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# STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

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## How do you process study material?

### Different techniques

**Studying** is more than just reading. If you only read a study book, you will have forgotten 80 per cent of it the next day. Therefore, to absorb more, you need to do more than just reading. There are numerous techniques available for this. You may have already found a method that works well for you. It may also be the case that you want to be inspired by everything that is possible. For that reason, we will briefly deal with some techniques below. Start using these techniques and also see how your fellow students are applying these. What would work best for you? Underlining summarising or maybe a schedule?

#### Underlining/marking

This technique is popular among students. People mostly mark books feverishly with yellow pink or orange pens. The technique works well. The text jumps out at you straight away. This technique does, however, have a disadvantage. People often read with a marker pen in their hand, begin underlining, notice that the next part is actually important, too, and the following sentence and the one after, too...and before you know it everything is yellow. Time pressure also influences the marking. It is often the case that either everything is marked or absolutely nothing anymore.

#### Notes

Many student begin enthusiastically by making notes of the study material. That is also how they did it at secondary school. Notes are a great way of processing the material. This is especially true if you can describe the study material in your own words (to avoid literally repeating the text you are reading). There is only one actual disadvantage: this technique takes a lot of time. Notes of just half the book is not very practical.

Therefore, if you are going to use this technique, start on time and plan in the time it will take to complete the notes.

Is it useful to use the notes of others? You can sometimes buy notes. However, doing something with the material yourself is much better than passively consuming. If it takes you too much time to make notes, you can choose one of the other techniques

#### Margins

Some students write in the margins of the book. In this way, they make an analysis of the text and create structure. For example, they specify in the margin where a definition is, where examples are, where a discussion is etc. Many people develop their own set of symbols to encompass and structure the text. This technique also works well in combination with other techniques. The following also applies here: first read

**Only reading is insufficient for processing material. You need supplementary techniques to process the material. Try experimenting with different techniques and subsequently choose the most suitable one for your learning objective each time.**

What can you do to use this technique optimally? Start with focused reading (see the pdf 'How do I read smartly?'). If you then start reading, read the paragraph or (sub)section first before making a choice about which words you think are important enough to mark. The advantage of this is that you are actively reading right away and that you focus on the important sections at the same time.

the paragraph, or (sub)section, and only then make a note in the margin.

### Student Services

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[www.uva.nl/studyingsuccessfully](http://www.uva.nl/studyingsuccessfully)

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## Outline

Other students make an outline of the material. What are the most important terms and what are their interrelationships. This is written down schematically, or even drawn.

The advantage to this is that it forces you to extract the essence of the material. In this way, you can place cause and consequence, for example, very clearly within an outline. One disadvantage can be that the details and definitions are sometimes slightly less clear.

## Mind map

Another variation is the mind map. Just as with an outline, this involves working with the essence of the material. However, a mind map is even more visual than an outline. The material is structured and visualised. It works on the basis of colour, key words, image and structure. A mind map is 'brain-friendly'. You can often summarise a chapter of a book, or an article, in a one-page mind map. This is very convenient. A mind map can be used for many other objectives.

Below you will find an example mind map in which the advantages of a mind map are displayed as a mind map.

## Most important points

- Choose a way of processing that suits your learning objective.
- Process the material actively: 'do' something with it. Only reading is passive.
- When processing, make choices about what you think is important in the material.
- Ask yourself questions while you read. That helps you get a grip on the material.
- Choose a method of processing that suits you.

## Workshops and training

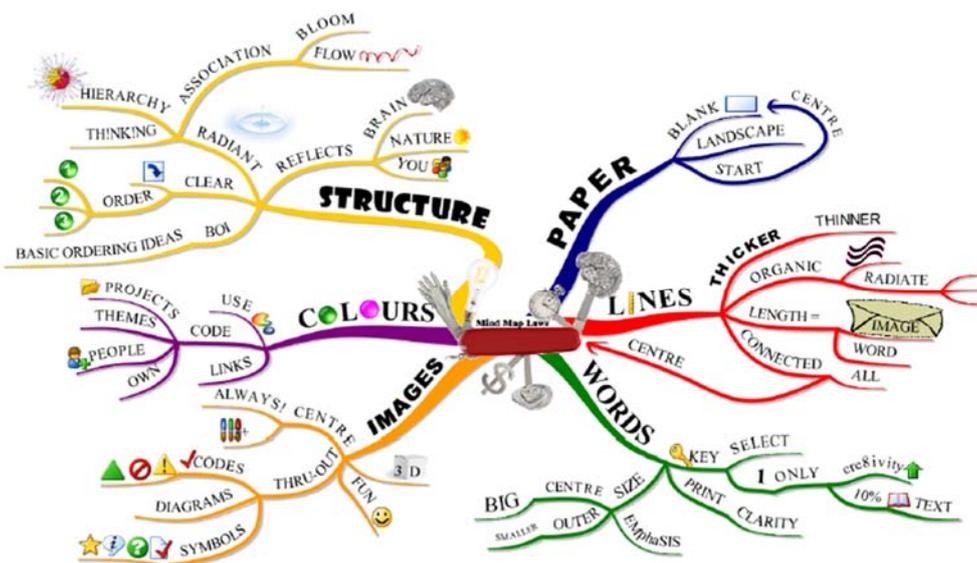
- *De Stapel te lijf* (Tackling the books)

## Questions?

Do you still have questions? Email the student counsellor Ans Rekers: [a.m.rekers@uva.nl](mailto:a.m.rekers@uva.nl).

## Further reading

- Tony Buzan (2006), *The Mind Map Book*.
- Jan Willem van den Brandhof (2007), *Gebruik je hersenen* ('Use your brain', Dutch only).
- Mark Tichelaar (2009), *Haal meer uit je hersenen* ('Get more out of your brain', in Dutch only).
- Doreen du Boulay (2010), *Study Skills for Dummies*.



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