

STUDYING FOR SUCCESS – Part 1

by Lynette Sampson

Success in exams begins long before that dreaded day, when your knowledge and memory skills are put to the test.

The process of remembering can be considered in three steps:

1. **Input** – you have to get the information into your brain
2. **Retention** – hold it there and make sense of it
3. **Output** – then use it in situations, such as an exam or real life

Although your teachers and parents also impact upon this process you have the ultimate responsibility for your learning, since above all, you are the one who has to bear the consequences of any deficiencies in your education. There are many things you can do to make learning more effective, easier and more enjoyable and we will explore some of these now.

INPUT – this begins for most people in a classroom when a teacher is teaching, when they read a book for the first time, or watch a television programme.

You can:

- Find other books that explain the material better
- Ask a teacher to repeat something you may have missed
- Speak with your teacher after class and ask her to go over what you did not understand
- Examine charts and other illustrations in the books
- Listen carefully to explanations given by the teacher, questions and answers from other students.

RETENTION – this is what we commonly call studying – making sure what was put in, stays in. This should take place as close as possible to the time of input e.g. every afternoon after school.

The more of your senses you stimulate in this process the better.

You can . . .

- Draw diagrams
- Build models
- Visit places where you can see the information being applied in reality
- Highlight or add colour to your notes and text books
- Try to teach what you are learning to someone else like your parent or sibling
- Study in a group, where you take turns preparing a topic and explaining it to the rest of the group or leading the discussion on the topic

- Walk around, gesticulate and / or talk to yourself
- Create examples to illustrate or clarify ideas
- Visualize the information
- Make up acronyms e.g. Every Good Boy Deserves Food to remember music
- Make posters and put them all over your room or the house, if everyone else does not mind
- Make flash cards with the main points AND USE THEM – take them with you everywhere and USE THEM
- If messy notes are a distraction, re-write them

A note on T.V., radio and other distractions

The benefits of doing well far outweigh the sacrifice of missing a few calls, missing a few television programmes or missing few limes with friends. All those things will always be around, but not many people can afford a second chance at education.

“The heights by great men, reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upwards through the night.”

Next month we will look at the output part of this process and address some of the problems of taking examinations.