



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A TEACHER WRITES TO HIS STUDENTS: TOP TEN TIPS FOR TACKLING TENACIOUS TASKS

Successful students aren't just "smart." They employ a variety of strategies to learn new information effectively. Using the following list of study tips will help you succeed in this class, as well as in many others. You will probably not need to use them, but take your pick, be prepared to put in some time and effort, and happy studying.

1. Attend class regularly: I spend a large amount of class time showing visual aids (slides, videos, overheads, demonstrations, and physical models). You must attend class to take advantage of this teaching technique. Make sure that you complete the video worksheets and take notes on what you see in class because this information will be on the exams. We cover something important every single class meeting.

2. Prepare daily (even Friday!): Make no mistake about it, school is hard work. To be successful, you need to prepare before class and analyze information soon afterward. Make sure that you come to class prepared.

3. Take detailed notes: Try paraphrasing (taking notes in your own words). Don't just copy what is on the board—take copious notes on what was discussed, what slides were seen, what you learned from a video, etc. Leave room to add information from other sources (e.g., the textbook) later.

4. Recopy your notes: Many students are convinced that this is the most effective technique. At the very least, go over your notes nightly and use a magic marker to highlight the most important points.

5. Read the book: Especially read the parts that I emphasize. Mark in your book (this does not decrease the resale value of your book...tearing out pages does that!). I suggest reading the book three times!

- Scan it once briefly before the topic is discussed in class so that you know a little bit about the topic.

- Read it in detail after the topic is discussed in class, and highlight all important parts (these portions can also be transferred to your notes).
- Before the exam, reread the highlighted portions of the text.

6. Use flash cards: List a key word on the front and write a definition or explain a process or concept on the back. They are great study guides at test preparation time!

7. Allow ample time to study: This technique prevents cramming the night before an exam. For each hour in class, at least three hours outside of class are usually necessary for proper study time—more if science is difficult for you.

8. Earn extra credit: Take full advantage of opportunities to do extra credit assignments. Extra credit points will be added to your point total at the end of the semester and may allow you to get that next highest grade.

9. See a tutor: Available free-of-charge at the tutoring center, tutors have been selected from past classes based on their academic performance and their ability to explain concepts. Many of our tutors are considering teaching as a career and are there to help you.

10. Here's the best one: Join a study group. Recent studies document the effectiveness of study groups. They work because you have to explain concepts to someone else. If you don't know it, you can't explain it (it's as simple as that). I recommend meeting once a week to go over notes and to quiz each other.

There is no doubt about it: THESE TIPS REALLY WORK!

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THE SENTENCE GAME

The Sentence Game helps prepare students for writing error-free papers. The class is divided into equal teams. Two students with the highest test scores to date serve as moderator and scorekeeper, and earn five points toward their final participation grades.

Each team selects a captain to serve as spokesperson; the moderator is informed of the name of each captain. The captain (with the group's input) decides the order in which turns will be taken before the game begins. The captains consult and determine which team will go first in the Sentence Game.

1. Each team begins with six points.
2. The moderator randomly selects a sentence from a container holding 25 sample sentences and gives it to the first player. (The team determines the order of players, but every team member has to receive and respond to a selection.)
3. After reading the selection, the team member elects to rewrite the sentence on the blackboard or to purchase a "problem definition" or "team huddle" for two points, with the agreement of the team captain (points are subtracted from the team score).
4. The team member writes the corrected sentence on the board.
5. At this point, the other team (through the captain) can decide to challenge the sentence.
6. If the sentence is not challenged, the judge can signal to the scorekeeper if a point has been earned.
7. Each correct sentence is worth one point to the individual score and one point to the team score.
8. If there is a challenge, the captain of the opposing team is to write the team's new sentence on the board after huddling with team members. If it is deemed successful by the judge, two points are awarded to the team score. If the challenger fails, the original team gets an extra point added to the team score.
9. If the sentence is not challenged and not correct, no points are given; it is presented to the next player on the team and so on until a correct response is written; then another teams begins play.
10. Play continues until rewrites of all the sentences in the container are made or the judge determines the game is over. If the judge decides to end the game, she has to say "last sentence" and allow each team one more sentence.

Each student's total points are added to his or her final participation grade. The team points can be divided equally among team members or distributed as the team decides. However, all team members have to agree to the distribution; the captain has to put the decision in writing and pass it to the judge. These points are added to final participation grades. The winning team is awarded a bonus of one point per player.

There are frequent challenges to rewrites. Typically, opponents challenge and try to rewrite even before a sentence is written. I am impressed with the liveliness and the newfound pleasure students have in working with the language! Evidently, having the opportunity to add points to their final grade gives them important motivation. Practice in working as a team is another excellent outcome. Everyone's effort counts.

Students have been imprinted far more deeply with game shows than with texts. This game works as an interesting and effective instructional strategy.

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