

# **7 SECRETS TO STUDYING**

## ***Hints on How To Pass Any Exam!***

Exams! A cause of nervousness, fear, and even terror, yet a necessary rite of passage toward a worthwhile goal.

The good news is there are many things you can do before and during your final exam that will almost guarantee a passing grade.

*The two most important things you need are motivation  
and an effective study plan!*

Motivation will take a bit of effort, but it's the key to achieving your goals. To stay motivated, remember why you took this course and review the benefits you'll derive from passing the exam and receiving your certificate. Perhaps you're looking forward to increased income, increased self-respect or self-employment. You enrolled in this course because you're looking forward to a brighter future!

In the following pages, we'll provide tips and information on how to create an effective study plan. You'll discover seven guidelines for creating a worthwhile program for yourself. If you want to do well and you want to put forth the effort, use these simple techniques. They have helped many people succeed, and if you use them, they will work for you as well!

## **SECRET #1: No Excuses! Make Studying a Habit Worth Having**

The very first thing you need to do is accept the fact that studying is a requirement, and a necessary part of the learning process.

### **Set up a Winning Schedule**

Next, set up a schedule and follow it! By doing so, you are developing a HABIT of studying. A habit (as you may already know) takes on a life of its own and starts to generate its own energy, making it easier and easier for you to continue. Remember, consistency is the key to developing a positive study habit.

#### **How to develop a strong, effective study habit:**

- Start small. Start with only 10-15 minutes of studying at a time and then build up to longer amounts as you progress through the material.
- Set time aside for studying every day if possible.
- On the other hand, be realistic. Be sure to set up a reasonable schedule that you can easily follow.

#### **BONUS TIP: Study Shorter, More Often!**

We absorb a lot more information if we learn in small, manageable portions, instead of trying to learn everything at once.

Break it down! Study small sections, take a break, then study again.

## **SECRET #2: Create the “Right” Study Environment**

### **Avoid All Distractions**

Try your best to avoid distractions during your study time. Eliminate all the obvious distractions like phone calls, or friends dropping by. Tell your family members, spouse or children that you need time alone to concentrate on your studies. Unplug your phone, shut the door, move the newspaper and magazines to another part of the house. Keep the television and radio off. Take control of your environment!

### **Don't Procrastinate!**

Don't be tempted to put off studying for even two or three hours just because the garage needs to be cleaned out, or the closets need reorganizing. Those tasks can wait. Remember to stick to your schedule.

## **SECRET #2: Create the “Right” Environment (continued)**

### **Where to Study**

Find a quiet, comfortable (but not too comfortable) place to study. If you find too many distractions at home, go to your local library. Find a part of the library that is well-lit and ventilated. This will help you to concentrate. Pack a box with everything you need to study, so that when it’s time to go, you can just pick up the box and take off.

### **The RIGHT Study Environment:**

- Studying in the same place each time will help you concentrate and will reinforce your positive study habits.
- If your exam is proctored, try to recreate the same environment as your final exam. This means that if you will be taking the exam sitting at a desk, make sure you study sitting at a desk. If you do this, you will form an association with knowing the material and sitting at a desk. Make your study situation as similar as possible to the exam situation, and, believe it or not, this will actually help you during the exam!  
*(Later we’ll talk about forming a “mental attitude” during study that you will duplicate during the exam.)*

### **The WRONG Study Environment:**

- Don’t study lying in bed. Your unconscious mind associates your bed with sleep. You’re more likely to nod off than get any real studying done!
- Don’t study in front of the television set.
- Don’t eat while studying. Food can be the greatest distraction of all!

#### **BONUS TIP: Eat Light & Eat Right**

Do you study in the evening? If you feel sluggish, it could be because you ate a heavy meal.

Also stay away from foods high in sugar, like candy bars or chocolate. You’ll get an initial surge, but you’ll soon crash! Instead, eat carbohydrates (bread or pasta), fruits or protein (nuts, meat).

## **SECRET #3: Maximize Your Time**

### **Take Study Breaks**

Make sure you take a break! Periodically stand up, gently rotate your neck, touch your toes and feel the stretch along the back of your legs. If possible, take a short walk to get some fresh air.

### **Find Your Peak Performance Time**

Have you noticed that you're more alert during a certain time of day? For some, their peak time of day is in the afternoon, while others feel sharpest in the early morning hours. Most people claim they're either a morning person or a night owl. Which are you? Find out, then study during those hours, whether it's 7:00 a.m. or midnight. However, don't study when you're too tired. It's a waste of your valuable time and it won't do you any good!

#### ***BONUS TIP: Avoid Cramming!***

Cramming is a good way to guarantee poor results. Don't expect to retain any information you try to learn at the last minute. In the days before your exam, you should review the material you've *already* gone over.

## **SECRET #4: Use Study Aids to Your Advantage**

Plan a review of each chapter as you go along, so that you don't have to review everything all at once right before the exam. Remember, no cramming!

Make up your own questions for each chapter. Use the chapter headings and subheadings for ideas. Can you answer these questions quickly?

Flash cards are very good tools, particularly for memorization of important terms and definitions. You can create them out of the words and terms you're having the most difficulty with. Review them in random order until you feel confident that you know them.

Videos, (if offered with your course) are excellent study aids, because watching and listening to videos involve more of your senses than just reading. Plus, videos can be rewound and replayed as often as you need.

Practice exams (if available) can also help prepare you for the real thing. If you can score 90% or more on your practice exams, you're doing well!

Remember, effective studying is a result of active involvement, not just passively reading the text and materials.

***BONUS TIP: Score at least 90% correct on your study aids***

Your study aids are a valuable tool! Use them to track your progress. You'll know instantly which topics you're weaker on and which areas you need to review again.

## **SECRET #5: Remember to use Memorization Tools!**

### **Associative Memory Techniques**

What's the best way to recall important facts? When you associate something familiar to you with those facts. Here are some examples of associative memory techniques that will work for you.

#### **Acrostics**

Have you ever heard of the phrase, "Every good boy does fine?" This is an example of an acrostic. The first letter in each word stands for the note on the musical staff — "E, G, B, D, F". This is an aid to memory. For instance, in real estate, when you want to remember property tax dates, use the acrostic "No Darn Fooling Around" (for November, December, February, and April). See if you can make up creative acrostics for areas you need help remembering. Sometimes the more outrageous, the better!

#### **Acronyms**

Acronyms are actual words formed from the first letters of a series or list of words you need to remember. In grade school when you had to remember the names of the Great Lakes, you probably used the word "homes" to remember all five lakes - Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. Be creative in making up acronyms for yourself!

#### **Rhymes**

Making up a simple rhyme can be a very effective memorization tool. Remember, "I before e, except after c?"

#### **Imaging Techniques**

Visualization engages a different part of your brain than reading or listening, thereby adding to your learning success. You can use "LINKING" to recall a list or series of words by creating a visualization that contains all the words you need to recall. The more outlandish the image, the more likely you'll remember it. For instance, say you want to recall the errands you need to run that day. You need to go to the post office, buy milk, pick up your daughter at soccer practice, and buy dog food. "Link" these together by visualizing a dog with a letter in its mouth being chased by a cow kicking a soccer ball. It might sound strange, but it works!

**BONUS TIP:  
Make Sure You  
Understand What  
You Read**

NEVER go past a word you don't understand in the textbook. Stop and look it up, then continue. If you don't understand a sentence or paragraph in the text, take it a phrase at a time until it makes sense to you. Write down any term you find difficult and make it into a flash card. Review it the next day at the start of your study session. Soon you'll know them all!

## **SECRET #5: Remember to use Memorization Tools! (continued)**

### **Other Memory Techniques**

#### **Recitation**

Probably the most powerful tool you have to transfer ideas from your short-term memory to your long-term memory is to say those ideas *out loud* and in your own words.

#### **Interest**

You'll remember things better if you are *truly* interested in remembering them. It may sound simple, but it's true! Therefore, periodically recall your reasons for taking this course in the first place. Imagine all the benefits of your new career. Keep your goals in sight. This will refresh your interest in learning the material and aid in your study success.

#### **Repetition**

Remember, memory is interest plus *repetition*. Reading and re-reading is helpful, but also say things out loud, write them down, invent acronyms or use the linking technique. Practice what you've learned on your family or friends. Have them ask you questions based on the material you've studied. We learn through repetition. How do you think we learn the lyrics to a popular song or all those television ad lines and jingles? Because we've heard them over and over and over and . . .

**BONUS TIP:**  
***The past doesn't  
equal the future!***

Whatever happened before is *not* destined to happen again. So if you've failed in the past, it doesn't mean you'll fail in the future. The past is gone, so forget it. Let's start fresh!

## **SECRET #6: Visualize Your Success and Tame Your Fears!**

If you're like most people, you may have a little discomfort at the thought of taking a quiz or an exam. You may remember past experiences that didn't work out, or you may focus on how you'll feel if you don't do well. Your anxiety may even be intense enough to classify as real fear.

However, it's important to transform a fearful or negative attitude into a positive attitude, because a *positive* attitude counts for at least a third of your success on any exam! Luckily, we have the power to focus our attention on thoughts and feelings that serve us better.

**SECRET #6: Visualize Your Success and Tame Your Fears! (continued)**

But how do you generate a positive attitude? First, let's shift our focus away from how we'll feel if we fail to how we'll feel *when we succeed!* Each night (or day) at the end of your study session, visualize yourself receiving your Certificate of Completion. See the words, "Congratulations, you've passed your course." Smile, take a deep breath, relax and imagine telling your best friend or family member the good news. Enjoy your success. Pat yourself on the back for all that studying and good work. You deserve it!

At first, you may have difficulty visualizing if your fear level is high or if you've had a disappointment or two in the past. However, if you persist, little by little, the visualization will become easier. It can actually be quite fun!

Here's another visualization tip. Remember when we talked about duplicating the same study environment that you'd have during the actual exam as an aid to doing well? Another good visualization technique is to duplicate the "mental attitude" during study that you'd like to have during the exam.

You'd probably like to be relaxed, confident, clear-minded and alert during the exam. So, before each study session, take a minute to imagine yourself in the exam room, your feet planted on the floor, a clock on the wall in view, your pencils, eraser, and calculator on the desk in front of you. If this makes you nervous — fine. Next, close your eyes and take a long, deep breath. Inhale through your nose, slowly filling up your diaphragm first, then inhaling upward, filling your lungs. Hold your breath to the count of three, then exhale slowly through your mouth while saying the word "relax" in your mind. As you exhale, imagine your whole body letting go of any tension. Do this three or four times until you feel relaxed. With your eyes still closed, take a moment and concentrate on how it feels to be relaxed. Tell yourself, "I am in the exam room and I'm completely relaxed and feeling fine. I feel confident and intelligent! I remember everything I studied." (If you wish, substitute other sentences that feel helpful to you.) If you do this breathing technique and affirmation each time you study, you will develop a relaxation response. This relaxation response will become stronger each time you practice it.

**BONUS TIP:**  
***Anticipation Jitters are Normal!***

Don't deny what you're feeling. You're experiencing anxiety because you realize the importance of passing this exam - it's a natural reaction. However, don't let this fear paralyze you. Remember your visualization and relaxation techniques.



## **SECRET #6: Visualize Your Success and Tame Your Fears! (continued)**

When you actually find yourself in the exam room, you can close your eyes and repeat this procedure. The relaxation response you developed sitting in your study area will be recalled by your body and will help you relax during the exam. It works!

You can also add a cue to your relaxation response if you'd like. For example, in order to relax during an exam, you can program yourself to deep breathe and relax while gently tapping your index finger on the table. Practice this technique over and over again until your mind associates the relaxation response with the tapping of your finger. Then, if you feel tense when you're taking the actual exam, all you need to do is gently tap your index finger on the desk and you'll calm down!

If you psychologically prepare yourself for success, your chances for real success will increase dramatically. Professional athletes frequently use visualization techniques to improve their performance. They don't allow room for a single negative thought, and neither should you. Tell yourself you're looking forward to your exam, because it will be the culmination of all your hard work and in the end, you'll have a rewarding new career!

## **SECRET #7: Don't Cram The Night Before - What to Do Instead!**

### **The Day Before the Exam...**

If your exam is proctored and you need to drive to the location, make sure you load the car up with gas the day before your exam. Also review the two routes you've planned to take to get to the exam location. Think through and write down your pre-exam schedule so that you know when you have to leave the house to arrive at the exam early. Give yourself adequate time to shower, dress, eat, etc. Gather all the materials you'll need for the exam and put them in a box or bag.

### **The Night Before...**

Some people recommend not studying at all after dinner on the night before the exam. Instead, go for a long walk, or read, or hit some golf balls - whatever relaxes you. If you've followed your study schedule and used the suggestions in this booklet, you should be well prepared! Now all you need to do is make sure you get a good night's sleep. Staying up late, or going out to a party won't help your test results!

## **BONUS SECTION: Tips For During The Exam**

Regardless of whether your exam is proctored or not, *read the directions carefully*. Don't assume you already know what they say. Take nothing for granted. Be sure to note if you'll be penalized for wrong answers or not. If you're not penalized for wrong answers, then it's okay to guess.

Next, do a quick preview of the exam. If you don't already know how the exam is broken down, this will give you some idea. If any information comes into your mind during the preview, write it down quickly on your scrap paper for use later. Previewing the exam quickly may even give you some answers to questions. Also, your subconscious will be working on the difficult questions you've seen before you get to them.

Once you know how the exam breaks down, then you can quickly calculate how much time is reasonable to allot for each section. For instance, an essay question worth only a few points is not worth spending 30 minutes on!

If the exam is all multiple choice, you can calculate how much time each question should take in the following manner. Divide your time into quarterly segments. For instance, if you have 4 hours to complete the exam, and there are 150 questions, then set a goal to finish the exam in 3 hours. (*We will explain why later.*) Therefore, divide 3 hours by 4 and you'll get 4 forty-five minute segments. Write down when you should be done with one-quarter of the questions, one-half of the questions, three-quarters of the questions, and finally the whole exam. It will look something like this:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Question #</u>
9:00 - 9:45	#1 - #38
9:45 - 10:30	#39 - #75
10:30 - 11:15	#76 - #113
11:15 - 12:00	#114 - #150

## **BONUS SECTION: Tips For During The Exam (continued)**

This way, if at 9:45 you're still on question #12, you'll know you're moving too slow. But luckily, you've spotted your error early and you have time to pick up speed! If you're right at question #38, you know you're on time and doing well. Keep checking your progress periodically.

Work on the easiest parts of the exam first, but be sure to allow enough time for the difficult parts of the exam. If the exam is all multiple-choice questions, then just go ahead sequentially. But if the exam contains some multiple-choice and some essay questions, and you have a definite preference for one type of question over the other, complete the type of question you like better first. As a result, you'll gain confidence and momentum. Then when you go back to the harder questions, your subconscious mind has already been working on them.

When answering essay questions, write notes in the margin of your scrap paper to help you organize your ideas briefly before writing. Be sure to make your writing easy to read.

Any question you don't understand can be restated in your own words to make it easier for you to understand. However, be sure not to change the original meaning of the question!

### **Go Through Your Exam Four Times**

You're going to go through your exam four different times. That's why we took that extra hour away from your first pass through the exam. This last hour allows you time for the subsequent passes through the exam.

The first time through the exam, skip any questions you don't know the answers to. Draw a line on your scrap paper, and write down the numbers of those questions you skip.

After you've gone all the way through the exam the first time, count how many questions you've skipped and quickly calculate how much time you have for each of them, then go back through the exam a second time to answer those questions you've skipped. Try to answer them, but don't take longer than the time you allotted for each one. If you still don't know the answer, leave it blank.

The third time through the exam, go ahead and guess on those questions you left blank (if you won't be penalized for guessing).

## **BONUS SECTION: Tips For During The Exam (continued)**

The fourth time through the exam, proofread your answers. When you proofread, you're looking for these three things: clerical, mathematical or perceptual errors. Did you misunderstand the question? Is the decimal point in the right place? Did you mistakenly pencil in "A" for answer #23 instead of "B"? On the other hand, don't change any of the answers unless you're absolutely sure they're incorrect. Your first instincts are usually right.

It may be difficult for you to review the exam the fourth time. You're under stress and you may just want to finish as quickly as possible. But don't give up yet. You've worked hard, so see it through. Use all the time you have been allotted for the exam. Don't leave until the proctor says "Time is up!"

### **After The Exam .....**

*Congratulations! You've worked hard, and you've done well, so now you can relax. If you've faithfully followed these steps, you'll soon be able to enjoy your success!*