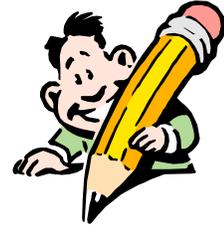


# Special Needs Information Press Study Skills Questionnaire



Name.....

Date .....

## 1 Organisation

Do you:-

Check lessons on your **timetable** the previous evening?

Arrive at lessons with **correct apparatus**?

Work harder at lessons you are **interested** in?

Work harder at lessons you are **good** at?

Achieve better results if you **like** the teacher?

Achieve better results if the teacher is **stricter**?

**Complete homework** on time?

Always give **priority** to your schoolwork?

Possess materials to help you achieve **higher results** e.g.revision guides?

Have problems with your **presentation**?

Take time to organise your subject **notes** ? e.g. In files with dividers?

Work better if you are in a class/group or **alone**?

Plan your **revision** time or do you tend to leave everything to the last minute?

Have any other organisational problems?

## 2 Learning

Are you aware **how you learn** i.e. Do you learn best visually ? Try Kim's test

Look at these objects and give yourself 90 seconds to remember them all. After the time is up ask your teacher to write down what you can recall.



Do you remember better by hearing information? Try Digit Span

Ask your teacher to say these digits slowly for you to repeat.

162.....395.....

3872.....9415.....

86194.....37285.....

257931.....648912.....

8516379.....6218529.....

96482615.....716824935.....

Are you better at remembering information with your eyes or ears?

Do you:-

**Use** your learning strength in all subject areas?

Actively apply **memory techniques** to improve learning?

Manage to **listen effectively or does your attention wander?**

Always **understand** what has been said?

Use any strategies to **improve your listening** ability?

Have difficulties picking out the **important facts?**

Know the problems the **teachers** generally identify in your coursework?

e.g. spelling/handwriting/incorrect answers/carelessness?

### **3 Subject areas**

What **specific** problems affect the standard of your achievements across the curriculum? Understanding/remembering facts/writing/tests?

Are you easily **distracted?**

Do you find it difficult to **remain on task?**

If you do **not understand** a topic would you ask a teacher or parent for help or look it up yourself in the library?

### **4 Can you apply memory strategies** to help you recall items?

Would you be able to remember a formula?

Would you be able to remember a list?

Would you be able to remember events in order?

### **5 Notetaking**

What method do you use to make notes:-

Write it out in long hand?

List key words/points?

Spidergrams?

Mindmapping?

Visualisation techniques such as pie charts, graphs etc

Do you **actively involve** yourself in learning by asking questions and joining in with discussion?

### **6 Information from written text**

Do you:-

Read well enough to **decode** GCSE material effectively? (R.A. 12.00+)

**Remember** what you have read well enough to answer questions on it?

Are you familiar with techniques such as **S.Q.R. x 3 ?**

(Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review)

Can you read **fast enough** for GCSE questions? i.e.150 words per minute

Time yourself reading silently. Can you still recall the information?

Do you use **different** reading techniques such as skimming and word for word reading when you are searching for information?

Do you read for **pleasure?**

Do you read for **information** outside the curriculum?

## 7 Written information

Do you **try to improve** the standard of your written work by analysing errors and doing something about them?

Is your handwriting **legible**?

If not have you considered using a **word processor**?

Is your handwriting **fast** enough? ( Approx. 20 words per minute)

Is your **spelling** adequate? i.e. S.A. 12.00+

If it isn't do you :- Do you want to **improve** your spelling ability?

Can you **identify errors** in proof-reading exercises?

Are you prepared to work at a structured spelling programme for **10** minutes at least five times a week?

Are you **prepared** to use word lists, indexes in text books, dictionaries and other aids to improve the standard of your spelling in your work.

Are you **satisfied** with just completing your work or do you always try and achieve the best you can?

8 Have you **problems** with :-

**Planning** essays?

Understanding the **title**?

**Descriptive** writing?

**Grammar**?

**Punctuation**?

**Presentation**?

**Expression**?

**Timing**?

## 9 Exam techniques

Do you find **revision** difficult? If you do is it because of :-

Lack of **discipline** in organisation?

Not being able to **pick out** important information?

Not being able to **remember** facts?

Not being able to **decide** what to revise?

Is **anxiety** about the actual exam a difficulty?

What is your **aim** to achieve at school?

Can you **identify** areas that need additional work on?

Can you split these areas into smaller **targets**?

How much **time** are you prepared to give to improving your study skills?

### **Further notes**

When I give this questionnaire to my students I also give them, according to their age and ability, a few exercises to complete. These I keep with the questionnaire so that I can refer to them at a later date and compare to measure progress in whatever area has been identified as causing difficulties. Improvements in skills will be slow but they are worth measuring as it can greatly encourage both pupil and teacher!

Exercises include:-

### **Reading for Meaning.**

Any good comprehension exercise will do but it needs to test more than literal understanding. Try the true/false/not enough evidence tasks in **Headwork Stories** - Chris Culshaw - Oxford University Press to give an idea. Pupils enjoy them because they do not have to write sentences as answers.

If pupils are less-able readers, the earlier English Headwork books by the same author and publisher are useful

### **Proof reading exercise**

You can invent your own although EGON produce a useful pad of photocopiable exercises. Again my pupils enjoy this and like to work out their percentage of spelling errors identified to see if they have improved on the previous weeks work. The one I have written has common spelling errors in, but you can also include punctuation errors, grammar errors etc.

Read the following exercise and circle any spelling errors.

Yesterday went to sea my friend Tim. He wanted to talk to me about his new computer that he had built the week before. He had gone off to the computer market to buy the bits and had spent all his spare time constructing it. At first it had not worked but he had persevered and now it seemed to be fine. I was very impressed. It was very quick and quite whilst my own is an original one and is old and noisy.

He has encouraged me to think about building my own but at the moment I haven't saved enough money to purchase the bits that I would need. My parents have promised me money for my birthday next month but I will need to save about £300 to buy all the individual bits necessary to make a decent computer.

# Special Needs Information Press

## Study Skills Questionnaire

**This questionnaire is intended to :-**

**Involve** pupils in identifying their difficulties in acquiring study skills

**Target** specific areas that need additional attention

**Indicate** the attitude of the pupils towards improving their abilities

Additional hints : The teaching of Study Skills has increased in importance in the last decade. Many pupils with a range of special needs do not automatically establish competencies in the specific abilities that are needed to increased the opportunities available to them to access the curriculum and to pass exams. Also some pupils have motivational or emotional difficulties which again can prove a threat to achieving.

This questionnaire will allow the teacher to identify the areas of difficulty. The pupil may need to work through it with support from an adult but the responses must reflect the pupils opinion.

### 1 Organisation

An area that many pupils with SEN have difficulty with. They need to consciously develop skills in this area. Supporting them by providing a prop in the end only reduces the likelihood that they will become independent of adults. Encourage them to see themselves as learners and to identify and address difficulties. The questions are intended to give some idea of their input into learning. If arriving at school with the correct apparatus is important to them they will make efforts to do it. We all can remember things better if they are important to us. I have pupils who regularly forget their workbooks but never forget the kit for playing rugby. Is that an organisational difficulty or a motivational one? Do we expect too little of our pupils?

### 2 Learning

Encourage the pupil to become aware of their learning profile and to use it. Observe how they attempt to recall the twelve items on the Kim's Game. Do they rehearse them? Subvocalise - Say them to themselves? Do they invent a story to remember them or use strategies like grouping? Did they find it easy to remain focused on the task for 90 seconds? If you help your pupil to identify the way they naturally use to recall then they can use this information to improve their learning in all areas. Identification and awareness of difficulties is also useful. Most KS4 pupils should be able to recall all the 12 items, but some might have better auditory memory abilities. If that is the case then they are likely to learn better by saying information out loud to themselves. Demonstrate the effectiveness of this by giving them a cloze passage. The first time let them read the passage silently and then fill in the missing blanks. The second time (a different passage but same level of difficulty) tell them to read the passage out loud and then fill in the missing blanks. They will discover the missing words are much easier to remember if they have seen and heard them. When you move on, discuss listening effectively and suggest ways of improving attention by writing down key words, asking questions, active learning. Make pupils aware that their responsibility is to learn rather than relying solely on the teacher to impart facts. Encourage them to identify any obstacles. Picking out the important facts/key words is often problematic for pupils. Give them short passage and see if they can highlight the key words. If this seems to be difficult, work on this aspect - Teaching identification of nouns is usually a good starting place.

### 3 Subject Areas

Pupils may have difficulties in understanding information and therefore recording it will be problematic. Try and encourage the pupil to pinpoint the actual difficulty and consult subject teachers for their opinion. Sometimes the specialised language of a subject can put barriers

up and prevent learning. It might also be a problem associated with confidence.

#### **4 Memory Strategies.**

Think of such techniques as mnemonics. *My Vampire Eats My Jelly Sandwiches under Nanna's Plants* for the names of the planets, rhythm and rhyme, association (associating an item with numbers 1- 10 e.g. 1, bun, 2 - shoe etc.) and Buzan techniques.

#### **5 Notetaking**

Encourage effective notetaking for specific purposes. What is the best way to record information to improve the chances of it being recalled accurately later? Could it be Mindmapping? Pictograms? What works? Again Buzan has plenty of suggestions.

#### **6 Information from text books**

Reading age can be established by applying a standardised reading test. I use Macmillan Graded Word Reading test for this age group - It is quickly applied and gives reading ages between 6-14 available from NFER 01753 827 249

Training in techniques such as Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review can greatly enhance the information derived from text, as can teaching higher reading skills such as reading for meaning, scanning and skimming. I ask whether they read for pleasure to establish if any reading is completed apart from school work. Poor readers often get little practice at improving literacy apart from the reading of text material in class. Encouraging reading of magazines, or the use of the email to enhance the speed and competence of poor readers. Some schools have set up emates for pupils with poor literacy skills to communicate on the internet. Indicators are that literacy levels are improved and of course it isn't boring!

#### **7 Written information**

It is important to be realistic here. Although to improve spelling consistently, the only effective way is by regular practice using a structured spelling programme, I find that by 14 many are reluctant to continue with the effort. Therefore methods of improving spelling need to be a compromise. Pupils must be encouraged to take responsibility for improving their work. I give students proof-reading exercises to complete. If they are able to recognise the errors then they are able to correct them by using dictionaries or wordcheckers. If it is a dictionary then it has to be the ACE dictionary (LDA) which is accessible to poor spellers.

#### **8 Essay Writing**

Many have still not grasped effective essay writing but the key is to identify the problem and work on that. Many students have difficulty with the overloading or multi-tasking aspect of essay writing e.g. thinking of handwriting, punctuation, spelling, content, style and presentation. If support enables some of this load to be lifted then essay writing becomes easier.

#### **9 Exam techniques**

Work in this area cannot make the difference between a pass and fail but it can make a positive contribution and ensure that the pupil feel prepared for the task. Check SNIP issue 75

Resources include

Cloze - **Corncircles and Codswallop** & **ACE dictionary** : LDA 01945 463441

Proof reading exercises - **Be the Teacher** - EGON 01462 894498

**Mindmapping** - Tony Buzan - Many different books - BBC publications

**Headwork Stories** Chris Culshaw Oxford University Press

Learning Skills :**How to Study Effectively & How to Succeed in Exams** £9.50 each

Colins Educational : Available from 01223 3166441