

My experience with group work is positive	1	2	3	4	5
I think that it is important to work with other students	1	2	3	4	5
I do not suffer from writer's block	1	2	3	4	5
I write – often and a lot	1	2	3	4	5
I take useful notes during classes	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at highlighting central points in my sources – neither too much nor too little	1	2	3	4	5
I take useful notes when I study	1	2	3	4	5
I always try to get a general idea of a text before I read it in detail	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at adjusting my reading technique to the purpose of my reading	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at separating the relevant from the irrelevant when I study	1	2	3	4	5

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Concentrate on what you are doing

First and foremost, concentration is about avoiding thinking about other things when you study.

Three good pieces of advice to increase concentration are:

- always read and write with a question and a purpose;
- take notes while you read; and
- vary your tasks during the day.

Furthermore, concentration is about keeping noise and unnecessary interruptions at a minimum. In this respect, the important thing is to identify and avoid disturbing elements in your surroundings – especially when you are in the process of writing a research paper or studying for an exam.

If you are sitting at your pc, do not open the web browser or mailbox. To most people, it is also a bad idea to have the television turned on while they study. All in all, phones, the television, the Internet, magazines, etc. are all potential time-wasting and disturbing elements. Concentration may fail for many reasons. Noise from the television in the background is a direct and easily identifiable source of failure to concentrate. However, more indirect and hidden sources are also present. Maybe your teacher's illustrations annoy you. Or perhaps you are worried about financial problems. Whatever the source, it is important that you offer yourself the best conditions to be able to concentrate. Consequently, figure out what works for you and stick to it.

Find out where you work most efficiently

If you are easily distracted, try to establish a fixed work place at a location without disturbing elements where you are outside the reach of the good intentions of your friends, where you are able to have all

Plan your breaks from the studies as well

Sometimes international students travel and in these cases it is important to plan the return to the course of study very carefully. Before you leave, it is wise to:

- tidy your work table
- make an appraisal of how far you have come in your studies; and
- write a list of the tasks which you must work on immediately upon return.

In this way you avoid having to spend several days re-establishing your course of study after the break. Furthermore, you are able to enjoy your break more, as you are on top of the planning of the course of study.

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sometimes difficult to read. Nevertheless, these texts are made up of relatively obligatory elements, you may use as guidance (some are mentioned on the next page). Moreover, the structure of research reports is usually less flexible than the equivalent in textbooks. Chapters often follow a continuing argumentation, which makes it difficult to read the chapters in random order.

As seen above, the different types of text you come across in the course of your study differ to a large degree, which makes it necessary for you to read them in different ways.

Question 2: What is the aim of the text?

It is of course difficult to establish one book's actual relevance to you and your studies in advance. You have to crawl before you learn to walk, and it is not unusual that the underlying relevance of a book becomes apparent a long time after you have finished reading it. But remember that, academically speaking, you never start from scratch. You always possess relevant knowledge and references which you may use to assess new texts. You have already obtained relevant knowledge through previous studies and school attendance, television, newspapers, etc.

You should insist on placing yourself in the centre of things. The books are made for your benefit – not the other way around. In other words, do not allow yourself to be controlled or impressed by the books and their authors. You must dare to prioritise and decide which subjects are important to you, e.g. a subject you are having trouble understanding.

Naturally, an exam or a specific written assignment makes it easy to establish the relevance of individual texts. If the text forms part of the syllabus, it is usually relevant to you no matter what you might think of it otherwise. However, it is rare that all texts form part of a research paper or exam in the exact same way or at the exact same level, and consequently, you have to carefully consider which type of problem

Divide the reading into phases

As mentioned above, it is generally a bad idea to just read. Remember to somehow process text you have read. If, for example, you are about to read an important book which does not immediately make sense or offer a general idea about the subject, you may prepare a schedule of how you are going to read it by putting the different reading techniques into use. In between, you may leave time to work on the meaning of the text, e.g. by means of mind maps or group work.

Phase reading of larger texts

Read introduction, etc. to get a general idea of the text	- 45 minutes
Draw a mind-map of the main parts of the text	- 10 minutes
Pause	- 10 minutes
Read sections which have been singled out intensively	- 45 minutes
Write a short summary of the read text (speed-writing)	- 10 minutes
Pause	- 10 minutes
Look up key terms in encyclopedias	- 30 minutes
Discuss the book with your study group	
Participate in the lectures	
And so on.....	

You risk growing tired of it all, if you just read the book without distinguishing between different reading techniques and study activities.

If you, on the other hand, vary the syllabus reading by applying different reading techniques and study activities, the interest in the subject is all the more likely to be retained without any loss of perspective. The important thing is that you get to view your studying as a process of various types of activities of which every single part contributes to your collected academic knowledge.

Examples of symbols:

$\div$	instead of <i>not</i>
$+$	instead of <i>and</i> , <i>in addition</i> , <i>well</i>
$\Rightarrow$	instead of <i>leads to</i> , <i>results in</i>
$=$	instead of <i>equals</i> , <i>the same thing as</i> , <i>corresponding to</i>
$>$	instead of <i>larger than</i> , <i>subsequently</i>
$\sim$	instead of <i>almost the same thing as</i> , <i>partly corresponding to</i>

Reading notes

When you read on your own, it is a good idea to take down notes as well as comments in the margin of the book while reading. First, the notes help you structure and, therefore, understand the information in the text. Second, notes act as a sort of guide, which makes it easier to find core points at a later date.

However, notes have an adverse tendency of becoming an unintegrated and very comprehensive reproduction of what is written in the book. Consequently, the notes more or less become a summary rather than what they are supposed to be: a guide to what you have read. In other words, be careful when it comes to writing your notes in your own wording. This is best done by putting off the note-taking until you have finished reading the section and have put the book aside.

In order to avoid writing too many notes, you should begin by considering what you are looking for before you start taking down notes. If you wish to learn something about applied economic methods of calculation, then put on your “mathematical reading glasses” and avoid taking down notes on the more socially descriptive and/or historical information. In general, avoid taking down notes of the

6: Requirements for Essays and Research Papers

Requirements for research papers vary around the world. Within this area as well, the Danish educational system awards independence above rote learning.

In this chapter, some of the general requirements for essays and papers are put forward. The papers we will consider in the following are those where students themselves may influence the choice of subject. The weekly assignments in Mathematics with clearly defined questions and final answers are almost identical in all countries. The requirements for essays and research papers on the other hand vary a lot and tend to be more culturally conditioned.

As a minimum, most papers must bear evidence that students have read, understood and gained a broader perspective of the syllabus - as is the case for oral exams as well. Furthermore, it is a common requirement for research papers that students must show that they are able to use core concepts and methods of the subject independently by applying them to a “piece of real life” or by putting concepts into new contexts or drawing new lines between theories.

The important thing is that the student shows that he/she is able to put forward a problem and research it in an independent manner, and that he/she is able to discuss this in an academic way, i.e. put forward independent claims and substantiate these using academic backing established on the basis of recognised methods.

Once more, there is no reward in learning the scientific texts by heart and, thereby, become able to render them elaborately. You should only mention theories or empirical material which find direct use in relation to the whole of your research paper.

Research papers must be well documented. Sources of concepts, theories and argumentation of which you are not the author must be thoroughly referenced to enable the reader to know whether you are

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Mindmaps:

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