Getting Started

A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students
by Virginia Nilsson, Ph.D.

The more I study,
The more I know,
The more I know,
The more I forget,
The more I forget,
The less I know.
So why study?”

Anonymous

Learning Assistance Program
Student Services

Athabasca University
Improve Your Study Skills:

A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students

1 Getting Started
2 Time Management
3 Reading to Remember
4 Note Taking
5 Writing
6 Surviving the Slumps
7 Exams

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## The Modules at a Glance

### Module 1
**Getting Started**
- Evaluate Your Readiness for Post-secondary Education
- Start a Course
- Set Objectives
- Identify Your Resources
- Structure Your Study Space
- Determine Strengths and Weaknesses of Your Study Skills
- Decide on the Order in Which to Study the Modules
- Where to Find More Information About Study Skills

### Module 2
**Time Management**
- What Time Management Means
- How Time Management Can Help You
- Set Your Priorities
- Schedule Your Time
- Test Your Time Schedule
- Reward Yourself
- Where to Find More Information About Time Management

### Module 3
**Reading to Remember**
- Different Types and Purposes of Reading
- Your Own Reading Habits
- How to Read More Effectively
  - Overviewing
  - SQ3R
  - Learning Pyramids
  - Improve Your Reading Speed
- Where to Find More Information About Reading

### Module 4
**Note Taking**
- The Purpose of Taking Notes
- The Note-taking Process
- Systems of Note Taking
  - Outlining
  - Cornell
  - Mind Mapping
  - Note Cards
  - Underlining
- How to Evolve Examples
- Where to Find More Information About Note Taking

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- Where to Find More Information About Writing

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- Recognize Problems
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- Search for Solutions
- Where to Find More Information About and Help with Dealing with Problems

### Module 7
**Exams**
- Before the Exam
  - Is it Harder to Learn When You’re Older?
  - Factors Which Influence Learning
  - What to Do in Preparation for an Exam
- During the Exam
  - Good Exam-taking Strategies and Behaviour
- After the Exam
  - What to Do When You Fail
- Where to Find More Information and Help
Preface

The first edition of *Improve Your Study Skills: A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students* was written specifically for Athabasca University students. While there are some aspects of studying and some problems which may be unique to home-study students and to adults just returning to formal study, the series deals with skills and strategies from which all adult students can benefit by becoming better students. This third edition is aimed at “the adult independent learner.”

The modular format of the series enables you to concentrate on any one of seven areas, or to work through the material in the order most beneficial to your particular needs. Checklists and surveys providing diagnostic and prescriptive information, and exercises encouraging you to practise the skills and strategies presented make the series interactive. As an adult student you are much more alone, working on your own, unsupported by other students and teachers, than are traditionally aged college and university students. While we are not suggesting that this handbook can take the place of fellow students and helpful and supportive teachers, the interactive nature of the material does facilitate learning and will help you to improve your study behaviours. And the annotated bibliography at the end of each module tells you where you can find information complementary and supplementary to that in the handbook.

Each module concludes with a summary and review section. When answering the questions keep in mind the purpose of the series: to help and encourage you to become a better student by improving your study behaviours and honing your study skills. You can use this section as a self-test of whether you have understood the material.
Introduction

Why an Adult Study Skills Series?

You probably think you don’t need to learn how to study. You’ve studied before. You’ve been to school. What’s this series going to tell you that you don’t already know?

Of course, you have some useful study skills. But as an adult university student, you’ll probably find that you could use some different or additional skills and techniques now. You will need to apply goal- and priority-setting skills to use your time well. You’ll be required to read advanced texts, search original documents, and review scholarly material and intellectual presentations. You’ll be expected to remember in detail what you read and to organize your learning to demonstrate your memory, understanding, problem-solving ability, and creativity for the purpose of evaluation or testing. This kind of learning will demand skills you may not have developed or didn’t use in any previous schooling.

You’ll probably discover that some of your learning styles and strategies will have to change simply because studying will have a different impact on you as an adult than it did when you were younger. For example, research has shown that tasks or methods involving significant time pressure are more difficult for adults than for young people. Although some degree of anxiety is desirable or even necessary in a learning situation, it has been shown that the optimal level of anxiety for adults is lower than for younger people. And for older adults, tasks causing considerable mental or physical fatigue may be a problem. On the other hand, you can take encouragement from the fact that most verbal skills are not influenced by age until quite late in life.
How to Use This Series

This series comprises seven modules, each of which will assist you in developing or refining a different skill. The first module can help you get started in your course and also assist you in determining which other modules in this series might be helpful to you. To make the best use of your time, it is suggested that you try the following general strategy:

1. Read the "Getting Started" module.
2. Complete the Study Skills Self-Assessment in "Getting Started" to determine if you need help and in what areas.
3. Review each of the module summaries that follows the self-assessment and number them in order of need, based on the results of the self-assessment.
4. Go to the modules in the order you have listed them to study the methods that fit your requirements.
5. Do the exercises as you go.
6. Try new ideas one at a time.
7. Test the new methods you’ve learned by applying them.
8. And remember, always pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

An annotated bibliography in each module provides alternative approaches to the same problems or emphasis and elaboration of the same methods. You can find these or similar titles at your local public or school library or bookstore. They are also available on loan from the Athabasca University library.
Will It Work for You?

You may have taken courses before, you may have just begun some courses, or you might be only thinking about university. Whatever the case, some of the tips and techniques presented in this series should help you learn more effectively. For example, we’ll show you how to pace yourself, provide information on how to learn more from your notes, and give you some helpful tips on improving your performance on exams.

Of course, nobody expects you to follow these guidelines to the letter. You will still want to do some things a certain way because that way works for you. This series provides popular and proven methods that can help you make the most of your study efforts. It’s up to you to pick and choose what’s best for you.

There are many factors which contribute to learning, only one of which is study skills. Just doing all of your course-related activities the way the series suggests does not ensure that you will learn or be a successful student. Likewise, you can be a successful student, and you can learn, even if the self-assessments point out that your study habits and behaviour are different from those of most successful students.
Virginia Nilsson, retired Professor of Psychology and Learning Assistance Psychologist at Athabasca University, was for many years a Chartered Psychologist in the Province of Alberta and a member of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta. Dr. Nilsson's extensive experience in adult education, in course development and course delivery, made her aware of the demands that Athabasca University courses place on students and the problems students face in meeting these demands. Hearing the same questions and problems from students over a period of years prompted her to write these study skills modules as a strategy to help students overcome common study skills problems.

Dr. Nilsson earned advanced degrees in Psychology at Columbia University in New York City and at the University of Alberta, specializing in learning theory. She presently resides on a farm near Colinton, Alberta.
Module 1
Getting Started

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Getting Started

The purpose of this Getting Started module is just that—to help you to start a course and to develop the good study habits you will be needing along the way. The Study Skills Self-Assessment in this module will show you where your study skills may need a little polishing, and the summaries of other modules will help you select the modules most useful to you.

Starting a Course

You have just obtained your course materials, but you don't know where, when, or how to begin. The best place to start is with the materials in front of you. There are some fairly specific questions which you can ask yourself, and things which you can do.

1. Do I have all the books and materials I am supposed to have?
   Check for a list of contents or a syllabus, to help you identify what's what, what you are supposed to have, what you do have, and what you don't have. Familiarize yourself with all of the materials. If materials are missing contact Course Materials at (780) 675-6366 or cmat.athabascau.ca.

2. Is there an introductory section or a student manual?
   Read this material first. Find out how the course is organized and how and where directions are given. There may be symbols or icons to indicate different directions.

3. What if I still don't understand, or I think that I am missing something?
   Contact your tutor, instructor or Call Centre. Explain that you have gone through the materials
   "... but I don't seem to have the reader..."
   "... but it isn't clear to me what I am supposed to read first..."
   "... and there is one book which seems to be extra—I don't see it referred to in the syllabus..."
   "... and the instructions about the first assignment are unclear..."
Set Your Course

It's always easier to accomplish something when you have a goal in front of you that you can work towards. How specific, concrete, or tangible your goals need to be is up to you. Some people can work successfully with fairly vague or distant goals, while others work better with very detailed or immediate sets of goals and subgoals.

Many courses will have learning objectives or study questions which tell you what you should know on completion of an assigned reading, individual parts of the course, or the entire course. These learning objectives are subgoals which guide you in the accomplishment of more major goals: one study question at a time towards the midterm exam, one chapter at a time towards the course, one course at a time towards the degree.

If your textbook or course is not designed with learning objectives, you can set your own. That way you'll be working towards something you can relate to and you will obtain a sense of accomplishment as you work through these objectives towards your goal. You might decide on many very specific objectives which will lead you towards your goal of course completion. These objectives will be closely related to the course content. Or you might choose a few very global objectives, which may not be so closely tied to course content. For example, you may set an objective to trace the origins of the denominations of the Christian church to lead you toward your goal of understanding the various religions of the world. Or, if your goal is to obtain an undergraduate degree in ten years, your objective could be to complete three courses a year.

One way to set your own objectives for learning is to turn the table of contents of the material you are studying into questions. Look back to the “In This Module” section on page 1 and try this technique. For example:

1. How do I begin a course?
   • inventory my material
   • read the Student Manual
   • contact the tutor, instructor or Call Centre

2. What resources are available to me?
   • tutor
   • library
   • Student Services

3. Why is study space important?
Identifying Your Resources

Just because you are an adult doesn’t mean you are expected to have all the answers. If you are a student, regardless of age, you’re intending to learn. By signing up for a course you are saying that you do not know the course material. You are admitting that you are not familiar with the concepts and ideas that are presented in the course. So it’s all right to admit that you don’t know something. And if it’s been some time since you have taken a formal education course, it’s okay to ask for help with the ins and outs of studying and being a student.

Most post-secondary institutions offer a variety of services to assist you in being the best student you can be. And since they’re paid for by your tuition, you may as well use them.

Your Instructor, Tutor or Call Centre

If the course you are taking assigns you a telephone tutor, you are assigned to a Call Centre, or there is an instructor, then make sure you make good use of that resource. If not, think about finding someone who can help you—a friend, a neighbour, or a teacher at the local school.

Many students prefer to wait until they have completed a couple of course units to get used to the terminology and style of asking questions before contacting anyone about their work. Others wait until they make some mistakes or complete an assignment so that they know what questions to ask. Whatever you decide to do, remember your tutor, instructor or call centre can advise you on the course, show you how to begin, give you tips on studying, and answer questions on any aspect of your studies. Don’t feel you have to have made giant strides in your course work to justify contacting the tutor or instructor. Know your tutor’s or instructor’s hours and try to arrange your study schedule so that some of your study hours coincide with those contact or office hours. Doing so provides you with the opportunity of contact while you are studying.

It’s a good idea to establish contact with your tutor within the first few weeks of your course. There may be times when you find it very difficult to get through. The line may be busy with calls from other students. If that is the case, you may want to leave a voice mail or call at the very beginning or at the end of the tutor’s hours just to let him or her know that you are having difficulty getting through. You may wish to try having your tutor call you at predetermined times—once a month or every other week, preferably during some of your scheduled study time. Another option is to send an e-mail message to the address provided when you register.

The Library

A world of information is as close as your computer, telephone or mailbox with most libraries. For example, Athabasca University’s librarians will make every effort to answer course-related questions and will send you material, return postage prepaid. They will assist you to access internet resources as well.

Many libraries have their catalogues available in remote locations, either on microfiche or on-line computer. The catalogue of Athabasca University library holdings is
Many libraries have their catalogues available in remote locations, either on microfiche or on-line computer. The catalogue of Athabasca University library holdings is accessible in any of the university’s Learning Centres and the University’s Honle Page http://www.athabascau.ca. There is always someone available to show you how to access this information.

To begin using a distance-delivery library, try requesting some of the books listed in the annotated bibliographies of this series. The library personnel are more than eager to help you. They evaluate their success according to how much use is made of the library and their services. Contact the AU Library at (780) 675-6254 or library@iathabascau.ca.

**Student Services**

You may come across a stumbling block in your studies that this series has not prepared you for. Learner Support Services at AU can help. They include:

Access to Students with Disabilities: http://www.athabascau.ca/asd/services/index.htm

Advising Services: http://www.athabascau.ca/advising/index.php

Counselling Services: http://www.athabascau.ca/counselling/index.php

**Outside Help**

Remember that you are certainly not limited to the services provided by your post-secondary institution. Workshops and materials offered on the Internet, by other institutions, other libraries and bookstores, or advice from friends and family are all valuable resources. For example, if you are interested in a time management workshop that is offered locally, check with the sponsoring organization to see if you can sign up. You often don’t have to be a student of that institution to attend. In addition, you may find it very helpful to discuss your course with a friend or family member, or have them quiz you on some material, or read one of your essays. They just might have the resources that you are lacking or are just beginning to strengthen.

**Yourself**

As you probably already know, you are your own best resource. You already have some skills necessary to plan, organize, read, make notes, review, evaluate, synthesize, and communicate. They just need some brushing up or improvement.
Give Yourself Space

The space in which you study is as important as the schedule you keep, especially when you are just beginning to study. As you gain experience, you may find yourself able to study in a variety of settings. But generally, the use of the same study place, free of distractions, will help you to get down to work and stick to your schedule. Your mind will begin to shift automatically into the learning mode whenever you go there. You'll begin to find that mind wandering is less of a problem because your study space will help enforce the positive study habits that you have established through time management techniques. Eventually, you will feel there is nothing else to do but learn when you settle into your study place.

Test Your Study Skills

Before you venture into these individual learning and study skills modules, why not check out your strengths and weaknesses? This Study Skills Self-Assessment can help you see what your strong points are and pinpoint areas where you might benefit from some work.

Study Skills Diagnostic Checklist

Directions

1. Tear out the Study Skills Self-Assessment Answer Sheet—the page just after this one—and turn it sideward.

2. Beginning on the next page, read each of the numbered self-assessment statements carefully, then put a check for that statement number in the box beside the same number on the answer sheet under the word ("Yes," etc.) that most closely describes whether that statement applies to you. Of course there are no right or wrong answers: remember, this questionnaire is a survey or assessment of the way you do things.

3. Add up the number of check marks for each of the 21 columns and enter the totals (from 0 to 6) at the bottom of the columns on the answer sheet.

4. Fold the answer sheet under on the line marked FOLD LINE.

5. Now turn the answer sheet over.

6. For each of the study skill areas, you now have an indication of whether you have habits which may cause you difficulty with your studies. Areas with higher numbers of checks for "Sometimes" and "No," are areas in which you practise good study skills. These areas are where your strengths lie.
If you have more checks for “Yes,” you need to examine your study habits in those areas.

Be aware, though, that you may have ways of doing things which present problems for others, but are successful for you. For instance, you may have many checks on the “Yes” end of exam preparation, but you may also do very well on exams. In that case don’t change. While cramming for exams may be typical of students who do poorly on exams, and be frowned upon by the experts, if it works for you don’t worry about it.

Now, in the labelled boxes on the back of the answer sheet, jot down those habits which you have decided are troublesome—items on the Self-Assessment question sheet you checked “Yes” and which you have decided you need to change.
## Answer Sheet

### Study Skills Self-Assessment

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 35 | 42 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 6 | 13 | 20 | 27 | 34 | 41 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 5 | 12 | 19 | 26 | 33 | 40 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 4 | 11 | 18 | 25 | 32 | 39 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 3 | 10 | 17 | 24 | 31 | 38 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 2 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 30 | 37 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
| Yes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sometimes |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| No | 1 | 8 | 15 | 22 | 29 | 36 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

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*Improve Your Study Skills / Getting Started*
Can I improve in this area?

- Time Management
- Reading to Remember
- Note-Taking
- Writing
- Surviving the Slumps
- Exams
- Career Planning
Study Skills Self-Assessment Statements

1. I don’t know what to do in order to reach my long-term goals.
2. I find it difficult to locate “key words” and terms in exam questions.
3. I don’t seem to be interested in the course I’m taking.
4. I haven’t written an essay since high school.
5. I can’t understand my notes.
6. I feel like I’m going through a maze when I read a textbook.
7. There are not enough hours in the day for me to do the things I need to do.
8. I wonder what I am good at.
10. Problems in other areas of my life interfere with my studying.
11. I can’t think of the words to begin a written assignment.
12. The notes that I make on what I study are very disorganized.
13. I have difficulty picking out the main ideas and important facts in my reading.
14. I have good intentions at the start of the day, but I don’t seem to get done what I intend.
15. I think I would like a career change.
16. I don’t have enough time to finish tests.
17. Daydreaming uses up my study time.
18. I don’t know when I need to use the dictionary to check the spelling of a word.
19. My mind wanders while I am writing notes on the material that I study.
20. I quickly forget the information I read in my text.
21. Sticking to time schedules interferes with doing what I like to do.
22. I’m not sure if I have what it takes to do what I want to do.
23. I’m not sure my answers on tests are correct.
24. I don’t feel as though I am accomplishing anything when I study.
25. I am not sure what plagiarism really is.
26. It takes me as long to make notes on the material that I read as it does to read it.

27. I get bored when I read.

28. I procrastinate when it comes to doing course work.

29. I am not content with my job.

30. I don’t know how to answer multiple choice questions.

31. My mind wanders or I get sleepy when I try to study.

32. I seem to be able to communicate verbally, but I’m not sure if I can write effectively.

33. I lose track of what I am supposed to be learning about while I am trying to write notes.

34. Once I have read an assignment, I never look at it again until I study for the test.

35. I seem to be too flexible in my time commitments.

36. I don’t know how one course fits into my long-range plans or course of study.

37. I get so nervous about upcoming tests that I can’t concentrate on studying for them.

38. I become easily discouraged when my first efforts to study or to do an assignment fail.

39. When I write, my thoughts seem to be all jumbled and disorganized.

40. When I make notes on what I am reading, I lose track of the overall concepts being presented.

41. I have difficulty determining what to underline in my text.

42. Tests, assignments, and papers seem to “creep” up on me.
Module Summaries

Now that you have determined which study skills need polishing, have a look at these summaries to determine which modules of this series can supply the help you need. Jot down beside each summary whether you need it, or which one(s) to work on first, according to your needs as indicated by your self-assessment.

[ ] Time Management

"I was really excited when I received the course materials. I opened them up and browsed through them. Everything looked really good, and I was excited about studying. But the course has been sitting there now for three weeks, and I haven't done anything with it."

Like this student you may be feeling a little anxious about getting your course work done in between all of your other responsibilities. Or you may be pretty good at setting a schedule and sticking to it, but you still have trouble accomplishing what you set out to do. The problem could be priorities, scheduling, or it could be related to setting up a proper study space for yourself. Whatever the case, the Time Management module will help you with managing your time.

[ ] Reading to Remember

You have read the course material, but cannot remember what you have read. You have trouble concentrating while reading. The Reading to Remember module will help you develop the skills required to read educational material more efficiently.

[ ] Note Taking

Reading is no problem for you. But when exam time comes you find you have to spend countless hours rereading the original material. The Note Taking module will show you the whys and the hows of making more effective reading notes. It's designed to help you learn and remember what you read.

[ ] Writing

You're sure you could do well on your course if only you could write a passable essay, or write one in less time. If writing is a troublesome experience for you, work through the Writing module.
Surviving the Slumps

Although you started out well in your course and studied regularly, you seem to have lost your “steam”. Or perhaps you’re having problems dealing with the increased demands your family or work have suddenly put on your time. Whatever the cause, your course material seems to be going right over your head, and assignments that you thought were done well are receiving failing grades. These situations may seem insurmountable, but there is hope. Work through the Surviving the Slumps module and learn how to survive.

Exams

You know you have mastered the course material, but when it comes time to take the exam you have difficulty demonstrating your mastery. Quizzes and assignments make you nervous. Learn how to demonstrate your knowledge more successfully in the Exams module.

Career Planning

You are enjoying your course of studies, but you’re beginning to wonder how it fits into the rest of your life. Just because you are unsure of yourself or your motivation doesn’t mean you should quit. If you have lost sight of your goals and objectives, you can clarify them again by working through a Career Planning Program such as Athabasca University’s Planning Your Career, or some of the material and programs described in the bibliography. There are also government Occupations and Careers offices in most cities and larger towns.
Summary and Review

This *Getting Started* module has tried to help you begin your studies by identifying your readiness, some prerequisites, and your resources. To help you summarize and review what you have learned, answer the following evaluation questions:

1. Do you think the results of the Study Skills Self-Assessment (p. 10) accurately reflect your strengths and weaknesses?

2. In what order do your results suggest you do the modules?

3. What do you know now about getting started as a student which you did not know before you worked through this module?

4. If you could have only one of these seven modules, which one would you choose?
Annotated Bibliography for Getting Started

Whether you’re studying in a classroom, by teleconference, or at home, and whether you are fresh out of high school or haven’t done any studying for many years, the materials described here can be helpful.

The bibliography lists information on general study skills; how you can succeed, difficulties you may encounter in your studies and possible remedies for the difficulties. If you are encountering setbacks, or want to avoid encountering them, have a look at one or more of these books. They can help you define problems before you go on to the other modules. This list is only a sampling of the library holdings. If what you are interested in on this list is not available the librarian can help you find something similar.

All of the books listed here are available in the Athabasca University library and in the Calgary, Edmonton or Fort McMurray Learning Centres.

And don’t stop here. Your public or school library or your bookstore will have many other useful titles.


In addition to chapters on how to choose a university and a degree program, rules and regulations of universities, typical admission requirements, and financial aid available, there are good chapters on:

- developing study skills
- managing time effectively
- writing essays and reports
- preparing for exams
- motivating yourself

The real value of this book is its wide range of topics. It is not recommended for individual study skills problems because the chapters are very brief. They do, however, give a good overview of each topic.


A very general approach to study skills with a particularly good chapter on improving your thinking ability: the nature of thinking, daydreaming, defensive thinking, snap judgements, rational thinking, creative thinking, blocks to thinking, and aids to thinking. References and suggested readings are given for each chapter.


In addition to chapters on specific study skills, this book introduces the reader to studying with student-, learning-, and teaching-style inventories. This is a serious approach to studying for the classroom student, but it is relevant for the
adult independent learner as well. The material is presented primarily through activities, exercises, and inventories, with few illustrations, and it is referenced and indexed.

Ellis, David B. *Becoming a Master Student*. Rapid City, South Dakota: College Survival, Inc., 1996.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their education. The book explains and gives practice in strategies which have proven useful for successful students. There are 340 pages of tested techniques to improve reading, memory, test taking, time management, essay writing, goal setting, note taking, stress management, communication, attitudes, and motivation. The book is aimed at any new post-secondary student. The level is appropriate for any age.


This book covers a wide range of topics aimed at success. Open-ended exercises, diagrams and cartoons help to make the content interesting and interactive.


This Canadian edition has sections devoted to getting started in school as well as specific study skills. The material is presented through examples and is liberally sprinkled with photographs, drawings and cartoons. The presentation is interactive, with plenty of exercises which encourage the reader to try out the ideas and concepts. Although the primary audience is the new university student just out of high school, it also addresses the adult, non traditional and independent student. It is indexed and includes references.


A wide variety of topics pertaining to studying and being a student are covered, and there are lots of examples and exercises included which enable you to practise and see how the skills and strategies help. It is an old book but the material is still relevant today.


The first section of this comprehensive study skills book focusses on getting to know yourself, your course materials, and the resources available. Intended for an adult audience, Schumm concentrates on presenting textual material along with inventories, exercises and activities. It includes references for each chapter and has an extensive detailed table of contents and an index.


In addition to chapters on specific study skills, Sherfield includes topics such as resources, goals, motivation, self-esteem, and learning styles, all aimed at helping you get started. The book is broken up by detailed headings, examples, diagrams, drawings, cartoons, and photographs. It includes references, a glossary, and an index.

Resources, values, life styles, and goals, as well as specific study skills are included here. Two unique features of this book are its recognition of different skills for different disciplines, and a section on computers. The text is broken up with some examples and illustrations, and exercises, diagnostic inventories, and quizzes with the answers provided. It is referenced and indexed.


Staton is writing for the classroom student, but the book contains good general information and sections on note taking, thinking, and reading which are appropriate for home-study students.


This is an excellent book which takes a positive, dynamic, optimistic approach to learner styles, reading, writing, exams, time management, slumps, motivation, and success. It is written for the student in the classroom, but it is effective for any student. There are plenty of examples, exercises, and checklists to encourage active reading.


This booklet includes a self-scoring inventory of study habits and attitudes to help you identify your weaknesses. Included is a brief description of how you can make improvements.