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HOW TO STUDY

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classroom discussion is still fresh in my memory. I find, too, that I can master the most difficult subjects easier at this time than by waiting until later in the evening when I am mentally tired.

3. Alternate your periods of study with periods of relaxation.

It is just as hard to concentrate the attention on one topic without wandering off to another as it is to keep the eyes fixed upon one point for any length of time. If the eyes have become tired of gazing at one thing, the proper rest for them is not necessarily to close the eyes. Letting the gaze shift to other objects is just as restful. Periods of work must be succeeded by intervals of rest and recreation, because mind wandering is merely Nature's protest against continued effort.

Therefore, take a hint from Nature and allow for these periods of inactivity; decide for yourself that you need a period of rest and don't let Nature decide it for you by throwing you involuntarily into a state of inattention. Spend your period of rest in one of these ways: (a) relaxing completely for a while and letting the mind wander; (b) pacing about the room; (c) looking at a paper or a magazine; (d) reviewing some familiar topic, or taking up some other work.

I warn you not to use these short rest periods to read a novel, because it is apt to engross your interest so as to make your mind unfit to return to its serious tasks.

4. Don't try to do more than one thing at the same time.

This rule does not contradict what I said before about shifting occasionally from one piece of work to something else in order to rest the mind. I mean that the thing you are attending to for the time being should occupy your mind until you are familiar with it. Not only is it inadvisable to think of anything else at the same time, but it is absolutely disastrous to attention to do so.

5. Eliminate all extraneous conditions which are apt to distract your attention.

The purpose of this rule is to prevent "mind wandering" as the result of conditions which are within our control. Some of these distracting elements are noise in the room, heat or cold, lack of ventilation,

strained posture, physical fatigue and sluggishness. Sluggishness comes after a heavy meal. When your head begins to nod and your eyes to blink as you sit at your studies in the evening, you may not be sleepy, you may simply be sitting in a warm and stuffy room. It is fresh air that you need and not sleep. It is always a good rule to keep windows open. In studying under artificial light beware of eye-strain. It inflicts a continuous strain on the brain and on the whole nervous system, which depresses the vigor and the mental action. Always read or study with the light falling over the left shoulder onto the book or paper. As for study after physical exercise, it may be said that when the body is tired the mind is tired and study is futile. But light physical exercise improves circulation and is a good means of relaxation after a period of concentration.

6. Learn to organize what you are studying.

You have undoubtedly found in the course of your work that a multitude of facts are presented to you, both essential and non-essential—facts varying in degrees of importance. Some text-books make it a practice by indicating some of the essential facts with capitals, heavy type, italics, etc., but this is not always done, and in that case you must decide for yourself. Try to pick out the important points in your assignment. It is difficult, so think it out! Grasp its meaning and its relation to the fact to which it applies. When you concentrate your mind upon a topic and think about it, you are putting all your mental might on it and you are learning and remembering its meaning. But when you can come to class and recite briefly upon a topic, you have learned to organize what you have been studying; that is, you have learned to pick the essential facts of your assignment. Then, subordinate the non-essential facts to it.

7. Give more time to the more difficult points.

It is human nature to be always looking for what seems to be the easiest task, because there is a good deal more pleasure in doing what is easy. Don't get into the habit of trying to learn the easy points first, and leaving the more difficult ones to be taken up at the end. You may be too tired after going over the easier sections to be in the condition necessary to apprehend what you have left for the end. If Ancient History, or Botany, or Algebra, or English, or whatever your hardest subject is, you will do yourself justice if you will spend a little extra time on it.

8. Be enthusiastic about your work.

Without enthusiasm your study is forced and unpleasant, and your efforts wasted. Study with a view of making use of your knowledge, or your mental training in post school days, for the attainment of wealth, position, or fame. Know that in thinking out problems and questions, you are equipping yourself with driving power that can be transferred to other active spheres. With this object in view, your studies will become more vital and interesting, and above all, you will be surprised at the results of your work. Study that is pleasant becomes reflexive and can be assimilated much faster.