Self Testing
Self-Testing 101

Are you struggling to do well on tests and are not sure why?

The way you prepare for a test depends largely on the strategies you use to make sure you understand the content properly. This is called *self-testing*. Self-testing is necessary to check understanding, consolidate knowledge, integrate related information, and identify whether additional studying should be done.

In this workshop, you will learn several techniques to prepare for exams, including the use of index cards, memorization techniques, and effective reading strategies.
Index Card Study System

Many students who struggle to recall or retain information for their courses find that the use of index cards is beneficial. Writing information on index cards helps students to learn needed material more effectively than just reading a textbook.

Try the following strategies to use index cards to your advantage.
Index Cards (continued)

As you are reading your textbook or notes, imagine that you are teaching the course. What questions or terms would you ask on the exam?

Write each of these questions or terms on the front of an index card. On the back of the index card, answer the question asked or define the term *in your own words*. Use a separate index card for each question or term.

Shuffle the index cards and go through them one at a time, attempting to answer the questions. If you can answer the question, put the card to the side. If you cannot answer the question, put the card back in the deck to review again.

Go through the deck of cards until you know them all.
Index Cards (continued)

A few tips about using index cards:
• Take your cards with you wherever you go and take advantage of small amounts of time. Review them while you are waiting in line, riding the bus, etc.
• If you think you know an answer but cannot put it into your own words, you probably do not know it well enough.
• Recite your answers out loud. That is the best way to be sure you know the material and will be able to recall it at test time.
• Study index cards with a friend. You can share ideas and help each other understand concepts.
Memorization Techniques

Your brain has an amazing ability to store and recall information. However, many students complain that they have difficulty remembering course material for a test.

By applying the following techniques to your coursework, you can improve your ability to memorize and recall information for exams.
Memorization (continued)

Break into Parts
Instead of trying to memorize a large amount of information at once, break it into parts. For example, if you are trying to memorize a poem, take it one section at a time for better memorization.

Chunk Material
Try memorizing information in chunks. An example of this is memorizing a phone number. Memorizing 10 numbers - 3175521389 - might be difficult, but by putting the numbers into chunks, 317-552-1389, it makes memorizing the numbers easier. This can be done with dates, names, formulas, etc.
Memorization (continued)

**Mnemonics**
A mnemonic is a phrase used to remind you of something. Common mnemonics include:

- “My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nachos” is a mnemonic to remember the planets in the solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.
- “HOMES” is a mnemonic to remember the names of the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.

Create your own mnemonic for what you need to remember.

**Music**
Adding a musical tune to what you are remembering can also be helpful. You may not have been able to remember the 26 letters of the alphabet when you were young, but putting it to music made it easier.
Critical Information
Focus on memorizing just the critical information. If you are preparing for an exam in math, don’t try to memorize all the formulas, just the ones that will be covered on the exam. Your instructor may be able to tell you what you will need to focus on for a test.

Repetition
Repetition over time is the best way to retain information and be able to recall it easily. Do not expect to recall information when you cram for a test the night before. Review the material in the weeks leading up to the test for more effective memorization.

More than One Method
Try two different methods, such as writing down and saying out loud. The more ways you use to recall the information, the more successful you will be.
Effective Reading

In order to effectively and efficiently read, you will need to review the material several times in different ways. One effective method is called the SQ3R Method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review).

Although this may take longer than reading more passively, it will save you time in the long run in two ways:

• You will have excellent notes to review for an exam.
• You will learn the material so well that you will not need to take as much time to study for exams.
The SQ3R Method

The first step in the SQ3R Method is SURVEY.

Skim the chapter, reading only the title; subtitles; italicized terms; boldface print; charts and graphs; and introductory and summary sections. The goal is to familiarize yourself with the general ideas in the reading.

Make mental predictions about what you think the reading material is about. This is an important step that should not be skipped.
The SQ3R Method (continued)

The second step is QUESTION.

To do this, change headings into questions. For example, if the heading is, “Distinguishing Heredity and Environment,” it could be changed into, “How does one distinguish heredity from environment?”

Write down your questions in a notebook, leaving room underneath to take notes and answer the questions as you read. This will give you something to look for while you are reading.

These first two steps should be done before you starting reading the material.
The SQ3R Method (continued)

The third step is READ.

Read each chunk of text actively, specifically looking to answer the questions you asked in step two.

Focus on 5-7 pages at a time. Take notes, mark with a highlighter, underline, and write in the margins.
The SQ3R Method (continued)

The fourth step is RECITE.

Immediately after you have read the material, summarize what you have read in your own words. Do this without looking at the book or your notes.

Answer the questions you asked out loud. Think about how you would explain the material to someone, and then practice doing so.
The fifth and final step is REVIEW. The step is not completed once, but is an ongoing process.

Review the material several times following your initial read by:
• Going back and – out loud – answering the questions you asked in the beginning.
• Making flash cards and reviewing them.
• Using memory tricks to remember the material.
• Making a study sheet prior to the exam.

Go over the information daily to learn it well and avoid cramming.
These methods may appear to be time-consuming and overwhelming at first, but with practice, they can be effective ways to get the most out of your study time.

If you continue to have difficulty with your coursework, visit the College Learning Center or utilize the other resources provided at the end of this workshop for additional assistance.
Resources Available at WCCC

College Learning Center, Founders Hall room 565, 724-925-4135
• Offers tutoring sessions to review course material, answer questions on course content, learn test-taking strategies, and provide study skills & writing assistance

Disability Services, Founders Hall room 130, 724-925-4189
• Provides services and/or academic accommodations to support students with disabilities

Counseling Services, Founders Hall room 130, 724-925-4121
• Provides academic advising, career testing, and personal counseling, as well as referrals to outside agencies

Student Services Support Assistants, Founders Hall room 555, 724-925-6893
• Offers assistance and referrals to first-semester students
References


Self-Testing Quiz

Answer true or false to the following statements:

1. When studying for a test, the strategies you use to understand the course content are called self-testing.
2. When using the index card system, write the answers on the card exactly the way they are written in the textbook.
3. Small amounts of time are not sufficient to learn the material on index cards. You should only study index cards when you have a large block of time available.
4. Cramming for a test the night before is an effective way to memorize the information.
5. In the first step of the SQ3R method, Survey, the goal is to familiarize yourself with the general ideas in the reading.

Name one skill you have learned in this workshop that you will use to improve your Self-Testing ability.
Evaluation

Please take a moment to complete our brief survey. Please print this slide (CTRL-P in the Design View) and return it to the College Learning Center, Founders Hall Room 565.

Name of workshop: ___________________ Date taken: _____________

Using the following scale, please rate each item below.
(1) Not very much (2) Somewhat not (3) Somewhat (4) Very much

❖ After completing this workshop, my knowledge has increased on this subject: ____
❖ I found the information in this workshop to be helpful to me: _____
❖ I am likely to use the information in this workshop in my life: _____
❖ Other comments: ________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________