

Studying: then and now

Sociology, Communication



One June day, I staggered into a high school classroom to take my final exam in United States History IV. I had made my usual desperate effort to cram the night before, with the usual dismal results—I had gotten only to page 75 of a 400-page textbook. My study habits in high school, obviously, were a mess, but in college, I've made an attempt to reform my note-taking, studying, and test-taking skills. The first thing I tried to improve in college was note-taking. I took notes in high school classes but I often lost interest as compared to my note-taking at college.

Note taking in high school classes often began with doodling, drawing Martians, or seeing what my signature would look like if I married the guy in the second row. Now, however, I try not to let my mind wander, and I pull my thoughts back into focus when they begin to go fuzzy. In high school, my notes often looked like something written in Arabic. In college, I've learned to use a semi-print writing style that makes my notes understandable. When I would look over my high school notes, I couldn't understand them.

There would be a word like " Reconstruction," then a big blank, then the word " important. " Weeks later, I had no idea what reconstruction was or why it was important. I've since learned to write down connecting ideas, even if I have to take the time to do it after class. Taking notes is one thing I've really learned to do better since high school days. Another area that I needed to concentrate on was my method of studying. Ordinary studying during the term is another area in which I've made changes. In high school, I let reading assignments go.

I told myself that I'd have no trouble catching up on 200 pages during a 15-minute ride to school. College courses have taught me to keep pace with the

work. Otherwise, I feel as though I'm sinking into a quicksand of unread material. When I finally read the high school assignment, my eyes would run over the words, but my brain would be plotting how to get the car for Saturday night. Now, I use several techniques that force me to really concentrate on my reading. I also changed the way of study for taking tests

In addition to learning how to cope with daily work, I've also learned to handle study sessions for big tests. My all-night study sessions in high school were experiments in self-torture. Around 2: 00 A. M. , my mind, like a soaked sponge, simply stopped absorbing things. Now, I space out exam study sessions over several days. That way, the night before can be devoted to an overall review rather than raw memorizing. Most important, though, I've changed my attitude toward tests. In high school, I thought tests were mysterious things with completely unpredictable questions.

Now, I ask instructors about the kinds of questions that will be on the exam, and I try to " psych out" the areas or facts instructors are likely to ask about. These practices really work, and for me they've taken much of the fear and mystery out of tests. Since I've reformed, note-taking and studying are not as tough as they once were, and I am beginning to reap the benefits. As time goes on, my college test sheets are going to look much different from the red-marked tests of my high school days. Outline Introduction:

Thesis Statement: My study habits in high-school, obviously were a mess, but in college, I've made an attempt to reform my note-taking, studying and test-taking skills. Topic sentence 1: I took notes in high school classes but I often lost interest as compared to my note- taking at college

1. Interest
2. Note writing
3. Connection

Topic Sentence 2: Ordinary studying during the term is another area in which I've made changes.

1. Pace
2. Concentration Topic Sentence
3. In addition to learning how to cope with daily work, I've also learned to handle study sessions for big tests.
4. Spacing
5. Attitude Conclusion