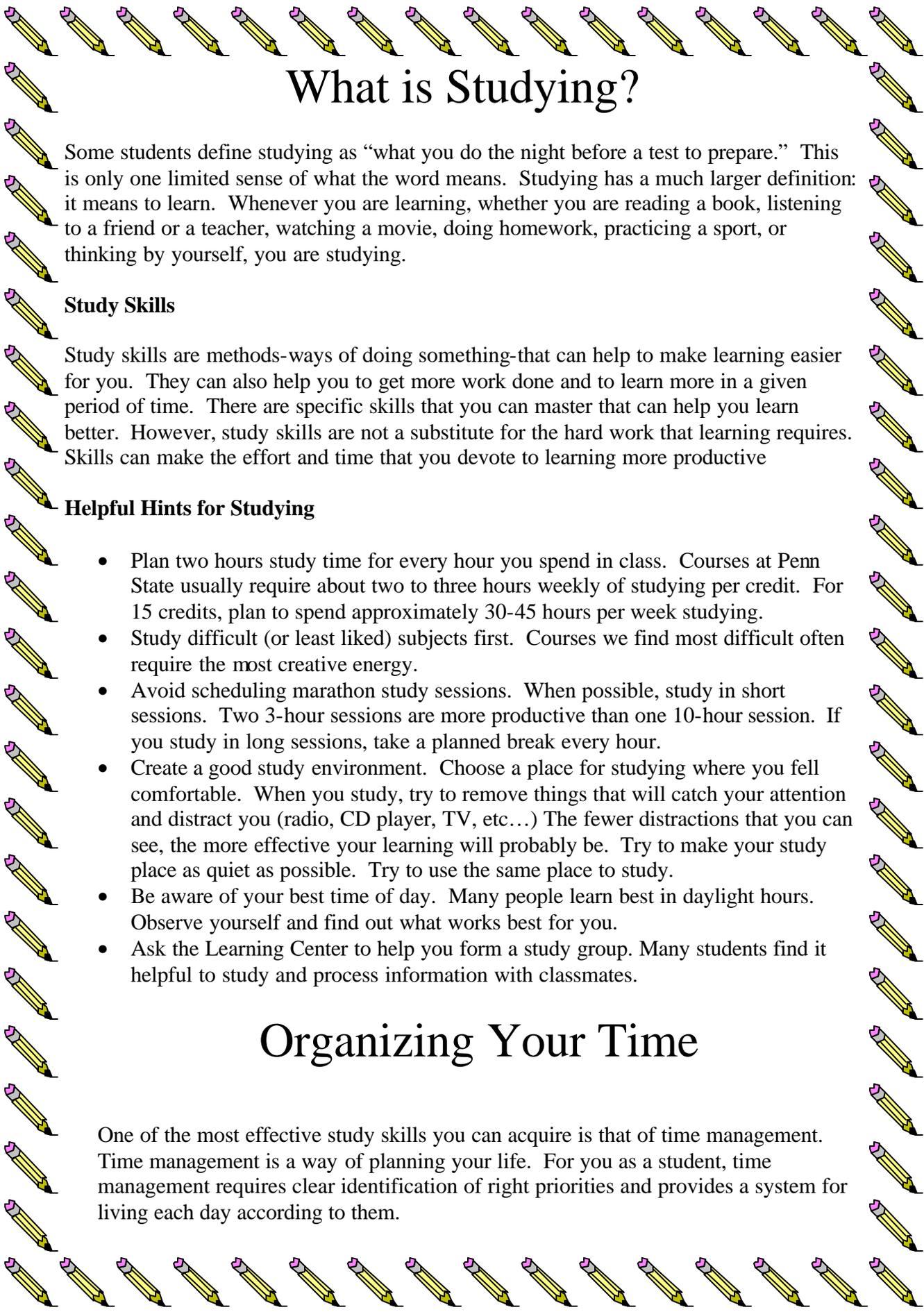


PENN STATE DUBOIS
GUIDE TO EFFICIENT STUDYING





What is Studying?

Some students define studying as “what you do the night before a test to prepare.” This is only one limited sense of what the word means. Studying has a much larger definition: it means to learn. Whenever you are learning, whether you are reading a book, listening to a friend or a teacher, watching a movie, doing homework, practicing a sport, or thinking by yourself, you are studying.

Study Skills

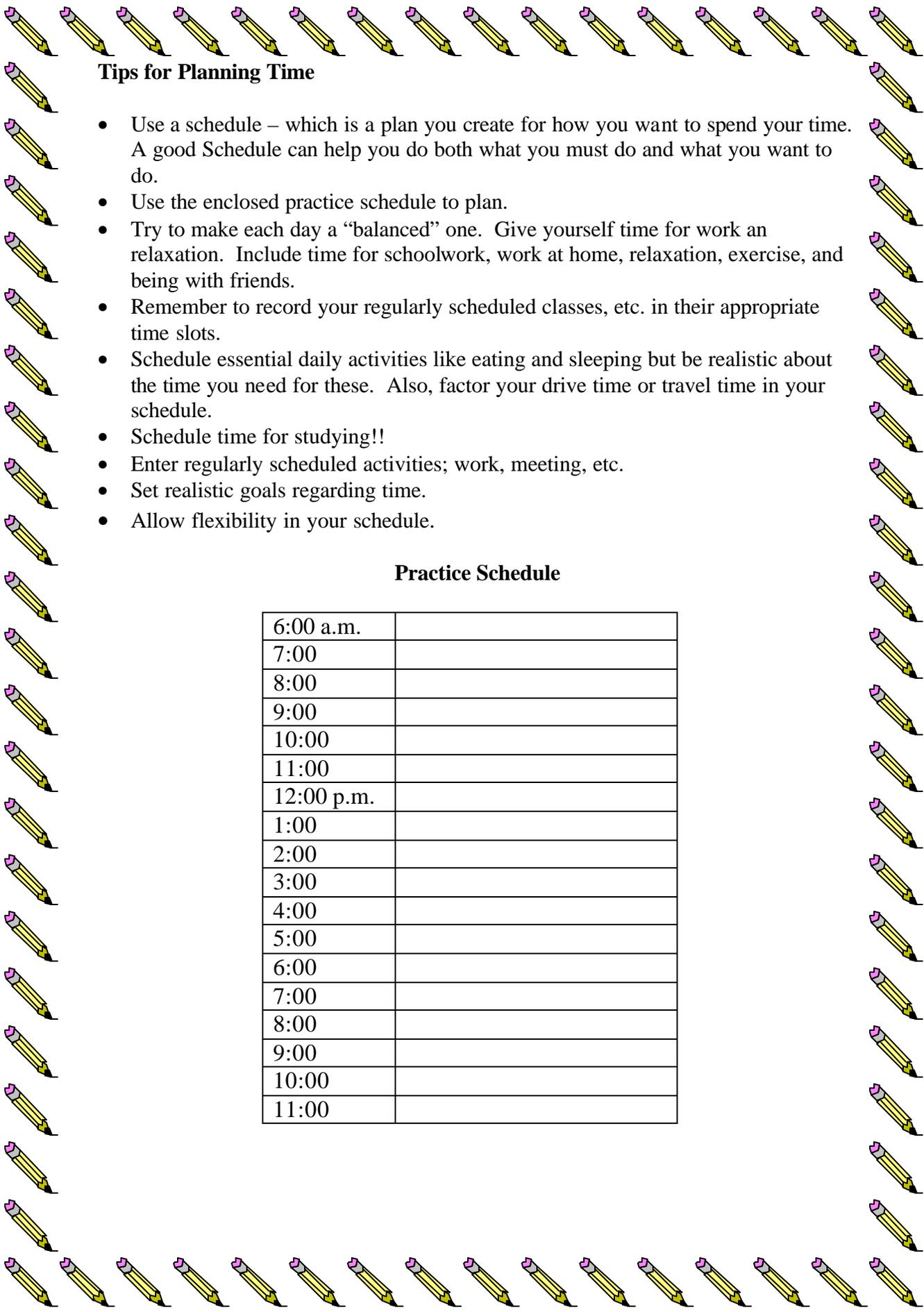
Study skills are methods-ways of doing something-that can help to make learning easier for you. They can also help you to get more work done and to learn more in a given period of time. There are specific skills that you can master that can help you learn better. However, study skills are not a substitute for the hard work that learning requires. Skills can make the effort and time that you devote to learning more productive

Helpful Hints for Studying

- Plan two hours study time for every hour you spend in class. Courses at Penn State usually require about two to three hours weekly of studying per credit. For 15 credits, plan to spend approximately 30-45 hours per week studying.
- Study difficult (or least liked) subjects first. Courses we find most difficult often require the most creative energy.
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions. When possible, study in short sessions. Two 3-hour sessions are more productive than one 10-hour session. If you study in long sessions, take a planned break every hour.
- Create a good study environment. Choose a place for studying where you feel comfortable. When you study, try to remove things that will catch your attention and distract you (radio, CD player, TV, etc...) The fewer distractions that you can see, the more effective your learning will probably be. Try to make your study place as quiet as possible. Try to use the same place to study.
- Be aware of your best time of day. Many people learn best in daylight hours. Observe yourself and find out what works best for you.
- Ask the Learning Center to help you form a study group. Many students find it helpful to study and process information with classmates.

Organizing Your Time

One of the most effective study skills you can acquire is that of time management. Time management is a way of planning your life. For you as a student, time management requires clear identification of right priorities and provides a system for living each day according to them.

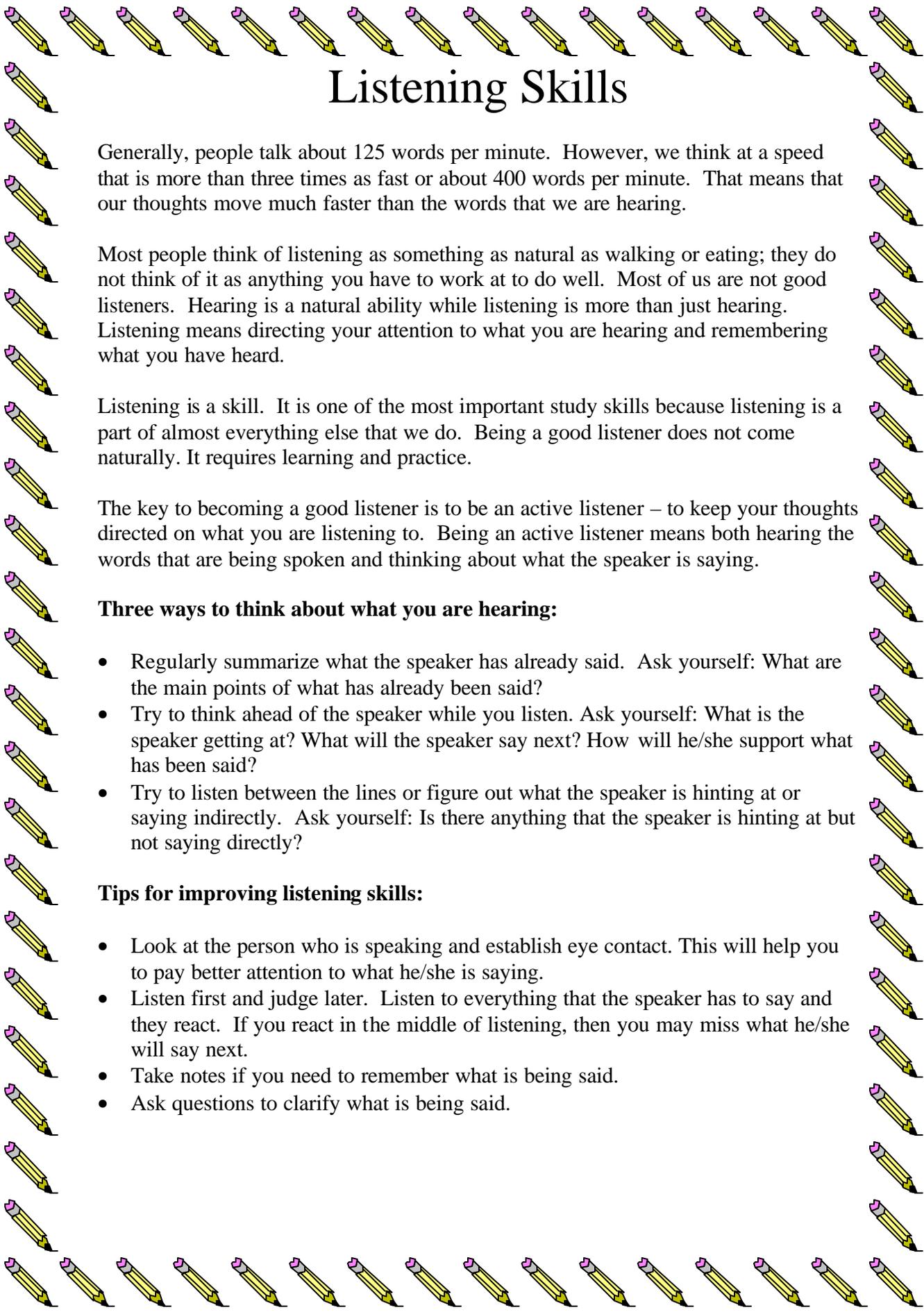


Tips for Planning Time

- Use a schedule – which is a plan you create for how you want to spend your time. A good Schedule can help you do both what you must do and what you want to do.
- Use the enclosed practice schedule to plan.
- Try to make each day a “balanced” one. Give yourself time for work an relaxation. Include time for schoolwork, work at home, relaxation, exercise, and being with friends.
- Remember to record your regularly scheduled classes, etc. in their appropriate time slots.
- Schedule essential daily activities like eating and sleeping but be realistic about the time you need for these. Also, factor your drive time or travel time in your schedule.
- Schedule time for studying!!
- Enter regularly scheduled activities; work, meeting, etc.
- Set realistic goals regarding time.
- Allow flexibility in your schedule.

Practice Schedule

6:00 a.m.	
7:00	
8:00	
9:00	
10:00	
11:00	
12:00 p.m.	
1:00	
2:00	
3:00	
4:00	
5:00	
6:00	
7:00	
8:00	
9:00	
10:00	
11:00	



Listening Skills

Generally, people talk about 125 words per minute. However, we think at a speed that is more than three times as fast or about 400 words per minute. That means that our thoughts move much faster than the words that we are hearing.

Most people think of listening as something as natural as walking or eating; they do not think of it as anything you have to work at to do well. Most of us are not good listeners. Hearing is a natural ability while listening is more than just hearing. Listening means directing your attention to what you are hearing and remembering what you have heard.

Listening is a skill. It is one of the most important study skills because listening is a part of almost everything else that we do. Being a good listener does not come naturally. It requires learning and practice.

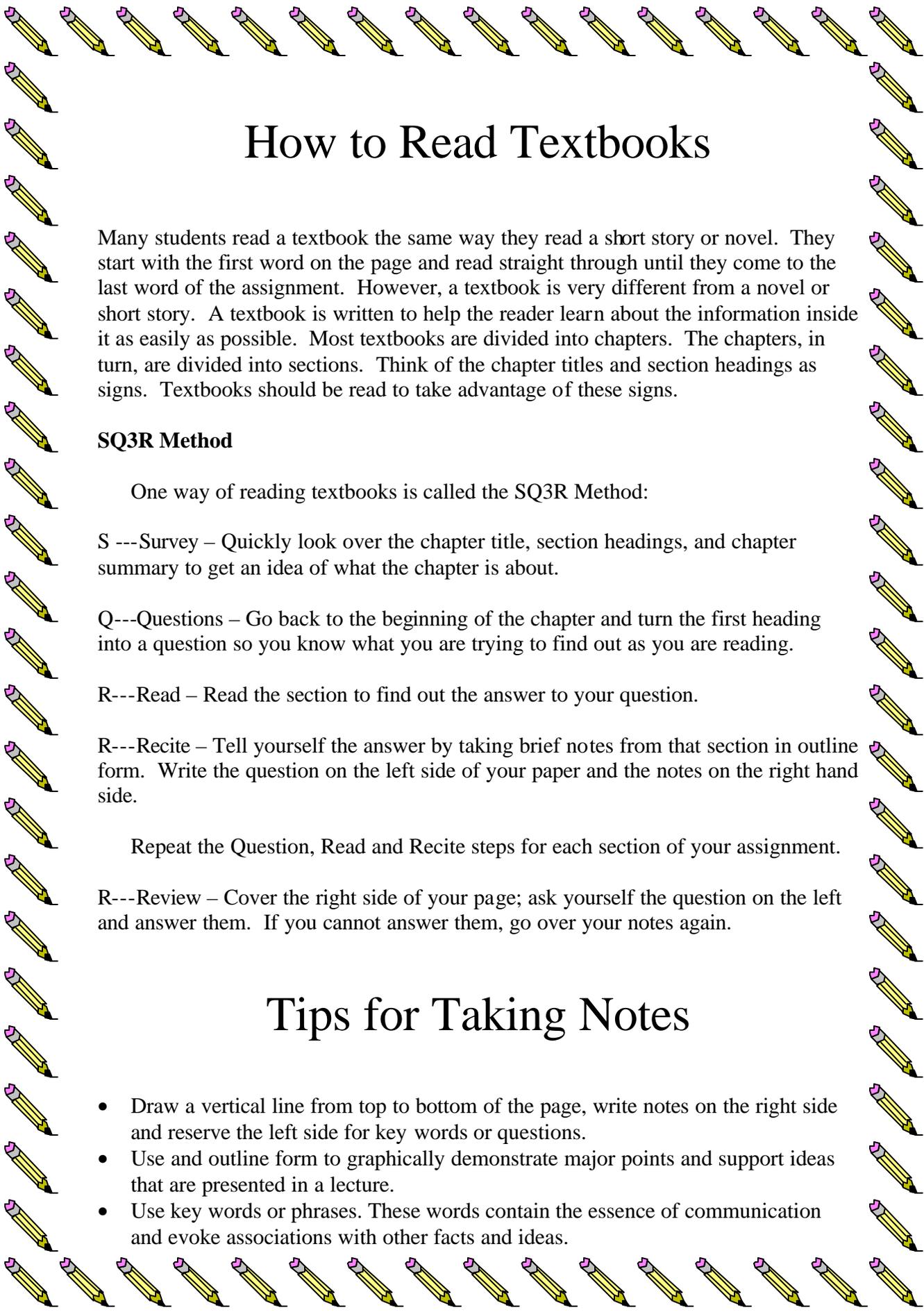
The key to becoming a good listener is to be an active listener – to keep your thoughts directed on what you are listening to. Being an active listener means both hearing the words that are being spoken and thinking about what the speaker is saying.

Three ways to think about what you are hearing:

- Regularly summarize what the speaker has already said. Ask yourself: What are the main points of what has already been said?
- Try to think ahead of the speaker while you listen. Ask yourself: What is the speaker getting at? What will the speaker say next? How will he/she support what has been said?
- Try to listen between the lines or figure out what the speaker is hinting at or saying indirectly. Ask yourself: Is there anything that the speaker is hinting at but not saying directly?

Tips for improving listening skills:

- Look at the person who is speaking and establish eye contact. This will help you to pay better attention to what he/she is saying.
- Listen first and judge later. Listen to everything that the speaker has to say and they react. If you react in the middle of listening, then you may miss what he/she will say next.
- Take notes if you need to remember what is being said.
- Ask questions to clarify what is being said.



How to Read Textbooks

Many students read a textbook the same way they read a short story or novel. They start with the first word on the page and read straight through until they come to the last word of the assignment. However, a textbook is very different from a novel or short story. A textbook is written to help the reader learn about the information inside it as easily as possible. Most textbooks are divided into chapters. The chapters, in turn, are divided into sections. Think of the chapter titles and section headings as signs. Textbooks should be read to take advantage of these signs.

SQ3R Method

One way of reading textbooks is called the SQ3R Method:

S ---Survey – Quickly look over the chapter title, section headings, and chapter summary to get an idea of what the chapter is about.

Q---Questions – Go back to the beginning of the chapter and turn the first heading into a question so you know what you are trying to find out as you are reading.

R---Read – Read the section to find out the answer to your question.

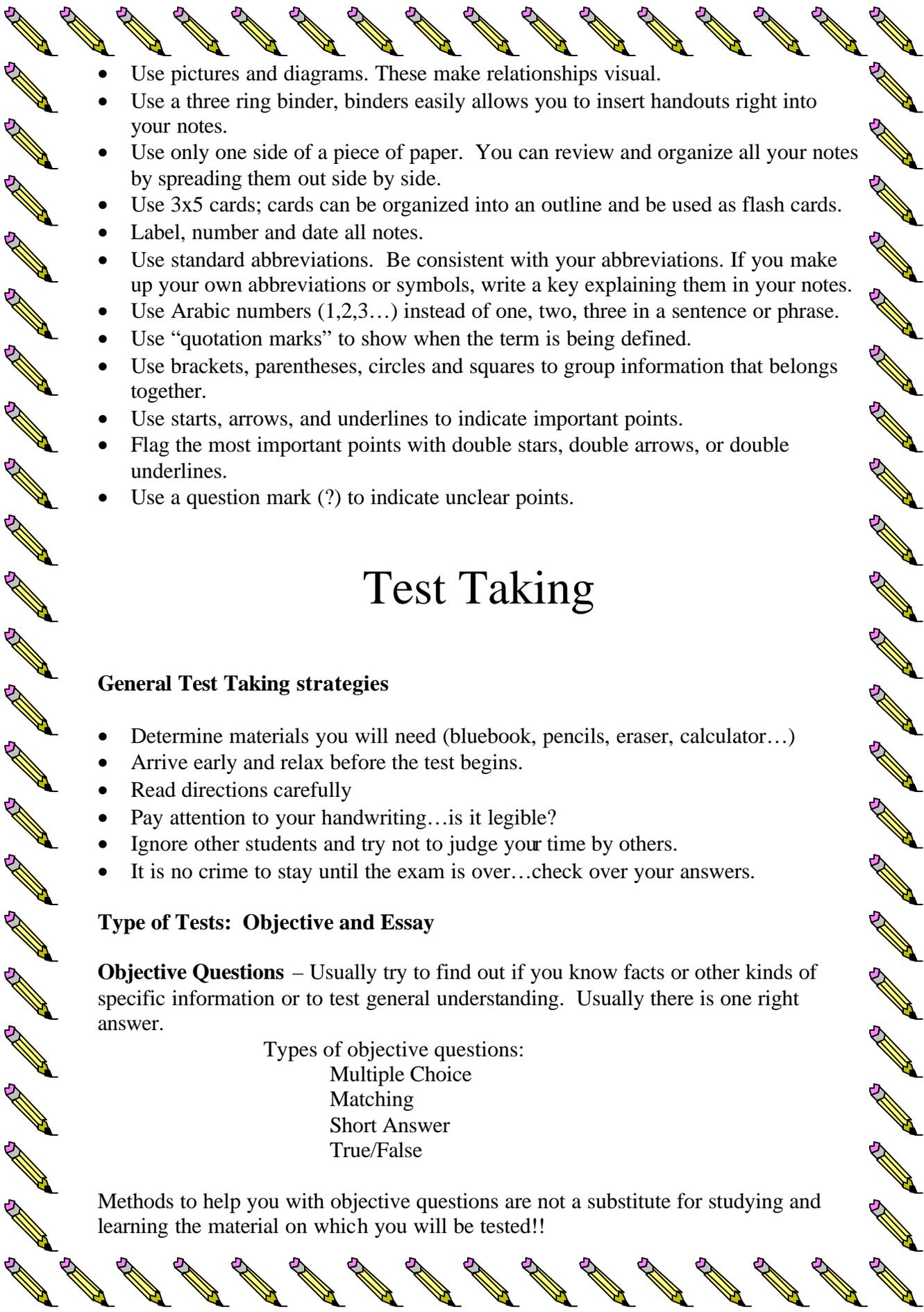
R---Recite – Tell yourself the answer by taking brief notes from that section in outline form. Write the question on the left side of your paper and the notes on the right hand side.

Repeat the Question, Read and Recite steps for each section of your assignment.

R---Review – Cover the right side of your page; ask yourself the question on the left and answer them. If you cannot answer them, go over your notes again.

Tips for Taking Notes

- Draw a vertical line from top to bottom of the page, write notes on the right side and reserve the left side for key words or questions.
- Use an outline form to graphically demonstrate major points and support ideas that are presented in a lecture.
- Use key words or phrases. These words contain the essence of communication and evoke associations with other facts and ideas.

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- Use pictures and diagrams. These make relationships visual.
 - Use a three ring binder, binders easily allows you to insert handouts right into your notes.
 - Use only one side of a piece of paper. You can review and organize all your notes by spreading them out side by side.
 - Use 3x5 cards; cards can be organized into an outline and be used as flash cards.
 - Label, number and date all notes.
 - Use standard abbreviations. Be consistent with your abbreviations. If you make up your own abbreviations or symbols, write a key explaining them in your notes.
 - Use Arabic numbers (1,2,3...) instead of one, two, three in a sentence or phrase.
 - Use “quotation marks” to show when the term is being defined.
 - Use brackets, parentheses, circles and squares to group information that belongs together.
 - Use stars, arrows, and underlines to indicate important points.
 - Flag the most important points with double stars, double arrows, or double underlines.
 - Use a question mark (?) to indicate unclear points.

Test Taking

General Test Taking strategies

- Determine materials you will need (bluebook, pencils, eraser, calculator...)
- Arrive early and relax before the test begins.
- Read directions carefully
- Pay attention to your handwriting...is it legible?
- Ignore other students and try not to judge your time by others.
- It is no crime to stay until the exam is over...check over your answers.

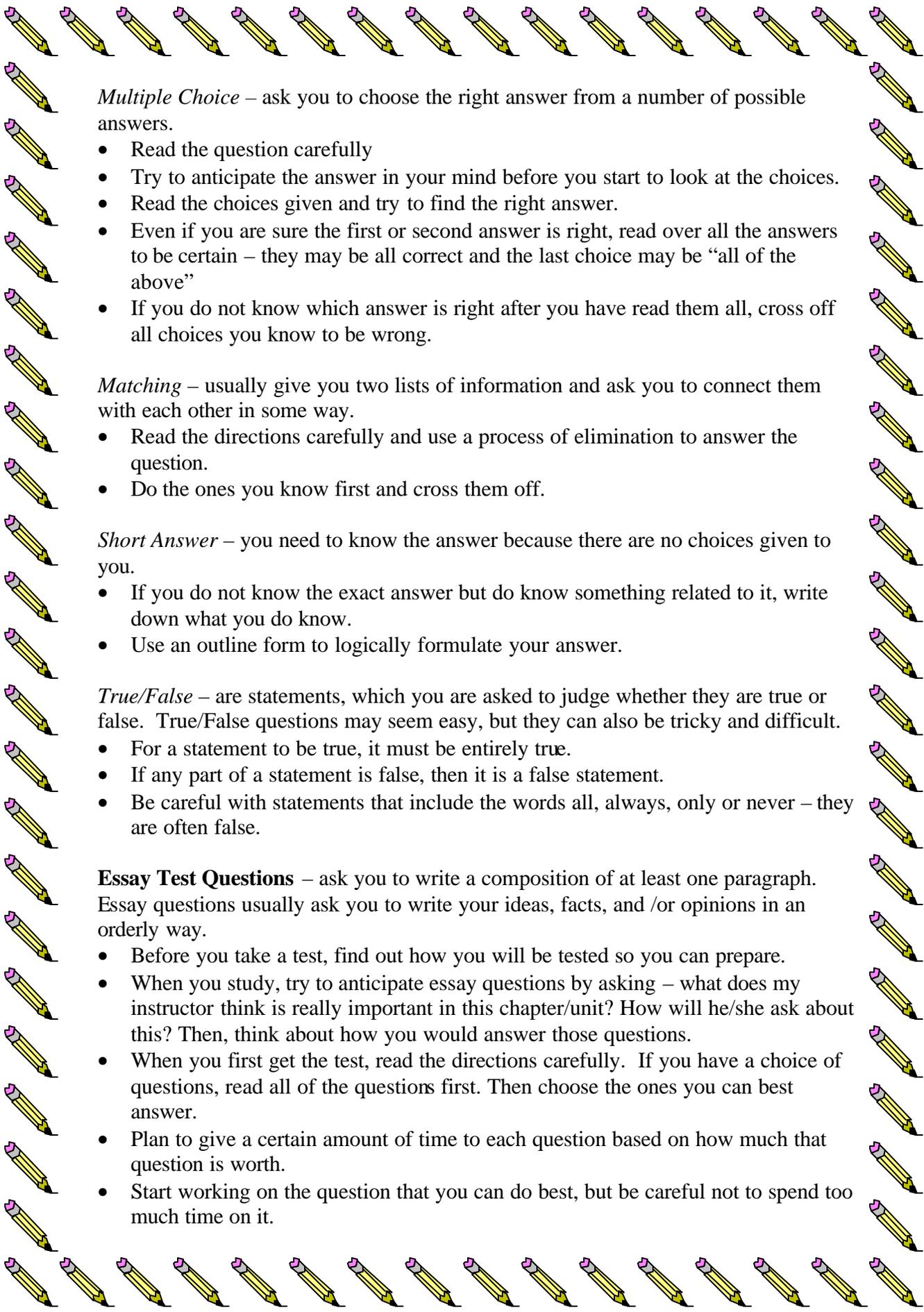
Type of Tests: Objective and Essay

Objective Questions – Usually try to find out if you know facts or other kinds of specific information or to test general understanding. Usually there is one right answer.

Types of objective questions:

Multiple Choice
Matching
Short Answer
True/False

Methods to help you with objective questions are not a substitute for studying and learning the material on which you will be tested!!



Multiple Choice – ask you to choose the right answer from a number of possible answers.

- Read the question carefully
- Try to anticipate the answer in your mind before you start to look at the choices.
- Read the choices given and try to find the right answer.
- Even if you are sure the first or second answer is right, read over all the answers to be certain – they may be all correct and the last choice may be “all of the above”
- If you do not know which answer is right after you have read them all, cross off all choices you know to be wrong.

Matching – usually give you two lists of information and ask you to connect them with each other in some way.

- Read the directions carefully and use a process of elimination to answer the question.
- Do the ones you know first and cross them off.

Short Answer – you need to know the answer because there are no choices given to you.

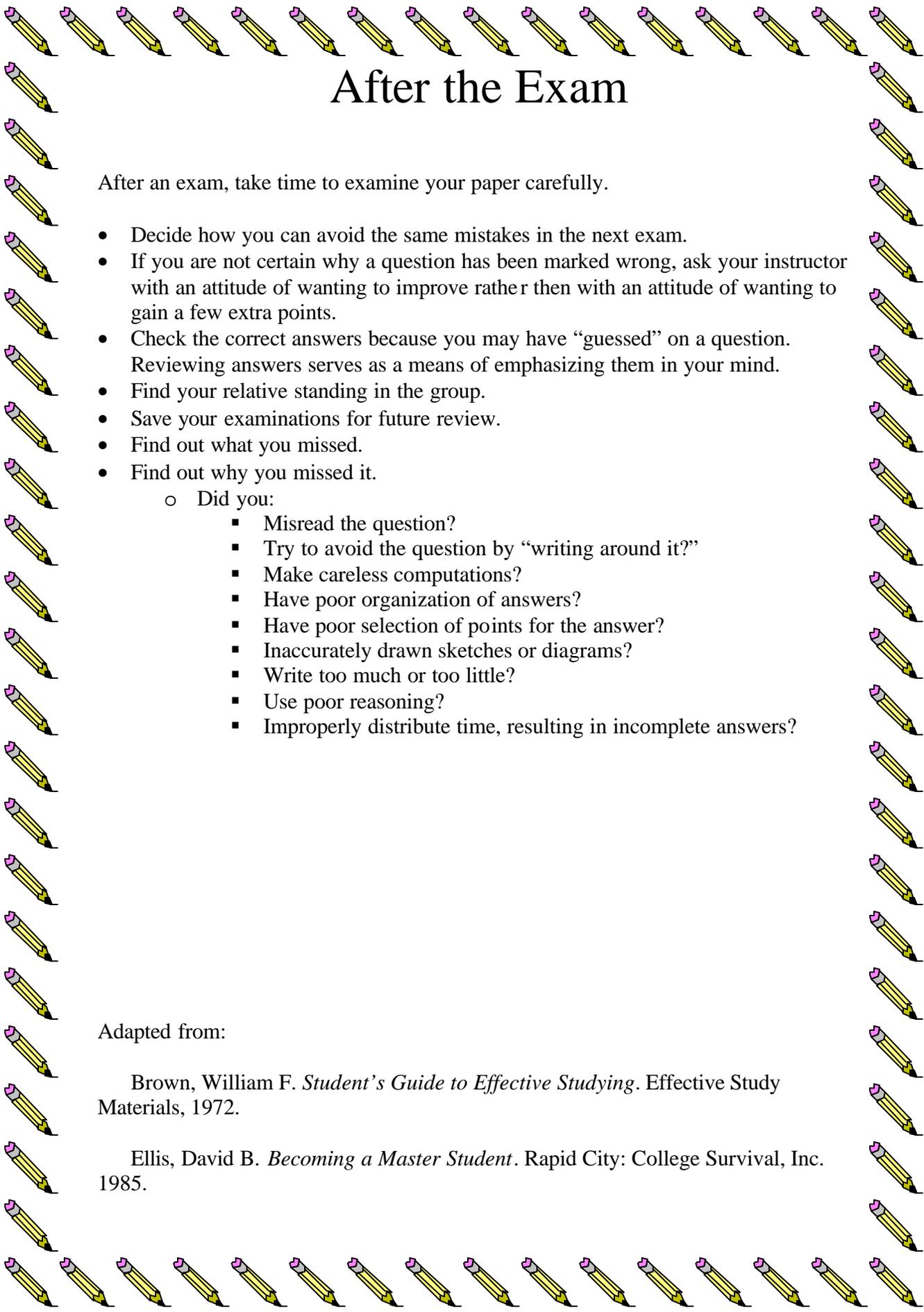
- If you do not know the exact answer but do know something related to it, write down what you do know.
- Use an outline form to logically formulate your answer.

True/False – are statements, which you are asked to judge whether they are true or false. True/False questions may seem easy, but they can also be tricky and difficult.

- For a statement to be true, it must be entirely true.
- If any part of a statement is false, then it is a false statement.
- Be careful with statements that include the words all, always, only or never – they are often false.

Essay Test Questions – ask you to write a composition of at least one paragraph. Essay questions usually ask you to write your ideas, facts, and /or opinions in an orderly way.

- Before you take a test, find out how you will be tested so you can prepare.
- When you study, try to anticipate essay questions by asking – what does my instructor think is really important in this chapter/unit? How will he/she ask about this? Then, think about how you would answer those questions.
- When you first get the test, read the directions carefully. If you have a choice of questions, read all of the questions first. Then choose the ones you can best answer.
- Plan to give a certain amount of time to each question based on how much that question is worth.
- Start working on the question that you can do best, but be careful not to spend too much time on it.



After the Exam

After an exam, take time to examine your paper carefully.

- Decide how you can avoid the same mistakes in the next exam.
- If you are not certain why a question has been marked wrong, ask your instructor with an attitude of wanting to improve rather than with an attitude of wanting to gain a few extra points.
- Check the correct answers because you may have “guessed” on a question. Reviewing answers serves as a means of emphasizing them in your mind.
- Find your relative standing in the group.
- Save your examinations for future review.
- Find out what you missed.
- Find out why you missed it.
 - Did you:
 - Misread the question?
 - Try to avoid the question by “writing around it?”
 - Make careless computations?
 - Have poor organization of answers?
 - Have poor selection of points for the answer?
 - Inaccurately drawn sketches or diagrams?
 - Write too much or too little?
 - Use poor reasoning?
 - Improperly distribute time, resulting in incomplete answers?

Adapted from:

Brown, William F. *Student's Guide to Effective Studying*. Effective Study Materials, 1972.

Ellis, David B. *Becoming a Master Student*. Rapid City: College Survival, Inc. 1985.