

Dear educator, tutor or parent,

Students everywhere are discovering techniques which free them to learn more, grow faster and pursue their education with increased joy and excitement. We call them “school skills”. The methods of note taking, memorization, test taking and more. Just like learning to drive a car or learning to play violin, practicing these basic academic techniques can help you reach your goals faster and with more creativity. You’ll have more fun too.

The next pages contain three key skills that can help students of any age or level. Each skill is described on a one page handout. You can give these out in your library, student center, tutoring area or anywhere students might come looking for assistance. These handouts are free to copy and distribute as long as you include the copyright footer.

There is also some space at the bottom of each handout for you to add school specific information about academic skills classes, counseling you offer or a teacher to contact for more information. We ask only that you keep the copyright and web link on the pages as you add your own information.

#1 SSAMM Note Taking System (1 page double sided, page 2-3)

Students completing our School Skills academic success seminars often tell us the best things they learned is how to take great notes. This technique works on paper and computer.

#2 Better Grades in Only 6 Seconds (1 page single sided, page 4)?

This simple breathing and thought technique radically reduces test stress and increases accuracy.

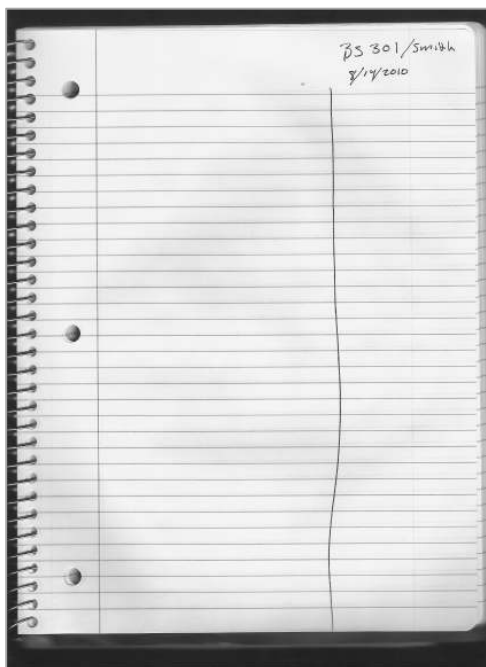
#3 Breaking Through Study Barriers (1 page single sided, page 5)?

Some easy ways to get moving again when study has you stuck.

For more free stuff along with great products to purchase, go to www.SchoolSkills.net.

HOW TO TAKE GREAT NOTES

Students everywhere are learning that high test scores start with great classroom notes. We would like to introduce you to our friend SSAMM: the School Skills Active Memory Method. SSAMM is an easy, organized way to capture the right information during class and then refresh your memory for the test. It gives you the right tool for the job, and it works every time. You can use SSAMM with either paper notebooks or computer note taking. And takes a lot less time than you would think. Here is what you do:

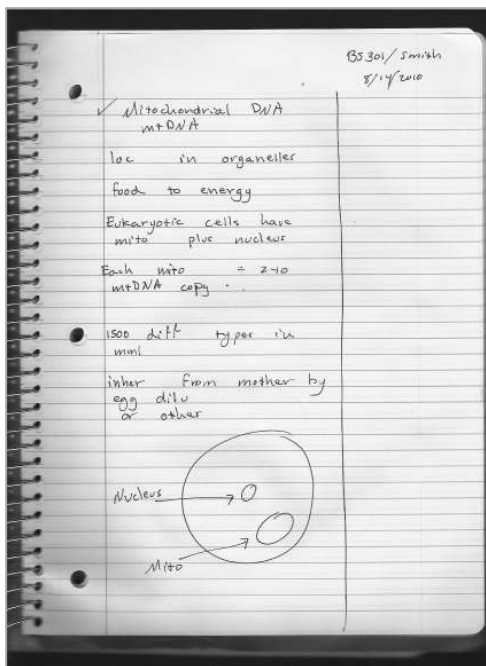


STEP 1: It's the first day of class, and you have your fresh white notebook in hand, ready for anything. Open the notebook and label the page at top right with the date, class title, and instructor name. This label might look like:

Organic Chem 102 / Johnson / 3/12/2012.

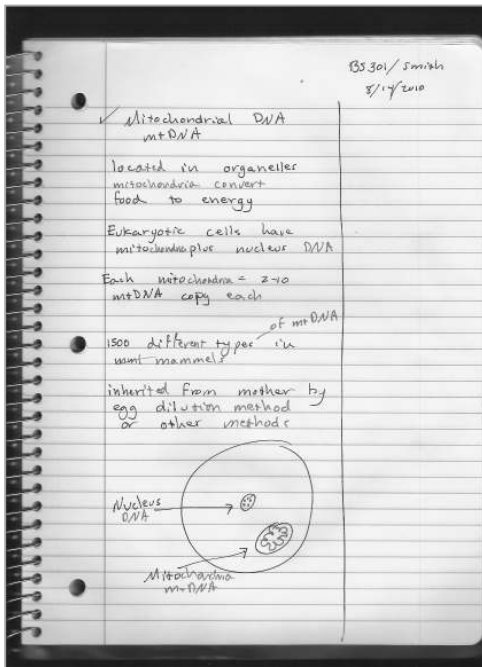
If you are taking notes using a computer, you can create a new file named "Organic Chem 102 / Johnson / 3/12/2012".

STEP 2: Draw a single line down the right hand side of the page, dividing it into a large column on the left and a narrower column on the right. The facing page shows what this might look like.



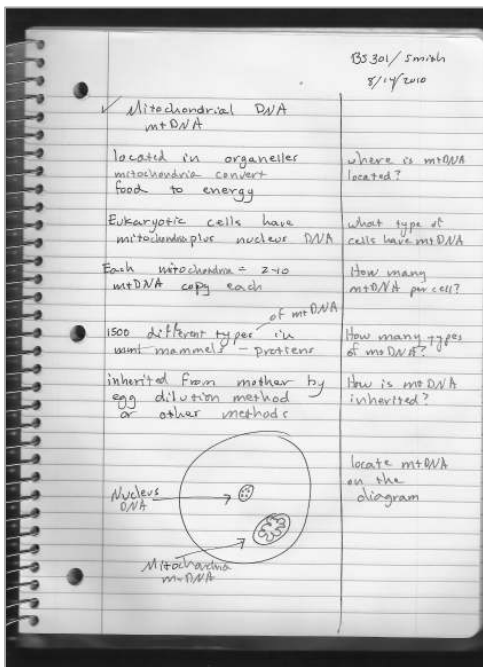
STEP 3: During class, use the large, left-hand column to capture any names, dates, facts, key points or other information that your instructor lets fly. Write constantly during class. Never stop. Be sure to leave lots of space in between notes—you'll need it soon.

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STEP 4: After class or the next day (always within two days), open your notebook to the class notes and flesh out your notes by adding details, expanding abbreviations, and adding additional facts that might come to mind. Notice how our sample notes have more details than before.

Extra Credit Tip: Why do we review notes within two days of class? Your brain has two kinds of memory – short term and long term. Short term memory is ... short. If we don't refresh our memory within two days the brain just dumps the information. We forget. When we review our notes it helps move the information from short term into long term memory.



STEP 5: Now return to the top of your notes and use the right hand column to create potential test questions. You are creating your own exam! And creating your own test questions helps you remember the material by looking at it from 'the other side.'

Extra Credit Tip: If your school allows computers in the classroom you can use exactly the same note-capture method by creating a document with your word processor and dividing it into two columns. Fill in the main column with quick notes during class, then return to your document later to fill in the details and create your own study questions in the right hand column.

Wait! What if I'm using a computer? SSAMM works the same way on a computer. Create a word processing document and divide it into two columns. During class you will type like mad into the main large column, capturing every fact and key item you can. When it's time to review your notes, fill in the details using the main column and fill in the second narrow column with questions. Be sure to save your document using a name that clearly identifies the class, date and instructor.

BETTER GRADES IN ONLY 6 SECONDS?

Could you use a fast way to improve your grades? Then get ready to slow down. Many exam and test errors come from the same source. Not reading the question well. We get stressed and hurry through the questions, missing the main points. We trip into an answer that 'looks right' because we haven't fully comprehended the question.

Here is how you can fix it.

Each time you come to an exam question, stop and count three long, steady breaths as you read through it. In. Out. Breathe slowly and easily while your eyes scan the test question and every possible answer. No hurry.

One...

Two...

Three...

Now here's the kicker. After counting three long breaths, ask yourself "How would my instructor answer this question?" This prompts your brain to recall the class when your teacher discussed the topic. Practice this pattern until it becomes automatic:

(breath) one...

(breath) two...

(breath) three...

(think) "How would my instructor answer this question?"

Try it on your next test or exam. It works!

Extra Credit Tip

If you still don't have a great answer for a test question ... what do you do? Don't get stuck. Don't stop. Mark the question for review with a penciled question mark "?" by it and move on. Later questions on the test will often remind you of answers you need. Once you have worked through to the end of the test, come back to the beginning and review ALL the questions, including the one you marked for review. Answer the questions you skipped and don't be afraid to change the answer for a question you already completed. 70% of all changed answers on tests go from wrong to right!

BREAKING THROUGH STUDY BARRIERS

Sometimes you just can't plow through your class study materials no matter what. You're stuck. Maybe you don't enjoy the subject. Actuarial tables? Bleh. Maybe you are exhausted or maybe it's you just have been studying too hard for too long. Nothing works to get you focused. And the test is coming up fast.

What do you do?

Here are some quick fixes that work great:

Get some sleep. Drink a big glass of water and make sure you have a good meal. Then snooze. It's the only real cure for old fashioned exhaustion. 8 hours of sleep and 2 hours of study are more effective than 10 hours of bleary eyed, exhausted cramming.

Exercise. If there is a magic potion that helps people focus – it's exercise. Drink it! Go for a run, play some soccer or dance with your friends. Exercise kicks up your blood flow, boosts brain oxygen and burns off stress. You'll be clear headed and ready to study when you are done.

Find someone who loves it. If you are studying a required subject and, honestly, you hate it then there is only one cure. Find a friend who loves the subject. Then study with them. Their excitement will rub off on you.

Laugh (a lot). Watch a hilarious movie that just makes you smile. Share some jokes with a friend. Laughter has a wonderful way of making everything easier. It also helps you relax. Take a 5 minute break. Watch something that makes you bust out with laughter.

Use a clock and race. For those super-competitive people who love to race you can race the clock – with your homework! Make a guess about how long the study session will take. Write down your time guess. Then start your stopwatch. And beat it!

Extra Credit Tip

Energy drinks loaded with sugar and caffeine work great ... for about two hours. Then you will crash. The short term energy boost robs your body of energy, drains your brain of calories and leaves you more exhausted than before. It's not worth it. Try a nap or a fast run around the block instead.