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Robin Raygor, July 2004

How to Use This Book

After observing students in introductory psychology classes for more years than I'd like to admit, I'm convinced that one of the biggest barriers to success is a lack of information about how to study. Far too many students think that reading is the same as studying and that most of their study time should be spent reading and re-reading the assigned chapters.

Too many students skip the study aids in their textbooks. They say, "I don't have time for this; I have to study." They don't realize that using the study aids *is* studying. In fact, it is a more efficient method of studying than reading is. Using the study aids will save you time. If you are like most students, your goal for each test is to learn the material well enough to get your desired grade on the test. If you study efficiently, you are guaranteed to reach that goal in less time. You have my promise that if you use the study aids throughout the book, you will get better test scores in less time. In addition, you will have a better understanding of psychology—something that will come in handy both in later classes and in real life. Here is a preview of the book's study aids and how to use them. Remember that the more active you are in using them, the more they will help you. For example, writing down the answers to the Locking It In quizzes will help you more than just thinking of them.

There is a great deal of scientific research on how to study for a test. The researchers are all in agreement on one point: Simply reading and re-reading the material is one of the worst ways to study (Raygor, Wark, & Raygor, 1982). We remember things best when we study actively. For most students, reading is far too passive an activity to be very effective. Most study skills experts agree that you should spend at least two-thirds of your study time doing something other than reading. With this principle in mind, I've tried to put features in this book that encourage you to use effective study techniques. The technique I encourage you to use is called the PAT system (P. Wheeler-Andrews, personal communication, June 24, 2004). The letters stand for the three steps of the process:

Preview
Actively Read
Test yourself.

PREVIEW

The first step is to preview the material in each chapter. Studies show that you will get much more out of a chapter if you look it over before reading it. Read the chapter preview questions. Think about them. Can you guess the answers to any of them? Which are most likely to be covered on a test? Which ones are you most interested in? Once these preview questions give you an idea of what the chapter is about, take a quick look through the pages. Look at the headings to see how the chapter is organized. When you get to the end of the chapter, look over the important terms and concepts so they will be more familiar to you when you see them in the chapter.

Feel free to adapt the preview process so that it works best for you. Some students like to start with the important terms and concepts at the end of the chapter. Others like to page through the chapter looking at the headings *before* looking at the chapter preview questions. Find out what works best for you.

ACTIVELY READ

Now that you know what the chapter is about and are familiar with some of the ideas in it, you are ready to read. There are four study aids built into the book to help make your reading more active: The important terms and names, the questions, the Locking It In quizzes, and the chapter summaries.

Important Terms and Names In each chapter, the most important terms and names are in **boldface** type. When you see them, you should realize that these are prime candidates for test questions. It is a good bet that most of the questions on a test will have something to do with one of these important terms or names. The important terms are also defined in the margins of the text near where they first appear. Some students like to make flashcards for each important term or name as they go through the chapter with the term or name on one side and the definition or a description on the other. For review purposes, the terms and names are also listed at the end of each chapter.

Questions

Q: What is the second active reading aid?

The questions in *italics* (like the one above this paragraph) that are spread throughout each chapter are another important active reading aid. Stop and think about each question just as you did with the chapter preview questions. Can you guess the answer? What are the odds that the topic will appear on a test? As you read the section following a question, keep the question in mind and watch for the answer. When you get the answer, stop again. Was it the answer you expected? Do you agree with the answer? What would a test question on this idea look like?

Locking It In Quizzes Be sure you stop to take the Locking It In quizzes in every chapter. They not only let you see if you understood the ideas in that section, they also help lock them into your memory system so that they will be there when you take the test. Taking the quizzes is a particularly efficient form of studying. It will save you time in the long run. Be sure not to cheat by looking at the answers printed below the test. Cheating may seem like it will save you time but it won't. Cheating will slow down the process of learning and will actually lengthen your study time. If you don't know the answer to a quiz question, go back and find it. Think about how you can remember this idea so you will be ready if it appears on a test.

Chapter Summary When you finish the chapter, be sure to read the chapter summary. Everything in it should be familiar to you now. The chapter preview questions are repeated here. Before reading the summary material following each question, test yourself to see if you know the answer to the question. Remember that the chapter summary leaves out a lot of details. Don't be tempted to read the summary instead of the chapter! If anything in the chapter summary seems unfamiliar to you, go back and re-read that section of the chapter.

TEST YOURSELF

You've already done part of this step as you took the Locking It In quizzes. Now, it's time to test yourself again by going through the important terms and names. Make sure you know what there is to know about each one. If any of them seem unfamiliar, go back in the chapter and refresh your memory. If you have made flashcards, use them to test yourself. Use them both ways. Go through them one time with the terms and names showing and see if you know the definitions and descriptions. The next time through, turn them around and see if you can give the term or name based on the definition or description. Don't stop when you can get them all correct. Doing them over and over helps organize your memories so that they will be available when you take the test. Try testing yourself right now with the following quiz.

Locking It In

1. PAT stands for _____, _____, _____.
2. Skipping the Locking It In quizzes can save you time (T/F).
3. When you know all the important terms and names, you can stop studying (T/F).
4. You can often do well on a test just by reading the chapter summaries (T/F).

Answers: 1) Preview, Actively read, Test yourself, 2) F, 3) F, 4) F

SOME FINAL TIPS

Be sure to set aside enough time to study. If you are used to high school tests, you may not be aware of how much more time it takes to study for a test in college. If you are very good at studying, you can expect to spend at least three hours studying each chapter. If your study skills are not that strong, it will take a lot longer—possibly two or three times as long. As your skills improve, (and if you use the techniques described above), you will find that you can spend less time and still get the grades you want.

Find a good place to study. Most people study best in a quiet spot where they do nothing but study. People who study in bed, in front of the television, or with others who are not always serious about studying generally don't do well on tests.

Don't be tempted to skip the **Applications, Going Beyond the Data,** and **Science of Psychology Journal** sections of each chapter. Many test questions are taken from these sections.

Remember, above all, that studying is a skill like tennis or golf. Anyone can improve his or her study skills. To do so, however, you need to think of it as a skill. Don't just study the way you always have. Try out the suggestions presented in this section. At the end of each study session, pause a moment and think about how well you were able to concentrate and how much you got out of the session. Try to identify the conditions that help or hinder your studying. Can you study where it's noisy? Do you study best on a full stomach, and empty stomach, or something in between? Can you study well with others? Does it matter if there is music playing and what kind of music it is? Do you study best at a particular time of day or after a particular activity? Once you find out what works best for you, try to stick to it. Remember that using effective study techniques will not only improve your test scores, it will save you time in the long run.