

## NEW PUBLICATIONS ... NUWE PUBLIKASIES

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*Study and thinking skills in college*. Second edition. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

The book succeeds in integrating what is known about learning (study) skills with what is known about thinking skills for student success in tertiary education. These skills in the academic context are not innate; they are learned. Though it seems to be written for use as a class text, the study and thinking skills it deals with can also be learned by the student working alone, in a tutorial setting or in a study group. A computer software package that supplements the content is available. Computer interaction provides learners with practice in applying specific strategies and also gives immediate feedback.

*Study and thinking skills in college* is based on two key premises. First, the learner is active in the processes of thinking and learning, not a passive receiver of information. Second, the learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning. The learner is shown how to use metacognition, which in this context means being conscious of and controlling the processes he or she can use. One might say this is empowerment at a rather high level. Along with metacognition there is a major focus on academic thought patterns as thinking and organising strategies. These patterns are adapted to various disciplines.

### OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

**The book is organised into seven parts.**

**Part 1.** *College, a focus on learning and thinking* explains what is required of students, offers time management tips, and urges the student to develop problem-solving and decision-making strategies.

**Part 2.** *Learning and thinking strategies* relates learning to the way memory works. It explains a systematic approach to learning, which is consistent with the deliberate processes involved in metacognition.

**Part 3.** *Mastering course content* covers patterns of academic disciplines, note-taking, strategies for reading textbooks, course content reduction, and critical analysis.

**Part 4.** *Applying your skills to academic disciplines* deals with technical vocabulary and study strategies for various academic disciplines.

**Part 5.** *Exams: thinking under pressure* shows how to study for exams and how to employ appropriate reasoning skills for objective and essay exams.

**Part 6.** *Writing: a vehicle for thinking* emphasises the writing process as a way to learn and think. It gives practical ways to write research reports.

**Part 7.** *Consolidating your study and thinking skills* gives the student a checklist for self-assessment for the remainder of the study program.

Each of the 18 chapters begins with three to five learning objectives, which give the reader purpose for reading and which let the reader check retention after reading the chapter. Exercises throughout the chapter provide a consistent way to apply what is read. If the exercise has a specific answer, the reader can check his or her answer against a key given near the end of the book. Class activities are suggested which promote students' working together, as do discussion questions. A further in-depth problem is given which draws on the concepts in the chapter. A summary brings the main ideas together, and a brief reference list offers to take the student further into the chapter content.

A manual for instructors suggests ways to use the various sections of the text. It contains a ten-item multiple-choice quiz for each chapter.

### **EVALUATION OF THE BOOK**

This 420-page text will prove highly beneficial to students beginning tertiary studies, as well as for lecturers who must guide their students' efforts. It will probably serve best if the author's recommendation that one read the first chapter and then pick and choose from the others as needed is followed.

The writing style makes it a pleasure to read. The language is direct and the sentences short and uncluttered. The tone is serious but engaging, and never patronising. The layout includes a variety of headings, sub-headings, indents, and print such as bold and italics with exercises given in contrasting grey blocks. Presentation is uncluttered, with effective use of white space.

The self-tests for analysing learning style and for applying techniques in the book seem particularly useful in engaging the personal response of the learner. It seems helpful to have some idea where one may be according to five bi-polar scales: social or independent, spatial or non-spatial, applied or conceptual, auditory or visual, creative or pragmatic. The student is shown how to adopt study strategies that will best utilise his or her preferred learning style.

Strategies are generally based on solid research. This alone makes the book more than a mere how-to book of common sense and advice.

This book is written for an American audience, as is clear from the examples, but this is not really a problem for users elsewhere. It may even be a welcome challenge to adapt examples to local circumstances. (The word "college" in the American setting indicates tertiary level education, including two-year community colleges as well as four-year university courses.)

In sum, *Study and thinking skills in college* is definitely a worthwhile book for students at a technical college, technicon, or university. Its consistent view of the student as active and responsible should foster learner achievement. It may be especially useful for students in bridging courses or academic support programmes. Academically oriented students in secondary schools may use it for a head start. Lecturers across the curriculum should use it as a resource to give their students that extra strategic guidance which, for many, may spell the difference between academic failure and success.

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