

February, 2010

Insider's Guide to Studying

Students of all ages can hone their study skills with these tips that teachers wished they knew when they were students.

Tip 3: The Fake Test

There's a test coming up. How will you do? One way to find out is by taking the wait-and-see approach. The other is to practice taking the test until you've got it perfect! This is a **take-charge approach** to studying that helps students **anticipate test questions** and discover how well they'll perform on the actual test.

The Fake Test separates the so-so students from the test-acers! Here's how it works:

1. As you read over your notes, use a separate sheet of paper to **write down questions** about what you are reading. This uses the pencil-to-paper style of ACTIVE studying that keeps students engaged during the study process.

Bonus tip: keep track of where to find the answers to your fake-test questions.

For instance: Q: When did Christopher Columbus sail for the New World and what were the names of his three ships? (page 37, first paragraph)

2. As you read, pay special attention to the **challenging concepts**. Create more questions for these concepts. Really test yourself. After all, that's what a test is designed to do—assess how well you understand something. So **dig in and ask the tough questions**. Go for those bonus marks!
3. Now that you have read over all of the study material, and have a sheet filled with questions—what's next? Put the fake test aside and **wait a day or two**. Then, when you sit down to study next, begin with your fake test. Did you pass or fail? How many questions did you answer correctly? How many were you unable to answer?
4. Go back and study some more, and focus on the **questions that you answered wrong** or that you were unable to answer.
5. Start early! Building a fake test that really challenges your subject knowledge takes time. You won't be able to properly test yourself if you left studying to the last minute. The extra time required to get organized and create a fake test pays off. As the saying goes: practice makes perfect.