



(This Pedagoggle was written with Christina Meredith: Learning Strategist, Centre for Student Success)

**Lens on Learning Principles**

“The degree to which students learn the course content and/or skills depends a great deal on their repertoire of learning behaviors. If our students do not understand the learning process, they are not going to learn very much in our courses no matter what we do.” (Doyle)

Teaching course content to an academically diverse group of students is never an easy task. One of the reasons for this challenge is that many students have not, for whatever reason, acquired effective learning strategies. Learning and study strategies include approaches to managing the learning process, understanding and using information, completing learning tasks, and evaluating learning.

**Faculty can assist with this aspect of learning by doing any or all of the following:**

- offering students structures that support learning.
- teaching students a variety of strategies for approaching learning tasks.
- modeling effective learning and study strategies for their subject area.
- encouraging students to develop and implement a variety of learning strategies.
- engaging students in monitoring and reflecting on their learning.
- providing opportunities for students to practice various strategies.

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**Reflection on Practice**

1. What aspects of the learning process do your students have difficulties with (note taking, reading, studying for tests, completing assignments etc)?
2. What strategies could they learn that would improve their skills in this area?
3. How could you model, demonstrate, or otherwise integrate these strategies into your teaching practice?

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**Expanding the Teaching Toolkit**

In this section, we offer a few suggestions on ways faculty can assist students with the “strategic” aspect of the learning process.

**1. Learning strategies for time management**

One of the greatest challenges many students have in adjusting to college or university life is time management. This is especially true for students who work long hours or who have family responsibilities. To assist students with time management, faculty can:

- Create a syllabus that clearly outlines when tests, quizzes and assignments are due.
- Model how learners can break larger assignments down into smaller tasks.
- Emphasize process over product and have students submit stages of their work (i.e. an outline, bibliography, first draft etc).

## 2. Learning strategies for note taking

Note taking is an essential skill for understanding and retaining learning material. Faculty can support students in improving their note-taking skills by modeling or providing the following:

- **Skeletal notes.** Give students skeletal notes containing the lecture's main ideas interspersed with spaces for note taking.
- **Lecture cues.** Provide students with cues signaling important ideas either on the chalkboard, on transparencies, orally, or in Blackboard.
- **Note-taking frameworks.** Give students templates for different types of note taking, such as outlines, visual organizers, and the Cornell Method  
( [http://www.westshore.edu/webs/ltc/cornell\\_note\\_taking\\_method.htm](http://www.westshore.edu/webs/ltc/cornell_note_taking_method.htm) )

## 3. Learning strategies for effective and efficient reading

The ability to read effectively is critical to success in any subject area. Engaging students in active reading practices can aide comprehension and retention.

- **Introduce the K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I've Learned) method.**  
Before reading, have students brainstorm everything they know about a topic. Then, have them list questions they have about the topic (what they want to know). After reading, check what students have learned and if they can answer the questions they generated. Consider identifying new areas for exploration.
- **Generate a list of controversial questions or statements related to reading topics.** Have students skim the chapter topics and compile some controversial questions or statements. This will engage them in the subject matter and generate authentic discussion related to the topics.
- **Implement the use of graphic organizers for student reading.**  
These tools can help students to visually organize what they are reading and extract the main ideas. Graphic organizers are especially useful as a reviewing tool.  
(More info on visual organizers <http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/visual-org.htm> )

## 4. Learning strategies for studying and taking tests

Taking tests is an integral part of any post secondary experience. It is also a very difficult and stressful thing for many students. Below are a few strategies for test preparation.

- Explain to students the format of the test, the topics covered, and how they can prepare.
- Ask students to identify what they believe will be hard for them to learn and brainstorm how they can work to learn it. This will encourage active participation in the learning process and will help students determine what to focus on while studying.
- Practice test-preparation strategies with students. (i.e. mind mapping for visual learners or acronyms; mnemonics for auditory learners; explaining concepts to a peer; writing notes in their own words)

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### More Information

Doyle, T. (n.d.). Integrating learning strategies into teaching. Ferris State University.

[http://www.unm.edu/~castl/Castl\\_Docs/Package1/Integrating%20Learning...%20Terry%20Doyle.html](http://www.unm.edu/~castl/Castl_Docs/Package1/Integrating%20Learning...%20Terry%20Doyle.html)

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