

Launch Pad to Success:
Study Skills for Middle School
Parent Teaching Manual

Key Code: 8209

Center for Distance and Independent Study
University of Missouri

Dear Parent,

Congratulations on your child's interest in learning "how to learn." In today's world, learning has become a lifelong challenge.

As adults we have been amazed by the amount of change we have experienced. Our children will be challenged to master change at an even faster pace.

To help your child master the study skills taught in this course, each lesson is divided into five sections:

- MISSION—the purpose of the lesson
- OBJECTIVES—the skills the student should gain from completing the lesson
- BLAST OFF!—concise action steps to use the skills taught in the lesson
- SPACE LAB—an explanation of the concepts behind the action steps
- SPACE WALK—a section that provides practice of the skills taught in the lesson

Please read the assignments in your child's course so you will be familiar with each skill as it is presented.

A study skills course is an applied skills course. To know how to study is only part of the benefit—using the skills to study on a daily basis is the real benefit. To get from "knowing" to "doing" requires that your child form habits of study. Knowing that brushing teeth after meals helps prevent cavities is nice but unless you brush after meals, there is no benefit to your teeth. In order to remember to brush, you had to form the habit of brushing. Research tells us that it takes at least six weeks to form a new habit. During this period of time, the new behavior must be continually reinforced.

To reinforce new study habits, at the end of each lesson is a Study Skills Checklist to help your child monitor the usage of each skill taught, and to reinforce the skills taught in the previous lessons. Since it is tempting for your child to mark the chart without much thought, it is important that at regular intervals (perhaps every other lesson) you go through the chart with your child. You might ask questions like: How have you used this skill this week? What has worked? What hasn't worked? What changes need to be made so that the skill works?

TIP: The earlier you catch misunderstandings of directions or skills that need to be adapted to the special needs of your child, the more success your child will have. It is difficult to get rid of a habit, good or bad, once it has been practiced. Early intervention is important.

UNIT 1: ORGANIZATION SKILLS

Lessons 1 and 2 are both lessons that are designed to teach basic organization skills. Since home situations differ as well as school requirements, you may have to adapt some organization strategies to your situation.

LESSON 1: YOUR STUDY SPACE

The important organization skill in Lesson 1 is selecting a study space that is away from visual distractions like TV and family activities. If this is not possible, try setting up the study table so it faces a wall and your student's back is to the activity. Earplugs or a headset plugged into classical music is helpful in screening out conversation noise. Rearranging the family schedule or study schedule is another option.

Keeping study supplies together saves time when getting started with homework. If your student has to use a table that is used for other family activities, then placing the supplies in a portable container that can be brought to the table makes getting started easier.

Setting up the notebook, as well as use of calendars, is especially helpful to students who have difficulty keeping track of things.

TIP: Keep it simple. Be consistent.

The organization tool of the three-ring notebook for class notes, handouts, and homework is very basic. However, when there are too many categories, it becomes a hassle trying to put things in the right place. When there are too few categories, it's difficult to find what is needed. Again, "tweak" the system to meet your student's needs.

Consistency is the other key. Every day check to see that your student has followed the organization plan. It's worth the few extra minutes to establish an organization routine.

TIP: Remember the power of appreciation.

Let your student know you appreciate the effort involved in following the organization routine. Even if your student completes only part of the routine, appreciate those completed steps. The more attention you give to attempts at organization—the greater the results you will get. You get what you pay attention to!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The following are some questions for discussion with your student. They require your student to generalize information by building on information presented in the online course.

How should the file box be organized? Why?

Can your student recognize that keeping the same categories used for the three-ring notebook or binders (notes, handouts, and homework) as well as using the same color of index tabs are an aid to easy filing and retrieval of information?

What other folders might be useful for the file box?

Can your student recognize that a project file folder for each subject will keep research materials conveniently located while working on the project?

What changes must be made in the study space suggestions to meet the requirements of the school or home setting?

Since there are a wide variety of requirements, adaptations must be made. This is an opportunity for you and your student to make those adaptations.

LIKE TO KNOW MORE—RESOURCES

Check the Web Sites page of the online course for a listing of helpful Web sites.

LESSON 2: USING STUDY TIME

The second lesson deals with scheduling time. The main idea is to have a consistent schedule for studying. This may vary on some days when your student has other activities like music lessons, or sports activities, but the schedule should be consistent for each day from week to week.

You will note that there is a suggested study schedule in your student's online course. Your student may have difficulty estimating how long a study task actually takes. A Space Walk activity has been designed to help your student understand how much time is actually used in the active studying of any one subject. Your student is asked to write down the beginning time and finish time minus breaks for each study task (subject). Keeping such a record for one or two weeks should give both you and your student an accurate idea of how much time each subject actually requires. Keeping such a record for a period of time adjusts for variations in assignments over a week's time. You can then see if the suggested study schedule is realistic. If study time extends beyond two hours, it is important to take a break of about an hour. The fatigue factor makes additional time unproductive and the ten minute break after each 30–40 minutes study period isn't adequate.

The other skill that your student may need help in mastering is breaking down large project assignments into steps and scheduling completion dates for each step, so that the end product is complete by the due date. Some students catch on quickly but others may have difficulty. After all, many adults have the same difficulty with keeping schedules.

TEACHING ACTIVITY

Have your student break down some common household activities into steps, such as cleaning up after a meal, doing the laundry, or preparing for a trip. Next, ask your student to estimate how long each step will take and by what time/date the step must be completed for the task to be finished by the deadline.

The monthly calendar is a great planning tool. Your student may need help remembering to include family commitments on the calendar since they will affect the study schedule.

As your student receives school project assignments, walk your student through the project completion process. As you know, most projects require similar steps and your student will soon discover this; so the process will become easier.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The following are some questions for discussion with your student. Again they require your student to generalize information by building on information presented in the online course.

Why is a comfortable but not too comfortable chair recommended for the study space?

Does your student recognize that the habit principle is at work here? Lounge type chairs are normally used for leisure TV viewing or reading for fun, so the body associates this type of seating with relaxation—not what you are aiming for in the homework study space.

Why is the timer a valuable time management tool?

Does your student recognize the value of an auditory signal to get the body to react to time limits (example: a referee's whistle immediately stops action in a game). Remind your student that the timer should be set for forty minutes to signal the start of break-time and for ten minutes to signal the end of break-time.

What changes do we have to make to accommodate family schedules and school activities in the study schedule?

This is an opportunity for you and your student to address the individual needs of your family in planning a consistent study schedule. For example: If your student has a favorite TV show during what appears to be the best time for study, perhaps the show can be taped for later viewing. Or the study time can be moved up and viewing of the TV program can be dependent on the completion of homework before the student can watch the show.

MORE RESOURCES

A fun book your student might enjoy reading on study skills is published by the American Girls Library, Pleasant Company Publications and is titled *School Smarts: All the Right Answers to Homework, Teachers, and More*, by Brooks Whitney. Many of the study skills in this course are presented in a colorful, brief format in the book, so you might find it useful to reinforce the skills presented in this course.

UNIT 2: TEXTBOOK-READING SKILLS

LESSONS 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

These five lessons deal with the most successful of all study skills—the PQR3 method of textbook study. First introduced as SQR3 by F. P. Robinson in his book *Effective Study*, SQR3 is an acronym for Survey—Question—Read—Recite—Review. More recent study experts have changed the word *survey* to *preview*, a more familiar word to today’s youth. The acronym becomes PQR3, which is how the method is referred to in this course.

The process is described in detail in your student’s online course and exercises are provided for practice. You will want to familiarize yourself with these lessons because you have an important role to play when your student transfers these skills from practice exercises to textbook assignments.

You can use questions like the ones found in the practice exercises to help your student use the process with textbook assignments.

Here is a list of questions you can use:

PREVIEW

- What is this assignment about?
- What are the main ideas you learned from the headings?
- What were the pictures/maps/illustrations about?

QUESTION

- What question did you ask for this section? (Repeat for each section.)

READ/RECITE

- What is the answer to your question?
- What is the main idea in this section?
- What does the author want you to know?
- What vocabulary words were in this section?
- What do they mean?

REVIEW

- Write what you learned from this assignment.
- What did you already know about what the author told you in this section/assignment?
- What vocabulary words did you learn and what do they mean?

ADAPTING PQR3 TO LITERATURE ASSIGNMENTS

Although the preview—question—read—recite—review (PQR3) textbook reading method is best suited for subjects like science and social studies; it can be adapted for reading literature. In *Tools For*

Learning, by Gall, Gall, Jacobsen, and Bullock, studies by Short and Ryan (1984) are cited which use the questioning technique that provide a structure for studying literature. The questions are:

1. Who is the main character?
2. Where and when did the story take place?
3. What did the main character do?
4. How did the story end?
5. How did the main character feel?

In Idol's study in 1987, (also cited by Gall, Gall, Jacobsen, and Bullock) a more extensive list of questions is used. The questions are:

1. Where did this story take place?
2. When did this story take place?
3. Who were the main characters in the story?
4. Were there any other important characters in the story? Who?
5. What was the problem in the story?
6. How did _____ try to solve the problem?
7. Was it hard to solve the problem? Explain.
8. Was the problem solved?
9. What did you learn from reading this story? Explain.
10. Can you think of a different ending?

TIP: Use the mapping technique.

The mapping technique, which is explained in Lesson 12, is useful in showing relationships between characters and events and is helpful in literature study. For students with learning styles that are highly visual or kinesthetic, the mapping technique is very helpful in the study of literature.

STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR OTHER SUBJECTS

The development of a time line for the period of history being studied with important dates, significant people, and events placed along a horizontal line allows your student to see the connections between these factors and is an especially valuable tool for review.

A math and/or science dictionary is another technique for use in these two courses that are heavily orientated toward vocabulary definitions and rules. Have your student use 3" x 5" cards with the vocabulary word on one side and the definition on the other or math and/or science rules on one side and an example on the other. Using cards allows for filing in alphabetical order for easy access.

The dictionary is also a good study tool when studying a foreign language, recording each new vocabulary word and its English translation as learned on 3" x 5" cards.

Studying a foreign language is one subject in which a "study buddy" can be advantageous. Using a "study buddy" from the language class, conversations should be conducted in the language being studied. This practice can even be conducted over the telephone or via the computer. This is one time when "goofing around" with the study buddy is allowed—in the foreign language of course!

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

Objective: To provide additional practice in selecting main ideas.

Method: If your student has difficulty grasping the concept of main ideas, you can provide additional practice by extending the headline practice activity from the Space Walk in Lesson 5. Select several newspaper stories of about two paragraphs in length and remove the headline. Have your student write a headline for the story and then compare it with the headline that you removed. Although your student's wording will probably be different, did the new headline express the same idea as the newspaper headline?

YOUR STUDENT AS TEACHER

Objective: To provide a check on understanding PQR3.

Method: Have your student teach you the PQR3 method of textbook study. Since most parents didn't learn this technique in school, your student will enjoy teaching you something you didn't know! There is a saying that you never learn something until you teach it to someone.

LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY

Objective: To provide additional information on your student's preferred learning style.

Method: There is a short learning style inventory included in your student's practice Space Walk section for Lesson 6. If you have access to the Internet, you may find it helpful to access Web sites that include more lengthy questionnaires that will give you more information and therefore a more accurate look at your student's learning style.

See the Web Sites page of the online course for a listing of learning style inventory Web sites.

Kinesthetic learners need hands-on learning activities.

The most difficult learning style to accommodate in the classroom is the kinesthetic learner because they need more hands-on learning activities. Science experiments and trips to science museums that feature hands-on learning are excellent. You might teach spelling using a game of Scrabble. While most students learn best while seated at a desk, this type learner may find reciting information and reviewing while moving to the rhythmic beat of music suits their need to move.

Some students have a learning style that benefits from group interaction. Law students have studied in small groups for many years. Many students at the middle school age are not mature enough to do much unsupervised group study and they tend to become social rather than study groups. If you feel that your child would benefit from group study, you might try having them select a study buddy (not a best friend) who is a serious student. A study buddy works best for review study and each partner should be responsible for leading part of the review. See the resource section for a good Web site with tips for studying as a group.

ADDITIONAL PQR3 PRACTICE

Objective: To reinforce the use of PQR3 in textbook reading.

Method: To provide additional textbook reading materials and feedback for your student to practice the PQR3 skills, two more reading selections are provided for your use. You might use this material as supplementary practice at the end of each lesson or after the completion of Lesson 7 when all steps have been completed. Since the PQR3 process was taught over a period of several weeks, having an opportunity to repeat the process over a one- or two-day period may be needed to reinforce the skills with regular textbook assignments.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING SELECTION: LORDS, LADIES, AND CASTLE LIFE

ENTERTAINMENT

Imagine a day without the computer, phone, television, radio, VCR, or video games. These items have become so common and essential to us in our daily lives that doing without one or more of them can make us feel like we are living in the Dark Ages. However, technological advancements such as these are a relatively new occurrence in history. Prior to the middle of the last century, people had to rely on less technological and more creative ways to entertain themselves. Music, dancing, art, and literature were all-important parts of people's lives when they had time for them.

MUSIC

The most common place for individuals living in the Middle Ages to listen to music was in church. The earliest music was changed by monks and was called plainchant or plainsong, later to be known as Gregorian chants. There was usually no instrumental accompaniment, but sometimes bells, an organ, or a harp was used.

Outside of church, music was much livelier. Minstrels traveled the countryside playing for nobles and telling stories. Peasants would gather to play on homemade instruments when they had time. Dancing often accompanied the music they played. Though peasants and nobles did many of the same dances, the nobility's dances were usually quiet and stately, while peasant dances were loud and joyous.

ART

Early religious art was symbolic, meaning that an object often represented something entirely different. In order to understand the painting, you had to understand the symbolism. Medieval symbolic works were intended to praise God.

Other types of artwork found during the Middle Ages were Romanesque, with its large, odd-shaped humans, animals, and gargoyles, and Gothic, which was lighter and more emotional. Commissioned work was also popular. Individuals or families who wanted to be remembered, but didn't want to offend church leaders, often paid to have a stained-glass window or sculpture created and donated to the church. The artist would incorporate the individual into the scene, showing his or her humility to God.

LITERATURE

Because most people could not read or write during the Middle Ages, most stories and literature were passed down orally. In church, people would hear about the lives of the saints or the miracles of the Bible and would occasionally be treated to mystery plays produced by the local guilds. *Everyman*, a play that has survived since the Middle Ages, tells the classic tale of good versus evil.

Outside of the church, romance stories were very popular. Some were long epics of more than a thousand lines or shorter versions known as lays. Most of these stories told of daring bravery and love, which were admired in feudal society. The stories of King Arthur are the best examples of this type of romance story. Fables were also popular because they provided a moral at the end of the story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare the types of music one would have heard in church with music one would have heard outside of church.
2. What were the differences between religious art and nonreligious art?
3. List some of the different types of literature that individuals of the Middle Ages would have listened to or read.

PREVIEW STEP

- What is this reading selection about?
- What main points will be covered?

QUESTION STEP

- What question did you ask of each section?

READ STEP

- What answers did you find to your questions?
- How does the information in this selection fit with what you already know about the subject?

RECITE STEP

- List important ideas and facts that you remember from each section:

REVIEW STEP (to be completed one week later)

- List important ideas and facts that you remember from each section:

POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO ABOVE STEPS

Again, remember that your answers may not be exactly the same as those given here. Did you get the major ideas? That is what is important.

PREVIEW STEP

This lesson is about entertainment in the Middle Ages which was dependent on people making their own fun. It covers music, art, and literature in the Middle Ages.

QUESTION STEP

Questions that might be asked:

- How did music played in churches differ from popular music in the Middle Ages?
- What were the differences in the art styles of the Middle Ages?
- Who read books in the Middle Ages?
- What kinds of books were available during the Middle Ages?

READ STEP

The answers to the questions asked:

- The music in churches was chanted without instrumental accompaniment. Today that music is called Gregorian chants. Popular music was lively and minstrels roamed the countryside singing and playing homemade musical instruments. Nobles danced to more sedate music while the dances of peasants were joyous.
- Religious art was symbolic and intended to praise God, while other art was lighter and more emotional or Gothic in style, or odd-shaped figures like gargoyles or Romanesque in style.
- Most people could not read so most stories were orally transmitted. Religious literature was about the lives of saints and good and evil. Outside the church, romance stories such as those about King Arthur were popular.

How does what I read fit with what I already know about the subject?

- There are several popular songs based on Medieval tunes. There are also lots of pictures showing art of that time and many public buildings like museums, which have gargoyles as decoration. Lots of stories about King Arthur have been made into movies.

RECITE STEP

Some ideas and facts remembered from each section:

Entertainment during the Middle Ages was home-made and was of two types, religious and popular. In art, most art was religious and was intended to praise God. Individuals who wanted to be remembered donated stained glass windows or sculpture to the church in which they were one of the figures in the scene showing humility to God. In music, church music was chanted without instrumental accompaniment while popular music was lively and accompanied by homemade instruments. Literature was both religious and popular. Religious books were about saints or Bible miracles while popular books were long epics or shorter writings known as lays and were romantic in theme, telling of bravery and love. An example of the long epics are stories about King Arthur. Most people could not read or write, so most stories were passed down orally.

REVIEW STEP

Most of the ideas expressed in the Recite Step should be repeated in this step.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING SELECTION: THE HORN OF AFRICA

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the geography, economics, culture, and history of Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti.

SUDAN

Sudan is not only the largest country in Africa, it is also the most geographically varied. The northern half of Sudan is desert climate and is used primarily for nomadic herding. The area where the Blue Nile and the White Nile join together is primarily herding country. This is a fertile flood plain that exists on either side of the Nile as it flows northward through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.



South of this area is mainly tropical rain forests and swamps. Actually, one of the world's largest swamps, called the Sudd, lies in the south area of Sudan. This swamp is useful because it drains directly into the White and Blue Nile branches, which provide a lifeline for Sudan. Therefore, while little grows in the Sudd, it provides irrigation waters to the Nile branches for the huge cotton and sugar cane plantations that contribute to the country's economy. There is actually plenty of good farmland in Sudan, even with the Sahara in the north and the Sudd in the south.

SUDAN: THE PEOPLE

The Arab Muslims in the north are fighting with the Africans in the south, leading to widespread starvation. This problem was made worse by drought. The central government is in the north, so the Arab Muslims have had control of Sudan from that location since 1954. Another problem in feeding the people of Sudan is a result of wars in the countries around Sudan. Refugees—people who seek to escape civil war and other events—leave their country and escape to other countries where there may be some relief from the hardships they are suffering. Many of these refugees come to Sudan, but Sudan is also experiencing civil war. So, many people from Sudan as well as other countries go without food because of war, drought, and floods throughout the area.

Sudan is similar to many African countries—people's needs are met in both old and new ways. For example, the different cultures that make up Sudan meet at town markets called suqs, where the Arabs sell clothing and imported goods and the tribal Africans sell food and handicrafts. Another good example of how old and new mix is the Nuer tribe. The tribal members have scars on their bodies from tribal rituals, but they work in the country's modern oil fields to earn money to buy cows and increase the size of their herds. The people of this troubled African nation are willing to make changes to meet their needs. Sometimes this is not enough when selfish leaders, overpopulation, and civil war interfere with these choices and changes. It is easy to see how refugees and natives of Sudan both struggle for a decent life.

ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, we see a familiar story of fertile farmland shut down by drought, which leads to a starving population. In the 1980s, pop stars recorded a song called “We Are the World.” Copies of the song and the video were sold in an effort to raise money for food shipments that would help save the eight million starving Ethiopians. But this was followed by horrible stories of piles of food rotting on the docks of Ethiopian trade centers, with no effort being made to get the food to the starving citizens. Ethiopia has been an independent country for centuries, but long-running wars with neighboring countries, their own civil wars, and corrupt leaders drain the country of its resources and prevent international aid from helping those who cannot find food to survive.

Ethiopia is thought to be the original home of coffee. It grows wild in the rain forest in the southwestern highlands, and some farmers grow coffee. Two-thirds of the country is a high, fertile plateau with a mild climate where a wide variety of crops can be grown. But coffee is the chief export of the country.



ETHIOPIA: THE PEOPLE

Ethiopia is an ancient country with a long history of emperors and empresses. Archeologists have found fossils that indicate people have lived there for over four million years. Ethiopia is covered with highlands. There is a 4,000-mile-long “scar” that slices through the eastern portion of the country; it is called the Great Rift Valley. On its floor, scientists have found some of the oldest fossils of early humans—older even than the ones found earlier in Tanzania.

Ethiopia follows the pattern of most African countries, with people from an assortment of ethnic groups, including Muslims and Christians, speaking seventy different languages. Again, each of these groups has needs to be filled, and there is always an emerging government trying to fight for its spot to fill those needs. In the end, the resources of the country are wasted on wars, and the people are pulled in different directions by various dictators. African countries have a hard time becoming stable because often every group has a different idea of how things should be done.

ERITREA

Eritrea is the newest African country. It was a province of Ethiopia until 1993, when a lengthy civil war led to its independence. Remember that civil wars such as this one also interfered with Ethiopia’s use of resources and led to widespread starvation in the 1980s. The war did not help this new little country on the Red Sea, either. Once good land is being affected by erosion because of the trees cut down by the soldiers. Civil war does not seem to benefit anyone. It drains resources from the country that is trying to hang on to power and tears apart the resources of the country fighting for freedom. Still, the wars in Africa continue in almost every country today.

SOMALIA

Rivers provide irrigation for sugar cane and citrus farmers in Somalia. It is united by having a predominantly Muslim culture and by the Somali and Arabic languages. Another belief that unites all Somalis is that certain lands in neighboring countries should belong to Somalia. For example, they believe that parts of Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia should belong to them and have fought unsuccessfully to gain these territories for years. However, there is division among the Somali clans, who value close family relationship ties. Because of the disagreement between the clans, there is war, as

well as unprotected and mismanaged food supplies, which leads to starvation. In 1998, President Clinton made a trip to Africa and pledged American assistance to help solve the problems so that the precious African resources could be traded for American goods. But it is all very complicated, and the pattern of civil war and poor economic conditions in Africa continues today.

DJIBOUTI

This country wraps itself around a natural harbor on the Gulf of Aden. This inlet of water provides a huge harbor. The ships coming from the European countries through the Suez Canal by Egypt can trade with all of Central Africa through this port. This country is one of the hottest and driest on earth. However, it is successful because the people are mostly Muslim and the majority of them live and work in the same place, the harbor city and capital of Djibouti. We can conclude that Djibouti's small size and one major resource simplifies life there and perhaps makes conflict less likely.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Define *drought* and *clan*.
2. Where do most of Sudan's people live?
3. What is the newest country in Africa?
4. What challenges do farmers face in the Horn of Africa?

PREVIEW STEP

- This lesson is about...

QUESTION STEP

- Questions I asked about the vocabulary words, *drought* and *clan*:
- Questions I asked about Sudan:
- Questions I asked about Sudan's people:
- Questions I asked about Ethiopia:
- Questions I asked about Ethiopia's people:
- Questions I asked about Eritrea:
- Questions I asked about Somalia:
- Questions I asked about Djibouti:

READ STEP

- The answers I found to my questions:
- How did what I already knew about these countries fit with this reading selection?

RECITE STEP

- List the important ideas and facts that you remember from each section.

REVIEW STEP (to be completed one week later)

- List the important ideas and facts that you remember from each section.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE STEPS

Again, remember that your answers may not be exactly the same as those given here; however, getting the main ideas is what is important.

PREVIEW STEP

This lesson is about the five countries in the Horn of Africa—Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti. It talks about the geography, economy, and people of these countries.

QUESTION STEP

Some questions that could be asked about the sections:

- What is the meaning of the vocabulary words drought and clan?
- What kind of land does Sudan have?
- How is the economy related to the land?
- What are some of the problems of the people of Sudan?
- How is Ethiopia the same or different from Sudan?
- What kind of economy does Ethiopia have?
- What are some of the problems of the people of Ethiopia?
- Why is Eritrea important?
- What are some of the problems of Somalia?
- Where is Djibouti located?

READ STEP

The answers to the questions asked:

- Drought is the absence of water over a long period of time which means that crops don't have enough water to grow.
- A clan is a group of people who are usually related to each other as members of an extended family would be.
- Sudan is the largest country in Africa but is varied geographically, having both a desert area and a fertile flood plain. It also has tropical rain forests and swamps.
- The rain forest drains into the White and Blue Nile that provide irrigation water for the huge cotton and sugar cane plantations that are important to the economy.
- Some of the problems of the people of Sudan are the Arab Muslims in the north fighting with the Africans in the south, contributing to starvation, along with a drought.
- Ethiopia is similar to Sudan because it has fertile farmland but a drought has also led to starvation in this country. Coffee is the main export of Ethiopia.

- Some of the problems of the Ethiopian people are the more than seventy different languages and a wide variety of ethnic groups and religions in Ethiopia. These problems lead to many wars for control of the country by the various groups and dictators.
- What is important about Eritrea is that it is the newest African country. It was a province of Ethiopia until 1993, when a civil war helped it gain independence.
- Djibouti is located on land that surrounds a natural harbor on the Gulf of Aden, which positions it to take advantage of shipping coming from Europe to Africa through the Suez Canal.

How did what you already know about these countries fit with what you read?

- Much newspaper coverage has been given in recent years to the civil wars in this part of Africa which have led to many deaths in the local population caused by rebel groups. At the same time, newspapers have documented the widespread drought in the region that has led to starvation. Some fundraising efforts to provide food supplies to this region have been led by music groups and other celebrities.

RECITE STEP

Important ideas and facts remembered from each section:

- This lesson covers the five countries that lie at the tip of Africa, known as the Horn of Africa. A common problem of the region has been constant civil war and drought which has led to starvation and death for many in the population.
- Sudan is the largest country in Africa and has many different geographic areas including desert, fertile flood plain, and tropical rain forests. The Nile River furnishes water for irrigation for large cotton and sugar cane plantations which are important to the economy of the country. They also have oil fields.
- Sudan's people are engaged in a civil war between the Arab Muslims in the north and the Africans in the south. Refugees from other African countries and drought have made starvation a problem.
- Ethiopia is like Sudan in that it has fertile farmlands but also civil war and drought, which cause problems such as starvation. They export coffee and may be the original home of coffee.
- The people of Ethiopia speak seventy different languages and come from a wide variety of ethnic groups as well as having both the Muslim and Christian religions. This has led to much strife between different factions trying to control the country.
- Eritrea is the newest African country, having been a province of Ethiopia until 1993 when it secured its independence following a civil war. There is a problem with erosion because so many trees were cut down by soldiers during the civil war.
- Somalia has rivers that provide irrigation for sugar cane and citrus farms. There is warfare among the family groups in Somalia, called clans.

- Djibouti is geographically situated around a natural harbor that gives them a great natural resource to take advantage of shipping from Europe to Africa coming through the Suez Canal.

REVIEW STEP

Most of the ideas expressed in the recite step should be repeated in this step.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Two articles by Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper, "Your Natural Brain Dominance" and "Your Brain at Work," published in *Your Personal Best* (April, June 1991), give an excellent summary of learning style as it relates to brain dominance. In the online course, two ways of organizing information, logical and global, are introduced. The brain assigns different functions to the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere of the brain. The right hemisphere corresponds to global organization while the left hemisphere corresponds to logical organization.

In her article "Your natural brain dominance," Dr. Cooper explains that over the past thirty years, scientists have learned a great deal about the differences between the brain's two frontal hemispheres. In the early 1960s, Roger Sperry began research that confirmed the two hemispheres' separate functions, earning him a Nobel Prize in 1983. Much research has developed out of discoveries that injury to the left side of the brain produced quite different disabilities than injury to the right side of the brain.

According to Dr. Cooper, the left side of the brain appears to govern the ability to use language, writing, and mathematics such as to perform logical deductions and other types of analysis, and the ability to be disciplined. The right side of the brain appears to govern visual, spatial, artistic, and intuitive concepts, plus be the source of imagination and spontaneous play.

The two hemispheres are linked together by nerve fibers called the corpus callosum so the two hemispheres pass information back and forth. Many people can use both hemispheres equally well, however, most of us develop a preference for one hemisphere over the other. This can be seen in our preference for how we organize information.

Dr. Cooper describes left-brained persons as people who usually process information in a manner that is sequential and logical. They prefer to deal with concrete data, rules, systems, linear processes, and mathematical and written problems. They also like to work in a step-by-step fashion and to complete one project before going on to another. They dislike clutter and prefer keeping their work in neat, organized areas or filed away when not in use. They also prefer to work alone in a quiet setting.

She goes on to say, "Conversely, right-brain-oriented people are energized by a different set of conditions. They enjoy change, flexible schedules, work spontaneously and intuitively. Most like to have lots of sensory stimulation within their work area, including bright colors, posters, and other kinds of artwork and music." They are best at conceptualizing something and often jump from project to project, juggling several things at once. Right-brained people use divergent thinking, left-brainers use convergent thinking.

So learning styles are based on our preference for right-brain hemisphere or left-brain hemisphere utilization.

MORE RESOURCES

SPEED READING RESOURCES

There are several excellent books available on speed reading, including *Evelyn Wood Seven-Day Speed Reading and Learning Program* by Stanley Frank, published by Barnes and Noble Books, July 1994, and *The Speed Reading Tips of the World's Fastest Reader* by Howard Stephen Berg, published by Warner Books, August 1992.

Being able to see the speed reading process via video may be helpful to some students. An old video that might be available from your local library or through inter-library loan is "Speed Reading Hand," International Video Entertainment, 1985. Your librarian might be able to recommend other videos that are in the library collection.

OTHER RESOURCES

A book that provides research data to back up the techniques explained in these lessons as well as the previous lessons is *Learn Faster & Remember More* by David Gamon and Allen D. Bragdon, Brainwaves Books, July 2001. It explores what to eat to keep the brain alert, the "Mozart Effect," and how the brain uses dreams to file facts away when you study just before going to sleep.

UNIT 3: NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

LESSONS 8 AND 9

In Lessons 8 and 9, the skills your student will be learning are among the most difficult study skills to master—taking notes. However, the more your student practices the skill, the easier it becomes.

You can assist by providing additional opportunities to practice, including taking notes from oral presentations.

Lesson 8 is designed to help your student learn the basics of note-taking such as eliminating unnecessary words and using abbreviations. The focus is on using printed materials so that the pressure of listening while writing is eliminated.

In Lesson 9, the transition is from taking notes on written material to taking class discussion notes. You can help your student make the transition from the written word to the spoken word by reading, very slowly, sections from a textbook assignment while your child takes notes. Take a few minutes several times a week to do this and it will reduce the stress your student feels when learning to take classroom notes. Don't make your note-taking sessions too long. You might begin with ten minutes and work up to twenty to thirty minutes. Taking notes is tiring because it demands intense concentration.

TIP: Your student should read notes back to you to check comprehension—notes are of little value if unreadable.

Encourage the use of common abbreviations. There is a substantial list in your student's course. Teach your favorites, too.

If your student is having difficulty learning to take notes from oral presentations, it may be due to lack of listening skills. Here are some activities to help teach this skill.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

STRETCHING ATTENTION SPAN

Objective: To lengthen the student's ability to listen to and repeat information.

Method: In this activity, students are asked to listen carefully to information and repeat it exactly as presented. This reinforces the skill of accurate listening and noting details. Family games can be used to reinforce this kind of listening. Such favorites as "I'm going to (name of place) and I'm taking a (name of object)." can be used. This can be played with any number of players from two on up. Each player begins by saying "I'm going to (name of place), and I'm taking a (name of object)." and repeating each of the objects the previous players have stated and then adding the object they are taking. The game continues until a player forgets one of the objects the previous players were taking. You may have played a variation of this game as a child.

Another similar game is "I have a million dollars and I'm going to buy a (name of object)." Again, any number of players can be included. Each player begins by stating what they are going to buy and each subsequent player repeats all the previous purchases and adds one of their own. The game continues until a player forgets one of the objects the previous players were taking.

These games are an enjoyable method for training the memory to retain larger amounts of information, which is an essential skill for note-taking. As you know, classroom note-taking involves writing down previous important information while remembering new information being presented simultaneously.

If you have a special needs student, this skill will be one that your student probably will not have mastered. Playing memory games of this type can help develop the ability to pay attention long enough to get important information written down in notes.

YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID—WHAT DID I MEAN?

Objective: To develop the ability to get the main idea from what is being said.

Method: The skill of being able to get the main idea from what is being said is the next level of listening skills essential to classroom note-taking. In this game, one person begins the conversation (speaking for about a half-minute) and the other person paraphrases (tells in their own words what the first speaker has told them) and then adds their comments (speaking for about a half-minute). The first speaker then paraphrases in their own words and adds their comments to the conversation. If your student has a sibling that is willing to participate in the game, they can either be one of the “talkers” or the “observer.” The role of the observer is to listen to what is being said and decide whether the “paraphraser” has correctly stated the main idea.

CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

Objective: To encourage your student to look for the main idea and not be distracted by details.

Method: When listening to class presentations, main ideas must be separated from details. Because details use most of the time in a presentation, it is easy to overlook the main idea. This exercise will help your student understand that concept.

Draw a map on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Tell your student you are drawing a map that will help explain a math problem. Then say the following:

“Assume that you are a bus driver and you take your bus out of the garage at point A. You drive your bus 4.3 miles to point B. [All this time, you will be drawing the map. How this map actually looks is up to you.] Then you take your bus and you turn at this corner and drive directly north for 1.3 miles to point C. Now you drive your bus 4.3 miles east and then you turn your bus one more time and drive 7.2 miles back to the garage.”

At this point, ask your student to answer this question: How old is the bus driver?

You will probably be met with silence! Then explain that you told your student eleven times that they were the bus driver. Discuss the tendency of most people to get so involved in details that they miss the main point—literally not seeing the forest for the trees. Fortunately at the middle school level, teachers try to indicate the main idea in clear terms—this is important, I want you to know this, don't forget this, etc. As your student progresses into high school and beyond, more time is going to be devoted to details with the assumption that the student has figured out the main idea.

(My thanks to *Becoming A Master Student* by David B. Ellis for this activity idea).

IS NOTE-TAKING VALUABLE?

In Lesson 9, students are given an example of complicated directions for a party in which notes were used to remember what to do. The example was used to help your student understand how note-taking can be helpful in remembering important information. Perhaps your student is still not convinced that note-taking is worth the time and effort. Here is an enjoyable activity that you might use to help in teaching this lesson.

Objective: To help students understand the value of note-taking in remembering complicated directions and/or information.

Method: Introduce the lesson by asking this: “Do you think you’re a good listener? Let’s see if you can decode what I’ve written on this paper—it’s what Paul Revere said when he ran into a British barbershop.”

SGDEZ Q JSIR GAB Q DUBNLZHMF

(NOTE: Once you start this activity, continue to read the following directions, even though your student may ask you to stop—just tell your student to keep up as best they can. Read the directions at a normal rate of speed. What will happen as you do this exercise is that your student will begin following the directions as you read them—then will get lost, not being able to carry out the directions as fast as you read—about halfway through your student will simply stop. Keep on reading until you finish the directions and come to the discuss section.)

First, write on a sheet of paper the complete alphabet in alphabetical order.

You know what vowels are. They are A E I O and U. Circle them in the alphabet.

In this code, a vowel can be either the letter itself, like an E can be an E, or an O can be an O, or it could be one of the letters right next to it in the alphabet, either before it or after it. For example: the letter E in the code can stand for either a D, or an E, or an F in real spelling. The letter U can be either a T, or a U, or a V.

Whenever in the code, we write a letter representing a vowel, we put a line under it. If you see a P underlined that would mean it is a code letter that represents a vowel in real spelling and it would be right next to that vowel in the alphabet. The only vowel that is next to P in the alphabet is O. So P would have to be an O. Just like an N also would have to be an O.

All the other letters are represented in the code by the consonant that is just in front of them. A consonant is any letter other than a vowel. So an R would be represented by Q. If you see a Q in the code, you know it stands for R. K would be represented by a code J. That means that if you see the letter G in the code, you decode it as an H. V is decoded as W.

Also a B in real spelling is encoded as Z, so when you see a Z in the code, that stands for B.

The spaces in the code don’t mean anything. Ignore them. The actual spaces between words are represented by vowels in the code that are not underlined.

Now I want you to translate the coded message you see on the paper. It is what Paul Revere said when he went into a British barbershop.

DISCUSS: Why did you stop working on decoding the sentence? (Answers will vary and may include “you went too fast,” etc. You might then ask a question like this: “How might you have been able to remember the directions as I gave them?” Introduce the idea of taking notes of the directions, then after the directions have been given, using the notes to decode the sentence.

Next, work with your student to decide which directions are important to put in notes. You might want to go back over the directions, paragraph by paragraph, and work with your student on recording the significant directions. At the end, your notes should look like this:

Write ABCs

vowels = A E I O U

consonant = closest vowel

vowel = itself, + or – letter

consonant = next letter

vowel = space between words

Z = B

When your student has these directions written in notes, have them decode the sentence. It will take about ten minutes for most students.

ANSWER TO QUESTION: What Paul Revere said when he ran into a British barbershop?

The British are combing.

(Be prepared for groans!)

MORE NOTE-TAKING PRACTICE

Objective: To provide more practice in note-taking from oral presentations.

Method: Read at a slow rate of speed the following lecture abstracted from “Secrets of Building a Better Memory At Any Age” by Gary W. Small, M.D., director of the memory clinic and the Center on Aging at the University of California at Los Angeles, as published in *Bottom Line/Health* (Vol. 17: No. 5, May 2003).

Begin your lecture by saying, “Today we are going to be learning more about memory.” Then read the following words:

“In addition to a healthful lifestyle, our brains need regular workouts. Specific memory techniques can improve your memory almost immediately.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have found that focusing on meaningful (as opposed to nonsense) words increases activity in the frontal and temporal regions of the brain.”

[Note: For the purpose of this note-taking exercise, write “functional magnetic resonance imaging” on the board or on a piece of paper large enough for your student to see it and copy it in their notes.]

“To boost your memory, start practicing these three basic skills—Look, Snap, and Connect:

Look means paying close attention to new information. For example: Remember key details when watching movies. This may include the hero’s hairstyle, the furniture in an important scene. Afterward, jot down as many details about the movie as you can remember.

Snap means creating a mental snapshot of what you wish to remember. For example: Create a vivid, detailed image. Visualize a flower—rather than a generic rose, visualize a bright yellow rose with a thorny stem and dewdrops on its petals.

Connect means linking mental snapshots to remember lists, birth dates, and names. For example: Connect unrelated images. Fix the name “George Waters,” in your memory with an image of a river rushing through a gorge.”

END OF LECTURE

Here are notes taken from the memory lecture: (Remember that your student may have used different words—but should have put down the same ideas, used abbreviations and omitted unnecessary words).

MEMORY LECTURE

Date:

Technique improve mem.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging scan show focus on meaningful word increase activity. Frontal & temporal parts brain.

Practice 3 skills–look, snap, connect

LOOK–pay attent new info. Ex: remem detail movies (hairstyle, furniture etc.) Write down what remem.

SNAP–make mental snapshot. Ex: create vivid image (rose-bright yellow, thorns, dewdrops)

CONNECT–link to remem lists, dates, names, Ex: connect unrelated images (remem George Waters. See river rushing by)

(NOTE: There is a lecture title and date at the top of the notes. The technical term “functional magnetic resonance imaging scan” is spelled out in full. The 3 skills are part of a list, indicating they are important facts. Examples are included in the notes—you may need to call your student’s attention to the inclusion of examples as necessary in notes as a way of understanding their notes. Some long easy-to-read words like remember and information are shortened without losing comprehension. Elimination of words like “the.”

MORE RESOURCES

Check the Web Sites page of the online course for links to good note-taking information.

UNIT 4: TEST-TAKING SKILLS

LESSONS 10 AND 11

The best way for you to help your student master test-taking skills is before a scheduled test.

1. Review the type of test question usually asked by this teacher (based on past tests). Does the teacher prefer to use true/false, multiple choice, sentence completion, or matching questions? Does the teacher ask questions that are answered with information taken directly from the textbook or must the student generalize information to questions not taken directly from the textbook (critical thinking questions)?

If essay questions are used, does the teacher prefer one kind of directions or words to others (discuss, compare, list, define, etc.) that require your student to put information into a particular form? Do the questions ask your student to relate information directly from the textbook or to use critical thinking skills in the answer?

Since teachers often ask the same types of questions in tests, either using the same format or similar types of information, this is a very helpful step in teaching your student how to anticipate the types of questions that can be expected. It not only helps in the preparation of practice review questions but also diminishes test anxiety. Anxiety for many students is based on fear of the unknown, so when you help your student anticipate and practice the types of questions likely to be on tests, it will increase their self confidence.

2. Review, with your student, the pertinent sections of the two lessons on test taking skills. Encourage your student to answer the questions on the test to which they know the answers and utilize the test taking strategies to help answer the other questions.
3. When your student brings home the corrected test paper, review the mistakes to see if there is a pattern or type of mistake made most often.

TIP: Patterns to watch for:

- Not following directions correctly
- Missing key words
- Not completing the test (may have used too much time on difficult questions)
- Spelling or grammatical errors (if points are deducted for such errors)
- Addition or subtraction errors on math problems (maybe needs additional practice on math facts or to check work more carefully)

If there is a test-taking strategy that will help, then review the missed questions using that strategy. If the mistakes don't fit a pattern, perhaps reviewing for the test needs more emphasis.

TIP: Don't overemphasize test mistakes.

Concentrating on what your student did right, may do more good than dwelling on mistakes, especially if the mistakes don't form a pattern. Too much emphasis on mistakes can create test anxiety in your child. It is better to comment on the 95 percent correct than the 5 percent incorrect!

TEST REVIEW TECHNIQUES

Reviewing for the test starts immediately after the information is presented. As you recall, the third R in PQR3 is review. Research has verified the value of spaced review in the ability to recall information over a long period of time. Spaced review also allows the brain time to place new information into patterns of what already is known by the student which tends to increase understanding and insights into how information fits together. This type of assimilation occurs even when the student is not actively studying the information and so each review will stimulate even more assimilation of the material. The spaced reviews should be short in length.

CREATE REVIEW TOOLS

These may take the form of test review guides (which may be provided by the teacher), mapping summaries (which can be utilized to see relationships between main ideas and details—see Lesson 12), flash cards (which can be used to reinforce vocabulary word definitions, math and science formulas and laws, dates and events), class notes (paying attention to ideas and facts the teacher indicated were important either by verbal cues, writing the information on the board, repeating information more than once, etc.).

For science courses and other courses involving problem solving, make up practice problems similar to the ones that will probably appear on the test. Before working the problems, practice estimating what the answer will be. This is an especially good technique for multiple-choice questions on mathematics portions of achievement tests. It helps to immediately eliminate answers that are way off base but can also serve as a check on math fact errors that might have occurred during the working of the test problem. Teaching your student to make an estimate of the answer before working the problem can eliminate many common math errors due to carelessness.

TAKING READING TESTS

This technique is useful for all students, but it is especially important if your student is a slow reader. Most reading tests involve a reading selection of one or more paragraphs in length, followed by questions about the main idea and details found in the reading selection. Here is where using a variation of the question step of PQR3 is a time-saver. Have your student read the questions that are asked about the reading selection before reading the selection. When they do this, the information needed to answer the questions will literally pop out as they read. This saves your student from having to reread the selection to find the answers.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

ASK IF YOU DON'T KNOW

Objective: To encourage students to ask questions when you don't understand what is being said.

Method: Sometimes a student may be too shy to ask what they think is a “stupid” question regarding a term or other information that is presented. To help your student understand the necessity of asking when you don't know something, try this activity:

During a discussion on memory (you could use the information on review from lesson 7), write the following statement on the board or piece of paper that your student can see—“An effective memory

allows students to gormandize material.” Don’t say anything about this statement. Instead, proceed to talk about the importance of taking accurate notes. Then tell your student that you are now going to test them on the “lecture” you have just presented. These are the test questions:

1. Why is reviewing your notes before a test important? (2 points)
2. What does gormandize mean? (8 points)

Not many people know the meaning of “gormandize,” which is to eat ravenously. Now discuss with your student how not knowing the meaning of one word affected their test performance. (Not being able to answer the question would have caused them to fail the test and may have caused some test anxiety). It is difficult to understand what is being read when a word is used that you don’t know. Finding out what it means is as easy as asking, “What does gormandize mean?” This age student is often afraid of being thought dumb by classmates, and won’t ask this type of question. Sometimes they need to be reminded that if they don’t understand the word, others don’t either and they are doing their classmates a favor by asking the question.

THIS IS A TEST

Objective: To reinforce the test technique of quickly looking over the entire test before beginning to answer questions.

Method: This activity can be used for several purposes. It is often used to teach students the importance of listening to all the directions before beginning work, something that many students have difficulty with, especially special needs students who are impulsive. In this instance, it is being used to stress the helpfulness of briefly scanning the entire test before beginning to answer questions.

Begin by telling your student: "This is a timed test. You must complete it in seven minutes." Next hand your student a sheet of paper on which are written the following instructions:

1. Carefully read all of the instructions below.
2. Write your name in the upper right hand corner.
3. Write your address in the lower left hand corner.
4. If you have carefully followed directions to this point, shout in a clear voice, “Yes.”
5. Using the tip of your pencil, punch a hole under the 7 in the instructions above.
6. Repeat aloud your first name, middle initial, and last name.
7. On the back of this sheet, draw a heart with an arrow through it.
8. In the upper left hand corner, draw a picture of your teacher. If you don’t have a teacher, draw a picture of your mother.
9. If you have followed all instructions, write on your paper, “I am perfect” and sign your name underneath.
10. Now that you have finished reading all of the instructions as directed in step 1, ignore steps 2–9.

Discuss how your student felt when they reached step 10. Ask “How might looking over the entire test quickly before beginning be beneficial?” Answers might include the idea that some questions might include clues to answers in other parts of the test. It also helps you know how much time you need to allow for each part of the test in order to complete all questions in the time allowed. This is also an opportunity to encourage your student to answer the easier questions first, then go to the more difficult questions, which is especially important if time is a problem for your student.

COPING WITH TEST ANXIETY

TAKE REGULAR DEEP BREATHS

In the online course, there are several “easy to do” suggestions for dealing with test anxiety before a test or during the test. One is an effective deep-breathing technique which encourages your student to breathe from the abdomen rather than from the chest. This is especially calming. If your student is one who is tense in the day before a test—to the point of interfering with sleep, etc.—then this routine will be helpful in reducing the daily level of test anxiety. Begin by selecting regular times during the day when your student stops what they are doing and practices deep breathing. When this is done ten to twenty times a day, it has a cumulative effect on anxiety reduction. A good time is to make the study break (remember the 10–40–10 rule) a time when deep breathing is practiced. Consider adding deep breathing just before sitting down to each meal and again just before going to sleep. You can even suggest something simple, such as encouraging your student to take one deep breath each time he or she goes through a door.

According to Dean Ornish, M.D., deep breathing is one of the simplest yet most effective stress management techniques there is. How does deep breathing work? It infuses the blood with extra oxygen and also causes the body to release endorphins which have a natural tranquilizing hormone. By breathing from the abdomen, you involve the lower lobes of the lungs that more easily fill with oxygen.

Another breathing exercise is used by Martin Pierce, director of the Atlanta-based Pierce Program, which specializes in stress reduction for professionals. Your student might find it helpful for reducing on-going stress.

Lie down with your arms near your sides. Begin to inhale, raising your arms (elbows bent) toward the ceiling as you do so. Raise them all the way over your head as you inhale.

Reverse the procedure, focusing on a very slow, smooth and even exhalation as you slowly return your arms to your sides.

Repeat several times. Try to make the exhalations longer but inhalations can be whatever speed is comfortable.

TAKE A WALK

Many students don't get enough physical exercise. Exercise is an excellent way of reducing daily anxiety. It can even be as simple as taking a walk. Studies by California State University psychologist Robert Thayer, Ph.D., have shown significant reductions in tension after walks lasting only a few minutes. Not only did walking reduce tension but it also left people feeling energized. Another study by Florida's State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services found that participants in an eight-week walking program were able to reduce their stress level by thirty per cent.

TAKE A MINI VACATION

Another way to reduce daily anxiety is by having your student do what amounts to a brief daydream. Encourage your student to relax their body. A good way is to have them tense all of their muscles groups and then release (relax) them. If they have difficulty doing this, here is a brief exercise you can lead them through:

Lay on the floor or bed. Bend the right foot down with toes pointing down. Hold and then relax the foot. Repeat with the left foot.

Tense the calf of the right leg. Hold and then relax the calf muscle. Repeat with the left leg. Let both legs go limp.

Tighten the abdomen. Hold it and relax the abdomen. Follow by tightening the behind. Hold it and then relax.

Clench the right hand into a fist. Hold and relax. Repeat with the left hand.

Pull the shoulders up toward the neck. Hold and relax by allowing the shoulders to drop back to their natural level.

Make an “ugly” face (your student might have fun making a growling sound of a lion during this step). Relax the face.

When these steps have been completed encourage your student to pretend they are taking a quick vacation. Have them imagine going to their favorite place for a vacation. Ask them what they see, what sounds they hear, what smells, etc. Encourage them to feel how happy they are in their vacation place. After a few minutes, tell your student that they will retain that relaxed, happy feeling as they get up and return to their work.

IS IT WORKING?

This is an inexpensive way to get some “bio-feedback” from the relaxation exercises. Since the tense body usually brings the blood supply in toward the body organs, leaving less blood flow in the extremities, a relaxed body allows the blood to flow freely to the extremities including the hands and feet.

Use an oral fever thermometer. Put the thermometer flat on a table. Have your student place the ball of the index finger on the bulb (mercury end of the thermometer) for about thirty seconds or until the liquid stops moving. Record the temperature. After the relaxation period, again have your student place the same index finger on the bulb of the thermometer and record the temperature. The more your student relaxes, the higher the temperature will be. Another way is to use the old mood rings (remember those). They work on the same principle. At first, there will be little or no change but as your student begins to master relaxation, they will be able to see small changes in their temperature telling them that relaxation is working.

WHY WORRY?

Some students are simply “worriers” by disposition. No matter what it is, they worry! Here is an activity that is designed to help your “worrier” deal more constructively with this habit.

Objective: To encourage the student who is a chronic worrier to deal with worry in a useful way.

Method: To help your student understand the constructive use of worry and how to dispense with worry when it has served its purpose. To do this you are going to construct a “worry tree.” First get a bare twig

about 1 ½ to 2 feet in length and place it in a container. Now you are ready to have a discussion with your “worrier.” The discussion might go something like this:

I notice that you do a lot of worrying about school, especially tests. Worry is a very helpful feeling most of the time—do you know what its purpose is? Worry helps us get prepared for things that we might not want to happen. For example, many people worry about losing their home in a fire, flood, or earthquake. They act on that worry by buying home insurance, which protects them if one of these catastrophes happens (you can use some examples of your own ways of protecting yourself against bad events).

Now you are ready to bring up how your student uses worry. For example:

Worry before a test encourages you to prepare for the test. What have you done to prepare? (Here you can work down the list—doing all the assigned homework, paying attention in class, reviewing class notes, using PQR3, memorizing vocabulary words and definitions, doing practice math problems, etc.)

Hopefully your student is indicating that those things have been done. If not, then it is time to encourage the use of worry to start the review process! However, chronic worriers have usually done the review work. So now you’re ready to ask if there is anything more that they can do to get ready for the test. If the answer is no, then they are ready for the next step.

Introduce the Worry Tree by saying something like this:

It sounds like you’re ready to release your worry. It’s done its job and there is no need for it to stick around. But sometimes when you’ve formed a habit, it’s hard to get rid of it even when it is no longer useful. So what we’re going to do is give it a place to hang out until you need it again. We are going to make a “worry tree”. It works like this: Start by writing on a piece of paper what it is exactly that is worrying you about the test tomorrow (you can use whatever your student worries about here). Now let’s roll it up and tie it to the tree. It will be there whenever you feel you need to worry about it. But for now, you don’t need to carry that worry—the Worry Tree is in charge of it now.

This exercise gives your student permission to let go of the habit of worrying. Repeat the “worry tree” whenever you feel your student has the need to “let go”. An interesting follow-up is, after a few weeks, have your student unwrap their worries. It is often a revelation to find out that most of the things they worried about never happened.

MORE RESOURCES

An excellent resource for understanding anxiety reduction is *The Relaxation Response* by Herbert Benson and Miriam Z. Klipper, Mass Market Paperbooks, 1990. Your library may have a copy.

UNIT 5: REPORT-WRITING SKILLS

LESSON 12: REPORT WRITING

The purpose of this lesson is to help your student research and organize material for projects and reports. Several formats are presented that can be used to organize concepts and ideas quickly and easily. These include charting, mapping, and index cards.

Utilization of the newest research tool, the Internet, is discussed in detail. It is assumed that your student is already familiar with the library as a research tool. The section on Internet usage shows how to locate and evaluate information found at this source. The Internet is a useful research tool; however, the amount of information available in this medium can be overwhelming and can actually act as a hindrance to the completion of the project. Strategies are presented to help “weed-out” superfluous information.

A third section introduces the format used for a bibliography. This section includes information and practice on citing books, articles, Web sites and other electronic media in the bibliography.

WRITING A REPORT

In *Tools For Learning* by Gall, Jacobsen, and Bullock, the authors list these study skills for writing a school paper:

1. Defining the writing task (purpose, length, audience, due date)
2. Specifying the paper topic (not too wide nor too narrow)
3. Developing a writing plan (list of things to do, numbers 4–10)
4. Generating ideas (brainstorming, mapping techniques useful)
5. Collecting information (using indexes, scanning material, evaluating material)
6. Organizing ideas into a plan for the paper (outlines, mapping, charting, index cards, etc.)
7. Drafting the paper
8. Getting feedback on the draft (reading it to others for opinions)
9. Revising the paper (reorganizing ideas, deleting irrelevant details, correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.)
10. Editing the paper and producing a neat final copy (errors previously unnoticed often show up after a short break from proofreading)

TECHNIQUES FOR GENERATING IDEAS

Usually teachers have a suggested list of topics that relate to the subject being studied; however, these topics are, by design, generic in order to develop a topic in which the student is interested as well as wide enough to gather enough information to generate the length of paper that is being produced.

One of the techniques useful for topic generation is **brainstorming**. Brainstorming is simply writing down every idea that comes to mind regarding any specific topic. Every idea is recorded regardless of whether it is relevant or not. The goal is to get as many ideas as possible. What happens is that even irrelevant ideas will bring out other ideas through association. Take about ten to fifteen minutes for this step. The next step is to evaluate the ideas and see if any are appropriate for the report topic.

Another source of topic ideas is to type in key search words for the general topic into a web search engine and see what related topics are generated.

Another way to generate topic ideas is **mapping**. Although this technique is more useful in organizing information, it can also be used to generate topic ideas. To do this, write down as many ideas as you can think of relating to the main topic (like brainstorming).

An idea that Charles Thompson suggests, in *What A Great Idea*, is to use various symbols (squares, circles, triangles etc.) to separate ideas that belong together into groups so all ideas that belong together have the same symbol. When you have separated ideas into groups, then you are ready to use the mapping technique as an organizing tool.

ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Generally a paper has a title, an introduction, several main points, and a conclusion.

The introduction has several purposes: to capture the reader's interest, to introduce the topic, and to set the tone for the rest of the paper. Encourage your student to pay attention to the opening paragraph in different stories. Magazine articles are excellent sources for this purpose.

The main idea is usually presented as the lead sentence in a paragraph followed by supporting details. However, it can also be presented as the ending sentence in the paragraph with the supporting details leading up to the main idea as the conclusion. Have your student visualize this process as a "T" that is sometimes right side up and sometimes upside down, with the crossbar representing the main idea and the stem representing the details.

The conclusion might include a summary of the main ideas that lead to a particular conclusion.

Index Cards

Index cards with a single idea—main point or detail—work well with the outline method of organizing information. They can be quickly stacked in any order to link ideas and details. This linear method of organizing material is helpful for logical learners. Remind your student to include the source of the information on each index card.

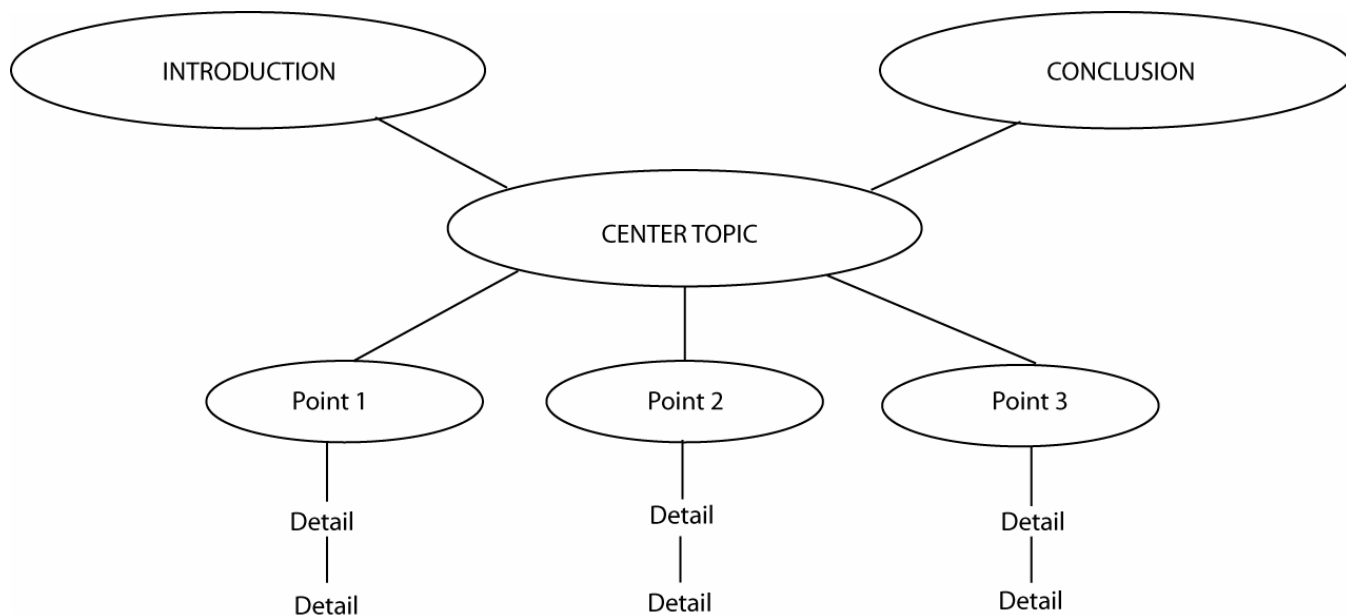
MAPPING

Mapping is a rather new concept and was developed by Tony Buzan and is described in his book *The Mind Mapping Book*. This is a visual, conceptual way of organizing information, which is especially attractive to the global learner. When you have finished organizing main ideas and details through the mapping technique, your page will resemble a "spider web."

To start the process, place the title of the report in a square in the middle of the page. Each main idea related to the center topic is placed in a circle rotating around the topic in the center square. In each main idea circle, you write two or three key words (usually nouns and verbs) that express the idea. Each main idea will have information relating to it; the details are placed on lines (like a sunburst) radiating from the main idea.

Now look for connections between ideas or details and draw lines linking these connections. Color can be used very effectively to do this.

After you see how the various main ideas connect, you can again use the mapping technique to organize the sections into introduction, points with supporting details, and conclusion. Supporting details are written on lines radiating from the main points. Example:



An interesting use of mapping as a graphic organizer for use with literature reports is found in *Study Skills to the Rescue* by Jan Brennan, Creative Teaching Press, Cypress, 1998.

The center circle contains the title and author with satellite circles attached to the center circle. One satellite circle contains the main idea, another has characters and settings, a third features problem and climax, and a fourth satellite circle shows resolution and ending.

CHARTING

One example of charting is shown in the online course, where a table is used to compare and contrast two articles. This type of chart can be enlarged to show similarities and differences between ideas for any number of attributes (characteristics).

Another type of graphic organizer that falls into the chart area is called “Fishbone mapping”. Picture the backbone of a fish with vertebrae leading off of it. It is an excellent way to show how several causes produced a particular result. The result is written on the “backbone” line with the different causes written on each “vertebrae”. This type of chart is designed to answer the questions, ‘What factors cause the problem?’ and ‘How do those factors interrelate?’

The flow chart is a type of graphic organizer often used in business to indicate a hierarchy of jobs or the sequence of steps that must occur for a project to be completed. The flow chart could also function to identify a problem and to consider different solutions and possible results of each solution. This is also called a “decision tree.” The problem is stated in the top box. Descending boxes identify a proposed solution and probable result and the final box indicates the solution that has the best probability of solving the problem.