

**28 STEPS
TO
ACTIVE SELF-STUDY**

Free e-Book

By B. S. Sujendra Prakash

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Dr. B. S. Sujendra Prakash

M.A., Dip.Ind., Ph.D.



CEO & President
FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF SUPRA THERAPY (FAST)

Consultant Psychologist

LMA
Life Management Academy

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"It is so boring to study" is a statement we often come across whenever the word studying is mentioned. Is learning such a meaningless task? How come the students spend most of their waking life studying and yet do not get any considerable benefit out of it? Why do students develop negative attitude towards study? What makes them remember TV serials, films, and sports but not detailed information in the textbooks? Why are they not able to concentrate?

The answer lies in their approach towards studying. Now that the teaching of syllabi is coming to an end, students are left with study holidays. This is a time when parents keep cajoling, threatening and pestering their children to study but students try every method in the book to avoid studying. It is not that students are unaware of the importance of gaining knowledge. They know why they should study better than we do. If their heart and soul are not there in it, how can we expect them to sit and do the monotonous work?

Active Self-Study is an alternative method of studying, which automatically removes the above problems. The rationale behind such a method is to first allow the students to learn how to learn and then allow them to learn. The following paragraphs clearly provide step-by-step method so that studying becomes a matter of enjoyment rather than drudgery. Hundreds of students have benefited from this technique, which has been modeled on the basis of a thorough research in information processing. One needs to start from the beginning with an open-mind in order to reap the benefits of the technique.

Step1: - Forget the fact that you are a student. Imagine yourself to be a detective. You know how adventurous the job of a detective is? If you do, then your job will be more fun and so get going.

Step2: - Select a textbook or syllabus, which is most difficult or boring to you. It is on this book that you will show your detective skills.

Step3: - Take a few sheets of writing paper. Keep your pen or pencil ready but do not write anything now. Find a good dictionary and place it nearby. Arrange all these things on the table.

Step4: - See if you are comfortable in your sitting position. If you are lying down or standing, then make yourself room to sit. Use a steel chair, sit comfortably and then pull the table towards you. Make sure you do not have to bend down while reading or writing. Ensure that your back is straight. Posture is an important ingredient while studying and always you should keep reminding yourself to maintain an erect position.

Step5: - Put an end to your habit of opening your book and reading it. This is the first fatal error you make, which is irreversible. Do not open the book until you are told to do so.

Step6: - On a sheet of paper draw two parallel lines in such a way that there are three columns. Write the title of the book in the first column and keep your pen down.

<u>Column1</u>	<u>Column2</u>	<u>Column3</u>
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Step7: - Ask yourself the three questions: Why should I study this book? What does it deal with? What do I already know in this subject?

Step8: - Take your time thinking answers to these questions. In active self-study there is more thinking than reading.

Step9: - Write each question in the first column and write the corresponding answer in the second column. It is imperative that all the three questions are answered before you set out to go through the textbook. If, in case, you are studying a new subject about which you know very little or nothing, you still need to answer these questions. If you do not know what exactly to write, then take a guess, even if it is a wild guess. At this point of time suspend all judgments. Do not bother whether your answers are right or wrong. The idea of introducing the second column is to refresh already existing knowledge. It follows from the dictum:

'From Known to Unknown'.

Step10: - Now start your detective work. Take the book and read the front and back pages. Read the preface. Read instructions to students if they are present. Glance through the end of the book and see if index or glossary or both are there. Do not do anything more. This stage of information processing is known as *Preparation*. You are regulating your consciousness to receive information as a whole. Keeping the answers you have already written down in the second column, you need to search the book at relevant places to find out the following: Do your answers cover all aspects the book deals with? If not, then are there something more to be added? Are some parts of your answers irrelevant to the subject under study?

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Why should I study this book?	<i>Write your answers here.</i>	<i>Do your answers cover all</i>
What does it deal with?	<i>Try to give one-word answers. Make a list of</i>	<i>aspects the book deals</i>
What do I already know about this subject?	<i>what all you know. Do not be afraid of making mistakes. You can correct your mistakes later.</i>	<i>with? If not, then are there something more to be added? Are some parts of your answers irrelevant to the subject under study?</i>

Step11: - Check each statement written by you in the second column and scratch out whatever part is not relevant. If your answer is correct even in general terms then do not correct or edit it. If you have missed out something important, then write that information in the third column.

Step12: - Now your general layout is ready. This serves as a foundation upon which you will be building your repertoire of knowledge.

Step13: - Usually, any textbook or syllabus is divided into chapters. Close the book you are studying and try to visualize the contents. Think of what chapter can come under the subject you are studying. In our traditional method of teaching, sometimes even the teachers do not remember all the chapters they teach. This is an important stage to set your plan of action and this stage is called *Awakening*. You need to awaken your consciousness to see the general relationship that exists between the major highlights of the study material.

Step14: - Take a fresh page, make three columns, and write 'contents' in the first column. Write down the headings that you already remember in the second column.

Step15: - Pick up the book, open the contents page and see if you have missed out any headings. Whatever you have missed out, write the same in the third column. If you have written a heading that is wrong or irrelevant, then scratch it out.

Step16: - Close the book. Think of each heading and try to link it to the subject you are studying. Guide yourself with the following questions:

1. Why should I study this chapter?
2. Why is this heading included in this subject?
3. What do I already know about this topic?
4. How is this chapter related to other chapters?

Step17: - Write down the name of the first chapter and the above questions in the first column. Then write down your answers to these questions in the second column. Let your answers be brief and to the point. We do not need lengthy answers at this point of time.

Step18: - Similarly, proceed to other chapters and for each chapter follow the same method as in Step17. You are trying to follow the dictum: '**From General to Specific**'. Without doing this if you proceed to go through the reading of the chapter in detail, then consider that you have blocked any further learning.

Step19: - Now open the book. Almost all the good textbooks have a summary at the end of each chapter. Read it and compare it with what you have written. Scratch out unnecessary details and fill the third column with what you have missed.

Step20: - Go to index page. Read each word written there and try to place it with reference to the chapters. If you have a doubt, then refer to the page number and confirm its origin. If you come across a new word, unfamiliar words, or a word that gives no meaning to you, then refer either the dictionary or the glossary or the textbook itself to know its exact meaning. This is an important stage called *Semantics* where you associate and tag each word appropriate to the section.

Step21: - Close the book. Take a fresh sheet of paper with three columns and write the name of the first chapter in the first column. Now think of what sections, subsections, concepts, terms, and ideas come under the chapter and write them down in the second column. Try to generate a list of words. Do not elaborate them at this juncture.

Step22: - Open the book and check whether all the important words are present or not. Write down in the third column what you have missed. Scratch out irrelevant words.

Step23: - Read the chapter section by section. This stage is known as *Tracking* where specific information is learnt part by part. After finishing each section, close the book, write the section heading in the first column, and write down a short summary of what you have understood. Use your own sentences. This is very crucial because during the examination you have to write everything on your own. This stage will help you practice for the exams.

Step24: - Open the book and check if all details under the section are being recalled by you. Just as you have done earlier scratch out unnecessary information and write down what you have missed out in the third column.

Step25: - Repeat steps 23 and 24 until you complete all the sections in the chapter. Now think of what questions can be asked in the chapter. If you already have old set of question papers search for the relevant questions and see if you can answer them without leaving any details. The best thing for you to do is to write down the answers to each question under the chapter. This follows the dictum: **From Simple to Complex**. Use the same 'three-column format' as you did earlier and check for your completeness in understanding. This stage is known as ***Parallel Processing*** of information.

Step26: - Repeat the above procedure for all chapters.

Step27: - This is the last stage called ***Reorganization***.

Suppose that a book has 12 chapters. The first chapter has 17 sections, the second 15 sections and so on. All you need to do is count the number of sections in each chapter and assign corresponding number to the letters of the chapter. Thus prepare a list like the following: A17, B15, C12, D19... and so on. Go back to the questions you have answered under each chapter and find out which of the sections correspond to the question. For instance, a question on Chapter 1 may expect you to know sections 7 to 14. Glance through the section headings once again and file this information in your mind. This will help you to recall answers fluently during examinations.

Step28: - As the old adage goes, 'Practice makes us perfect'. If you set out to learn on your own using this method it will work wonders for you. Initially, you may feel the method is making you to proceed very slowly. It does not matter. If you persist with the method, things will fall into place automatically and the speed picks up. Remember always that it is not the amount of information you go through that matters. What is crucial is how much of the information will be at your fingertips when you need to recall them. Once you finish the book this way you can consider yourself a master of the subject. There is no need for you to go back to the book once again. What you have written down itself serves as a reference to you.

During exams there is no need to go through everything you have written down. Glance through the first column and you know what all are there in the subject. Whenever you feel that you need revision only then read the second and third columns. If you have time to practice write a set of questions from your memory and answer them on your own. Refer to your document only when absolutely necessary. This way you will overcome your problems of forgetting and lack of concentration.

Get set and go actively into your self-study. Wish you all the best.

Please send in your comments, suggestions, questions and clarifications to supratherapy@yahoo.co.in

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You need a lot of courage to **seek help**

If you are **courageous**, then please read on.....



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Take a few minutes off and check the Self-administering Check List for Students

- ✓ I am weak in studies
- ✓ I have problems in concentration
- ✓ My parents are unhappy about me
- ✓ I am afraid of forgetting what I study
- ✓ I am not able to study for long duration
- ✓ I read the same material over and again
- ✓ Whenever I try to study, I am distracted
- ✓ I cannot remember information in detail
- ✓ I take a long time to read and understand
- ✓ I am unable to recall information whenever I want
- ✓ I know the answers well but I am not able to write them
- ✓ I understand when the teacher explains but I cannot recall afterwards
- ✓ I know I can do better but I don't know how to go about it
- ✓ I cannot keep unwanted thoughts away while studying
- ✓ I need to read every thing before I go to the exams
- ✓ I want to score good marks but I need guidance
- ✓ I do not have interest in a few subjects
- ✓ I get bored when I try to study
- ✓ I am very tired after studying
- ✓ I have memory problems

Studying for the whole year is a cumbersome activity. Most of our time and energy are spent in re-reading the same material over and again. By using modern scientific techniques one can master the study skills so that studying becomes an object of happiness than drudgery. In addition, problems in memory and concentration disappear. Smart Studying also helps in deriving maximum benefits by putting minimum effort.



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If your answer is yes to any of the above statements, then there is a need to change your method of studying.

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Our researches have specifically identified intervention strategies that can bring about changes in the teaching-learning process.

Modern pedagogical techniques have shown that an awareness of the nature of information processing will facilitate learning and help in retaining information longer.

This program is aimed at providing such awareness to the student so that studying becomes an effortless activity.

At the same time a minimum amount of effort should be able to bring in an optimum level of performance in the student whenever there is a need to recall the information that is learnt.

Students put in a lot of effort to understand and remember the study material. One reading is never enough and repeated studying makes them either tired or bored. A solution to these problems has been tried out scientifically through action research. Information processing depends upon how the information is coded, decoded, processed, stored, and retrieved.

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8. Clipping Edges (Writing Ability)
9. Whose Life is it Anyway? (Career Planning)
10. 28 Steps to Active Self-Study

Bonus: **The Regulation of Consciousness in Information Processing**, a research article.



The last twenty five years of research has revealed that each student has about 35 problems on an average that are related to studying. As providers of education, it is our duty to make sure that these problems are tackled while the students are in school or college. Else, these problems magnify to undermine the efficacy of the future citizens of the world. Now that we are moving towards globalization, it is imperative that the students are trained to cope up with the increased need for competition.

We are presently observing a trend where most of the younger generation has very little employability. One of our researches conducted to find lacunae in the graduates passing out from the universities showed that only 12% of the skills necessary for employment were present. It is true that the job market is opening up but unless one is able to grow and prosper, it is difficult to modify the job into a career and move towards success.



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