

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty No. 5

The Top 10...

Tips To Promote Effective Student Study Skills

- ✓ Realize you may be part of the problem. Do you have great PowerPoint presentations that cover the readings? Do you carefully review the homework problems? Why study when your professor will do all the work? Instead of concentrating on providing information, spend class time developing new examples, working with students to determine ways to apply the new information, having them prepare material to “teach” what they are learning to others, or having them write and answer their own problems.
- ✓ In 100 level courses that use textbooks, teach students how to take their own notes from the reading. Taking notes is far more engaging for our brain than highlighting. If you do not know another system, use “3 colors”. As they take notes, tell them to put major chapter headings in red, minor headings in green and detailed points in black.
- ✓ Reward students in a meaningful way for taking notes on their readings. An ‘open-note quiz’ at the very beginning of class rewards them for taking notes and encourages prompt attendance. Give 5 easy questions on topics in the chapter which, if they have notes, they should easily get a 100 on.
- ✓ If you teach a course that requires readings but not in a text, teach “active reading” which encourages students to “talk back” to what they read, rather than simply receiving information. Write in margins. Jot down questions. Note disagreements.
- ✓ Summarizing. Show students how to summarize and have them do this as they study. Reinforce their budding skills by forming small groups in class to share summaries on a particular concept and pick the best one to share with the full class. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of summaries

that are shared so students begin to master this difficult skill. Give points for the best ones.

- ✓ Key points. For each new reading have students identify 3 key points. Give class time for small groups to discuss key points and decide their 3. Lead a discussion about why the points they identified were the key points, or not. Make sure, at the end of the discussion, to be very clear about your thinking process in identifying key points – this is a higher order thinking skill that students need to practice to get better at.
- ✓ Reward students who ask good questions on their homework. Have them hand questions in on index cards so you can put them in an order to answer during class. Discuss what makes a “good question” and give class participation credit for the best few each week.
- ✓ Study Buddies. Strongly encourage students to work with 2 or 3 other people in class to share notes, ask questions, and connect with regarding the course outside of class. “Study Buddies” really does work, provided they concentrate on studying, not socializing!
- ✓ Study Time Log. Show students how to create a log that records the minute they **start studying** and **every time they stop studying**. Caution that they must record *every time* their mind moves off studying. Have them review their logs with other students (or you) to discuss how to become more effective. Remind them that research shows that it takes about 20 minutes for our brain to fully re-engage after an interruption, so it is necessary to put their phones in airplane mode, shut off computer feeds, and have a quiet area when they are *studying*.
- ✓ Be very clear about the time it takes to do well in your course. Generally we use 2 to 3 hours of time OUTSIDE of class for every hour inside class as a guide. Be prepared for students to be shocked at this, but it is the standard.