



STUDY SKILLS

HOW WE LEARN

Our brains process the information we receive through our senses in our memory banks for use in the present or future. To translate....

We use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting) to gather data (the sky is blue, water in a pan left on high boils, sugar tastes sweet). We can read about things, listen to people talk about things or actually observe phenomenon ourselves. Our brain stores the data to use now or retrieve later. Our brain then analyzes the data. Do we agree or disagree? Why? What is the relationship between different information? How can I apply this to my life?

Learning enables us to move forward in our storehouse of knowledge, expand our horizons and subdue the earth. Every career requires some type of knowledge as a prerequisite and the accumulation of learning to continue to be effective in the performance of the job.

Months ago the evening news had a feature on an experiment performed on laboratory rats. Their findings were that physical activity increased the blood supply to the brain and learning new skills caused growth of new brain cells. Our physical health is an important factor in how effectively our study skills work! Our bodies' condition will determine how much and how effectively knowledge will be retained. Learning will cause new cells to grow and new pathways in our brain to develop which will make future learning even easier. The more we learn, the easier it will be to learn in the future.

The Lord put a hunger inside of us to learn about and know Him. Part of appreciating the vastness of God and unraveling the mysteries of Christ is to explore and understand the world He has created. Nature reveals its Creator! Natural laws,

even mathematical laws, reveal a God of order and power. History, as well, reveals “His Story” from creation until its final end at Jesus’ return when there will be a new Heaven and a new earth. Every event throughout time points to Jesus as the center and focus of history. God sovereignly moves causing nations to rise and fall and working through good and evil men to accomplish His purposes. Reading is essential for all learning and most importantly, for reading God’s Word. Good communication skills such as writing and public speaking enable us to boldly share the Gospel effectively.

There is so much to learn! And what fun it is to discover and unearth treasures of knowledge. Study skills enable us to learn effectively making us more productive.

OUR GOAL

Our goal as Christians is not simply to obtain knowledge. "Knowledge puffs up but love builds up." -- I Corinthians 8:1. Our goal is to obtain wisdom which is the ability to apply true knowledge and Biblical principles to our life. Study skills are necessary to dig deeply into the Bible. Even if our children are called to work with their hands at a trade, we want to equip them to study God's Word, discovering for themselves rich insights, practical promises, and applicable principles. We never outgrow the need to study.

BEING TEACHABLE

Learning is fun! A positive attitude can make all the difference in our study habits. Early in life, encourage your children to enjoy learning. Cultivate their curiosity. Sharpen their observation skills. Teach them discernment. Model a teachable heart that longs to learn all about God and His Creation. Without a teachable heart, study skills will be ineffective in the quest to impart knowledge and wisdom to your children. Require a cheerful attitude! Children should obey, work and learn with a cheerful heart. This is learned, not innate.

There are no boring topics; only bored people. Often things are boring because we know little or nothing about the topic. Anything about music is interesting to a musician. Anything about science is interesting to a chemist. You get my point. Gather a bit of knowledge in every possible area and you will have a solid base to add to.

TIME MANAGEMENT

The first study skill to acquire is the ability to faithfully manage your time. Time to study must be set aside on a consistent basis. Children need to learn to use their time fruitfully, ignoring distractions and interruptions. Time is a gift from God

each day. We want to be good stewards of our time so that we can use it to glorify Him!

The first step for a child to learn time management is to respond cheerfully and obediently in using time according to their parent's direction. Children need to do school work during the time parents set aside for them to do schoolwork. In the past I have expected my little ones to sit still for longer periods than they could handle. My husband motivated me with stories from his boyhood to set them up for success by providing breaks and physical activity to break up the school day.

The second step is for children to begin to micromanage their time giving them more and more responsibility as they are faithful. "Please finish this math, vocabulary and Bible study before we gather as a family for world history." They determine what order they will work on. Soon they will be given a daily list of work that is to be completed, as well as the time you will spend with them one on one or with the family for other schoolwork. A child who can manage a day's work consistently is ready to plan a week's worth of schoolwork. Progression from step to step will depend on individual children's personalities. One of my daughters was born scheduling and planning (her training involves changing plans so she can learn to be flexible!). Another daughter is very forgetful! We work together longer at each step.

Micromanagement of time begins for our children with a daily routine we call "five things" (making beds, cleaning rooms, dressing, personal hygiene, & personal devotions). They must complete their five things before they eat breakfast. Hunger is a good motivator. Early on they learn to do their "five things" in whatever order they so chose with the framework of a deadline.

The third step is to plan and manage their own life schedules---daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. To do this requires a calendar and a simple daytimer or appointment book. At first, young people will work closely with Mom and Dad. But gradually, they will acquire the wisdom to "number their days" and manage their time independently.

A calendar is a wonderful planning tool that gives us a bird's eye view of our life month by month. One glance tells us if we are too busy and keeps upcoming events fresh in our minds and sight. Our children can use a calendar to manage their time on a yearly and monthly basis. Things should be written on the calendar as soon as possible: vacations, weddings, parties, workshops, due dates, and company. Place your calendar in a prominent place where everyone can see it. Tentative items should be written in lightly with pencil. If everything is immediately put on the calendar, schedule complications are avoided. Weekly and daily planning can be

done in a Day-timer or appointment book. Everyone finds the right scheduling tool for them, usually through trial and error. Your child may invent his own. This planning is detailed and includes calls to make, things to buy, time set aside to study (including subjects, books and pages), chores to complete, preparations, errands, baby-sitting, etc. Everything on the calendar will be on the weekly and daily planning sheet but with a lot more! A "typical day" schedule is nice to have in the front of the planner with devotion times, church meetings, family obligations and study times blocked off. But every week will be different. And additions will sometimes require alterations in their daily schedule. An early field trip may require rising one hour earlier so they don't miss their time with the Lord.

The truth will set you free! But organizing your time provides freedom and productivity that is amazing!

A PLACE TO STUDY

Children thrive on consistency including a regular place to study. Although we have a schoolroom, my girls prefer the dining room table. So much for the cute little school desks. Here are some things to make their study setting more efficient.

- ☞ Comfortable chair (not TOO comfortable so that they will not doze off—smile!).
- ☞ Good lighting.
- ☞ Reasonable (considering baby and toddler!) quiet.
- ☞ Hard surface for writing.
- ☞ Plenty of room for books and materials.
- ☞ Needed study materials at hand.

Your children may not like the cute little place you provide but make sure it is a place that has minimal distractions and motivates them to focus on their schoolwork. Choose reference books that have bright beautiful pictures. Make sure that any school posters on the walls are attractive and appealing. The gameboy, playstation, and brand new cartoon DVD should not be in sight!

Supply study aides such as lots of lined and blank paper, scissors, glue, pencils, pens, markers, protractors, compass, calculator, charts, timelines, and all kinds of books!

MEMORIZING

Some things can only be learned by memorizing them: multiplication tables, state capitals, foreign language vocabulary and history dates. Let's set our children up for success in memorization and all of life by having them start memorizing Bible

verses at a very early age. That is actually when children are able to “parrot” or memorize the most easily too! (Think about teaching foreign languages early too—I wish we had!) Start with short verses and then increase the length until they are finally memorizing whole passages of Scripture.

To help children memorize the Bible and school facts, use verbal expression and hand motions. Rhymes (“In fourteen-ninety-two—Columbus sailed the ocean blue”), flashcards, and songs help children memorize facts painlessly.

TAKING NOTES

Taking notes is a skill that we use throughout our lifetimes. We all listen to sermons, attend seminars, and hear lectures that we want to remember. As we age and our memories fade, taking notes is a necessity. Note taking helps us to concentrate, retain the lesson, and gives us written material to later review. Good notes make research more profitable and help us put together papers, projects and workshops with ease.

Note taking brings two senses (sight and hearing) into the learning process. It also forces us to listen attentively so that we can evaluate whether something is important enough to write down and summarize larger portions of information into the main point. Taking notes can train us to listen to key words and phrases. This can affect our communication and listening skills immensely.

Children can start note taking by drawing pictures while they listen to a sermon or watch an educational video. Afterward, they can tell you all about their picture and you can discuss the sermon or video. As children grow older, their note taking will include words, phrases, sentences and finally the lovely outlines that we parent/teachers all love. Encourage your children to write down questions that come to their mind when they are listening to sermons, lectures, audio tapes, or videos. . This is a painless way to introduce the concept of note taking. Also, set an example for your budding note takers by letting them see you take notes, especially during sermons (your pastor will also be blessed!). You can share your notes with your children, just like they share theirs with you.

Taking notes during lectures

Take notes during lecture, sermon or power point presentations. Stay alert and pay attention! Don't try to write down every word, use symbols (etc., e.g., w/) and abbreviations, and don't worry about perfect handwriting. Listen for main ideas, key words, and important phrases to write down. Listen for clues to discover the key points such as: "the three results are...", "to summarize...", and "this led to four changes...".

Also put in anything that the lecturer gives special emphasis to by writing it down on a board, showing a transparency, or saying "the most important result was...". If appropriate, ask questions. Write down any questions in the margin of your notes to ask lecturer, parents, or someone else at a later time. Tell someone about the lecture later or the next day and then compare what you shared with your notes. If you forgot anything, add it.

Taking notes from books or articles.

Before beginning a book or article, skim the entire thing to get the general feel and main ideas. Look at headings, subheadings, chapter titles, and section titles. Come up with some questions that you hope the book or article will answer. As you read, look for answers to your own questions. Also look for the plot (if it's a novel), the underlying message, main ideas, key points, and important facts. Jot down a list of words you don't quite understand and use a dictionary to look up the meanings of those words. Try to understand the relationship between the ideas and facts presented in the material. Does it make sense? Do the facts support the ideas? Can you explain them verbally? Can you make a chart, diagram or illustration to explain the material? Try teaching or explaining the material to someone else when you are finished which will force you to thoroughly understand what you have read.

RESEARCH

Another study skill is learning where to go to find out the particular information you need. When we think of researching a subject our immediate reaction is to read a book or magazine articles, watch a video, or listen to tapes. There are other sources available in the library called reference books which are often good places to start our research. An encyclopedia article will give us general information on a subject while an atlas will give us precise geographical data.

Encyclopedia

This series of thick books contain comprehensive summaries of various subjects and fields of knowledge arranged alphabetically

Dictionary

Here is the giver of concise definitions, origins, and pronunciations of words in alphabetical order. Children should learn to use the

dictionary often. There are bright, colorful editions made just for children.

Atlas

This collection of maps contains all kinds of geographical data. An atlas is lots of fun when planning a road trip for family vacations. I loved being the keep of the AAA “trip tick” when I was a little girl on our vacation road trips.

Directory

A directory contains listings of people, services, events, or places in a specialized field of interest. The “Yellow Pages” is a directory that children can become familiar with as family needs arise.

Almanac & Yearbook

These books are annual compilations of data in a specialized field of study, group or subject.

Bibliographies & Indexes

These books contain lists of books, magazines, and booklets listed by author and subject.

Although the majority of research will be done with books and articles, reference books are often a good place to start and a good place to go for specific facts and information. If you are not familiar with these items, ask a reference librarian at your local library to help you find and use them.

WRITING A REPORT OR RESEARCH PAPER

1. Research your subject thoroughly. Be careful of the temptation to choose too broad a subject (e.g. "The Middle Ages") giving you too much information to thoroughly research. But also avoid choosing too narrow a topic ("What pastors ate for breakfast during the Great Awakening") that will make finding books and other materials difficult. When an appropriate topic has been chosen, begin researching. At least 75% of your time working on the research paper should be spent on research.
2. Use note cards to take notes during research. Index cards are preferable because they are sturdy and small making them easy to

carry around and to sort. Put each quote or fact on a separate card. Put the title of the source at the top of each card. Use separate cards to make complete bibliography cards for each source you quote or take notes from. When your outline is completed, these cards can be arranged according to it.

3. Review your note cards and decide carefully what the main points you wish to make are. Write them down.

4. Make an outline.
 - TITLE
 - I** Introduction
 - II** Main Point
 - A. Fact
 - B. Fact
 - 1. Additional point
 - C. Fact
 - III** Main Point
 - A. Fact
 - 1. Additional point
 - a. illustration
 - 2. Additional point
 - B. Fact
 - IV** Main Point
 - A. Fact
 - 1. Additional point
 - a. Illustration
 - b. Chart
 - B. Fact
 - 1. Additional point
 - 2. Additional point
 - V** Conclusion

5. Arrange your notecards according to your outline. Add more notecards if necessary (may require some more research).
6. Write your first draft using your outline as a guide.
7. Use footnotes or endnotes to give sources for quotes, charts or specific data.
8. Read through your first draft several times. Think carefully about it, analyzing the content and flow of the paper. Does it communicate

what you wanted it to? Why or why not? Rewrite the paper as many times as necessary to make it communicate clearly what you desire it to.

9. Use your bibliography note cards to make a bibliography at the end of your paper. Also check the mechanics of the paper (spelling, grammar, and overall flow). Make any necessary changes. You are finished!! Celebrate!!!!!!

STUDYING THE BIBLE

The Bible has the power to change our lives! It reveals God: His character and His ways. Scripture shows us how to live an upright life and gives us direction for life choices. God's Word actually "washes" (purifies) us and imparts faith.

A balanced diet of God's Word includes: hearing the Word of God; reading large portions of Scripture; studying smaller portions of Scripture; memorizing verses and passages; and meditating on God's Word.

Studying the Bible can start once a child is familiar with the Word of God. The more a person has read the whole Bible, the less likely he is to draw conclusions out of context.

There are three steps to inductive Bible study: observation, interpretation and application.

OBSERVATION (step #1) When you read a passage, carefully observe the passage. Who is writing? Who is mentioned? Who is speaking? What are people doing? What is being discussed? What is the setting (time and place)? Who is the original audience?

Then look for context (how does this relate to the rest of the book?); repetition of words ("Joy" is used over and over in the book of Phillipians); comparisons ("Like..."); contrasts ("but...", "however..."); cause and effect ("so that..." or "for..."); key nouns; and key verbs.

INTERPRETATION (step #2) After you have carefully observed the passage, analyze your observations. Ask why? and how?. Why does the author use the words he does? How does one thing cause another? Why are things compared and contrasted? What is emphasized? Why are certain words or phrases used repetitively? What seems to be the main point the author is making to his audience? (how is he making that point? Why is he making that point?) What do you think the original audience's response to this portion of Scripture was? Why?

APPLICATION (step #3) Now you can apply the passage to your own life. What does this mean for me today? What lesson can I learn? What example can I follow or avoid? What does God want to speak to me about? What area in my life does this passage apply to? What situation in my life does this passage give light and direction to?

A METHOD TO STUDY A BOOK OF THE BIBLE

DAY #1 Skim through the entire book, noticing headings and key words. What do you assume the book is about? (Write it down)

DAY #2 Read the entire book in one sitting. Who wrote the book? Who is the book written to? When was the book written? Any other pertinent information about the book? What does the book talk about? Write down some main ideas.

DAY #3 Read chapter one. Make a list of observations (interesting things you notice about people, place, time, atmosphere, situation, etc.). Choose a title for each paragraph.

DAY #4 Read chapter one again and look at your study notes. How are the paragraphs related to each other? (Similarities, contrasts, cause and effect) What meaning or truth does each connection point out? What is the big truth this paragraph is teaching? Write it down in one sentence.

What is the main thing the Lord is saying to me through this chapter? (something to obey? A truth about Him that I can rejoice in? A promise that I can take for a situation that I'm in?)

DAY #5 Same as Day #3 except for chapter 2.

DAY #6 Same as Day #4 except for chapter 2.

DAY #7, #9, #11, #13, etc. Same as Day #3 except for chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.

DAY #8, #10, #12, #14, etc. Same as Day #4 except for chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.

LAST DAY Read through the book again. Review your notes. What lessons have you learned? How is your life different? Praise and thank God for what you have learned and how God is changing your life!!

You also might want to write a letter to someone sharing what you have learned and how your life is different. Keep a copy with your notes.

BIBLE REFERENCE MATERIALS

Bible reference books can be helpful aides in digging deeper into the Scripture. Children should be trained to use these reference materials. If you do not own the following books, they can be found in most college and university libraries, especially in Bible College or Seminary libraries; a church library; or your pastor's private library. Most seminary professors or pastors would be surprised at the request, but thrilled to show your children how to use a Commentary or Greek Interlinear Bible. Here are books to supply sources of information for the serious Bible student:

Bible dictionary

This dictionary defines Biblical and theological terms while giving the background of Biblical names and places. Of course, the words are arranged in alphabetical order.

Bible Commentary

Books and sections of the Bible are explained from the author's perspective, sometimes sharing applications of discussed principles, and often giving an introduction to each book of the Bible. It covers historical background, authorship, date of writing and other pertinent information.

Bible Concordance

This book lists the words found in the Bible in alphabetical order, referencing each word cited to its location in the Bible, and giving a short entry from the text. Be sure to use a concordance that matches your Bible version.

Bible Handbook

This book gives devotional insights, historical background, overviews, and concise theological explanations of various terms or concepts for each book in the Bible.

Bible Atlas

This specialized atlas emphasizes the historical and topographical background of the various eras and events of both the Old and New Testaments.

Greek and Hebrew Interlinear Bibles

These are the Greek or Hebrew Bibles with the definitions in English of each word directly beneath the corresponding Greek or Hebrew word.

STUDY TIPS!

Stay in good shape physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

- ☞ Get plenty of sleep.
- ☞ Exercise aerobically everyday.
- ☞ Meet with God everyday to read His Word and pray.
- ☞ Maintain healthy relationships with family members and close friends.
- ☞ Eat healthy – lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains/ minimize sugars and fats!
- ☞ Set aside time each day to relax quietly.
- ☞ Keep regular study hours.

When you don't feel like studying or you get sleepy or antsy:

- ☞ Get up, move around, and stretch.
- ☞ Go for a walk.
- ☞ Get a drink or quick snack.
- ☞ Try working on another subject.
- ☞ "Teach" the material to a younger sibling or the dog.
- ☞ Pray and ask God to help you concentrate.