



# **Study Skills Seminar**

## **Student Packet**

### **Module #2 — Basic Study Skills**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Capital Composite Squadron**

443 Airport Rd; Suite 4

Santa Fe, NM 87501

## ABOUT LANGUAGE

### Statements & Related Details

Every thing you read or hear comes in the form of either a statement or a related detail. Whether a text book, magazine article or political speech, this structure can be found throughout.

Whenever anyone makes a statement of any kind, the listener has the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting the idea. The related details are the things that help the listener decide.

ST: A number that can be composed by multiplying 2 or more prime numbers is called a composite number.

RD: For example, 6 is a composite number because it can be composed by multiplying 2 times 3.

Most related details support the statement but it is not required that they do. A related detail may question the statement or deny it.

ST: My esteemed colleague said that the price of tea in China has much to do with the economic climate in this country.

RD: I would just like to say that I don't see what this has to do with the price of tea in China.

Supporting details come in the form of either additional bits of information, proofs or examples. There can be any one or any combination of the three but they will all relate somehow to the original statement.

When taking notes make the statement on a new line and indent the related details.

### Definitions

Unless you understand very precisely the definitions of the words being used, you will be in danger of completely missing what is being taught.

If a question seems fuzzy to you, you probably don't know the definition of the words being used.

If someone is "talking above your head", you probably don't know the definition of the words being used.

Whatever your problem, with any kind of material, the first thing to do is to define the words being used.

A definition has two purposes;

- \* to distinguish one item from all other items in the Universe.
- \* to establish between people exactly what will be meant when a particular word is used between them. (This is called operationalizing.)

In other words, definitions are used to isolate and to communicate. The first time a new word is introduced in a text or class, it is usually defined. You are told what it is, what it does or what it means. Let's examine just how definitions work in order to better understand the process.

To define something:

You first name the item..... A cell

You say the words "is a" which is actually short for; "is a member of the larger category."..... is a

You name the category, group, or general classification ..... mass of protoplasm

You give the things that make this item different from all the other items in the classification.....

which is the smallest structural unit of an organism able to function independently.

### Idioms

Knowing a language includes knowing the morphemes, words and compounds of that language and their meanings. It also includes knowing the meanings of fixed phrases (idioms) that consist of more than one word. The usual semantic rules do not apply. When I describe 'my car', I am defining it by placing the item 'my car' in a category or classification. Normally in a language, that category must be able to accept the item. Take for example the sentence:

**My car is a sedan.**

The item "My car" can be placed in the classification of "sedan" because the group sedan can contain examples of various shapes sizes and models that are all commonly sedans.

Unlike the group 'sedan', the group 'fruit' does not readily accept a type of car.

**My car is a banana.**

does not follow the usual semantic rules and thus has no meaning.

**My car is a lemon.**

on the other hand, is understandable because it has a specific idiomatic meaning.

All languages contain idiomatic phrases and here are a few of some English idioms.

**sell down the river**  
**eat my hat**  
**let his hair down**

**give him a piece of your mind**  
**bite your tongue**  
**put his foot in his mouth**

Idioms tend to be frozen in form and do not fit well in other combinations or allow the word order to change.

**She put her foot in her mouth.**

has the same structure as,

**She put her bracelet in the drawer.**

but where,

**The drawer in which she put her bracelet was hers.**

and

**Her bracelet was put in her drawer.**

have the same meaning as the original sentence.

**The mouth in which she put her foot was hers.**

and

**Her foot was put in her mouth.**

do not have the same idiomatic sense.

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## BASIC STUDY SKILLS

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### Organization

- \* In class, sit in the front of the class.
- \* Attend every scheduled class.
- \* Revise your schedule as it becomes necessary.
- \* Deal with school on a long term basis instead of just a daily basis.  
Divide long term objectives into smaller, manageable tasks.
- \* Review materials on a regular basis to help to commit it to memory.
- \* Be flexible on the amount of time you spend on each subject.
- \* Study difficult material in several short periods instead of one long intense period.
- \* Begin your homework with the hardest or

- least interesting when you are fresh and spend about one half hour on that course. Take about a five minute break and then work on the easiest assignment for a half hour. After another five minute break, begin the next hardest assignment, etc.
- \* Do not give up athletic activities so as to do better in school. In fact many skills learned in sports can help you do better in school.
  - \* A positive attitude is necessary for good performance and can make up for a less than ideal study environment, but can't make up for poor study habits.
  - \* Always attempt to improve study skills and habits.
  - \* Prepare a daily and weekly activities schedule this will actually save you time in the long run.
- C Tailor your schedule to your own circumstances but stick to your schedule rather than studying as time and energy permit. Study together when possible.

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### **Taking Notes**

- \* Keep notes in a logical order. Clearly dated and labeled.
- \* Take notes in outline form  
This helps distinguish the main points from supporting details.
- \* Recopy notes as a way to review  
This is a good way to better organize your thoughts. It also brings more learning styles in to play.
- \* Compare class notes with corresponding textbook assignments  
This will help identify concepts that are poorly understood.
- \* To be able to take good notes, be an effective listener  
Ignore other noise and distractions.
- \* Use abbreviated words and symbols to get an

- idea on paper quickly.
- \* Give special attention to technical terms and factual details which are given in class.  
These are the vocabulary items used to describe the subject.
- \* Do not try to write down every thing the teachers says.  
Rather, jot down phrases and key words. You can fill in the details when you review and rewrite your notes.
- \* Review class notes daily while they are fresh.

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### **Reading Textbooks**

- \* After reading a passage, say the main ideas aloud to reinforce what you have just read.
- \* Pay special attention to boldface and italic type styles. They are used to emphasize important ideas and concepts.
- \* Take notes while you read the textbook. This will help when you review later.
- \* Try relating new material to something you have already learned. This will help you remember the new material longer.
- \* Take time to study charts and graphics before you read the text. They can summarize complex ideas and relationships without using a lot of words. They also provide information not provided in the text.
  - \* Study the relationship between the graphics and the text.
  - \* Analyze the graph legend (paying special attention to scale and units) so you can fully understand the graphic. These provide a lot of information.
  - \* Numerical data is often easier to understand in graphic form.
- \* Use other resources to help clarify confusing textbook sections.
- \* Look up unknown words while reading text assignments it can make the difference between understanding what you have read or not.

- \* Vary reading speed depending on the type of material being read.
- \* Review the subject headings and boldface type before you read the chapter.
- \* Read entire phrases  
Language usually contains idioms where phrases mean more than the individual words.

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### Using Resources

- \* The most up to date information can be found in newspapers, magazines, and journals.  
Be sure to separate fact from opinion when using a journal or news paper.
- \* Use non-print references such as microfiche, cassettes and computerized indexes.
- \* Collect references for a bibliography throughout the writing process.
- \* Spend some time browsing through the reference section of the library to familiarize yourself with what is available.
- \* Talk to the librarian for help in searching for resources.
- \* Read primary information sources before you begin writing but. begin writing your first draft early in the research process. This will help formalize your thoughts and direct your subsequent research.
- \* Keep track of name, date, source and location of all references.
- \* Use several different resources when researching a paper.
- \* Use a thesaurus to find the right word to express an idea.

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### Preparing for Tests

- \* Predict Test Questions
  - \* Look over previous test questions (save old test if possible)
  - \* Look for patterns, trends etc.
  - \* Get a good 'overview' of the test topics

- \* Find out the kind of test you will be taking

- \* You will use a different strategy for different tests such as objective, essay, analytical, etc.
- \* Calculation tests use practice problems
- \* Memorizing without meaning may work for objective test but are not effective on essay tests.
- \* Complete all relevant assignments even if the time for credit has passed.
- \* Give your self practice test. (chapter test in the book, etc.) in the form the test will be given.
- \* Test anxiety can be reduced through study and review.
- \* Be sure you are well rested and have a good breakfast on the day of the test.
- \* Review on a regular basis.  
This is more effective than last minute cram sessions.

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### Taking Tests

- \* Take as much time as necessary on each question but do not dwell. Leave enough time to check answers at the end.
- \* If stumped by a question, skip it and come back at the end.
- \* Ignore how long it takes others to take a test. They may just not know anything.
- \* Panic attack — stop, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and the go on.
- \* Test strategies
  - \* Multiple choice  
Read all the questions first
  - \* Essay  
Look for key words and phrases (explain, prove, define, identify)
  - \* Use point assignments as a guide to how much information is required.
  - \* Be thorough with your answer. This is

- more important than being long.
- \* Concentrate on the question at hand. Don't be distracted by the next question.
  - \* Start with a good general statement (position) then facts, details, examples (defense)
  - \* True/False  
Look out for words like always and never.  
Find out about guessing on T/F tests. Sometimes guessing can be advantageous.
  - \* Analytical/Computational  
Write down hard-to-remember formulas, equations, rules before working the problem.
  - \* Turn in a picture perfect exam  
Studies have shown that papers that are neat and easy to read get higher scores than sloppy papers containing exactly the same words.  
Use erasable pen or pencil wherever possible.

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### Rules for Students

- Rule 1. Be sure that the teacher knows what name is attached to your face, and vice versa. This may become crucial for a student on the border line between grades. If the teacher can't remember who the student is, there is no reason to give the student the benefit of the doubt.
- Rule 2. Eliminate, forever, the verbal behavior known as Hedging.  
Typical Hedges are:  
"I know this is probably a stupid question, but..."  
"I'm sure everybody else knows the answer to this question except me, but ..."  
"I know you said we couldn't turn in our papers late, but..."

"I know this is against the rules and there's no point in even asking for an exception, but..."

This is the verbal equivalent to wearing a sign on your backside that says, "Please kick me - I love to be a victim!"

Rule 3. Never use any verbal mode or speech pattern with an instructor that gives the impression, "Okay, we're equals...I can do anything you can...You're no great shakes." Most teachers have a rule not to humiliate students in front of people. This is along the same vane as; "Pick on people your own size." If you break this rule you can forget about Rule 1. You will be remembered.

Rule 4. Make sure you understand and accept the class rules and expectations the first week of class. If they are not specified, it is your responsibility to ask during that first week. Don't expect to object half way through the semester.

Rule 5. When you want a teacher to do something for you, such as include extra credit work into your class grade, prepare in advance and bring that preparation with you to present as a possible alternative. You must show the teacher that you deserve the extra consideration, time and effort on his part. Never try the following:

"I need an extra credit project, what can I do?"

"I know my term paper is due tomorrow, so I thought I'd better ask you for a couple of topics I could write on."

Either one of these will exempt you from Rule 1. Remember, you are asking the teacher to do something special for you. Be prepared before you go to the teacher.

Rule 6. If you behave like a doormat, expect to be stepped on.

Rule 7. Before you alienate a teacher for a

stupid reason, such as how good it would make you feel to demonstrate to the class what an idiot he is, remember this: The day will probably come when you need to ask that teacher for something. An incomplete grade, A late exam. Extra credit work. When that day comes, and you have broken this rule, the answer will probably be no.

Rule 8. Never let the teacher find out that you have not read whatever it was you were supposed to have read, unless you have been directly asked and would have to lie to conceal that fact. This also goes for the class syllabus, reading lists, class assignments and course requirements.

Rule 9. If you aren't sure about an assignment or something discussed in Rule 8, do not ask the instructor. Ask another student, preferably the class superstar. Remember, you are responsible for all assignments even if you are unable to attend class. Absence is no excuse for not learning.

Rule 10. Never argue with an instructor in front of other students or faculty or anybody, unless it is truly a matter of principal and you are prepared to accept the consequences. Rather, talk to the teacher after class where you can discuss the disagreement on a more equal footing. Alone, the teacher can more easily admit the error if there is one and will usually pass the correction on to the rest of the class.

Rule 11. If, in spite of your best intentions, you find yourself in a situation where you have really fouled up. You are 100 percent wrong, and disaster approaches. There is only one thing you can do, and your not going to like it. Go to the teacher after school, sit down, and level. Say that you are there because you have done whatever ridiculous thing you have done, that you already know that you have no excuse for

it, and that you have come to clear it up as best you can. Do not rationalize; do not talk about how this would never have happened if...;do not say that the instructor should have done something to ward this off; do not in other words try to spread the guilt around. Level and be done with it. You may have to suffer the consequences anyway, but your chances are far better with this tactic than with any other.