

Sempringham eLearning resources: online lectures

Lecture: History AS / A2 Study Skills: an Introduction by Gilbert Pleuger †

Some major aspects of the lecture

Key to your success - not brilliance BUT week on week steady plodding work. No set way with study skills, just what's right for you BUT done for a long time, best to step back and reflect/assess and try new ways. What I say are suggestions, not prescriptions.

Reading

Different ways to read, newspaper, novel in-depth History. Vary style with what read and purpose of reading. Think / know what you want from a book and read that way. The one pace, one style reader is death to good study.

Search for books that are right for you at you stage in study - especially books that illuminate a subject.

Notes

Main reasons for notes: a record to mobilise info / knowledge, judgements and analysis before an essay or an assessment

Secondary reasons; helps you understand topic/what is written and helps keep focus/concentration while reading.

Type of notes. Depends on the type of text read. Don't make notes on everything. Remember the purpose of reading.

Types of notes - 2 examples offered in lecture.

Gen comments on notes and layout. 1. Impose a structure, your structure - primary and dependent info

2. Always seek to use your own words and expression. 3. There should be a lot of white space (structure)

Working on information

Working on information is usually overlooked, I have also called this in my book 'middle-stage' activity - it comes between input (reading and noting) and output (writing answers). It's difficult to overstate the importance YET often forgotten. What is it?

Can be different things. Simple chronology; Spray diagram of key features of a situation; identification of main influences (the variables) in a situation and their representation and interconnection by a diagram.

Talking and listening

History, at simplest, is finding out and writing about the past. Writing requires analysis, judgement, expression. These skills improve with use, with practice. Practice with explaining and arguing is really helpful and makes study more interesting and therefore easier.

Analysis

Analysis is the breakdown of a passage of Hist into parts and identification of influences and relationship of parts to each other. You practiced analysis if you abstracted the influences on a situation in the working on information stage of study.

Once you get away from the basic 'cut and paste' attitude to study and make study your own work (and much more interesting for yourself) analysis will be more important.

Answer creation and essay writing. These require particular defined skills that ANY student can master.

There are three parts. 1. The Question. Be certain you see the meaning - don't hare off. 2. In rough, all ideas then moulded to an answer/argument. 3. Write - summary, one step of argu per para, staement/judgement supported by evidence.

Deadlines. When we have them: part unit study, module exam, course work, end year exam. Deadlines part of the adult/employment world. The competent student is on top with them. Time table from when set to finish date. Move week forward - cushion for unforeseen. Week by week tasks (plodding work) - give confidence. You're in charge.

Questions to discuss

1 How can a student avoid 'being in a rut' with study methods? Is initial success as a student an inpediment to improved skills?

2 Why is 'working on information' so important and why can it be so easy and enjoyable?

3 How can your friends help improve your skills and reduce the (formal study) effort needed for a good grade?

† For biographical details on Gilbert Pleuger (and his publications) please see the online lectures pages on www.ehistory.org.uk