STUDY HABITS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN EDUCATION AT MONTANA STATE COLLEGE

BY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this age of technological and scientific advancement, the need of the student to absorb great concentrations of knowledge has been increasing rapidly. This has placed emphasis on the habits of study by which the student is able to learn in an efficient manner.

The increased stores of knowledge which civilization has accumulated makes it imperative that students in schools improve their habits of study.

The writer had believed that there must be many good study habits in use by such a select group as the graduates in the field of education. He also expected to discover that not all graduates do make use of good habits of study. Poor study habits of graduate students should be discovered and replaced by the better habits of study. The individual and society cannot afford the waste caused by poor study habits.

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the study habits of the graduate students in education at Montana State College and thus determine their study habits by questions on time of study, class assignments, class notes, study conditions, final examinations, and reading ability. This study was made with the end view of improvement of study habits of graduate students.

Procedures

The first procedure in the study was to analyze information on study habits from material reviewed in Montana State College Library. Second, a questionnaire was constructed by the writer and given to graduate students in education at Montana State College. The questionnaire contained objective-type questions on study habits of the students. The questionnaire also asked for student age and the name of the collegewhere the B.A. degree was awarded. The appendix contains the questionnaire that was used.

Limitations and Definitions

Authors of literature on study habits were reviewed in Montana State College Library.

Questionnaires were given to 108 graduate students at Montana State College and were designed to find out the students' study habits.

Habit, as used here is described by Mantell, Reeder, and Stevens in these words:

> A habit is frequently definited as an aptitude acquired by practice. One finds that those attitudes which have become well-developed through continued practice need little effort of mind and body.[1]

Study, as used in this investigation has been described by Frederick, Ragsdale, and Salisbury as:

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[1]Mantell, Murray; Reeder, Milton E.; and Stevens, John A., Orientation in Engineering, p. 9.

> Study, then is intentional learning; it is activity whose chief, or only, reason for existence is promotion of growth towards mental and social maturity; more specifically it is activity whose purpose is the acquisition of facts, ideas, skills, attitudes, etc.[2]

Chapter 2 deals with the findings from review of literature on study habits.

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[2]Frederick, Robert W., Ragsdale, Clarence E., and Salisbury, Rachel, Directed Learning, p. 23.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature was made to determine what leaders in education have considered to be good study habits of college students.

Study has been further defined in the following quotation by Muse:

> Study is that phase of formal learning which seeks to fix new facts, to establish new habit tendencies, to perfect new skills in the specific fashion which promises to be most useful to the learner.[1]

If this explanation is assumed to be correct, there should be definite methods of procedure in accomplishing the desired goals in formal learning.

Certain factors which add to or detract from the effective learning process have been recognized by authorities in education. The following sections present a review of these recognized study habits.

Concentration

Most people, when given a lengthy reading assignment, particularly on complicated text material, have had difficulty in concentrating on text pages while they studied. Daydreaming or other distractions have resulted in a study session of meaningless activity. Making use of the senses in lecture and in laboratory classes has proven of much help in making a more lasting impression on the student. During

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[1]Muse, Maude Blanche, R.N., A.M., Efficient Study Habits, p. 22.

class time effort should be made by the student to have the attention concentrated. Note-taking during class time has been proven to be of value, because the sense activities are then used.[2]

The habit of concentration important to successful study has been developed by choosing work suited to interests, abilities, and previous preparation, according to Bennett.[3] He said that each person's most rapid work speed should be discovered, and that to develop concentration, a definite purpose or goal was necessary and an alert, questioning attitude was needed.[4] There should be interest in improvement and there should be control of emotional disturbances or fatigue, in order that concentration can be improved.[5]

Physical Condition

Lack of sleep, hard work, and worry can cause fatigue, which is detrimental to good concentration in study, according to Jones.[6] Overeating before study has been a cause of sluggishness; lack of exercise and improper habits of elimination have been causes of unclear thinking.[7] Excessive use of tobacco, drugs, coffee, and chocolate for some people has caused interference with concentration.[8]

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[2]Mantell, M. I., Reeder, M. E., and Stevens, J. A., Orientation in Engineering, pp. 9, 10.

[3]Bennett, M E., College and Life, pp. 130-132.

[4]Ibid., pp. 130-132.

[5]Ibid., pp. 130-132.

[6]Jones, E. S., Improvement of Study Habits, p. 69

[7]Ibid., p. 69.

[8]Ibid., p. 69.

Habits of efficient study have been developed by the use and control of will. That is, habits of resisting fatigue can be developed if continuous effort is practiced until higher forms of energy have developed the habit of responding when work is to be done.[9] This habit of persistence in having work started and performed as soon as it should be done can develop an inner strength which is stored within oneself.[10]

Schedules

Many students who have had trouble in finding time enough for their studies have failed to make use of good scheduling. Work should be planned and followed. In making out a schedule the following suggestions were recommended by Weigand:[11]

1. The schedule should fit the individual's needs.
2. Fixed and variable activities need to be included.
3. Lecture-type classes should be planned to allow two hours outside study per hour of lecture, while one hour per hour of laboratory class work should be allowed.
4. Schedule study, where possible, just before or just after the lecture.
5. Utilize odd hours during the day for study.
6. Plan to study no more than two hours on a course at one time.
7. Plan for two hours of weekly review.

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[9]Kitson, H. D., How to Use Your Mind, p. 130.

[10]Ibid., p. 130.

[11]Blake, W. S., Jr., and Weigand, George, College Orientation, p. 26.

8. Recreation time should be scheduled, preferably on Saturday afternoons.

9. Trade time as need comes up.

A well-planned schedule would make time.[12] Vacillating about what has to be done next would be stopped and less time wasted. Time would be assigned where it would be needed most.[13] With time organized, there would be more time to devote where the most good would be accomplished.[14] In planning out a schedule, track should be kept for a week showing how time was spent without a schedule.[15]

Taking Notes

In addition to such activities in the classroom used by the instructor, such as blackboard and laboratory materials, the student should make use of note-taking during class time. Note-taking can bring a physical sense of touch, tied in with the sense of sight. Note-taking also can hold the attention on the subject. Good, well-organized notes taken on lectures and assignments have proven of great value to students. The best type of notebook used for notes has been a strong, loose-leaf notebook.[16] This would help keep papers in proper order.[17]

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[12]Morgan, C. T. and Deese, James, How to Study, p. 18.

[13]Ibid., p. 18.

[14]Ibid., p. 18.

[15]Ibid., p. 18.

[16]Ibid., p. 54.

[17]Ibid., p. 54.

There were two important reasons given for taking notes. These were: Research has proven that what has been done is remembered best, and having good notes has helped when material is reviewed.[18]

Outlining and Underlining

Material outlined as studied has often helped impress the facts studied on the mind. If this takes too much time, another method used has been to underline the important points in the text. However, underlining with pencil in the text along with study has often turned into a poor practice, because many students do a poor job and have caused a second reading to be more difficult.[19]

Place to Study

The same place to study should be used as much as possible; the habit of regular study can thus be established.[20] A quiet place, free of interruption, is greatly to be desired. Light should be ample and should not be permitted to shine into the eyes. Temperature between 65 and 68 degrees and not over 70 degrees would be best for efficient study. Tight clothing, especially around the neck, has interfered with mental work.[21]

Use of Library

Since 1850 most colleges have had libraries where there is a

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[18] Ibid., p. 58.

[19] Bird, Charles and Bird, D. M., Learning More by Effective Study, pp. 158-159.

[20] Whipple, G. M., How to Study Effectively, pp. 9-13.

[21] Ibid., p. 9-13.

great wealth of stored material available for use by the student.[22] Much study time can be saved by the student by proper use of library material. Use of the card index should be learned by the student for the most efficient use of the library. Every student can become familiar with the 10 primary groups into which books are divided under the Dewey Decimal Classification.[23] This can be quickly given by any librarian.

Efficiency of Study Time

Efficiency of study time is improved by use of good methods of attacking the assignment to be studied. The "Triple S Technique" advocated by Farquhar, Krumboltz, and Wrenn has proven helpful. This consisted of the following three steps:[24]

1. Scan before reading by noting reader cues; in this way there will have been an overview of the assignment and direction can be determined.

2. Search when reading by turning the headings and subheadings into questions and then testing comprehension by giving the answers to questions.

3. Summarize when finished by re-asking questions based upon the main headings of the unit studied and pulling together the parts of the whole.

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[22] Jones, E. S., Improvement of Study Habits, pp. 57-58.

[23] Frederick, R. W., Ragsdale, C. E., and Salisbury, Rachel, Directed Learning, p. 348.

[24] Farquhar, W. W., Krumboltz, J. D., and Wrenn, C. G., Learning to Study, pp. 46-47.

Graphs and charts are often neglected. Authors intend to present much material in an easy and quick way by graphs and charts. When graphs and charts are studied, attention should be given to the factors that are being compared, to the major trends and to the extremes.[25]

Memorizing

Memorizing is another technique of study. The main trick about memorizing has been to know when to memorize. Poor students have tried to memorize whole books, instead of remembering the ideas by association. Memorizing should not take the place of thinking. There are certain places where memorizing would be necessary, as in science and language.[26]

Reading Improvement

The student should often work on increased speed of reading. This can be done by practiced reading at a speeded up pace and by reduced eye fixations in his reading span. An increased vocabulary has also improved the student's reading comprehension.[27]

An average speaking rate is about 125 words per minute, and a person should read still faster. Good readers should read 200 words per minute and upwards to 600 words per minute for easy material.[28] Reader's Digest and similar magazines contain much material to read

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[25] Ibid., p. 85.

[26] Cole, Luella and Ferguson, J.M., Students' Guide to Efficient Study, p. 43.

[27] Crawley, S. L., Studying Efficiently, pp. 34-36.

[28] Morgan, C. T. and Deese, James, How to Study, pp. 45-46.

that has helped increase the reader's speed.

Reviewing

Material should be reviewed immediately after being studied.[29] There should be brief periodic reviews.[30] Reviews should be over class notes and text.[31] The final review is to be completed the day before and not the hour before an examination.[32] For final review for an examination, two or three students can meet and have questions rapidly asked of one another.[33] This reviews questions which otherwise could be overlooked.[34]

According to authorities, the bulk of forgetting occurs within the first few days after the initial learning has taken place.[35] This is a reason why review of material studied should come as soon as possible after the first study has occurred, in order to have retention. Cramming, only a last resort used after proper review has been neglected. Last minute cramming what has caused the student to miss sleep the night before an examination is detrimental to clear thinking required in the examination.

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[29]Morgan, C. T. and Deese, James, How to Study, pp. 45-46.

[30]Ibid., p. 33.

[31]Ibid., p. 33.

[32]Ibid., p. 33.

[33]Bamman, H. A., and LeCount, Samuel, How to Improve Your Study Habits, p. 16.

[34]Ibid., p. 16.

[35]Farquhar, W. W., Krumboltz, J. D., and Wrenn, C. G., Learning to Study, p. 100.

Best results in taking examinations are accomplished, regardless of type of questions used, by preparation which has been made for essay-type examinations, because of the more efficient review work performed.[36]

Examinations

Examinations on the college level can be very important for the reason that many college instructors use examination grades to make up much of the course grade.[37] Advice on taking an examination was given in the following quotation from Mantell, Reeder, and Stevens:

> The best preparation for any examination is consistent, conscientious, daily application to one's studies. If one must start acquiring the information covered in assignments during the previous six weeks as well as prepare for an examination the next day, the task does become somewhat hopeless.[38]

A minute or two, during an examination, spent in looking away from work helps the eyes to become more relaxed.[39] The student should strive to be careful of his English, and the work should be written in as legible a hand as possible.[40]

Summary

Important study habits emphasized by the leading educational

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[36] Ibid., pp. 122-126.

[37] Morgan, C. T. and Deese, James, How to Study, p. 6.

[38] Mantell, M. I., Reeder, M. E., and Stevens, J. A., Orientation in Engineering, p. 15.

[39] Dearborn, G. V., How to Learn Easily, pp. 215-216.

[40] Ibid., pp. 215-216.

authorities cited in this chapter were the following:

1. Concentration
2. Physical condition
3. Proper use of a good schedule
4. Taking good lecture notes
5. Selecting the best place to study
6. Correct application of memorization
7. Improvement of reading ability
8. Proper use of reviewing for examinations
9. Development of the desire and persistence to succeed

For improving study habits, planning the most profitable use of the student's time has been accomplished by the use of a well-planned schedule. This has taken into account the scheduling of not only class time, but also the remaining hours of the day in school and out. The importance of taking good notes and making use of periodic reviews of notes and of text should be emphasized.

A comparison of these recognized study habits and those actually used by the graduate students in education at Montana State College is presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER III

STUDY HABITS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN EDUCATION AT MONTANA STATE COLLEGE

A questionnaire composed of 25 questions was distributed to 108 graduate students in education at Montana State College to determine their study habits. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix A.

The questions were fashioned by the writer to investigate the various study habits at Montana State College of graduate students in education. Before the questionnaire was given to students, it was reviewed by the Education Department, where some improvements were made.

Although the questionnaire was distributed to 108 students, 21 students failed to return the questionnaires. Some questions had "sometimes" or "other" included as answers, and the student was asked to explain the response. The results of the questions are dealt with separately and in the same order and style as they appeared on the questionnaire in the following sections.

Findings of the Questionnaire

This section deals with findings on study habits of those who answered the questionnaire. The information acquired has been grouped as follows: General information, time of study, class assignments and notes, study conditions, final examinations, and status of student. A discussion of each of these groupings follows:

General information, Many colleges from over the nation and one from India were represented by the graduate students. Graduate students had received bachelor degrees from 35 different colleges. This listing is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1. LIST OF COLLEGES FROM WHICH GRADUATES RECEIVED BACHELOR DEGREES BY FREQUENCY

College Awarding First Degree	Number of Graduates from College
Montana State College	32
Dickenson State Teacher's College	7
Western Montana College of Education	6
Montana State University	4
Eastern Montana College of Education	3
Rocky Mountain College	2
University of Minnesota	2
University of Pennsylvania	2
Walla Walla College	2
One graduate from each school listed below.	
Bemidji State College, Black Hills Teacher's College, Bowdoin College, Carlton College, Columbia University, Iowa State College, Jamestown College, John Brown University, Kansas State Teacher's College, Marycrest College, Minot State Teacher's College, North Dakota State College, Northern Montana College, Oklahoma College for Women, Pepperdine, Punjab University, University of California Los Angeles, University of Idaho, University of North Dakota, University of Oregon, University of Portland, University of South Dakota, University of Wisconsin, University of Wyoming, Washington State College, Westmar College.	26
Total Number of Colleges Represented	35

The ages of graduate students given ranged from 22 years to 55 years, with an average age of 36 years. The number of graduate students in the different age groups are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2. AGE OF GRADUATE STUDENTS ANSWERING QUESTIONNAIRE

Age Range in Years	Number of Graduate Students
22 - 25	8
26 - 30	21
31 - 35	21
36 - 40	16
41 - 45	6
46 - 50	9
51 - 55	6

As shown in Table 2 there was a fairly good representation of graduate students in all of the different age groups, with the largest number being in the age groups from 26 to 40 years of age.

The graduate students carried an average load of eight credits, the credit load varied from three to eleven credits during the first half of the summer session.

There were 58 students who followed a planned study schedule, while 29 students did not follow one. A rigid schedule was used by 27 and 31 followed a loose schedule.

Time of Study. Morning was the most effective time to study for 43 students, while 17 studied best in the afternoon. There were 52 students who studied in the evening. There was some overlap in the responses.

However, the time when the students actually studied were as follows: before breakfast, 10; before noon, 14; afternoon, 36; evening, 67. There were seven students who studied when possible.

The hours per week spent in study outside of class ranged from three to seventy hours, with the majority studying 30 to 32 hours. The average for the group as a whole was 3.46 hours per week per quarter hour credit.

The length of time studied before taking a break varied considerably. Three students studied 30 minutes and one four hours before a break. One did not break "until finished" and one took a break "when the children needed attention". The average study period was one hour and 20 minutes before a break.

Class Assignments and Notes. There were 78 students who said class assignments were made clear, and two who said class assignments were not clear. Four students said assignments were not specific enough, while three said that assignments were given at bell time.

In the study of reading assignments from textbooks, 31 read the material once, 26 read more than once, 69 outlined or underlined important facts, 15 made written summaries, and three used some variation of these methods.

Most students used some system of reading and outlining or underlining.

Questions were answered at the end of chapters by 10 students. Thirty-four indicated they did if the instructor assigned the questions.

Unfamiliar words encountered in reading assignments were looked up by 57 students. Those who responded "sometimes" looked up the word if it was absolutely necessary to the understanding of the material.

There were 29 students who rated their notes good, 48 rated their notes fair, and 10 rated their notes poor. There were 83 students who

thought their notes helped them. Only four did not think their notes helped.

The preponderance of those who took notes systematically showed the importance of taking notes in class.

Study Conditions. Twenty-eight students said they could study while people are moving about and talking, while 32 said they could not.

Twenty-four students could study if the talking was low and subdued.

There were 42 students who reported that they could study when a phonograph, radio, or television set was on, while 40 indicated that they could not. Those who could stated music should be low and smooth.

Students were about equally divided on the best place to study, as 48 indicated "home" and 49 the library. Six students reported that they could study almost anywhere.

Final Examinations. When studying for final examinations, 17 students reviewed the text, 21 reviewed notes, and 70 reviewed both text and notes. The majority stated that they reviewed both text and notes. The 15 who answered "other" mentioned the use of small question and answer groups before an examination, and one answered that no studying was done out of class.

Review before finals was started the night before by 11 students, while 30 started the day before, and 28 began studying the week before.

Over half of the students who responded stated that they began review from one day to one week before the final examination. Variations of the foregoing study habits were used by 19. Two students

stated that their examination review was done as they studied each day's lesson.

Status of Student. There were 17 students who rated their reading ability as fast, 50 who rated their reading ability as medium and 18 felt they read slowly.

A good reader is generally considered to be a comparatively fast reader.[1] Since most of the students considered themselves to be in the "fast" or "medium" group, reading did not appear to be a major problem.

Student Opinions. Student opinions on points thought to be important in developing good study habits were many and varied. The most frequently mentioned are listed belows:

a. Proper study environment - good lighting, well-ventilated room, quiet atmosphere, etc.

b. Well-planned schedule to be observed.

c. Keeping good class notes

d. Discussion review with other class members

e. Study for concept and association of ideas rather than details

f. Practice concentration

g. Avoid procrastination

h. Have a goal

i. Have materials at hand for study

j. Study one to two hours without a break

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[1]Frederick, R. W., Ragsdale, C. E., and Salisbury, Rachel, Directed Learning, p. 304.

k. Read text and underline important parts

l. Practice emulation

The preceding section gave the results of the questionnaire given to the graduate students in education.

Study Habits of the Typical Montana State College Graduate Student

The study of the questionnaire results showed the study habits of a typical graduate student in education at Montana State College would be as follows:

1. The student in graduate education would be 36 years of age, and he would have earned his bachelor's degree at Montana State College.

2. The student would do most of his studying during the evening, but would also do considerable studying dur- in the afternoon. He would prefer his home and the library as a place of study. He would study in a quiet atmosphere, with very little talking, although sometimes he would study some with subdued, smooth music. He would take a break after one hour and 20 minutes of study.

3. The student would have a schedule which would be follow- ed with some adjustment as needed. The student would complete his study for his load of eight credits in 31 hours of study per week.

4. The student would complete his class assignments by reading his text once and then would outline or under- line important parts. He would not answer questions at ends of chapters. The student would review two or three days before examinations. He would review his text and his notes.

5. The student would look up unfamiliar words whenever he would encounter them in his study.

6. The notes taken by the student would be fairly good. Realizing the importance of adequate notes when review- ing for examinations, he would feel that taking notes had been of great value in his learning.

7. This student would be a reader of average speed. He would be reading with association of ideas more than for details in mind.

Most of the students answering the questionnaire carried out the following practices which are recognized as good study habits:

1. Making use of concentration
2. Working for good physical condition
3. Proper use of good schedule
4. Taking good lecture notes
5. Selecting the best place to study without distractions
6. Correct application of memorization
7. Improvement of reading ability
8. Proper use of text and examination reviews
9. Development of the desire and persistence to succeed
10. Outlining of material studied

There was one study habit the students answering the questionnaire practiced very little. These students seldom answered questions at ends of chapters. Several students felt that their reading ability could be improved. Many students did too much pencil underlining of their texts, which in most instances caused confusion in rereading of text.

In general there was very little difference between most of the preceding points and the study habits employed by the graduate students of Montana State College.

In Chapter 4, a summary of the material in this paper is given, and conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this investigation was to examine the study habits of college students as enumerated by authorities in education in a review of literature on this subject. Another phase of the problem was to determine, by use of a questionnaire, the study habits of graduate students in education at Montana State College and to compare them with the findings from the review of literature.

Summary

After a review of literature, by authorities in education, the findings on good study habits which were recommended are as follows:

1. Making use of concentration
2. Working for good physical condition
3. Proper use of a good schedule
4. Taking good lecture notes
5. Selecting the best place to study without distractions
6. Correct application of memorization
7. Improvement of reading ability
8. Proper use of text and examination reviews
9. Development of the desire and persistence to succeed
10. Outlining of material studied

Conclusions

As a result of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The findings of this questionnaire indicated that the graduate students in education at Montana State College have study habits which compare favorably with those

favored in the literature.

2. Some of the graduate students have study habits, such as poor reading and lack of concentration, which are in need of improvement.

Recommendations

Recommendation is made that further study be made to determine the effectiveness of graduate students use of proper study habits.

Further recommendation is made that study should be made on the teaching of study habits in the elementary and secondary schools.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDY HABITS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS
IN EDUCATION AT MONTANA STATE COLLEGE

GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. College from which you received your Bachelor Degree_____
2. Age to nearest birthday _____
3. Number of Credits now carrying_____
4. Do you have a planned schedule for your subject:
   _____Yes
   _____No
   If yes, is it rigid? _____ Or loose?_____

TIME OF STUDY:

1. When can you study most effectively?
   _____Morning
   _____Afternoon
   _____Evening
2. During what hours do you generally do your studying?
   _____Before breakfast
   _____Before noon
   _____Afternoon
   _____Evening
   _____Other time (When)_____
3. How many hours per week do you spend rewriting and reviewing notes _____
4. How many hours per week do you spend in studying?_____
5. How long, on the average, to you study before taking a break?_____

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES:

1. Are assignments in general made clear to you?
   _____Yes
   _____No
   _____Sometimes (Explain)_____
2. What method or methods do you employ in the study of reading assignments from textbooks?
   _____Read it once
   _____Read it more than once
   _____Outline or underline important facts
   _____Make written summaries
   _____Others
3. Do you review your text?
   _____Yes
   _____No
   _____Sometimes (Explain)_____
4. Do you answer questions at ends of chapters?
   _____Yes
   _____No
   _____Sometimes (Explain)_____

5. Do you look up unfamiliar words encountered in reading assignments?
   _____Yes
   _____No
   _____Sometimes (Explain)_____
6. How do you rate your notes taken during lecture classes?
   _____Good
   _____Fair
   _____Poor
7. Do you think your notes have helped your work?
   _____Yes
   _____No

STUDY CONDITIONS:

1. Can you study while people are talking and moving nearby?
   _____Yes
   _____No
   _____Sometimes (Explain)_____
2. Can you study while you can hear a radio, a phonograph, or a television set?
   _____Yes
   _____No
3. Where can you study best?
   _____At home
   _____In a library
   _____Other (Where?)_____

FINAL EXAMINATIONS:

1. How do you study for final examinations?
   _____Review text
   _____Review notes
   _____Review text and notes
   _____Other (List)_____
2. Approximately how long before finals do you start reviewing the material to be covered?
   _____Night before
   _____Day before
   _____Week before
   _____Occasionally
   _____Other (Explain)_____

STATUS OF STUDENT:

1. How do you rate your reading ability?
   _____Fast
   _____Medium
   _____Slow
2. What points do you consider important in developing good study habits? (List on back).