate and experience the material you are trying to learn, the more secure your understanding and memory will be. Some suggestions:

1. Make ***charts, diagrams*** and ***graphs.***

2. Make ***lists.***

3. If the subject matter includes structures, practice ***drawing*** those structures. Remember that a drawing is useless unless the important structures are labeled.

F.

There are almost always types of information which you will have to memorize (eg. vocabulary). No one has ever invented a better device for memorizing than ***flash cards***.

G.

One of the most universally effective ways to polish off your study activities is to prepare a ***self test***.

1. Challenge yourself as severely as you can.

2. As you are studying, keep a running collection of "exam questions." If you seriously attempt to write difficult and meaningful questions, by the time you finish you will have created a formidable exam. When you begin to feel you're ready for your instructor's exam, take out your questions and see if you can answer them. If you can't, you may need to go back and reinforce some of the things you are trying to learn.