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It's Smart to Be Smart

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It’s Smart to be Smart

WILL you make the grade—and grades—this year? It takes planning, patience and persistence. But you will silently put yourself on the back and say “It’s worth it” when you can honestly write home to an appreciative family that its daughter is really a credit to them.

Once upon a time Iowa State honored football players with a banquet. Then the wise members of our faculty put their heads together and decided that brains, as well as brawn, deserved recognition. So now, each spring some 120 students find in their mail boxes cards inviting them to the annual Honors Day Convocation and to a banquet. Here the spotlight is turned upon honor students, budget winners (upper 3 percent), honor society initiates and winners of prizes awarded in part for scholarship. All of which proves that at Iowa State it is considered smart to be smart.

No book-worms, some of the home-comers so honored last year tell how it is done. All of them say that it is especially important to start good study habits at the beginning of the school year. Says Helen Greer, “The library habit is a big aid to study. If I stay at the library, I can’t stop every other minute to straighten the room or wash out clothes.”

Honor students are equally divided on the controversy of where to study: own room or library. Elaine Cutler prefers to study in her dorm room. It depends upon you and your roommate, she explains. “And be sure to say in your article don’t cut classes! Just by sitting there, you can not help but absorb a lot.”

Two rules, paying attention in class and keeping up during the quarter, are Alice Post’s formula for good grades. Lois Kenser points out that concentration in class helps one take complete and readable class notes and arrive at a better general view of the whole class subject. Lois spends time on her notebook, copying over her notes and incorporating important points in the text with the notes.

Louise Peterson reads and checks over her notes every evening. In her own books, she underlines points that are worthwhile to remember now and points that she will want to refer to after graduation. She writes topics in the margins of her books.

Katherine Taube marks her books, too, and makes written outlines to study. Neatness is important, she emphasizes. “A place for everything and everything in its place” is her motto.

Ida Ruth Younkin thinks that budgeting time is as important as budgeting money. An assignment should be done while it is fresh in one’s mind. Notes of the previous period ought to be re-read just before class, if that is possible.

Taking up the part of the faculty, Ida Ruth says, “No instructor really over-works the students. We forget that we are expected to study two hours for each credit hour. Talk matters over with your professor if you are not getting along well or if you misunderstand anything. The faculty is human, you know.”

Cramming is out, but reviewing is in. None of the honor students consulted go to exams without some kind of forethought. Faithful studying throughout the quarter and carefully-kept notes on lectures and text are priceless aids to a high exam mark. There will be no burning of midnight oil for you if you can read your own concise notes, rather than the whole text book, the night before.

Psychologists say that the best studying is done for short periods of time—45 minutes or an hour. However, studying subjects alternately (that is, Chemistry, then Foods and Nutrition, then Chemistry again) interferes with remembering either subject. Most of the honor students say that they do not memorize; they remember important points. Sleep after studying a subject will help fix it in one’s mind. This is not possible, though, if you are completely exhausted. After all, a tired mind cannot work for you.

The method of review varies with the course and with the individual. Study alone or with others, whichever way teaches you the most. Some students believe that the question-answer method with someone else is the best way to study chemistry or physics. This must be done after both have mastered the basic material.

One student uses a self-designed game for studying. She fashions her own questionnaire by folding a paper down the center and writing questions on the left side and the corresponding answers and outlines on the right. The game is to cover the answers and try to duplicate them on another sheet of paper.

J. R. Derby, learned head of the English Department, suggests that we do ask ourselves these questions:

Am I making a distinction among facts, knowledge and wisdom? Do I understand how they differ in nature and in value?

Am I just memorizing facts to re-hash to the instructor, or am I learning to use the facts to think constructively and independently?

Am I getting a bird’s-eye view or a “worm’s-eye” view?

How many interests do I have? What do I discuss with others?

Do I confuse my emotions with my thinking?

Am I afraid of the truth, especially when it seems unpleasant?

What resources do I have within myself? Which do I value more—what a man has or what he is? In what sense may the Truth make me free?