



Lesson 2: Organising your studies

No matter if students are taking exams or not they all want to be able to recall and use what they have been studying. However, few students sit down, think through the options and organise the types of study skills they have at their disposal and when/why they should choose one over another. This lesson offers a snapshot of those styles and helps students to review and organise which skills are most appropriate for specific question types/situations.

Level: Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2 and above)

Lifeskills: Organisation, analysing and assessing information, planning

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is designed to be used in class Part A looks at study skills in general, Part B looks at exam skills in relation to study skills and can be completed for homework.

Part A

Introduction: Write the following words on the board (or bring examples to class): index cards; notebook; post-its; mind map;

1. Ask students to think of the different types of study skills they use (rote learn, write and condense, mind-mapping etc.). If students suggest practical resources, for example using coloured pens, ask students what they do with the information they have coloured; how do the colours help them (visual clue). List all ideas on the board and do a straw poll (hands up) for each suggestion. (see Q. 8)
2. Explain that there are many different ways of studying but it can help to class them into certain groups. Hand out the table and have students match up a study skill (to be written in column 1) with its definition (in column 2).

Study skill	Definition	Useful for	
Memorising /rote learning	Read, repeat; read, repeat; read, repeat	Dates, key names and facts, spelling tests, lists	
Condensing skill	Read, make notes; re-read notes and make list of key words; re-read notes and think of questions; list key words to questions	Presentations, essays, articles, stories, letters, explaining ideas, how to... guides	
Clues	Index cards with key words/ ideas, flashcards	Speeches, leading discussions, presenting a précis	
Visual imagery	Mind map, colour coding, linking words to imagery	Stories, conveying large ideas and concepts	
*Acronyms and **mnemonics	Using the first letter from each word/concept	Facts, headlines to help remember more in-depth facts/ details	
Songs/rhyme/music	Words set to music/memorable tune, chorus repetition of key facts	Historical data, linking ideas and concepts, long lists of facts	
Self-testing/exam preparation	Review old exam questions and prepare	Specific exam types, times tests	

*Acronym – an abbreviation consisting of letters that form a word. For example: NATO is the acronym for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

**Mnemonic – a short sentence or poem you use to help you remember something. For example; Richard of York gave battle in vain helps you to remember the colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet)

3. Now ask students to think about why being able to recall information is important (depending on the age of your students you may have to help them think beyond exams).
 - ▶ Jo has an end-of-term exam, 8 questions which will each require a one paragraph answer each
 - ▶ Chis has a practice interview, he will have to speak and answer questions about a project he has worked on
4. In groups, ask students to discuss which study skills should be used by the following students:
 - ▶ Bill has a spelling test on Friday, 10 words
 - ▶ May has an end-of-unit exam, 15 questions, multiple choice
 - ▶ Ali has to demonstrate a new product which has 6 key selling features and 3 main advantages over other similar products
 - ▶ Pedro has to give a presentation but is limited to only using 12 slides and has 15 minutes



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(possible answers: Bill – rote learn; May – rote learn or clues; Jo – visual imagery or condensing skills; Chris – self-test and visual imagery; Ali – visual imagery or condensing skills; Pedro – clues)

- Ask students to complete the table and add in to column 4 any additional examples they can think of. (There may be more than one answer.)
- Have students make up their own situation for other groups to answer.

Part B

- Ask students to list the kinds of tests/exams they have (multiple choice, T/F, exam questions that ask for compare/contrast, etc). Have groups share their answers and list on the board.
- Ask students to discuss which type of exam/test they find easiest to prepare for and what they do; which are more difficult/stressful. Have students compare their answers and share any tips. (Relate back to Q.1 and the most/least popular options on the board)
- Have students look at the second table and complete column 3 to show the study skill they think would best help them prepare for which type of exam

Study skill	Definition	Exam Type/Essay style	Other situations
Memorising /rote learning	Read, repeat; read, repeat; read, repeat	True/false, multiple choice questions that ask you to; prove	
Condensing skill	Read, make notes; re-read notes and make list of key words; re-read notes and think of questions; list key words to questions	Standard exam-format questions that ask you to; analyse, compare and contrast, define, discuss, review	
Clues	Index cards with key words/ ideas, flashcards	Matching tests, pairing questions that ask you to; relate (eg. the growth in car ownership to income)	
Visual imagery	Mind map, colour coding, linking words to imagery	Questions that ask you to; describe the stages (eg. in building a pyramid); draw a diagram showing... illustrate... trace	
*Acronyms and **mnemonics	Using the first letter from each word/concept	Lists, questions that ask you to; state (main points in sequence)	
Songs/rhyme/music	Words set to music/memorable tune, chorus repetition of key facts	Questions that ask you to: outline, summarise	
Self-testing/exam preparation	Review old exam questions and prepare	Questions that ask you to: explain, evaluate, justify	

- Remind students that study skills are not just for exam preparation. What other situations could they face when they need to learn and remember/recall information? List these on the board/have student complete this for homework in column 4.

Homework: Ask students to think about the next month/term – what tests and exams do they know they will have?

Ask them to prepare a study plan showing the study skills they will use, and when, to help them prepare!



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Q.1 What are the different types of study skills you use?

Q. 2 Fill in the table match the definitions to the following study skills: Songs/rhyme/music ; memorising /rote learning; Self-testing/exam preparation; Visual imagery; Condensing skill; Acronyms and mnemonics; Clues

Study skill	Definition	Useful for	
	Read, repeat; read, repeat; read, repeat		
	Read, make notes; re-read notes and make list of key words; re-read notes and think of questions; list key words to questions	Presentations, essays, articles, stories, letters, explaining ideas, how to... guides	
	Index cards with key words/ ideas, flashcards		
	Mind map, colour coding, linking words to imagery		
	Using the first letter from each word/concept	Facts, headlines to help remember more in-depth facts/ details	
	Words set to music/memorable tune, chorus repetition of key facts	Historical data, linking ideas and concepts, long lists of facts	
	Review old exam questions and prepare		

Q.3 Why is being able to recall the information we learn so important?

Q.4 Which study skills would help the following students:

Bill has a spelling test on Friday, 10 words _____

May has an end-of-unit exam, 15 questions, multiple choice _____

Jo has an end-of-term exam, 8 questions requiring a one paragraph answer each _____

Chris has a practice interview; he will have to speak and answer questions about a project he has worked on _____

Ali has to demonstrate a new product which has 6 key selling features and 3 main advantages over other similar products _____

Pedro has to give a presentation but is limited to only using 12 slides and has 15 minutes _____

Q. 5 Fill in the table with examples of when this study skill could be used:

Speeches, leading discussions, presenting a précis;

Dates, key names and facts, spelling tests, lists

Stories, conveying large ideas and concepts

Specific exam types, timed tests

Q. 6 Now, write three alternative situations for the other groups to answer.



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Q.7 What types of tests/exams do you have?

Q.8 Which type of exam/test do you find easiest to prepare for and what do you do? Which are more difficult/stressful? Make a list.

Q.9 Complete column 3 to show the study skill you think would best help you prepare for that type of exam/question style below:

- ▶ Questions that ask you to outline, summarise
- ▶ Standard exam-format questions that ask you to analyse, compare and contrast, define, discuss, review
- ▶ True/false, multiple choice, questions that ask you to prove
- ▶ Matching tests, pairing, questions that ask you to relate (eg. the growth in car ownership to income);
- ▶ Lists, questions that ask you to state (main points in sequence)

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Q.10 What other situations could you face when you need to learn and remember/recall information? Add these to the table.