

**HOW TO USE YOUR MIND: A
PSYCHOLOGY OF STUDY; BEING A
MANUAL FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS
AND TEACHERS IN THE ADMINISTRATION
OF SUPERVISED STUDY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649608812

How to Use Your Mind: A Psychology of Study; Being a Manual for the Use of Students and Teachers in the Administration of Supervised Study by Harry D. Kitson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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HOW TO USE YOUR MIND

CHAPTER I

INTELLECTUAL PROBLEMS OF THE COLLEGE FRESHMAN

IN entering upon a college course you are taking a step that may completely revolutionize your life. You are facing new situations vastly different from any you have previously met. They are also of great variety, such as finding a place to eat and sleep, regulating your own finances, inaugurating a new social life, forming new friendships, and developing in body and mind. The problems connected with mental development will engage your chief attention. You are now going to use your mind more actively than ever before and should survey some of the intellectual difficulties before plunging into the fight.

Perhaps the first difficulty you will encounter is the substitution of the lecture for the class recitation to which you were accustomed in high school. This substitution requires that you develop a new technic of learning, for the mental processes involved in an oral recitation are different from those used in listening to a lecture. The lecture system implies that the lecturer has a fund of knowledge about a certain field and has organized this knowledge in a form that is not duplicated in the literature of the subject. The manner of presentation, then, is unique and is the only means of securing the knowledge in just that form. As soon as the words have left the mouth of the lecturer they cease to be accessible to you. Such conditions require a unique mental attitude and unique mental habits. You will be obliged, in the first place, to maintain sustained attention over long periods of time. The situation is not like that in reading, in which a temporary lapse of attention may

be remedied by turning back and rereading. In listening to a lecture, you are obliged to catch the words "on the fly." Accordingly you must develop new habits of paying attention. You will also need to develop a new technic for memorizing, especially for memorizing things heard. As a partial aid in this, and also for purposes of organizing material received in lectures, you will need to develop ability to take notes. This is a process with which you have heretofore had little to do. It is a most important phase of college life, however, and will repay earnest study.

Another characteristic of college study is the vast amount of reading required. Instead of using a single text-book for each course, you may use several. They may cover great historical periods and represent the ideas of many men. In view of the amount of reading assigned, you will also be obliged to learn to read faster. No longer will you have time to dawdle sleepily through the pages of easy texts;

you will have to cover perhaps fifty or a hundred pages of knotty reading every day. Accordingly you must learn to handle books expeditiously and to comprehend quickly. In fact, economy must be your watchword throughout. A German lesson in high school may cover thirty or forty lines a day, requiring an hour's preparation. A German assignment in college, however, may cover four or five or a dozen pages, requiring hard work for two or three hours.

You should be warned also that college demands not only a greater quantity but also a higher quality of work. When you were a high school student the world expected only a high school student's accomplishments of you. Now you are a college student, however, and your intellectual responsibilities have increased. The world regards you now as a person of considerable scholastic attainment and expects more of you than before. In academic terms this means that in order

to attain a grade of 95 in college you will have to work much harder than you did for that grade in high school, for here you have not only more difficult subject-matter, but also keener competition for the first place. In high school you may have been the brightest student in your class. In college, however, you encounter the brightest students from many schools. If your merits are going to stand out prominently, therefore, you must work much harder. Your work from now on must be of better quality.

Not the least of the perplexities of your life as a college student will arise from the fact that no daily schedule is arranged for you. The only time definitely assigned for your work is the fifteen hours a week, more or less, spent in the class-room. The rest of your schedule must be arranged by yourself. This is a real task and will require care and thought if your work is to be done with greatest economy of time and effort.

This brief survey completes the catalogue of problems of mental development that will vex you most in adjusting your methods of study to college conditions. In order to make this adjustment you will be obliged to form a number of new habits. Indeed, as you become more and more expert as a student, you will see that the whole process resolves itself into one of habit-formation, for while a college education has two phases—the acquisition of facts and the formation of habits—it is the latter which is the more important. Many of the facts that you learn will be forgotten; many will be outlawed by time; but the habits of study you form will be permanent possessions. They will consist of such things as methods of grasping facts, methods of reasoning about facts, and of concentrating attention. In acquiring these habits you must have some material upon which you may concentrate your attention, and it will be supplied by the subjects of the curriculum. You will be

asked, for instance, to write innumerable themes in courses in English composition; not for the purpose of enriching the world's literature, nor for the delectation of your English instructor, but for the sake of helping you to form habits of forceful expression. You will be asked to enter the laboratory and perform numerous experiments, not to discover hitherto unknown facts, but to obtain practice in scientific procedure and to learn how to seek knowledge by yourself. The curriculum and the faculty are the means, but you yourself are the agent in the educational process. No matter how good the curriculum or how renowned the faculty, you cannot be educated without the most vigorous efforts on your part. Banish the thought that you are here to have knowledge "pumped into" you. To acquire an education you must establish and maintain not a passive attitude but an active attitude. When you go to the gymnasium to build up a good physique, the physical director does not