ELEMENT 3: SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

YOU CAN GET GUIDELINES FOR:

- Reflection guideline “How do I learn”
- How to take notes in lectures?
- How should I read?
- How should I excerpt?
- How should I work with scientific literature?
- How do I prepare for a presentation?
- How to work in a group?
- Checklist on Final Correction of Scientific Papers

z.B. Wie finde ich ein Thema für eine Hausarbeit?

YOU CAN REFLECT UPON AND OPTIMIZE:

- your learning process
- your learning techniques

Study effectively and successfully!
To be able to learn effectively it is important to reflect on one’s own learning. This guide-line helps you to understand and become aware of your individual learning strategies and offers you support to organize your learning more successfully.

Go through the following questions – step by step – and write your answers on a separate sheet of paper (which later can be filed in the Studien-Portfolio).

### 1. WHAT DO I LEARN FOR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful learning requires the willingness of the learner to do so. You should become aware – as a first step – of your individual motivation to learn.</th>
<th><strong>Ask yourself:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Do I learn because...</strong></td>
<td><strong>• I’m interested in the subject?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• I want to pass an exam/ a module?</strong></td>
<td><strong>• I want to make progress in my studies?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• it enhances my prospects to successfully complete my studies?</strong></td>
<td><strong>• it enhances my prospects for the future in general?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• I want to gain knowledge in a certain area?</strong></td>
<td><strong>• I want to become more(self-) confident?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• ...</strong></td>
<td><strong>• How does my learning influence other areas of my life?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Can I use what I have learned in everyday life?</strong></td>
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### 2. WAS MÖCHTE ICH DURCH MEIN LERNEN ERREICHER?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formulate the goal of your learning. Think about what exactly you want to achieve.</th>
<th><strong>To do so, you can ask yourself the following questions:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Which tasks do I want to cope with (e.g. efficiently prepare for an examination, handing in a paper etc.)?</strong></td>
<td><strong>• About which topics do I want to learn more?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• What are the subgoals I want to achieve and in which order?</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Imagine you would meet a former classmate of yours one year from now. What would you want to be able to tell her or him then about the success of your studies?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Imagine you would meet a former classmate of yours three years from now. What would you want to tell her or him about the success of your studies?</strong></td>
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3. WHEN AND HOW DO I LEARN BEST?

You should become aware of your strengths and your weaknesses related to your learning behaviour as well as your basic needs within the learning process. These aspects highly influence the success of your learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask yourself:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• At which day or night-time do I learn best?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• When do I have time to learn (besides lectures, side jobs and further activities/ responsibilities)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How much time can I spend for my learning project?</td>
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<td>• How can I create sufficient free space for my learning project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In what environment do I learn well (e.g. alone at home, in a cafe, in the train, in the library etc.)?</td>
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<td>• Where can I work particularly well on scientific projects/paper etc.?</td>
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<td>• When do I prefer to work alone, when in a learning group?</td>
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<td>• Who could I learn with?</td>
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<td>• Who could support me during my learning process? Who could help me if I experience difficulties?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What are your experiences with different learning strategies?</td>
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<td>• Which learning technique has proved its effectiveness (e.g. working with file cards, creating images, etc.)?</td>
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<td>• Which learning technique was less effective?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Which learning technique would I like to try out in the future?</td>
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<td>• Which learning techniques have I mastered so far? Which ones do I want to improve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• For what goals/tasks do I need a technique that suits my learning style?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Which media are there regarding my learning project? Which ones do I want to use?</td>
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4. HOW DO I CONTROL MY LEARNING SUCCESS?

Check regularly on your learning success. To be able to do so it is necessary to observe your learning behaviour and review the results you have achieved.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ask yourself:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How do I want to control whether I reached my (sub) goals (e.g. number of pages read or written, being interrogated by another person etc.)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have I reached the sub goals I formulated at the beginning of my learning process?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do I have to rearrange my schedule?</td>
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<td>• Do I want to involve another person to check on my (sub) goals?</td>
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</table>

TO WHAT EXTEND SHOULD I CHANGE MY LEARNING ORGANIZATION, THE LEARNING TECHNIQUES I USED ETC. TO ACHIEVE MY AIDS MORE SUCCESSFULLY?
WHY SHOULD I TAKE NOTES IN LECTURES?

Taking notes can support you to better understand what's being said during the lecture and help you handle new information more effectively. When being taken during the whole semester, notes provide you with an optimal way to prepare yourself for examinations.

WHAT SHOULD I WRITE DOWN?

• You should write down the main ideas given by the lecturer as well as your own thoughts and questions relating to it.
• Lectures can be divided in three parts: a beginning, the main part and a conclusion. Furthermore, the main part is made up of several arguments or subject areas.
  → You should write down these arguments/subject areas using catchwords and try to record the main information.
  → Terms you use regularly can be abbreviated (e.g. globalization = [GL] or Colonialism = [CL]).
• Write down names, dates, terms, sources and cross references.
• You should also make a note if you want to look something up (e.g. a term).

HOW CAN I DESIGN AND ORGANIZE MY NOTES?

• Start all your notes by writing down date and topic of the lecture.
• While taking notes you should leave some space so you can still add something later.
• You can highlight important terms and names by underlining them in different colours.
• Every new thought should start on a new line. Thus, you will be able to reconstruct the lecture afterwards.
Try to clearly arrange every sheet of paper on which you are taking notes by forming columns for each issue (like e.g. catchwords, questions). Here are two ideas:

- Take one folder for each lecture and file away your notes regularly. In the folder you should also collect further information about the lecture (e.g. scripts).
- Number your notes in the course of the whole semester.

HOW TO EFFICIENTLY PREPARE AND DEAL MORE INTENSLY WITH LECTURES

Weekly Preparation:

- Prepare yourself for the next lecture and its topic.
  → Read necessary literature (required reading, scripts etc.)
- Ask yourself questions (before the lecture) about the topic.
- Read your notes of the previous lectures’.

After the lecture:

- Clarify questions that remain unanswered after the lecture (e.g. look up terms and names, complete mentioned sources).
- Add or complete own thoughts and annotations to/in your notes and – if not already done – underline the main aspects and terms.
- File your notes away in the respective folder.
HOW SHOULD I READ?

STEP 1: GET AN OVERVIEW AND CHECK FOR RELEVANCY OF THE TEXT

Before you begin working with a text, you should first familiarize yourself with it and make sure that it is relevant to your research question and area of interest. Scan the following:

- Title and subtitle
- Author (areas of expertise)
- Publication date, number of editions
- Table of contents, chapter titles

- Bibliography (list of sources)
- Preface, introduction, summary (also for individual chapters)

STEP 2: ACTIVATE YOUR EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND ASK QUESTIONS

Activate your existing knowledge!

First answer these questions: What do I already know about this subject? What experiences do I already have with it? In what context did I gain this knowledge, or have I had these experiences?

Pique your curiosity!

Also consider: What do you want to find out? What interests you the most?

Concentrate on key points!

Ask very concrete questions about the text. Use the ‘W’ words: Who..., what..., where..., when..., why..., what for..., & how. Write down questions before reading and answer them afterwards.

STEP 3: READ

Skim first!

Initially, scan quickly through the text, making note of essential terms, key words, and the text structure. Don’t mark the text yet!

First determine which information can be found in this text. To what degree is this information that I already have, or is it new to me? Which sections are relevant for me, which superfluous?

Read thoroughly!

Select parts of the text that are to be read thoroughly. Pay close attention. Mark relevant passages after reading through a longer section. Carefully decide what is relevant in each segment of the text. Make notes in the margin which can help you understand the content of what you are reading more quickly.

STEP 4: EXCERPT (SEE HANDOUT „HOW DO I EXCERPT?”)

References

HOW DO I EXCERPT?

WHY EXCERPT?
Excerpting is useful in preparing materials you have read for later use: for example, for seminar discussions; for preparing a presentation; or for use in your final paper. If you have fully excerpted a text, it is not necessary to keep re-reading it.

EXCERPTING MEANS...
...to focus, summarize, and capture in writing what you have read.

WHAT SHOULD I RECORD IN THE EXCERPT?
Formulate your excerpt so that you can use it in your further work without having to refer to the original text. Make a running notation of page numbers in your excerpts: You will need this information later if you adopt the excerpt as a direct quotation or paraphrase it.

Parts of the Excerpt
Complete bibliographical information for the text
Summary of every passage
Direct quotes: Especially important passages, which you might later quote directly or paraphrase, should be recorded verbatim
References to parts of the text that are less important for your research question and have therefore not been excerpted
Your own critical and developed thoughts about what has been read

Notes
This information can later be inserted directly into the reference list. You should also make note of which edition of the book you used.
Indicate the theme and summarize statements about it in your own words (paraphrase).
Label these excerpts so that you recognize them later as direct quotes, for example, by using quotation marks.
Make note of these sections. This way you will quickly be able to again find information which, if not now, then perhaps later, is relevant for you.
Mark these parts of the text as well so that you will later recognize them as such.

HOW DO I FORMAT THE EXCERPT?
For a better overview, divide the page into columns. Maintain a standard page structure for all your excerpts. Then you can orient yourself on the page more quickly.

References
HOW TO FIND A SUBJECT FOR SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS
(E.G. TERM PAPER, THESIS)

IT IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE TO FIND A SUBJECT FOR ONE’S SCIENTIFIC PROJECT. THE FOLLOWING STEPS WILL HELP YOU FINDING A SUBJECT THAT IS INTERESTING AND PRACTICABLE.

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| 1 | Interests | Ask yourself: When have I last been proud of myself? Which topics have I already dealt with? Which are my fields of interest? In which field would I like to (advance) my knowledge?
You get further starting point when asking yourself: What has been surprising in the recent past? What should I know? Which processes should be known (in general)? What is different today compared to the past? (You can find more questions in Kruse (2004:193f.))|
| 2 | Previous knowledge | After finding an interesting subject you should discover what you already know about it. There are multiple ways to do so. Here are two methods:
- Brainstorming: Write down all you know about a subject. Everything is right! Take 15 minutes. Afterwards, try to draw connections between single thoughts. Which fit together? Which ones are standing out? Why is that?
- Questions: Write down all the questions you have regarding the subject. Keep in mind that easy questions tend to be the most important ones.
Investigate whether there are sufficient sources related to your subject. If so, please check whether they are available. Moreover, you should make inquiries as to who can support you with your project (e.g. lecturers).|
| 3 | Practicability | There are multiple ways to narrow down a subject, e.g. by
- selecting one aspect
- limiting the sources used
(You can find more ways in Rost (2005:279f.))|
| 4 | Narrow down your subject | You should become aware of the aims of your project.
- Ask yourself: Which question do I want to be answered by my project?
- End the following question: My project shows/ interprets/ discusses/ analyses...|

SOME SUBJECTS ONE SHOULD RATHER AVOID INCLUDING SUBJECTS WHICH ARE...
- too personal
- too “trendy”
- too abstract
- too ambitious
- too hard for you to connect with sources which are hardly available
- in need of
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A PRESENTATION?

YOUR AUDIENCE...

... is your fellow students: Consider their familiarity with the topic and their previous knowledge!

STRUCTURE: INTRODUCTION, MAIN BODY, CONCLUSION

Be sure that your presentation has an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion. The speaking time should be divided approximately as follows: 15% – 75% – 10%.

Introduction:
- Capture interest by using an original quote, a provocative question, an example, or an activity
- State the goal and give an overview: "First I will outline..., then I will examine..., finally I will go into...
- Make connections, for example to the topic of the seminar

Main body:
- Clearly structure the content:
  - Focus on the most important elements, these questions should help you to prepare:
    - What is the message I am trying to get across?
    - What are the most important points?
    - Which details could I leave out?
  - Use verbal queues: "I have shown that ... Secondly, I will clarify..., I am now coming to the third point...
- Make yourself clear: Speak in short sentences, repeat important points, use foreign words and acronyms sparingly
- Make yourself understood: Ask questions or pose rhetorical questions, use concrete and easy to understand examples, make comparisons and analogies

Conclusion:
- Briefly summarize your main points: "In summary, my first point was..., second...
- End by drawing a conclusion, making a prediction, stating a main idea, or a motto
- Write out key points and memorize them

MANUSCRIPT

Use a manuscript that meets your needs:

Mind-Map:
- Advantage: Visual aid showing the structure and progression are displayed on a single page
- Numbers, dates, quotes, examples, should be noted on a separate page

The key word manuscript:
- Prepare the presentation using key words
- Only write out certain parts, e.g. the introduction and the conclusion
- Fully reference all quotes
- Use note cards (DIN A6)
- Write on only one side of the cards, number them, use large print, also make note of which media to use and the flow of your speech
TRIAL RUN

• Practice the presentation at least four times aloud, checking for understandability, clarity, and length.
• Highly recommended: Practice the presentation in front of a few colleagues or friends and ask them to give you constructive feedback.

HANDOUT

As a rule, a handout includes:

• Information about the seminar, instructor, presenter, date, topic of presentation
• Overview of the topics, as well as the structure of the presentation
• Definitions and examples
• Names, numbers, dates, formulas, tables, graphics
• Quotations, including source information
• Suggestions for further reading

One part of the handout could also be a thesis page:

• Formulate the most important arguments and conclusions in short, pointed statements.
• Such thesis pages serve to stimulate discussion after the presentation. They shouldn’t be overly simplistic or obvious, since that would not serve as grounds for debate.

Distribute the handouts or the thesis page at the beginning of your presentation. The sequence of information in the handout or thesis page should correspond with the structure of your presentation.

REFERENCES

## CHECKLIST ON FINAL CORRECTION OF SCIENTIFIC PAPERS (BASED ON VOSS 2011)

### FORMALITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front page incl. all necessary information (pay attention to course-specific guidelines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerically structured index in accordance with text headings (pay attention to course-specific guidelines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent wording in index and text headings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent layout, line spacing, font type and size of text, headings, header and footer (pay attention to course-specific guidelines)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consecutively numbered figures and tables</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Headings for figures and tables</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of figures and tables</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>List of all abbreviations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed affidavit</td>
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### TEXT COMPOSITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible mode of expression, appropriate sentence length</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colloquial language avoided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling and punctuation checked</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction, main body and conclusion clearly recognisable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent chapters and a visible logic structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Figures and tables also readable on hard copy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indication of source(s) in case of borrowed figures and tables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent citation style (pay attention to course-specific guidelines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly marked direct and indirect citations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No appropriation of another author’s text without proper referencing (risk of plagiarism!)</td>
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</table>

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All in-text references are part of the bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>No reference to sources that are not mentioned in the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent layout of all bibliographical references (pay attention to course-specific guidelines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>All references sorted in alphabetic order</td>
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### FOR FURTHER REFERENCE SEE:

HOW TO WORK IN A GROUP

WHAT'S THE USE OF A LEARNING GROUP?

- Whenever I explain certain issues to another person, I'm forced to go deeper into the subject and to understand it more thoroughly.
- Immediate feedback and the comparison with others help me to rate my state of knowledge.
- Working together on certain topics is more fun than working alone.

HOW CAN WE PROCEED IN A LEARNING GROUP?

- Ahead of every meeting, narrow down a part of the issue to learn. Every member of the group has to prepare this part in the same way (e.g. work through texts and lecture notes, prepare a catalogue of questions).
- Discuss ambiguities.

HINTS TO MAKE LEARNING IN A GROUP A SUCCESS

Learning together in a group and learning individually should be complementing.

There should be 3–5 people in a learning group.

First, everyone has to agree on aims, procedure and rules of the group. The expectations of single members should not differ too much from those of the others.

Define topics and aims for each meeting together. Agree as well upon how every member should prepare the meetings.

All members of the group should be well prepared for each meeting.

Problems and discontent with the way of working of other group members should be discussed.

Members of the group should support each other: e.g. exchange notes and material or clarify content-related misunderstandings.

Make up a balance after each meeting and look ahead: How productive was the meeting? What can be improved in the next meeting? What is the agreement for the next meeting?