

# **STUDY SKILLS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

**A Use of English Course**

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**by Jean Floyd, M.A.**

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**by Jean Floyd, M.A.**

**Collins Educational  
8 Grafton Street  
London W1X 3LA**

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**10987654321**

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**Printed in Great Britain by Staples Printers St Albans Limited at The Priory Press.**

**ISBN 00 328011 X**

## Foreword

The contributions made to academic success by intelligence and upbringing, referred to as 'nature versus nurture', are not in doubt. What is not known, and may not be known for a long time to come, is the relative contribution of each. Experiments with identical twins reared apart, in contrasting environments, have not yielded any definitive results. Quite a number of factors are subsumed under 'nurture': methodology, materials, motivation, personnel, and general administration, to mention only a few. All these have profound influence on success in academic matters.

The genius of a child learns effortlessly in spite of many handicaps that 'nurture' may put in the way; but not so with average children, who constitute the bulk of every class – from the nursery school to the university. Most of the 'nurture' factors listed above are, therefore, usually tailored by educators to cater for the average learner; special arrangements are occasionally made for the gifted and the deprived.

At a time of rapid expansion of facilities, especially in the field of education, something is surely lost—standards of admission often drop. It is at such times that all the best elements of 'nurture' have to be called into play; it is then that special materials have to be most carefully prepared. We are at such a moment now in Nigeria: Jean Floyd's *Study Skills for Higher Education* is an invaluable text for university education. It is the sort of book I have personally wanted to write for years; but, being up to the ears in work turning out other more pressing books—a dictionary, textbooks and so on—I have not had the time to put my thoughts on paper in the sort of extended way in which it has been done by the author of this book.

Jean Floyd is certainly one of the best qualified to write this book: she is a trained, native speaker of English, and she worked at the University of Calabar, Nigeria, for a number of years teaching undergraduates how to study better and write better. Her skill has been brought to the wider public in the present book, which is well conceived and exquisitely written. This is not to say that the book cannot be better written: there is no book in the world that every qualified author in the field agrees with in every detail. Each author has his own predilections!

This book is certainly an invaluable gem for undergraduates who want to study more efficiently and write more logically; the exercises and suggestions are meant to achieve both ends as effortlessly as possible.

I wish the book every success. What is more, I wish those who will use it success in their academic endeavours!

S. H. O. Tomori  
University of Ibadan  
Ibadan

December, 1983

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the Use of English students and staff, University of Calabar, 1978–82, for their gratifying enthusiasm and invaluable feedback; the University of Calabar Senate Research Grants Committee, for sponsoring a study of Use of English programmes in other Nigerian universities; and Professor Barry Floyd, for his example and support in a wide variety of roles over many years – not least as an admirable Director of General Studies.

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# About This Book

## Who it is for

*Study Skills for Higher Education* is mainly for students who have achieved a WASC Credit in English Language, or its equivalent, and are taking a Use of English or Study Skills course as part of degree, certificate or diploma requirements. It is also for well-motivated individuals working independently.

## What it is

This is a text and workbook for a structured, developmental, individualized course which develops the language and learning skills required for independent study and academic work in any discipline at tertiary level. In Nigeria, all the skills involve the use of English. Typically, this would be a one-year course worth 3 credits each semester and be taught in sections of 25 students each, with two class meetings per week, regular assignments replacing a third meeting and the coursework file counting for half the course grade.

## Why it works

Course content and method are based on up-to-date research, extensive classroom experience and detailed feedback from several thousand students who used earlier versions of the material. These features are built into the course:

- clear instructions and guided practice in each skill
- active participation by the learner throughout
- reinforcement in each unit of what has gone before
- application of the skills to other courses and adaptation to individual needs
- self-motivation through the setting of ever-higher individual goals and the satisfaction of achieving them.

## What you will learn to do

- read faster and understand more
- get more from lectures
- remember more for longer
- use libraries effectively
- take better notes
- plan time sensibly
- write effective essays
- detect and avoid fallacies
- detect and correct language faults
- document sources
- assess your own progress
- tackle exams with confidence

## What else you will need

- a file folder for classwork and assignments
- a good dictionary (see Unit 3, p. 37)
- two African novels for reading practice (see Unit 2, p. 27)
- pens or pencils of different colours

## How to begin

Put your name and other identification in this book and get acquainted with it:

- Examine the table of contents and leaf through the pages.
- Work out what the marginal symbols mean, e.g. **K** = See Answer Key.
- Decide how the writer's reference section and index might help you.

Get to know your coursemates. There are many ways you can help one another speed the learning process.

Think about some specific personal benefits that doubling (or tripling) your present reading and study efficiency could bring to you.

## How to go on

Attend class regularly, taking everything needed with you, e.g. this book.

Set aside regular times for practice and assignments. Frequent practice of techniques is the key to developing a skill of any kind.

Always follow directions exactly. This proves you have understood them and is good preparation for examinations. It is a useful habit to work out the probable reasons for particular instructions and exercises.

Do not be discouraged by initial difficulties. Success will come if you keep trying, and you will soon realize that the time and effort invested in mastering the skills do 'pay off'.

Keep competing against your *own* previous performances. Set yourself realistic goals and plan your strategy for meeting them.

Learn from your mistakes.

- Correct errors, preferably in a different colour.
- If you commit many language errors, concentrate on eliminating one type at a time.
- Use your lecturer's (and coursemates') comments on written work to help you improve next time.

*Keep up with the work.* Falling behind not only gives you the burden of catching up, but also deprives you of techniques which should be making your other work easier and more rewarding. When you keep up, you get many times more value from the course because it is always working for you.

## Likely results

This book presents ideas and techniques that work—if they are used. How well they work for you is up to you. If you take the time to master the techniques and make daily practice a habit, you can get astonishingly quick results in improved study efficiency in all your subjects. Most of your practising can be done on studying you need to do or on a novel you want to read anyway.

You will soon find that the time and effort invested are beginning to ‘pay off’ and that both the quantity and the quality of what you can accomplish in a given time has increased. This discovery will lead to greater confidence in your ability to learn and remember—which in turn will lead to still greater improvement—and so on, success breeding success.

Here are some specific results to expect from the course:

- tripled reading and study efficiency
- enhanced critical and creative thinking powers
- the elimination of major writing faults and careless errors from your work
- increased command of the English language
- an appreciation of the interrelationships among all forms of knowledge
- satisfaction in achieving ever higher standards
- more pleasure in learning
- greater control over your learning, your language and your life

**N.B.** Despite the enormous number of English words, there are no satisfactory single words to mean ‘he or she’ or ‘him or her’. To save using these clumsy expressions, ‘he’ will be used in this book in the same way that ‘mankind’ is used to mean ‘human beings’ and should not prevent you from imagining female students or lecturers, where this is appropriate, as easily as male ones.



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# Unit One

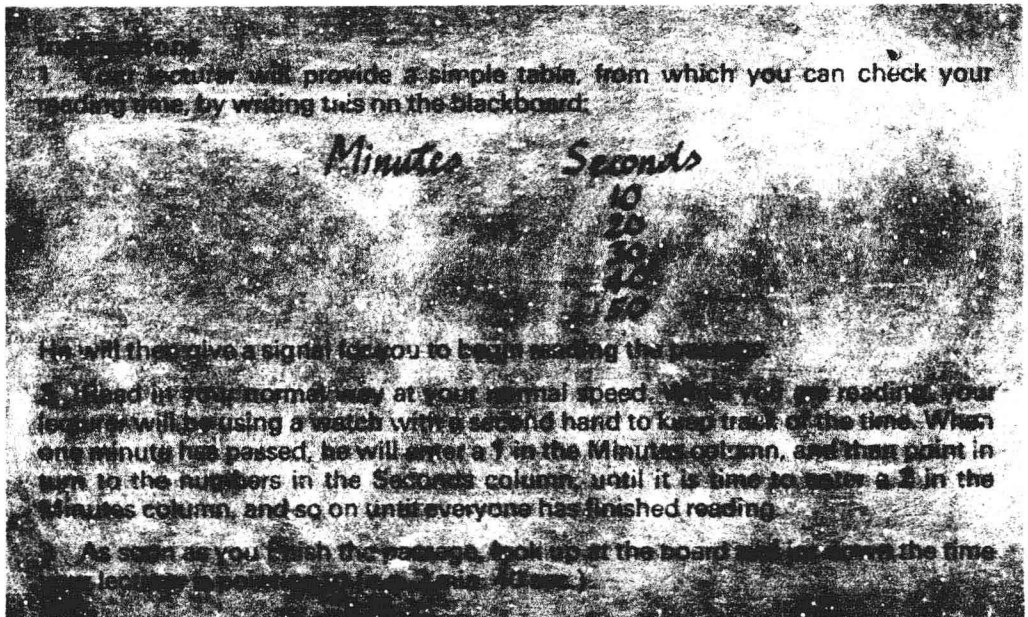
## Setting Goals

### Timed Reading Passage 1: The Reader You Can Become



In order to set goals, you must know where you are now. One of the assignments for this unit will ask you to assess your present ability in a number of study skills required for work at the college and university level. The first task, however, is to get an idea of your present reading efficiency.

Follow directions exactly, to prove that you have understood.



The efficient reader gets what he wants from his reading without wasting time and effort. His speed and his method vary with his purpose. Sometimes he wants to read fairly slowly in order to understand material thoroughly, but he is able to read quickly when he wishes. He can grasp the main ideas accurately and skip details when he chooses. We can say that the chief characteristic of the efficient reader is flexibility.

Perhaps you have a test tomorrow on the first chapter of your chemistry text. Or, for a literature course, you are to read a short story and decide why a certain character behaved as he did. Or you need to collect information for an essay on 'Problems of Palm Oil Production'. You may find that there are ten minutes before your next class and decide to get a general idea of the day's news from the paper. A friend has mentioned an article on 'The Educated Nigerian Woman' and you wonder if it says anything new on the subject. Before sleeping, you decide to relax with a detective story. . .

It is obvious that these situations call for different kinds of reading. The efficient reader is able to read at different speeds and knows different ways of reading.

Furthermore, he is able to choose the most appropriate speeds and methods for the particular reading he is doing.

The efficient reader is also intent on achieving a particular purpose, which means that his mind is alert and questioning: 'Are there any facts here not covered in today's lecture?' 'Will this article explain the government's policy on agriculture?' 'How will the author support such a claim?' Such questions give a reason for reading on. In addition, they help the reader decide when he can go quickly and when he should slow down.

He not only thinks ahead about what he wants to find out; he also relates what he is reading to what he already knows or has just read. He thinks: 'That explanation was confusing, but this example makes the point clear.' Or, 'The author's opinion on this issue is the opposite of my history lecturer's.'

The reader who forms the habit of thinking ahead and looking for relationships can often anticipate what the author will say next. This speeds up comprehension and gives the reader a sense of satisfaction. Finding out that he has made a wrong guess encourages him to pay more attention. Whether he is right or wrong, he is reacting to his reading.

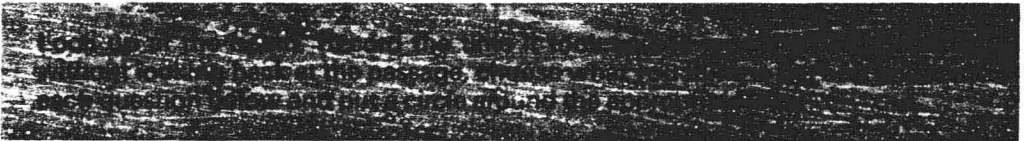
Another important fact about this reader is that he reads meanings rather than individual words. He is always looking for key words and ideas and trying to pick out essentials from what is less important. He is much too busy asking questions and reacting to his reading to say every word to himself as the poor reader may do.

It should be easy now to see why the efficient reader can read a passage faster than the inefficient one, and still understand and remember more of it. And why he can concentrate, and read for long periods without getting tired and frustrated. He enjoys reading because he knows how to get what he wants or needs both easily and accurately.

Since he finds reading rewarding, he probably does more of it. He has the time and interest to move beyond textbooks to books of his own choosing. His vocabulary, his use of English, his general knowledge and his critical judgement all improve in the best and most natural way: while he reads for his own interest and pleasure.

It is a major purpose of this course to help you become more like the reader described in this passage.

(615 words)



- 1 This passage is mainly about methods of reading more  
*a* rapidly. *b* effectively. *c* carefully. *d* widely.
- 2 It emphasizes reading for  
*a* various purposes. *b* literature classes. *c* study purposes. *d* relaxation.
- 3 The most important thing influencing the way we read should be our  
*a* reactions. *b* education. *c* reward. *d* purpose.
- 4 Saying each word to ourselves as we read is a sign of  
*a* attentive reading. *b* efficient reading. *c* poor reading.  
*d* scientific reading.
- 5 The efficient reader is one who reads  
*a* fairly slowly. *b* flexibly. *c* quickly. *d* very carefully.



- 6 The efficient reader understands accurately  
*a* everything he reads. *b* all the facts he reads. *c* about half of what he reads.  
*d* as much as he requires.
- 7 In his reading, he usually  
*a* agrees with the author. *b* relates his reading to what he already knows.  
*c* studies unusual words. *d* rereads interesting sentences.
- 8 The efficient reader normally concentrates on  
*a* key words and ideas. *b* paragraph development. *c* important details.  
*d* individual words.
- 9 He probably reads more than the poor reader, because he  
*a* wants to improve his English. *b* reacts critically. *c* finds reading rewarding.  
*d* has a better vocabulary.
- 10 A major purpose of this course is  
*a* stated at the beginning of the passage. *b* stated at the end of the passage.  
*c* stated many times in the passage. *d* not stated in the passage.

K

WORDS PER MINUTE CHART: Timed Reading Passage 1 (615 words)

Time	WPM	Time	WPM	Time	WPM	Time	WPM	Time	WPM
1.00	615	2.00	310	3.00	205	4.00	155	5.00	125
10	525	10	285	10	195	10	150	10	120
20	460	20	265	20	185	20	145	20	115
30	410	30	245	30	175	30	140	30	110
40	370	40	230	40	170	40	135	40	110
50	335	50	215	50	160	50	130	50	105

## Follow-up



### A. Record your progress

- 1 Prepare a sheet with headings like those in the example on page 4 for keeping track of your reading and comprehension scores and your own evaluation of your progress.
- 2 Use the Words Per Minute Chart to find out your WPM for the passage read.\* Now fill in the first four columns of your record sheet.
- 3 When the answers to the comprehension questions have been gone over in class, record the number of questions you answered correctly. For any questions which you answered incorrectly, make sure you understand what the correct answer is and why it is better than the one you chose.

\* The formula for calculations is  $\frac{\text{Number of words in passage} \times 60}{\text{Reading time in seconds}} = \text{WPM}$ . Figures have been rounded off to the nearest multiple of 5.