

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Learning How To Learn

Significant learning experiences should cultivate in students an understanding of the learning process. This is often described as **learning how to learn**. This process has three distinct components, including how to become a better student, how to engage in discipline-specific modes of inquiry and construction of knowledge, and how to be a self-directed learner. Beyond its obvious importance for success as a college student, learning how to learn is the essential foundation of life-long learning. Consider the following as you develop the platform for your students to learn how to learn.

Useful Strategies to Help Students Learn How to Learn

- **Stealth study skills.** Many students engage in ineffective modes of study, including highlighting text, rereading, and cramming. Trying to “teach” more effective study skills is time consuming and has limited effectiveness. Instead, try to incorporate these strategies into your assignments, so students have an opportunity to practice and receive feedback from you on their performance.
 - **Self-quizzing.** As students take notes during lectures or readings, coach them on writing study questions that they can share in online discussions. They can use these later to check their recall and direct their review.
 - **Making connections.** Students recall information better when they understand how it related to other things they know. Encourage students to explore how new knowledge or skills are related to their pre-existing knowledge and skills. This can be used as part of a quiz, study journal, or discussion.
 - **Metacognitive reflection.** Students should be encouraged to relate content they think they understand well and identify parts of lessons or readings about which they think they have an imperfect understanding. As part of online discussions, this can lead to useful peer-teaching opportunities.
 - **Distributed Practice.** Rather than waiting to study until an exam is imminent, encourage students to revisit content frequently. This may be chronicled in a study journal or encouraged through frequent scaffolded assignments.
 - **Elaborative Interrogation.** Engage students practicing their understanding by interrogating facts by asking questions like “Why does it make sense that...?” or “Why is this true?”
- **Model your strategies.** This can help to demystify complex learning processes and build a connection with your students.
 - **Discuss learning processes.** Tell students what strategies have been useful to you, and what strategies have not worked.
 - **Demonstrate how you process a complex reading.** By breaking down for students your pathway to understanding complex material, you build their skills in accessing literature in your field and draw their attention to the learning process itself.
 - **Tell students about your learning challenges and how you confronted them.** Not only will this help to normalize struggle with difficult material, which helps promote students’ sense of belonging, it will provide students with a blueprint on how to solve academic challenges.
- **Provide for developing executive function.** Executive function allows us to focus attention, organize time, initiate tasks, plan and prioritize, control impulses and emotions, and achieve long-term goals. These skills are not fully developed in traditional college-aged students and can present particular challenges to many students with neurodivergence.
 - **Scaffold projects.** Breaking large projects into pieces with benchmarks for progress helps students stay organized and models how to apply time-management to such projects.
 - **Explain the function of each assignment.** Students often perceive learning activities as busywork. Effective planning and prioritization are enhanced by an understanding of the function of assignments.

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