

Strategies for successful learning¹

Self-management strategies

- Monitor – don't just let things happen, assess and see why, then pick a strategy
- Evaluate – take the time to ask if things are not working out for you
- Reinforce

Time-management/Anti-procrastination strategies

- Prioritise
- Plan
- Break things into small, manageable pieces
- Goal Setting
- Be specific
- Use all time – e.g. even travel time can be used to review or quiz oneself
- Action builds momentum – do something, anything
- Make a commitment – create a deadline if one doesn't exist or you need an earlier one.

Attitude/Confidence strategies

- Stop making excuses – instead think in terms of challenges
- Focus on effort not results
- Thought stopping
- Reframe – e.g. “want” instead of “should”
- Self-Talk – use positive thoughts and challenge negative thoughts
- Affirm Yourself – use positive phrases including “I”, like “I can do this” and say them often
- Exert Control over what you can, accept what you cannot change

¹ With thanks to the City of Dublin VEC Psychological Service for material

Handling distractions

- Get more active in the study process – ask yourself questions, join a study group, try to
- teach someone else
- Distribute study instead of cramming – easier to concentrate for shorter periods
- Keep memo or notebook – for thoughts or things to do that keep popping into your head
- Assign Worry Time – if you have a problem or difficulty to deal with
- Re-focus attention – by using trigger words like “just listen”
- Build time – do something for five minutes, then next time 7 minutes, etc.
- Routine – organise environment etc., much like an athlete before an event

The attunement strategy

This strategy is designed to support pupils to become more independent in their approach to a task, in their ability to get started and to complete the task. It can be used in a variety of ways and it is up to individual teachers to identify how best to use it in their class. Some teachers give the sheet to pupils at the start of each activity while some like to laminate it and leave it on the pupil's desk. It can be used individually or in pairs. With learners who have concentration problems it might be best to use on a one-to-one basis. If used in this way give the learner some training in it first. The argument for pair work is that the target pupil can learn from the positive behaviour of their peer.

Essentially the attunement strategy involves a sheet which contains the following questions

1. Do I understand the task? (read instructions, scan all the work)
If yes tick
If no what will I do
2. Do I have all the equipment I need to get started? (e.g. pencils, rulers, number square)
If yes tick here
If no, what will I do ...
3. How will I get started? (e.g. line the page, write title)
4. How long will it take?
How will I know when I'm finished?
5. What will I do when I'm finished?

Mind and body

- Eat, sleep and exercise properly
- Don't ignore emotions or thoughts
- Manage your stress

Some general tips when working with students with specific learning difficulties / dyslexia or general literacy difficulties

1. Use different coloured paper for handouts. Yellow is considered best to reduce eye strain, however colour preference can vary. Try a few colours and select as appropriate.
2. Use visual cues on all handouts.
3. Using a dyslexia friendly font such as Arial or Comic sans.
4. Using large font (14) on handouts if students have particular difficulties.
5. Double space the lines (or use one and a half spacing) on handouts.
6. Limit the text to the middle third of the page.
7. Do not justify the text.
8. When using bullet points use numbers or letters rather than symbols

SMART GOALS

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

ACTION-BASED

REALISTIC

TIME-BASED

Smart goal planner

Write out your goal as you see it now _____

		Very	Slightly	Not
Is this goal	Specific?	†	†	†
	Measurable?	†	†	†
	Action-based?	†	†	†
	Realistic?	†	†	†
	Time-based?	†	†	†

Specify your goal: _____

How will you measure success? _____

How much time do you have? _____

List your action steps and the deadline for each step:

1. _____ by (time): _____

2. _____ by (time): _____

3. _____ by (time): _____

4. _____ by (time): _____

5. _____ by (time): _____

Improving Information Processing Techniques

Reading Textbooks

1. Use a survey approach to reading a chapter, i.e., read the headings and subheadings, observe charts and graphs, read summaries, and skim questions at the end.
2. Based on your surveying, ask questions before you read the chapter. Become actively curious about the material as this aids in concentration, comprehension and memory.
3. Read each section for understanding. Make a deliberate effort to recall the main points. Don't read further if you don't understand the key concepts.
4. While reading a text book make notes in the margins; consistently use a variety of markers to indicate examples, dates, etc.; underline main concepts. Make a list of key terms and their definitions.
5. If you take detailed notes, make an outline to condense the material and organize the material into identifiable categories.
6. Read material prior to attending the lecture, so you already have a general understanding or at least recognition of the material

Listening in Lectures

7. When taking notes use an outline format. Make sure you include all key section headings and distinguish definitions, key points, supporting material, examples, and your own ideas or questions. Try to put your notes into your own words, except when writing definition or exact examples.
8. When highlighting your text, mark only after reading a section. This will allow you to choose the main points and not mark the same ideas twice. Don't just rely on your highlighting when you study for a test.

9. Judge the content of the material not its delivery. Listen for ideas, keep your mind open, write down questions you have, and resist distractions.
10. Don't tune out in the last few minutes of a lecture. Professors may cram very important material into the last few minutes so you need to stay alert until the end.