My Academic Skills Plan for Organizing Study Materials

DIRECTIONS: In this activity, you’ll use the Wise Choice Process to design a personal academic skills plan to improve your ability to Organize study materials. Following are the six steps for completing your two-page Academic Skills Plan found on pages 190–191. To see examples of how to complete each of the steps, refer to the Sample Academic Skills Plans for Organizing Study Materials on pages 188–189. The goals of this Academic Skills Plan are that you 1) master four new study skills, 2) increase learning in your present courses, and 3) earn higher grades.

**Step 1** What is my present situation?
On a blank Academic Skills Plan (page 190), write one of the “Challenges with Organizing Study Materials” that you circled on page 170, including its number. Write a different challenge on the second blank Academic Skills Plan (page 191). Explaining your challenges in detail will help you choose the best Organizing strategies to address them. See examples of how to do this step on pages 188–189. For additional blank Academic Skills Plans, go to www.cengagebrain.com to access the College Success CourseMate for On Course.

**Step 2** How would I like my situation to be?
In Step 1, you identified two challenges you are having with Organizing study materials. Now shift your focus from these challenges to how you would prefer your situation to be. On your Academic Skills Plan, write your goals for Organizing study materials. State them in the present tense as if they already exist (e.g., I understand . . . rather than I will understand . . . or . . . I enjoy . . . rather than I will enjoy . . .). See examples on pages 188–189.

**Step 3** What are my possible choices?
Review strategies for Organizing study materials on pages 171–186. Choose two strategies you think will help with your first challenge and two strategies to help with your second challenge. Write these strategies (including their numbers) on your Academic Skills plan, two on each page. See examples on pages 188–189.

**Step 4** What’s the likely outcome of each possible choice?
Picture yourself actually doing each of the four strategies you chose in Step 3. Write on your Academic Skills Plan what you think would be the likely outcomes and experiences of doing each strategy, both positive and negative. If the negatives outweigh the positives, choose a different strategy. See examples on pages 188–189.

**Step 5** Which choice(s) will I commit to doing?
It’s now time to finalize your personal Academic Skills Plan for Organizing Study Materials. Write four specific actions that you commit to doing, two for each challenge. See examples on pages 188–189.

**Step 6** When and how will I evaluate my Academic Skills Plan for Organizing Study Materials?
Choose a future date to evaluate your plan. At that time, you’ll compare your situation then with how you said you would like it to be in Step 2. If at that future time you have achieved your goals, consider your plan a success. If your results in the future fall short of your goals, then the plan needs revising. Make your goals as specific as possible. Because some goals are inherently general and difficult to measure (e.g., I enjoy organizing study materials), it helps if you create a scale (e.g., 1–10) on which to assess these general goals. Write your criteria for deciding whether or not your Academic Skills Plan for Organizing Study Skills is a success. See examples on pages 188–189.
**Step 1**
What’s my present situation? (See page 170 for a list of common problems.)

**Challenge 4.** No matter how long I study for a test, instructors always ask questions I didn’t anticipate and/or can’t answer.

**Step 2**
How would I like my situation to be? (Remember to use present tense.)

I have anticipated and studied for all of the questions/problems that show up on my tests.

**Step 3**
What are my possible choices? (See pages 171–186 for a list of strategies.)

**Strategy 9:** Gather all course materials

I’ll have a better chance to figure out what questions the instructor will ask because the questions will come from the course materials.

**Strategy 13:** Create test questions.

Using the collected course materials, I should be able to anticipate and answer most of the instructor’s questions.

**Step 4**
What’s the likely outcome of each possible choice?

**Step 5**
Which choice(s) will I commit to doing? (Write the specific actions you will take.)

I’ll get a three-ring binder to keep class notes, handouts, and tests together. I’ll keep my book and binder together at all times.

**Step 6**
When and how will I evaluate my plan for organizing study materials?

**When:** After each test that I take.

**How:** • I will assess my readiness for the questions asked on the test: 1 = surprised by questions to 10 = anticipated and studied every question. See if my readiness scores go up with each test. Presently I rate my readiness at about a 4.
• Track my test grades for each course and see if they go up.

**SAMPLE**
Challenge 19. I study for tests by going over my homework and rereading my class notes. My grades aren’t nearly as good as they were in high school, so this approach isn’t working.

I master two new, effective ways to study.

Strategy 10: Condense course materials.
Condensing course materials will help me identify important information that will probably be on tests.

Strategy 20: Create Cornell study sheets.
By putting the test questions in Section B and the answers in Section A, plus a summary in Section C, I will have a powerful study tool.

I’ll review course materials as follows:
• Circle key concepts, put 3 stars beside main ideas, 2 stars beside secondary ideas, 1 star beside supporting details.

I’ll create a Cornell study sheet for every chapter.

When: After each test that I take.
How: • Track my test grades for each course and see if they go up.
• Assess my understanding of course content: 1 = no understanding to 10 = excellent understanding. Presently, I rate my overall understanding at about a 5.
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**When:**

**How:**
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What’s my present situation? (See page 170 for a list of common problems.)

**Step 2**
How would I like my situation to be? (Remember to use present tense.)

**Step 3**
What are my possible choices? (See pages 171–186 for a list of strategies.)

**Step 4**
What’s the likely outcome of each possible choice?

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Which choice(s) will I commit to doing? (Write the specific actions you will take.)

**Step 6**
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