

# Learning Center Handbook

Learning Center  
Earle Hall, lower level  
Adelphi University  
Garden City, New York 11530

# Frequently asked questions about using the Learning Center.

- Who should use the Learning Center?
- If you keep postponing assignments;
- If you have difficulty taking lecture notes;
- If you do not ask questions in class;
- If you did not do well on your first paper, exam or quiz;
- If you are overwhelmed by your class work.
- If you wish to speak with an A student who has taken the class.
- If you just want someone to speak with or to look over your work.

# What services are offered at the Learning Center?

- One-to-one tutorials;
- Walk-in-group tutoring in all the science areas;
- A computer lab with internet access;
- American English conversation groups specifically geared for the international student;
- Quiet study rooms for individuals or groups;
- Workshops to prepare for graduate exams;
- One on one strategy skill workshops: Taking notes; Time Management; Preparing for Exams.

# Who works at the Learning Center?

- The Director – Oversees all the programs of the Learning Center.
- The Coordinator – Assists the director in the workings of the Learning Center; runs the graduate studies' workshops.
- Peer Learning Assistants – A+ students presently attending Adelphi University and are representative of all the major degree programs of the University.

# Preface

- This handbook is designed to help you develop new skills by enhancing the academic skills you already use. By putting some of these methods into practice, you will begin to notice positive changes in your academic career. By using this handbook you will find helpful information about attitude, time management, and stress. This booklet is an aid and does not contain all the approaches to study skill problems.

# Attitude

- No one can get you to change your habits if you do not have the desire to change them. Remember that everyone has different ways of learning and studying. You can make a difference as long as you have a positive attitude, motivation, and focus on success. A change will only come from hard work, so set realistic goals and reward yourself for obtaining those goals.

# Adjusting Your Attitude

- Accept that not every teaching style will be to your liking. Your attitude going into the class will affect your perceptions while in the class.
- You need to care in order to listen effectively. You will listen well in class if you want to learn.
- Try to reduce distractions that will cause problems during class (uncomfortable clothing, empty stomach, lack of sleep or being unprepared). Try to deal with outside distractions (warm room, hallway noise, or a monotone instructor) in a positive manner.
- Go to each class and participate! You are paying a lot of money and spending a lot of time to be in college so make the most of your opportunities.
- Set short-term goals that lead up to accomplishing larger, long-term goals.

# Time Management

- A major problem that many college students face is having large amounts of unstructured time and no knowledge of how to manage this time. The purpose of this section is to assist you in establishing study patterns that utilize time effectively.
- Many students who have learned how to use time efficiently discovered that this one accomplishment made all the difference between mediocrity and outstanding success in school. By budgeting their time more effectively, students were able to get as much as 50% more studying done, as well as enjoying more leisure time for sports, parties, family, jobs, themselves, and other extracurricular activities. Time management reduces anxiety by reducing the amount of time wasted and eliminates the need for “last minute” cramming.

# Helpful Hints for Effective Time Management

- 1. Plan a semester schedule of balanced activities filled with fixed requirements: study time, eating, sleeping, class, church, work, etc. Then, plan a second schedule for each week.
- 2. Utilize odd hours during the day for studying. Establishing habits of using them for studying will result in free time for recreation or activities at other times in the week.
- 3. Prepare for your classes on a regular, weekly basis in order to help keep you up to date. This review should be cumulative, covering briefly all the work done so far in the semester.
- 4. Make a list of activities that have nothing to do with your homework and rank these items from greatest to least importance. Examples include laundry, cleaning, or calling a friend. When you find some free time, you can accomplish these goals.
- 5. Evaluate your time schedule and see how it is working. Be sure to make appropriate changes so that your days will flow smoothly.
- 6. Set goals and be realistic. Remember not to push your limits and that even getting a little accomplished is a good start. It is much better to have extra time instead of forcing things into a small time slot.
- 7. Use time early and often for those assignments that are due mid-semester and right before finals week. Break down major projects into smaller units of time so that you do not have a lot of work at one time.

# Four Elements of a Useful Goal

- **Specific:** Describe what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible.
- **Challenging:** Your goal should take energy and discipline to accomplish.
- **Realistic:** Set a goal you know you are actually capable of obtaining.
- **Stated Completion Date:** Set goals that break long-term goals into shorter pieces and specify target completion dates.

# Time Schedule Methods

- Making a schedule is a great way to fit both class and recreation into your week. The human body is accustomed to repetition, so if it is 4:30 and you usually eat at 4:30, you normally get hungry at this time. The mind operates in a similar fashion. It can become accustomed to studying at a certain time. Therefore, studying becomes as routine as eating and your mind and body will remind you when it is time to study.

# Use the following tips to create your own time schedule:

- Block out time for class and work.
- Block out any other “musts” for the week, such as appointments, meetings, Learning Center, activities, practice, etc.
- Block out 3-4 hours per day, Sunday – Thursday, to study. These times should be as close as possible to the same time every day and every week.
- Use the time before going out on Thursday, Friday or Saturday nights to study or review for half an hour to an hour.
- Sunday afternoon should be used in preparation for the week ahead.

# Why Time Schedules Are Effective

- Setting up a schedule helps to reduce the need to cram for an exam
- Studying in set time increments according to your concentration level helps reduce frustration and maintain energy levels.
- Every hour should include a five-minute break.
- Your studying environment is equally important and should be the same every night.

# Procrastination

- Make a list of things to get done and check them off as completed. Reward yourself.
- Try piling books and notebooks on a desk or table so you can see the pile get smaller.
- Work on subjects that you don't like first. This way you will look forward to doing your favorites.
- Set mock deadlines for writing assignments so that you have a rough draft done before the work is due. This gives you time to edit and revise and helps you avoid regrets about not developing an idea as well as you could have.

# Stress

- Stress is a very natural and important aspect of life. Without it, we would not be motivated, alert, or driven. Bad reactions occur when we are distressed and overreact. This can cause physical problems like nausea, insomnia, or bad habits such as drinking, smoking, abusing drugs, and overeating. The best way to deal with stress is to approach things in realistic and reasonable ways.

# Managing Stress

- Learn to relax. Take deep breaths, stretch, and smile
- If you believe you are stressed out, you are.
- Get organized, prioritize, and learn from your mistakes.
- Many times, being stressed out is just an excuse to avoid studying. Try to think on a positive level and avoid making excuses. Be sure to allow yourself extra time to accomplish the tasks.
- Accept yourself and work to improve the good things that you are doing.
- Take time for yourself. Read, run, talk to a friend, or play a game. Avoid overeating, alcohol, smoking, and drugs. These only make you feel worse.
- Be positive and avoid panicky people. They can be contagious.
- If stress symptoms persist over a period of two weeks, it would be helpful to speak with a family member, advisor, or counselor.

# Taking Notes

- Academic success in college requires taking good notes in the classroom. Good notes help you to focus your attention on the subject and keep your mind from wandering. They aid in absorption and concentration, summarizing arguments, getting an overview of the text or lecture, and strengthening the recall process.

# Note-Taking Tips for Math

- Write down the “title” of the lesson. If you don’t know, ask the professor.
- Write down the math problem and each step in the solution using math symbols. Next to each step, write down in your own words exactly what you are doing.
- Write down a question mark next to anything you don’t understand. Ask the instructor to explain the parts where you have written your question marks. Don’t just “let it go” thinking that you will figure it out later. Later rarely comes.
- When you get home, before you begin your homework, highlight in color the titles you have written in your notes. The highlighted information will help to give you the “big picture” of what you are doing. Remember to do all homework problems, not just some of them!

# Noteworthy Suggestions

- Put your notes into a loose-leaf, 3 hole binder so that you can add and remove pages.
- Use ink instead of pencil. Notes are bolder and catch your attention quicker. Use markers, highlighters, crayons to aid this even more.
- Date your notes and keep them in order.
- Include charts, diagrams, and doodles in your notes. They will aid in your recall process.
- Use as much paper as you need. Skip lines and use wide margins so that you can see your thoughts and understand them.
- Rewrite notes as soon as possible after class to organize and neaten them up. Do not, however, use this as a method of study. You may rewrite the notes without absorbing and retaining any information.
- Lengthy, detailed notes are inefficient. Keep them simple.
- Use a tape recorder ( with the instructor's permission) but still pay attention during class.
- Copy notes out of text into your own words so that you can recall them more easily.
- Review regularly. People tend to forget 73% of what they learned in 1week and 98% of what they learned in 3 weeks

# Marking Text

- Have a good reason to mark a page, not just to fool yourself into studying.
- Summarize works or phrases in margins but use words sparingly so that you will be able to understand.
- Use a variety of marks and be consistent: underline, circle, bracket.
- Indicate main ideas and the relationships between them using your margins or drawing arrows.
- Review right after you make your markings.
- Pay attention to the first and last sentences of a paragraph. They are often the key points or summaries.

# Before Class

- Complete assignments when they are due. It is a part of the reviewing process.
- Prepare and review previous notes to get your mind ready to listen.
- Write down questions that you will want answered during the lecture.
- Familiarize yourself with important terms so you will not get “hung up” on them during class.
- Sit in a place where you can see and hear the instructor clearly.

# During Class

- Concentrate and focus.
- Use active listening to get key points. Tell yourself to listen carefully and get yourself back on track quickly if you become distracted.
- Pay attention to stressed items, repeated items, and definitions and be sure to copy everything from the board, including charts and diagrams.
- Be positive! Think “I can...,” “ I will...” “ I am able...”
- Look and listen. Facial expressions, gestures and body language of the professor can say a lot about the importance of the subject matter.
- Be flexible! Adjust your note taking technique to that of the lecturer.
- Stay connected with the material no matter how fast or slow the lecture is going.
- Stay focused and try not to get weighed down by petty details.
- Use phrases, not sentences. Abbreviate whenever possible to save as much time as you can.

# After Class

- Review and rehearse as soon as possible to make sure you understand the material that you will need to recall later.

# Reading Text

- Textbooks are written for a purpose, not just to cost you a large amount of money and waste space in your desk. The information they contain is very useful but you must be willing to find that information, learn it, and include it with the material you learn from the lecture. No matter how much time is spent studying, it will be most effective if you read and then think reflectively on the material presented. Remember that you can read to memorize and read to understand. Be sure you know which one of these an assignment calls for.

3. **Read.** Read for the main idea. Understand the general concept that the author is trying to convey to the reader. After you know this, supporting details of the main idea will be easy to recall. Highlight the major points so you do not have to reread during review. Coordinate your notes with your reading.

4. **Recite:** After you finish reading, repeat in your own words what the author is saying. This demonstrates that you really comprehend the material and further reinforces it by repetition.

5. Go over the main points in the text and

# Memorization Techniques

- Acrostics: Phrases or poems in which the first letter of each word or line works as a cue to help you remember. Every Good Boy Does Fine is used to help remember the notes on a musical scale.
- Acronyms: Words formed out of the first letter of each word or line. SOH CAH TOA helps you remember Sine as Opposite over Hypotenuse, Cosine as Adjacent over Hypotenuse, and Tangent as Opposite over Adjacent.
- Narrative: Make up a story that ties together all the information that you need to know.
- Rhyme: Simple childhood fun can be very useful.
- Imagery: Link items together by likeness or difference.
- Association: Associate difficult concepts with articles in the classroom. The blackboard can serve to remind you of the concepts of "Plato's Cave."

# Studying

- Success in college takes effort and motivation. As a student, study habits can be improved at any time, although it is important to begin the semester with a solid study plan. Remember that studying is an active process that does not have to take up endless hours. With steady progress and good time management, your skills will improve quickly.
- Remember that these suggestions are only suggestions and will not help you in any way unless you motivate yourself to practice them over time. Trying a new study technique is like trying a new pair of shoes; a little uncomfortable at first but once broken in, it is hard to get rid of. Give the new study technique a chance. It can soon become a comfortable and rewarding effort.

# Study Plan

- Get a small notebook or planner and enter your daily assignments as soon as you get them. Forgetting an assignment is a poor excuse for not getting your school or meeting time done.
- Set a specific time to study in the evening and do not allow anyone to interfere with your schedule. Budget your time so that this study period is the same every night.
- Take breaks! The average attention span is 50-90 minutes. You will learn more studying in small portions and you will not get “burnt out” as easily.

# Study Methods

- Study the most difficult or least interesting material first, when your energy is high.
- When you start to study, avoid fooling around. Get to work quickly.
- If you are no longer concentrating as you are studying, stop for a while and do something that stimulates you. There is no need wasting time staring at pages.
- To remember a difficult point, highlight or underline it in the book or better than that take notes. Learn how to outline with a minimum of wasted space and time.
- Master the vocabulary of the subject. Familiarity with the terminology of the subject is very useful in study and is of immense value in helping to make a creditable showing on exams.
- If you learn something that seems “out of the ordinary” or not quite what you thought it would be, make a note of it because it may confuse you later on.
- Make flash cards. This is a good procedure for languages or history.
- Talk about the materials you are studying with someone else, preferably with someone who is interested and knows something about the subject.
- When you come to the end of your study time, observe whether or not you can summarize what you have learned. Write down the key points you remember and review the points you did not recall.

# Environment

- Have a specific place at home, the library or the Learning Center, where you can study without distractions.
- Organize your materials and have everything that you will need within your reach.
- Work under some tension (i.e. in a chair that is not too comfortable) especially while studying a more difficult subject.
- Memory is context and state dependent. Study in the same kind of classroom setting and be in the same frame of mind as you would be for class or an exam. Go to the classroom before class to review.

# Classroom Tactics

- Before you enter a class, review rapidly in your mind the main topics of the work for the period.
- During recitation, try to answer, to yourself, every question asked, instead of sitting passively. How would your answer have succeeded? This way, you get the advantage of reciting the whole lesson, without the strain.
- Ask the professor for help whenever you really need it but do not expect the professor to show you a way to understand without studying.
- Have self-confidence! Try not to let others in the class keep you from speaking up for fear of embarrassment.

# And Don't Forget....

- It is better to be one day's work ahead, than one day behind.
- Reward yourself for accomplishing a goal. This is great positive reinforcement for a job well done!

# Conditions of Study

- Get the best conditions you can. Deal with distractions and don't give up trying to study. If you refuse to give up, you can quickly learn to ignore what you cannot help.
- Learn by yourself; review with others when possible.
- Be sure to study with enough light and avoid cross lights causing shadows, flickering lights, and direct sunlight on your book.
- If you need glasses, wear them. Comfortable eyes will make you feel better all over.
- Manage your emotions. If angry, upset, or sad, you may have to adjust your study schedule. Study in smaller time increments and provide more time to get the work done. Seek help, from the Counseling Center or your own counselor if the feelings continue to interfere with studying.

# Hints For Problem-Solving Science Course

## Math, Physics, Chemistry, Statistics

- Time yourself when working practice problems. This helps you determine how efficiently you will use the exam time to solve problems on the test.
- Practice working problems until you can do them without referring back to the text. Don't be satisfied with the feeling that you "understand" the reading and example problems given. You need sufficient practice to work problems out correctly and effectively.
- Even if you don't understand the reading, try to work out the examples. The principles being taught in the reading will become clearer through practical application.
- Make sure you can explain your solutions to the problems. This will help you understand the process by which you found your solution.

# Hints

- Make flash cards or study sheets to solidify what you have learned. Use these to quiz yourself, not only on what the formula is, or what its various parts are, but how to apply it.
- Refer to another text to find explanations, formulas, or concepts that you find confusing in your own textbook and to work out more sample problems.
- Work with another student in the class. Comparing notes and assignments can clarify confusing concepts.
- Re-work difficult problems. They will become easier and you will be more confident when confronted with challenging problems.

# Hints

- Move on to another type of problem if you are getting frustrated. You can always go back after taking a quick break, and sometimes a fresh start can make a difference.
- When you feel as though you've mastered the material, take an entire practice exam to test yourself on all the concepts and the time it takes you to complete them.

# Foreign Language Study Tips

- Review vocabulary every night. Use flashcards and tape them to objects that the words stand for.
- Watch foreign videos first without sound. Get a general idea of what is happening and where the film takes place so that you may listen for key phrases. Then, watch the video again with the sound on to listen for the content of the film, not the meaning of every word. Write a summary of the film in that language.
- Practice dictation by speaking out loud to a study partner or a peer learning assistant in the Learning Center who can correct you.
- Read and speak the language: Try to predict from the title, illustrations, setting, and introduction what the text is about before you actually read it. Don't try to translate every word on the first reading. Gain a general understanding of the paragraph, and then go back for specific details later. Try to use context clues to determine the meaning of an unknown word before you reach for a dictionary. Look for prefixes, suffixes, and compound words to help with this. Don't write the English translation above an unknown word. You will focus on the English word and forget the unknown word again.

# Conducting Research

- Use all possible resources available to you: newspapers, Internet, microfilm, books and magazines.
- Define the scope of the essay/paper and write a clear thesis statement.
- Decide what information you want to use from your course reading list, bibliographies, periodical or newspaper, or statistics.
- Keep a list of all the sources you have looked at. It is easier to eliminate a source from your list than trying to find it after returning materials.
- Use the most current information available.
- Develop an outline and write your paper.
- Use a consistent style of footnoting, such as MLA (Humanities) or APA (Sciences) formatting.

# Tips For Improving your Paper

- Begin the writing process as soon as possible – the day you receive the assignment.
- Brainstorm several potential topics and make a list of words related to the topic that come to mind. For each listed word, provide yourself with an example to illustrate the point.
- Discuss the topic, thesis, and outline of your paper with your professor to be sure that your paper satisfies the purpose of the assignment.
- Study and research your topic to see what has already been written on it. This may generate other ideas regarding your approach to the topic.
- Free write using whatever technology ( computer, tape recorder, pen and paper) that helps you. Focus only on ideas and their development. Then, generate 3 sentences that summarize 3 points that you intend to make regarding the topic. Use these sentences to begin separate paragraphs that cover each point in depth.

# Tips

- Use charts, timelines, index cards, and graphics to organize your free writing and begin writing the first draft.
- Upon completion of the first draft, read your paper aloud. This will help identify areas of your paper that may need further clarification or supporting information.
- Create a personal checklist of your common writing and grammatical errors. Edit and proofread your paper carefully, using your personal checklist.
- Be sure to accurately document all information used as references for your ideas and information on the topic. Check with your professor to be sure that you follow the appropriate format for citing this information.

# Preparing for Exams

- Pre-Test
- 1. Practice continuous reading and review. Preparation for an exam begins when you begin the course.
- 2. Find out from your instructor what the exam will cover and how it will be set up: objective, short essay, long essay, or a combination.
- 3. Take extra time for review the week before an exam. Study in short chunks of time throughout the week. Go over the lecture notes and prepare summary sheets for large amounts of lecture and textbook notes. Meet with classmates to go over the material and check your textbook for review sections at the end of the chapter.

# Preparing for exams

- 4. Take notes in EVERY class. Avoid missing class unless it is absolutely necessary.
- 5. If you cannot sleep the night before an exam, get out of bed and exercise. Lying in bed will only increase your level of anxiety.
- 6. Prepare for each class as if there will be a pop quiz.

# Test Time

- Once the exam is handed out, look at all of it so that you know how it is set up, how to approach it, and how much time to allow for each section.
- Notice the point value for each question. Try not to dwell on a 2 point question when a 10 point question is not completed.
- Read the directions and underline anything important that you might forget.
- Leave nothing blank. You at least have a chance of being correct.
- If you are confused about a question, think about it as you go through the test and search for clues that may help you remember.
- Remember that your first guess is usually your best one so do not make changes without a good reason.
- Try to answer questions from the instructor's point of view. Recall what points the instructor emphasized and deemed important.
- Circle key words in difficult questions.
- Use all of the allotted time for the test. If you have extra time, cover up your answers and actually rework the question that you are least sure of.

# Advice on studying for different exams

- True/False exams: Watch for limiting terms like-all, never, none, and always. Overlooking these can cost you several points.
- Remember – guess when you are not sure unless you will be penalized for the wrong answer.

# Exam - Matching

- Look at both columns before beginning. Observe how they relate. Match the items that you are positive about first, then go back and make your choices.

# Exam – Multiple Choice

- After reading the question, answer it without looking at the choices. Then pick the choice closest to your answer.
- Consider each option before picking one. If you cannot find the answer, it is helpful to cross out the ones that you know are false and then pick the best answer from the remaining choices. Usually 2 can be eliminated quite readily.

# Exam - Objective

- Study as if it were an essay exam. Stress specifics. For true and false questions write some false statements as you study.

# Exams - Problem and Essay

- Problem exams: Memorize formulas as needed and practice the problems.
- Essay exams: First understand what the question is asking. Jot down everything you know about the question.
- The first sentence of your answer should repeat the question to forcefully show the reader how you will develop your answer.
- Make sure that major points stand out and support the main ideas with examples and facts.
- Make clear transitions from one major point to the next.
- The way you explain the concept discussed should be clearly understood by a person who has not taken the course.
- Stick to the question. Skip any irrelevant details.
- Conclude your answer with a summary statement.
- Proofread for misspelled words, sentence fragment, run-on-sentences, comma splices, subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent agreement errors, or other errors which might cause the reader not to understand what you have written.
- Handwriting should be legible and some space should be left in the margins for comments or additions.

# Post test

- After your exam, review it entirely, making sure that you filled in all blanks.
- Look for careless errors.
- Only make changes when it is necessary. “Gut” feeling answers are usually the best to go with.

# Reviewing a returned exam

- When you get your exam back, analyze what you did wrong so that you know how to approach it better next time. Take note of what you did right so you will not have to worry about certain areas as much next test.
- Always check to see that the point total is correct. Mistakes can occur sometimes.
- Know why you missed a question. The reason you missed the question is important in taking your next test.
- Review the instructor's comments, so that you know what is expected next time.
- Learn the types of questions and tricks that the instructor is most likely to use again.
- Determine whether the questions came from the text, the lectures or both. Concentrate more on that source for the next exam.
- Review how you studied for the exam and look for better study methods.
- Always speak with your professor and let him/her know how much you want to improve.

# Test trap to be avoided

Make a list and prioritize what needs to be studied.

- Review your syllabus, reading materials and notes.
- Be active with the material. Ask questions and be sure that you can answer your question.
- Review daily.
- Avoid cramming.
- Avoid exhaustion so take breaks from studying, relax and unwind doing something fun.
- Eat well, get an adequate amount of sleep and exercise often.