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DUDES' GUIDE

TO STUDY SKILLS

**Study Skills Training Course
Companion E-book**

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CHAPTER 1: Get Organized

Developing a simple organization system saves time, decreases stress, and improves both your ability to think and your grades.

So, generally speaking, we dudes don't typically do well with organization – again, generally speaking. We tend to PILE rather than FILE. Our laundry habits are... less than kosher. In fact, I imagine that most of you reading this right now can look around your room, see piles of clothes, and know exactly where to look for a clean shirt... mostly. After all, fellas, we're the ones who invented the "Smell Check" when it comes to doing laundry.

If you're not super excited about learning "organization strategies," we get it. I'm naturally a terrible organizer, honestly. My wife can't stand it. If it weren't for a good strategy for organizing my school life, I guarantee my grades would be a total train wreck. But – despite your guess that it's super boring (it's really not that bad) – having an effective organization system gives you at least 4 HUGE benefits:

Benefit Number 1: Your mind is freed up.

The truly incredible thing about an effective organization system is that it allows your brain loads more free space. When we're totally disorganized, we tend to get into this state where we know something is due soon... but we're not sure what it is. That means your brain has to keep working on it, keeping wondering about it. You can't quit thinking about anything,

which means your thoughts can't ever be totally focused in one place. When you're really organized, your mind doesn't have to worry about staying on top of things. This means you have more mental energy to give to ... well, anything else. Want to build a potato gun that will shoot a standard Idaho baking spud a thousand feet through the air? Get organized, and let your mind at it.

(Disclaimer: StudyRight does not support the launching of vegetables through the air where said launch would be illegal.)

Number 2: Your study time speeds up.

"What?" "Is this really true?" you ask. "Surely not!" But yes, it's totally true. When you're organized in a really effective way, you know exactly where to find everything – including assignments that still need to be completed.

This is so important. A lot of times guys don't want to waste a bunch of time on things like "getting organized." But the reality is, if you want to get done with your homework faster so you can go start a bonfire in your backyard, being organized gets you there MUCH faster than being disorganized.

Number 3: Your stress level decreases.

That's right fellas – sure, you can start a fight club to get rid of your stress, or put a punching bag up and destroy your knuckles every time you have a test coming up. But getting organized will take care of that stress – and you don't have to hurt your hands. Good

organization keeps you from having to worry about where things go – because you always know where they'll be. Now, you may still want to join a fight club or get a punching bag– but don't do it to release your stress. You can take care of that part with a decent organization system.

Number 4: Your grades will increase.

Not only will your mind be freed up by a great organization system, not only will your study time go faster, not only will your stress levels go down, but you can also expect your grades to go up. Why? Well, you'll get things done on time, you'll stop losing important things... like that book report your Sister's dog fluffy ate ... and you'll have more energy available for actual learning.

Convinced yet? Hopefully so. Getting organized is totally worth it. But here's the key to this: **you have to have an organization system that is so simple – and yet totally comprehensive – so that it takes away all your decision making power.**

We call this **mindless organization**. Here's how it works: you have a system that has made every decision for you before you're ever faced with a question.

When you're given a new assignment, you have to make a decision: where do I put this? When you're handed a graded assignment, you have the same decision: where do I put this? When you take notes in class, again, you have a decision: where does this go? And you can expect to have one, two, three, sometimes more of these decisions to make every day in every class. That's a lot of decision making! And every time you make a decision, it's an opportunity

to make a bone-headed move and put something in a weird place.

I do this all the time with my keys, wallet or phone --- maybe you do too. Sometimes, for whatever reason, I end up putting something down in the weirdest places. I once put my car keys in the refrigerator. Why? I don't have any idea. It's just what happens when you're left to make a lot of decisions.

Our key is going to be making every decision before it ever comes our way so that we know what to do with every assignment we're handed. Staying organized will be super simple we can get there – because it will be a HABIT, not a bunch of filing and decision making.

That leaves us with a question: *“If we've seen the value of having a simple organization system, how do we actually do this?”*

This can basically be summed up by making a shift **from subject-first organization, to assignment-first organization**. Most student organization works on a SUBJECT-FIRST SYSTEM. This involves multiple binders, reams of paper, multiple spiral notebooks, and about 50 pounds of stuff you have to carry around in your backpack. This is because everything from one subject goes in the same place (AKA SUBJECT-FIRST). You keep all your science stuff in one binder, all your math in another binder, all your history in a third binder, etc., etc., until you fill up your bag and can't walk.

But we don't want to do it that way. Instead of SUBJECT-FIRST, we want an ASSIGNMENT-FIRST organization system. Think about it like the difference between a *lake* and

a *river*.

Lakes are a bit like subject-first organization. When water comes into a lake it gathers in there. Subject-first is all about about keeping track of stuff. It's the only goal of a subject-first organization system.

We don't want this. We want to have an organization system that's more like a river than a lake – the goal is to flow our assignments to their final resting place, a folder where graded assignments go to be reviewed for a final... or eventually burned in a massive end-of-the-year bonfire with every piece of homework you had for the semester. [DISCLAIMER: StudyRight does not endorse the use of bonfires to dispose of old homework assignments. That was hypothetical. We don't recommend anyone do that.]

Assignment-first organization has two goals, not one. First, the goal is still to keep track of your stuff. That's a great goal. You need to know where you put things.

But it also has another goal in mind: keep you on track. ***Assignment-first organization is designed to both keep track of your stuff and keep you on track.*** When you sit down and open up your organization system, you should know exactly what you need to do in order to

So, how does it work? You need one place to put each of these five assignment types: "Unfinished," "Finished," "Graded," "Filed," and "Notes" (this includes both handwritten and hand-outs). That's it – if you have a place for each of those, and you use it every time, you'll be in business.

And you can do this a bunch of different ways, but we accomplish this with our three-

part organization system. It includes these three things: 1) Binder, 2) a Note-taking location, and 3) a Filed Assignments location. Watch the video lesson for info on how to build this.

Make sense? It's pretty simple, but it'll do the trick to help you make the most of your organization system.

Here's your challenge from this lesson – revamp your organization system., That's it. You can either do it by building what we have just shown you, or you can just reuse what you already have by naming a place for each assignment type, and make sure you use it that way.

Mindless, right? Get it done, and we'll see you next lesson.

CHAPTER 2: Productivity

You can develop a highly effective productivity strategy that will help you get more done in less time by implementing the 3 "Do"s.

Congrats on getting organized! Hopefully it's helping you out. Actually, it's really the foundation of this session... so , if you haven't quite nailed down the simple organization strategy we talked about last session, try going back to that lesson and getting your school work in order. It's going to be helpful, I promise. Also – you can't really do what we're talking about in this session, without nailing down that organization piece.... sorry bro.

So, like we were just talking about, a great assignment-first organization system is foundational to great productivity. It's really the starting place. But from there, we also want to make sure that we're getting things done – **quickly**. It's like some of you super hard-core athletes with us who are Iron man triathletes – I wanted to do that once... but then I realized I didn't want to die yet, so I haven't. Think about a triathlete though... Think about that race – it's a 2.4 mile open-water swim --- (like, in the ocean) – a 112 mile bike ride, and then it's finished it's finished up with a short little marathon – you know, just for fun.

Having a bad productivity strategy is like being a triathlete who doesn't pay attention to the path and just sort of zig zags his way through to the end. Can you imagine that? The 2.4 mile swim turns into a 4 mile swim pretty easily.. the marathon becomes a nightmare. And by the time you get done with that bike ride... well, let's just say those seats aren't exactly the

most comfortable place to rest that region of your body.

The most productive students are like the most productive triathletes – they get from point A to point B as directly and quickly as possible and use as little energy as possible. Why spend 4 hours on homework when you can get it done in 45 minutes, right?

So, productivity isn't hard. It just takes a little effort to get it started. Really all you need are three parts – **we call them the 3 “Dos” for Productive “Dudes”: Due Dates, To-do Lists, and Do Work.** We'll explain these in just a minute. But before we get there we need to talk a bit about why guys don't have extremely productive study sessions.

There is really one reason: it takes extra time at first.

That's it. (Well, that, and sometimes guys just haven't learned... but we're teaching you now, so.... that's not you).

It does take a little extra prep time you have to build into your schedule to be highly productive. We recognize that. But it also takes a little extra time to gas up your car before driving to school; but you can still get other places significantly faster by doing it. Productivity is kinda like that – it takes extra time initially, but it will make a huge difference in your study time in the long-run, just like driving a car takes a bit of preparation too.

Becoming super productive – becoming a guy who gets things done, who does serious work, but seriously quickly – that doesn't just happen. Now, it's not as hard as some people make it out to be, but it does take a little effort and planning.

So how do you do this? You build your productivity strategy with habits. That's right –

habits.

Practically, to make these habits stick, you need a plan for when you are going to put in these 3 “do's” – Here's our recommendation – study for a minimum 5 days per week. Here's how you actually build the 3 “Do”s into your study sessions.

First thing in your study session is to **1) record due dates on your calendar.** And you need a calendar, or “agenda.” We don't care which one it is. It could be digital, paper, or made out of the hide of boar for all we care. Just have some place you are recording every due date. **Second, you need a daily to-do list.** That sounds boring, I know. This is how our habits work out – after you've recorded each due date, you're going to also record the days you'll be working on it on your calendar.

The key here is that depending on the assignment, you need more or less time to actually work on it. Homework? That usually takes one study session, so it should just be recorded on your to-do list the day before it's due. Have a test coming up? That's going to require more work. You need at least 3 study days to do that effectively. There is this thing called the “distributed practice effect” that basically says you'll save yourself hours of time each week if you'll spread out your study sessions for a test. Don't wait until the last minute. **Start early, study less.**

Got it so far? Study 5 days a week – start each session recording due dates, then to-do lists, what's next? Do work son! Focus on things due tomorrow first, then work on everything

else. The most productive workers know how to prioritize the tasks for the day based on what's most important – but not ignore the things that are going to be super important in the coming days.

Here's your challenge for today. First, make sure you have a calendar, and then try to spend one whole week where you record every due date on your agenda. That's the first step to more productivity. After you get that down, add in the “to-do” lists.

Then do some work, son.

But how do I keep track of all my due dates?” It's easy – remember our organization system? Every day you will know exactly where to find all your new assignments. Make sure you record their due dates from your new assignment pocket.

CHAPTER 3: Learning on the Go

You can have an on-the-go lifestyle and still be a great student by creatively finding ways to learn on-the-go.

At one point in American history, you work up and went to bed with the sun. You also milked the cows before school, and gathered the eggs from your chickens. We have some students who may still live that lifestyle, but for most of us, it's just not that simple any more. Life rarely stops moving. We don't just get up, go to school, come home, and do our homework – we have 5000 other places to go, things to do, people to meet, social media profiles to update, TV shows to watch, sports to play – you name it, we've got it going on.

This is a big reason a lot of our students don't think they have the time to study – they're too busy, they say. And sometimes they may actually be right. I recently talked with a student who was a big-time hockey player, and he – unfortunately – couldn't start his homework until he got home from hockey practice, which was after 8pm every night. He was gone until 8pm – that's busy.

So ... what do we do? Do we act like life isn't that busy? Nope – that's crazy. Now, sometimes we get busy on the wrong things. But nevertheless our lives are just pretty busy.

No, instead we need to learn how to learn on the go. If the facts of life aren't necessarily ideal – aka, being super busy – you don't expect life to change, you change what you can control.

Also, learning on the go actually has 2 additional benefits you may or may not have heard about before. One is called the “**Distributed practice effect**,” and the other is the “**Spacing effect**.” Both of these can actually help you out a lot if you learn how to use learning on the go to your advantage.

The distributed practice effect – we mentioned it briefly last session – says that your long-term memory is boosted when you study information several times across a few days rather than just all at once. That means “cramming” isn't what you want to do. In fact, you can save yourself at least 1/3 of the time you'd spend cramming by just studying the same material over 3 days instead of all at once. Serious time savings by just studying a few times instead of all at once.

There's also the “Spacing effect” which says that it'd be way better for you to take a 10 minute break in the middle of a study session rather than study for 2 hours straight. Getting both of these benefits is easy if you learn to learn on the go. Here's how we do it. The old goal of studying was that you should try to get at least 2 hours in a row alone each night to do all your work. You never studied unless you could get a massive amount of time all together. If you can't get at least an hour, what's the point, right?

Well, there's a major point: learning on the go.

Here's how we do it – instead of looking for huge chunks of time, we look for smaller chunks to maximize our schedule gaps as learning opportunities. This is helpful because – well, for one, it actually takes less time to study this way because you have better efficiency in those smaller chunks. When you are highly focused, if you can get 20-25 minutes of highly

focused study time, you'll really get a lot out of it.

Second reason this is helpful, is that it feels like WAY LESS TIME, because you are using throw-away time blocks. We'll talk in a just a minute about what a "throw away time block" is, and how to maximize it.

Hopefully you agree that you need to learn on the go. So let's get back to those "throw-away time blocks" we were talking about. You have loads of time each week to do your homework, but you don't always have very many 2 hour chunks. Because we're looking for big chunks, not small throw-away time blocks, it feels like we don't have enough time to study.

We're busy dudes, after all.

But don't look for 1-2 hours; look for 15-20 minutes on your calendar that you know you have each week. For example, I knew every Friday during the fall in high school, I'd have 30 minutes between getting home and changing from a swimming workout until I needed to leave the house for Friday night football games.

That 30 minutes was just a throw-away chunk of time. I'd usually watch TV, or maybe goof off on the internet. But if I were being effective with that time, I could have turned it into a highly productive 15 minutes + 15 minutes of break time by making it a time I would do a recurring studying task.

For example, every week I had to learn vocab for an english quiz. It was there every week. I knew I had to learn them every week. It wasn't difficult, it just took some effort. And usually I'd wait until the last minute the night before, and it would be a stressful hassle.

Instead of doing that, I could have been much more productive by studying it on my throw-away time on Friday. It'd be done, and I wouldn't feel like I lost any time – it was being wasted anyway. I also wouldn't have to spend a long time thinking through what to do... because it was the same every week.

Using time blocks like this lets you make the most of small chunks so that you don't feel overwhelmed, and you actually get a ton of school work finished.

The toughest part of this strategy, though, is that it only works if you don't have to spend a lot of “get ready time.” (If it takes you 5 minutes to find your vocab list, you've already lost 1/3 of your 15 minute block). You have to be prepared. So how do you do that? To master this on-the-go learning, try these 6 tips. They'll save you tons of prep time and boost your productivity so you can get big things done in little chunks of time.

1) Read on-the-go.

To do this, you just need to have a book with you and a pen to take notes. As long as you know the chapter or page numbers, you're set with just the book and your note-taking materials. If you own the book and don't have a piece of paper, you can actually take notes in the margins of the book – I do it all the time. It's a good way to take notes (a retention-boosting strategy) without having to carry a massive notebook with you. IF you have a bus ride, or are going to be waiting somewhere for a while, always take a book. You'll earn the time back in the evenings and weekends.

2) Review on-the-go

Again, this is an easy strategy that anyone can implement easily without needing to plan it out. All you need is something to review. This can be a stack of flashcards you've made for a test, or just a couple of pages of notes. It doesn't take much to have enough material with you to get a good review session in. If you're not a flashcard maker (I'm not, even though I know they work well), you can also get one of several apps that will help you review effectively.

3) Re-listen on the go

If you are a highly verbal learner (and that's a small group – probably only 3 out of 100 students or so) you may also think about recording your class lectures and re-listening to them on the road. There are plenty of apps available now that make it easy to record a class room lecture – check out iTalk for an easy and free option – and then by relistening to it, you may pick up on some really important keys you missed before, or you may also just gain an added review benefit. A second way to get the most out of this is to actually record yourself summarizing some content, and then relisten to your summary. It will help you review without having to sit still and write it out.

4) Memorize on-the-go

Have to memorize something for class? You don't need to be sitting down quietly – you should be talking it out, and moving around isn't a bad idea. Memorizing on the go is a great way to save yourself time. Try writing a Mnemonic device or two on a card you can carry with

you to memorize. If you don't know what a Mnemonic device is, ask yourself what the colors of the rainbow are... now, did you or did you not just think "ROY G BIV?" that's a mnemonic device, and they work.

5) Pre-set recurring tasks for small time periods

This is what we talked about with my vocab quizzes. If something is recurring frequently, plan a recurring time to work on it, and then go to work when that time comes. You will get to the point that you don't have to get in the zone – you just have to start working and you'll be set. This is a great way to save yourself massive amounts of time with minimal planning.

6) Make sure you have your daily tasks planned out.

Yep, that's right. Having a to-do list is one of the most important keys to learning on the go. You need to be able to jump in and out of study sessions, and if you're not sure what needs to be done, you can't possibly do what you need to do with this. Plan it out, then get ready to learn on the go.

So what's our take-away from these 6? First, if you're looking for huge chunks of time for homework, start looking for small chunks of throw away time. They're at least as effective. Second, remember those last 6 strategies you just learned and took notes on? Pick one, and roll with it this week. Let us know how it goes, too. We love these stories of learning on the go and saving time.

CHAPTER 4: Staying Focused

In order to get the most out of your study time, you MUST stay focused.

Focus is one of the most important aspects of studying. Your ability to get more done in less time depends on your ability to get and stay focused. It's similar to how it is for a basketball or football player – you have got to keep your head in the game. When athletes get distracted from what they are doing during a game, they end up not performing to the level they could have. We want to make sure that our study sessions are really effective – so it's going to be important that we find great ways to get focused.

And this isn't easy, either. We know that. There's a good deal of research that says it takes you anywhere from 12 to 20 minutes to get fully re-focused after a distraction. That's super frustrating – really hard to get work done that way.

Think about that in terms of driving a car. Not just any car either – make it a great one – a really fast one. Now, picture with us that you want to drive from Raleigh, NC – where we are right now – to Washington, DC. It's not a bad drive, really. You can probably do it in 5 hours going 65 miles per hour (give or take). But let's add a wrinkle here – every time you get a text message, a notification on your phone, a call, or just get distracted by someone else who is talking to you in the car, you have to drop the car immediately down to 15 miles an hour before you can accelerate back to the speed limit.

How frustrating would that road trip be? It'd take you forever to get there! Our focus is

kind of like that – every time you're distracted, you have to get refocused, and until then, your ability to learn new information is dramatically decreased.

Now, when you're totally focused, you're good to go. You can learn more, faster, than you probably ever thought possible. But, let's be honest here, most of the time in our hyper-connected, uber-techy, multi-tasking, YouTube, Text Message, Tweeting world, we don't get to that most focused point.

So how do we counteract this distractability thing we're all facing? Well, there are 2 things that effect your focus. Get these straight, you'll be in business. Ready for them?

1) Your attitude.

2) Your environment.

We've got a few tips on how you can boost each of those.

First, your attitude.

This is huge, and it's difficult to figure out how to train someone in their attitude. Attitude is a very personal thing – each dude has his own. But here's the thing – you have to have a gear for getting focused even when you hate what you're studying.

This is part of being a dude. Every guy sometimes has to do something he doesn't want to do. Homework is good training for that, right? And part of this is the reality that if you hate studying, you will really have trouble focusing on it. How to get past this?

When you are struggling to focus, we recommend you ask yourself one simple question: “Can I give an extra 5%?” What's the answer to that question? Well, it's always yes. Yes, you can

give 5% extra. That looks different in every setting, but it's not that much.

Here's how this looks for me – recently I was doing a research paper – ugh, not fun. I was dreading the paper, dreading the research, not enjoying it at all, but I had a strategy for adjusting my attitude. I asked myself, “Can I give 5% extra?” Sure, I answered. What does an extra 5% look like in this setting? Well, I told myself to find 2 more sources off the shelf and record their info with my research. That took me less than 10 minutes, but I was super focused for that period. Why? Because I knew I was quitting as soon as I finished the extra 5%. See, your attitude doesn't have to be insane – we're talking about studying, not cheerleading here. You just need to give a little more. That's all. You're going to spend time studying, but if you accept it and have a good attitude, your focus will go up, which will allow you to spend less time doing it. Interesting, huh?

Now, on to our environment. This second piece of your focus is easily as important – if not more – than your attitude. Think about it this way; how many people do you see studying at a college football game? Or a professional basketball game? Baseball, you might be able to pull off.... but hockey? No chance man.

Your environment will determine your success before you ever start based on the distractions in that place. You need the right environment.

And here's the thing – we're not talking about the traditional “quiet, alone place with just you and your books.” If you're like me, that sounds a lot like the perfect place to take a NAP. The only thing missing is a pillow – but history books tend to take care of that part.

No, all the evidence suggests that the most important thing in your study environment

isn't making sure it's a calming, quiet place but rather --- don't miss this – the places that work for you.

That's right: places. You need more than one place to study. We tell every student to have a “home base” and at least one “outpost.” Homebase is where you can always study, no matter what. Maybe this is a desk in your bedroom, or perhaps in a study in your house. My desk is in a hallway – because that's the only free place in our house... (it's kind of small... eh, I mean cozy).

At the same time, sometimes that homebase can actually become distracting. When that's the case, head to an outpost. This can be anywhere, actually. A coffee shop, a park, downstairs in the kitchen, a library, you name it. Just have other places you go back to time and time again. It's a great easy way to boost your focus (and retention actually – by studying the same material in 2 places, your mind makes subconscious connections that help you learn info faster. Believe it or not, it's a real thing.

So, here's your challenge with that part: name a homebase and at least one outpost. Record it in your notes, and try studying in those places this week. See how it goes. But we're not done yet. We've got a couple more things for you to consider with these environments.

1) Do you listen to music?

Should you listen to music? Is it good, bad.. distracting, focusing? And the answer is.... yes.

Here's the thing with music. If you listen to music you like, your attitude gets a boost. This will help your focus, so it's not a bad idea. At the same time, if you're listening to music with lyrics, it can be a distracter – especially if you're doing work that's HIGHLY VERBAL (think writing a paper, reading a book).

So is it worth it? It depends. If you're already focused without it, I wouldn't worry about trying it for that study session. But if you're struggling it can be really helpful – especially if you're studying somewhere that's really distracting (coffee shops, the gym, a WWE Wrestle Mania event, stuff like that).

2) Do you keep your technology turned on when you study?

Eh... this is a tough one. Tech can be helpful, but if it's distracting you, know that you're burning precious time and energy. Here's a quick recommendation – Airplane mode while you study, then at your breaks, turn it off. We promise – you won't miss anything earth-shattering in 45 minutes (max)

3) As a final note, try this for the week:

Try asking yourself this question at the end of every study session: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how focused was I?” IF you can get that number in the 8-9 range consistently (it's hard to do), you'll be in business.

So, what are you waiting for? Get focused and let's get some things done!

CHAPTER 5: Getting and Staying Active

All effective learning is by nature active, which sets guys up for success.

Dudes are active. We move a lot. Our minds are always thinking up something to do. We've got ideas, man. Things to do, places to go, games to play, motorcycles to rebuild, friends to beat in something. You know – we're active.

Interestingly, there seems to be a recent stigma that girls are better students than guys are. You ever heard this, or maybe just felt it? Guys are too distracted, etc. to really get into this. We can't sit still long enough to learn, really.

And, to a certain extent, it's true. Guys are more active than ladies (generally speaking). Girls want to sit, talk, hold hands, and shop. Guys want to play sports, or video games, or kill animals and put them on the wall, or climb a mountain, or cut down trees with an axe. So, yeah, in an overly generic, too broad, stereotypical kind of way, we're different than girls like this.

Here's the deal, though: class tends to involve a lot of sitting, not a lot of doing. So it seems like it fits girls better, right?

Well, actually not necessarily. This active streak for guys is really a huge benefit if we'll learn to use it and not get sucked into our chairs and lifelessly sit in class as totally passive students.

You're made to be active – so be that way. It's a strength, so use it.

Are you with us on this one? If so, we'll give you a few strategies for becoming an active learner.

These are some of the top strategies for staying active as a student. If you give these strategies a real shot, stay active every time you learn, you'll quickly see the benefits.

1) Take notes

This is simple, but, boys, it works. Do you take notes right now? It's kind of the go-to study skill for a lot of students. In fact, a lot of students only know about this one skill. But it's a good one, so we want to make sure we're doing it well.

When you're taking notes, you have 2 goals. First, you want to use note-taking as a way to process information. As you take notes, you actually learn the material better. Your mind is more active, so you're going to be learning more, faster.

The second reason to take notes is that you need that information for later – like when your next test rolls around. It will be important to remember then, we promise. Sure, there may be one in a 1,000,000 who don't need notes. I actually know that guy – he passed law-school without taking notes because he has an insane-o crazy verbal memory where he could remember every word you ever say to him, but writing them down doesn't work.

If that's you – email us. We want to know you.

But, that's probably not you. Let's get serious here. You need to take notes.

How do you take note? Here are some keys;

a. Handwrite them, don't type them. Handwritten notes make a bigger impact on your grades and retention than do typed notes. Now, if your handwriting is so bad you can't even read it, it's better to take digital notes than no notes. But if you can handwrite them, that's probably best.

b. Be consistent to take notes every time you learn. I know it's not always the most fun. It definitely takes discipline. But think about this: it doesn't take any extra time (you are already in class), but it saves you significant time. In fact, you can expect an immediate 20-25% retention boost from taking notes, and long-term it may be more than that!

c. Keep track of your notes. We talked about this already in our organization lesson, but you need a way to keeping track of your notes. Don't just grab a scrap of paper, take a few notes, then lose it. You need to keep them for reviewing later on.

2) Summarize your notes

Your second tip is connected to the first, but different. To stay active, try summarizing your notes. This is similar, but different than taking notes. Taking notes is about listening to what you hear and recording the information in an active way that helps you learn it as you do so.

Summarizing your notes is re-organizing that information in a way that best fits the way your brain thinks and learns. This is easy, too, and a great way to review your notes that will really enhance your retention. Read your notes, and then try rewriting them in your own words in complete sentences. That's it.

For a practical way to try this, try summarizing 2 pages of your handwritten notes on one half-sheet of paper. This is a great skill to develop, and – although you have to be active to do it – it doesn't take much effort or energy.

3) Personalize your notes

As a final tip to get and stay active, here's a key for you: always personalize your notes. Contrary to popular practice, your notes are not meant to be exactly the same as the notes your teacher puts on the board. You need to personalize them. If your notes were stacked up next to any other person in the room, they should look different, be unique.

Think about some of the best athletes you've ever seen – let's say an NFL quarterback. On the one hand, any two quarterbacks are going to have some of the same things to their game. When they see a field, they read the same defenses, they play similar offenses, and they have the same basic fundamentals involved in connecting with their receivers across the field.

But on the other hand, no two quarterbacks run an offense the same way. They all have their unique approaches. Your note-taking should be like that. You are a different dude than any other dude in the room – you have different experiences, different ways of thinking about

things, different memories and connects you can make with the material you are learning.

So, run with it. Make them your own – you'll remember so much more if you personalize your notes. It's what we call a “deeper processing” strategy, and it's huge. Fill up the margins on your paper with personal thoughts. Connect ideas with lines. Disagree if you need to – on the paper. Whatever you're thinking, put it down. It's better to have more than less.

Let's recap. How do you get active? Try taking notes, summarizing those notes later on, and personalizing your notes as you go. For more help on this piece, we've made a 10-point note-taking checklist available for you. Hopefully it will help you develop world-class note-taking skills that will help you get and stay active like the dude you are.

CHAPTER 6: Kinesthetic Learning

Physical activity is an important aspect of mental activity as well. Your mind learns as your body moves.

We've already said guys are active, and we gave you some strategies for staying mentally active – namely, taking great notes. But guys generally aren't just better learners when they are mentally active. Being physically active is also important.

We call this “**kinesthetic learning.**”

Basically, it means that as you move physically, your mind actually learns more info. This is actually one reason that handwriting your notes works better than typing them – when you go through the kinesthetic process of writing out your notes, it actually helps you learn them.

Now, for us dudes, most of the time we're really kinesthetic – actually, everyone is to some extent a kinesthetic learner. It's just a big part of how we all learn. The key is going to be learning through movement intentionally (instead of getting in trouble for it).

Before we get to that, though – how kinesthetic a learner are you? Check out these 10 Signs that you might be a kinesthetic learner. If you find that you often do any or all of these, there is a really good chance that you're a kinesthetic learner. Ready for this?

1. When you hear music, you immediately start tapping your foot;

2. You can't quit bouncing your knee when you're sitting still;
3. You find yourself constantly clicking you pens;
4. If you have a pencil or pen that doesn't click, you end up tapping it on the table – constantly;
5. You constantly disgust your mom or girlfriend by cracking your knuckles;
6. You end up finger drumming – even if no music is playing;
7. Every pen cap ;
8. Gum smacking;
9. Everything-in-the-store touching;
10. You would much rather be fkicking a soccer ball, dribbling a basketball, or tossing a tennis ball through the air than sitting still and learning.

So, pretty much everything you get in trouble for; But here's the good news – while you may be getting in trouble for this now, there is a way to use your kinesthetic leanings to your advantage. Since our brains actually takes information in through movement, you are actually in a good situation if you're a highly kinesthetic learner.

Kinesthetic learners – which is all of us to some degree or another – how do we make the most of this? What can we do to use our physical activity to make the most of our mental activity? Check out these 6 strategies, and try using one this week.

1) **Use a vacation sheet.**

This is a strategy we teach students that can be super helpful for guys who need to be able to move a bit and process information kinesthetically. Basically, a vacation sheet is just a blank sheet of paper – “Behold, a vacation sheet.” And basically, you can just use it to put anything on there that you don't want on your notes sheet. This includes drawing, sketching, and any just hand movement that you need to do in order to stay active physically. Now, don't let it distract you (Remember that focused thing we talked about?), but do let it keep you physically active.

2) **Try a stress ball**

This is a cheap way to get something that can help your hands keep moving, but allow your mind to stay engaged in what is going on in your learning experience. You can find one online, and it is a good option to fidget with. Fidgeting isn't bad – it's good. You just want to do it without distracting yourself or other people.

3) **Find something to tap... quietly**

apping tends to be less quiet than fiddling with a stress ball – but it can still be good. If it's just you in your room studying, tap away. If you're a drummer, you probably do this constantly already. It's good – your mind can be focused elsewhere and you can still tap.

4) **Chew some gum before your learning experience**

This is a good way to activate your kinesthetic learning – but check this out. You don't want to chew gum through a test. It can be a distraction and negatively affect your ability to do well on tests if you chew THROUGH it. But chewing BEFORE it is great. Try the same thing when you study. It's great for a pre-game chew.

5) **Pace around**

Maybe this is better to do when you're by yourself, but it's great either way. By walking around, you can actually help yourself process information. Try memorizing facts in connection to one place in a room, too. This is called the “Loci” method of memorization. You connect a different part of a room with a different concept, and move as you review those concepts. If you're super kinesthetic, this can be a good strategy for learning.

6) **Exercise**

Don't let your nervous energy keep you from focusing. You're a kinesthetic learner, so you need to move. Make sure you're doing enough moving to keep nervous energy from building up and distracting you. Struggling to focus? Go for a jog, and when you're back, you'll be more ready to learn.

So, which of these 6 are you going to try? Give it a shot, and see if it doesn't make a difference.

CHAPTER 7: Visual Learning)

Visual learning is some of the most effective around; a key to maximizing your study skills as a dude is making the most of your visual-learning learning.

Dudes – we're visual learners. Generally speaking of course – in all honesty, we're all verbal and visual. Everyone learns by discussing, reading, writing, and listening to a large degree – the verbal side. We all also learn by seeing, watching, drawing, and doing – the visual side.

And – while some guys are really highly verbal – most are far more visual learners than verbal learners.

How about you – are you more highly visual or verbal? A couple of ways to think about this – when you read, how often do you remember where words are on a page? When you are asked a question, do you have to read it to remember it, or is it enough to just hear it? How about driving directions – do you prefer to have a map in front of you, or would you rather someone just give you instructions on where you need to turn.

Directions are one of the craziest for me – guys, if you have to get directions to somewhere new, do your best to get them from another dude. I once got lost for 4 hours because I got directions from a verbal processor rather than a visual one. If I'd had a map, I'd have been good to go. In fact, when I hear verbal directions (take a left on x street, turn right on y road, etc.) – I have to actually make a mental map and envision what it would look like to

actually drive the route. Far more guys learn directions that way than girls – girls want to know landmarks and instructions; those are bigtime verbal cues.

So, guys are usually more visual learners than verbal learners. Do you see a potential problem here? How does most learning actually happen? That's right – verbal, not visual. This is massively important for every dude. If you want to get the most out of your study sessions – which we know you do – you need to begin using HIGHLY VISUAL approaches to learning rather than relying on verbal strategies.

Sometimes teachers help you out. I recently taught a class where there were a bunch of dudes in the room. I had teaching notes. I didn't just read them – I drew a picture on the board to make it make sense.

But usually, you can't count on that – you need to employ strategies that work for you, no matter what the strategy your teacher is using. How do we take all the verbal info you're learning at school and make it visual? Try these 4 ways to make verbal info highly visual:

1) Make your own charts

That's right – charts. Charts are great, because they arrange info in a way that is far easier to remember for us visual learners. As a practical example, I once had a philosophy professor tell us we were going to have to learn every major philosopher across 6 centuries, their most important writings, their most important thoughts, and how to compare them with other philosophers of their day and other centuries. All told, there were 30-40 guys plus at

least one book, and all the other info for each guy. That's a bunch of info to learn.

If you're trying that verbally, you aren't going to get close to learning it all. So I made a chart.

2) Highlight your notes

This can be a helpful way to connect certain ideas together in your notes. Also, it's just about all a highlighter is good for. If you are using a highlighter to study and take notes, don't do that. It's really deceptive, because it feels like you're doing a lot... but it's actually just wasting your time. It's passive, not active – UNLESS you are using it to color code your notes for future retention. In this case, it can be really effective. You can connect ideas together visually, which will help you remember them better long-term. You need to organize them first, but try color coding them after that.

3) Make a Time Line

If you are in any history classes, time lines are HUGELY helpful. This is the number one strategy to make lots of verbal historical info very visual. It organizes things in such a way that it promotes memory, as well as being able to connect ideas together on a test. If you're asked an essay question, you'll have a visual memory of how those ideas fit together. You don't necessarily need dates, just order them visually.

4) Chunking

You may or may not have heard of this strategy. No, it's not the same thing as

“chucking” - which is what we in my home state of Oklahoma call it when you throw anything bigger than a baseball through the air. Used in a sentence, you might say, “I chucked that melon off the parking garage...” or “I chucked a basketball pretty far...”

No, chunking is *memorizing information in groups rather than by itself*. It's really easy, and also really effective.

For example, instead of trying to learn 25 vocab words, its way better to learn 5 chunks of related vocab words. Just find some connection between the words, then learn them together. Maybe they all look similar, or start with the same letters, or mean something similar, or are related to boats. It doesn't really matter how the ideas are connected; what really matters is that you know the connection and it helps you learn things together visually.

So which of the 4 are you going to try? Pick one, give it a shot, and see the difference visual learning will make for you. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

CHAPTER 8: Redefining Failure (aka quizzing yourself)

The best students spend more time quizzing themselves than just reviewing their notes, because quizzing has a much better long-term impact on learning.

There are a number of myths that go around schools. One of the biggest is what we call “The Myth of Intelligence.” It runs rampant among students. This is what the myth says: “smart students succeed, the rest of us just get by.” It's the idea that grades are determined by your intelligence. If you're smart, you're set. If you're not as smart, well... you're not as set.

We see this especially with taking tests. Most of the time when students get questions wrong on a test, it's attributed to them not being as intelligent as the students who didn't answer the questions incorrectly.

But the reality is far different. Everyone misses questions. That;s right – you did not misunderstand. Everyone misses test questions. In fact, everyone misses enough questions to fail a test.

“But some students never fail tests!” you say. In one sense you are absolutely right. When it omes to graded tests, they ace them every time.

Nine times out of 10 the reason those students do so well isn't because they are super brains. It's because they quizzed themselves at home – failed those questions – and got to the point that they're set for success when it matters. It's kind of like the way hunters site in a rifle. They take several shots, knowing that they'll miss a few. In fact, missing is sort of the goal

initially. They need to find out how accurate the scope is so they can make some adjustments. Now, it's not helpful if you just keep missing. But missing in order to correct something and be ready when it's go time, that's a great idea. When a 10 point buck is in your sights, you don't want wonder how accurate the scope is.

It's similar with your academics; we all fail. Some of us just do it at home when its not graded, while others wait to try answering questions when it's graded. Take target practice irst to get ready for that test.

We actually have a name for this academic target practice. It's called "Retrieval Failure," and it's one of the best things you can do, if you do it correctly.

Here's how it works:

- You ask a question of yourself;
- You answer it
- You see if you got it correct or not
- If it's wrong, you write yourself a note about the correct answer, and try again after a few minutes;

Sounds simple enough, right? It really is. We'll get into some specifics of how to do this momentarily, but know that if you focus on quizzing yourself when you study, you'll make more progress – in less time --- than if you just look over your notes a bunch of times.

So how do you go about becoming a guy who is constantly quizzing himself without

losing your mind? Yeah – that's right. We know that quizzing yourself sounds mind-numbingly boring. Answering questions over and over again? Lame. I personally hate that philosophy. Good thing that's not what we're talking about, right? We'll give you a few example here of what we're really talking about – but know that it doesn't mean you need to quiz yourself to death.

1) PRETEST every time you read.

That's right – pretest. Pretesting is a simple strategy that will take you next to no time, but it can boost your retention by a fat 50% in just one week. Basically, this is how it works; when you start reading a textbook, go to the questions at the back of the chapter. Try to answer them – in your head is fine, but writing them down is even better.

It's like priming the lawnmower engine. When we teach this material to girls, we have to take some time here and explain “priming” an engine. We know you guys get it – it's putting a little gas into the engine so that when you try to crank it, there is something in there that will burn. And it makes it less likely that you'll throw your shoulder out trying to start it. That short “quiz” of sorts will let you know what you're looking for when you read, and gets your mind ready to learn.

B) REVIEW for tests by quizzing yourself.

If you go into a test without having quizzed yourself before hand, you're not ready. It really is that simple. We are grad students. Kent – do you still do this? Yep. Me too. Now, there

are a lot of ways to do this... we'll give you six, but you don't have to use these necessarily.

And don't feel like we're asking you to spend 12 hours quizzing yourself.

Here's the big idea of quizzing yourself: **the first time someone asks you to answer a question shouldn't be on the test.** You should have been asked most questions before hand, and tried to answer them at least once.

Here are 6 ways to do this:

1) Make up a quiz.

Sometimes dudes ask us what to do if they don't have a quiz or questions from a teacher. What do you do then? Make it up. Actually create a quiz for yourself.

Now, don't make up the information – you should already have the info. You can go ahead and create questions based on what your teacher seems to be most interested in, though. Or if there is a key theme your textbook and lecture notes both cover? Make a quiz about that.

It's a good way to do it.

2) Cover Your Notes and try to reproduce them.

This is easy and doesn't take any quiz creation. You just cover your notes – under a book, for example – and then on a new sheet of paper try to rewrite them. It will help you know what you have super ingrained in your head and what you still need some work to understand. If you can reproduce it without looking at it, you're probably ready for the test.

3) Teach a friend.

This may not sound like quizzing yourself initially, but it's a really good way to test yourself, actually – ESPECIALLY for ESSAY questions. Essays are about explanations that cover the Big Ideas and most important key details. If you can talk this out to your friend without looking at your notes, you're in business.

4) Quiz yourself with flashcards.

Flashcards are interesting. I personally hate them. Kent, how do you feel? About the same. Yeah, not big fans here at StudyRight. But here's the fact – they work, actually. It's a good way to quiz yourself.

Here's why we don't like them, though. You should know this before spending a ton of time on flashcards. We have 2 reasons. First, they take a really long time to make. That's just my personal feeling. This wouldn't be a big deal, except for the second reason we don't like them: it's a super disconnected way to learn.

Flashcards give you the feeling that each idea is off alone on it's own island. It's like you're trying to memorize the location of a 1000 stranded Tom Hanks and their personal desert islands. Because of that, we have one big disclaimer on flashcards: they make a great review tool after you have already learned the material in a connected way.

Remember chunking? It's way better to learn by chunking first, and then create flashcards to quiz that understanding. If that's the case, flashcards can be a GREAT tool for test prep.

One final tip with flashcards – try a 4 stack approach. This is how it works: Start with your

cards in one stack on the left. Every time you get a card right, you move it up one stack (to the right). Every time you get one wrong, you move it down one stack (to the left). Do this until all of the cards are in the fourth stack on the far right. You'll be in good shape if you do this.

5) Use an app

We gave you a few in the tech section of this lesson – we're sticking to those apps. Give one a try – they're really helpful tools, especially if you're on the move.

6) Study Guide from a Teacher

Some of you were probably expecting this first. Well, we've included it last here for a reason. Sometimes students just review using the teacher's study guide. Don't do that. Do your own review first, and then check yourself based on your teacher's study guide. That's the best way to use a study guide. It's the most active way to review, because it uses all your other materials first, but it checks that based on what your teacher says is most important – keep in mind though, if someone is wrong, it's you. Take your teacher's word for whatever he or she says.

See, quizzing yourself isn't that bad. You can change it up as you go, and hopefully some of these tips will help you make the most of quizzing yourself.

CHAPTER 9: Motivation

Motivation is frequently the key factor that sets highly effective students apart from those who just get by; you need motivation for long-term success.

Well dudes, by now you've hopefully been seeing some of the serious benefits of great study skills. You're organized. You're productive. Your retention is going through the roof. You're saving some good time. You're rocking it. If not, let us know. We'd love to help you start applying these skills for more success – seriously. Email us. Our address is on the website. But let's assume you're all really benefitting from the skills so far. Fantastic to hear.

What now?

Well, we're going to finish the last chapter of the dude's guide with a few notes on manly motivation.

Here's the reality – motivation is always found to be an important part of success in anything. Sports? Athletics? Dating? Yep that's right. Dating. If you're more motivated to date a particular lady, you tend to do better. Look, this is just common sense. Motivated people find more success than unmotivated people. I'll give you a quick example.

We had a girl that we'll call Jaime who I taught much of the exact same material you're learning in the dude's guide, – but a little less manly. When she came to me, she was about to fail out of school. We worked through some of the skills we've taught you, and her grades

started coming up. Her grades came up a lot, actually. And fast. In fact, she went from about to fail out, to A/B honor role in less than 2 months. Boom.

But something kind of sad happened. 2 months later her grades started slipping again. So, confused about what was going on, I talked with her one night. “Jaime, what's going on?” She was pretty honest. Know what she said? “I realized I just don't care.”

Dudes, the skills we've taught you will make a difference in your grades. We guarantee it. Unless you don't care. If you're not motivated, you won't succeed. The best tools in the world can't help you.

So here's the deal – **we can't motivate you**. Your parents can't motivate you. Your teachers can't motivate you. Ultimately, only you can keep yourself motivated the way you need to be.

We can't manufacture motivation for you. But what we can do is help you think about your motivation with a couple of key ideas. So, what are those ideas, and what do we mean by “motivation”?

Do we mean a good feeling? Do we mean a desire? Do we mean something you want to do? Here's our definition of motivation: **a desired future outcome that determines daily effort**.

There are 3 components there. 1) Motivation is future-oriented. We mean big-picture future, not “make it to Friday so I can get a nap” future. 2) Motivation is personal. It's your future, it's

got to be your motivation. And 3) It's about daily effort. If your motivation doesn't drive you to keep working, it's not the kind of motivation we're discussing.

You won't get to your desired future outcome without some serious work for a long time. There are no shortcuts, amigos.

So, here's a question for you: do you have a desire or dream that keeps you going day to day? Hopefully so, but we know a lot of dudes don't think that far in the future. If you want to see the kind of success that you're capable of achieving, you have to start aiming for some future desires.

Sometimes this is talked about as "goal setting," which is a great concept. Goals are a big part of what we're talking about. Students who set goals are significantly more likely to hit those goals

But hopefully you have day to day goals already on your calendar – you "To-do" list, right? What we are thinking about with this motivation idea is bigger. If you don't first dream bigger, it's hard to find the day to day success.

So, we've left you space to answer these questions. Take a minute, and think through them.

1. If money, geography, and education weren't an issue (and you knew you wouldn't fail), what would you do with your life?

2. If knew you could make a lasting impact on any one thing in the entire world – but only on that one thing – what would you want it to be?

3. If the first two answers were possible, how much (a) time, (b) energy, (c) effort, and (d) money would you spend to accomplish them?

Those three questions can help you start to think about your motivation, and the more tightly you can define that guy in a complete sentence, the better off you are.

With that, we also want to ask you one more question that will help you think about setting at least one goal. I re-set goals at least three times per year. It's a great, manly habit to get into.

Use this last question as a start for that:

What 1 thing could you do in this semester that would make your ability to hit that long-term vision 50% more likely?

Well, that's what we've got for you. That's the dudes' guide to study skills. Finish up this lesson, and leave as motivated, skilled students who expect to succeed – and actually do succeed.

For an action item today, we have one last challenge for you. Write out your motivation in a complete sentence – define it, even if it may change.

For us, this is the punchline of our motivation: 50000 students. We're shooting to make a difference in the lives of 50,000 students by 2018 by giving them high-quality study skills training. It's a desired future outcome that drives our daily effort.

Happy studying – now go be a dude.