Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Develop effective learning strategies by assessing your existing practices.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 3: Taking Notes

Chapter 4: Taking Tests

Unit Lesson

Earlier in the course, you began reading about what it means to be a great learner—the learning techniques that work best for you. This unit elaborates on learning strategies by focusing on note taking (study skills) and test taking. Before we go any further into the material, consider the following statement: While the following study techniques are good examples, the study techniques that you use must make sense to you, since the learning needs to benefit you. With that, if you use a studying technique that is not provided here and it works for you, then you are in good shape. Keep using it. On that same note, it can also be a valuable experience to try new study techniques in order to expand your skills.

Note Taking

What does it mean to take notes in an online course? And, what is the purpose of taking notes, anyway? As an online student, it is very important to both ask and also answer the questions above. First, most of us are familiar with a traditional classroom, where a professor (or teacher) stood in front of the classroom and began speaking (lecture) about the concepts you would learn. While the professor is speaking, the students are typically taking notes in notebooks. The intent of the lecture was usually to prepare you for a quiz, a test, or some sort of assignment. The intent of the notes were so that you could refer back to the important concepts as you study for the quiz, test, or assignment. In this description of the traditional classroom, the study techniques were likely to encourage students to memorize particular course concepts. In certain types of courses, such as Mathematics, memorization can be useful. However, the majority of your coursework as an online student at Waldorf University will not warrant memorization. In fact, you are not likely to listen to lengthy lectures nor are you likely to take notes—not for the same reasons anyway.

As an online student, you are encouraged to take notes in such a way that allows you to learn the most from the material. Unlike a traditional classroom, the course material for your online courses will probably be delivered in a different way. In other words, you will not be listening to a professor speak about the material for a great length of time. Instead, you will see study guides like this one, and you will be assigned to read certain material in the textbook(s) and/or articles before completing coursework for a grade. As a result, the note-taking technique that you choose should help you prepare your knowledgebase and skill set as a student and also as a professional.

Since the material will be delivered in an online format, does that mean I should not take notes like I did while attending a traditional classroom? The short answer is yes, take notes by writing the main and important concepts into a notebook as you complete a reading assignment—as long as it helps you learn. If it helps you
learn the material, it is best to stick with it. However, if it does not help you learn, you might consider trying a different method.

Outline: Organizing

One method of taking notes involves creating an outline of the material. The purpose of an outline is to organize the material in such a way that makes sense to you, the student. If you are big on keeping things organized, you will love using outlines. You may be familiar with the idea of creating an outline for the purposes of planning a written assignment like an essay or a research paper. Well, an outline can be used for studying as well. It is basically the same idea—an outline for an essay allows the author to organize his or her thoughts, while an outline as a studying technique allows the student to organize the course material into his or her own thoughts. The question you can ask yourself as you utilize a note-taking method is how would I organize this material if I had to explain it to someone else?

Click here to view an example outline.

T Table: Comparing and Contrasting Two or More Items

Another tool you can use as you study is something you might have seen in books, newspapers, magazines, and other types of articles, and it is a T table. If you are an analytical learner, you will love T tables. Although a T table is a rather simple idea and approach, it can be very effective for comparing and contrasting two or more concepts. To begin with a T table, you create a large T within a document (or on a sheet of paper), and you end up with four quadrants within the document. The two quadrants at the top can be somewhat small since you will usually only insert a term or small phrase. The two larger quadrants at the bottom are where you compare and contrast the two terms or phrases by listing the characteristics and constituents of each. By viewing the characteristics side-by-side, a T table is a great tool for comparing and contrasting concepts, models, theories, frameworks, and anything else you would like to compare and contrast as you study. If you are wondering when it might be appropriate to use a T table, ask yourself the following question while you are studying:

- Would I like to know the difference between two concepts?
- Is it currently unclear about when I should use one of these models?
- Am I wondering how does one concept, theory, or model relate to another?

If you answer yes to any of the questions above, take a few moments to create a T table before briefly listing the differences and similarities between two concepts. Then, take a few moments to analyze the T table as you begin formulating a conclusion about what you discover.

Click here to view an example T table.

Concept Map: Visualizing, Planning, Organizing, or Brainstorming

The next tool that you can use to study is a concept map, which is also known as a mind map. If you are a visual learner and you visualize concepts, you will love concept maps. Concept maps are another simple tool but can be very effective for people who are visually-oriented. A basic concept map begins with an oval in the middle of a document (or a sheet of paper), and you insert a macro-level or big-picture concept into the oval. Then, insert another oval within a short distance from the first oval before connecting the two ovals with a line. In the second oval, insert a concept that relates to the first concept. To add more concepts to the map, simply insert additional ovals, lines, and concepts. How much detail should you insert into a concept map? Well, you must decide the answer to that question, as the concept map is to help you learn. Therefore, include as much detail as you like. While an outline is usually used for organizing material and a T table is often used for comparing and contrasting, a concept map (or concept maps, plural) can be used for any or all of the same purposes and more. Concept maps are great tools, and they can be used to help you study in several different ways. If you finish reading a chapter or studying material within a course and you find it unclear how all of the material relates to one another, consider creating a concept map to visualize the connections. Use a concept map for any or all of the following reasons:
• to organize material during or after completing a reading assignment
• to compare and contrast two sets of information (this might require creating two concept maps and then comparing the two)
• to simply visualize the material you just absorbed (create a concept map so that it makes sense to you—instead of reading it, visualize it)
• to select or create a topic for coursework (brainstorming)
• to plan an argument/message for an essay (if you have the details of the argument in your mind but are not sure how to organize the details, use a concept map)
• to plan a project for a course (use a concept map to ensure you include all of the details you would like to offer)

Concept maps can be great assets for any learning experience, as they can be used for existing concepts and even for creating new ideas. Be as creative as you like with concept maps, and, if nothing else, be sure to have fun while you are creating them or using them.

Click [here](#) to view a few sample concept maps.

**Flash Cards: Comprehension**

The next tool has been a very popular study technique among students for some time now, and the technique involves using flash cards. Perhaps the popularity of flash cards has been due to their fun nature or even how they challenge and encourage us to improve our knowledge. One helpful way to use flash cards while studying is to refer to the key terms in a chapter of a book or even within an article. In a sense, you can use flash cards to test yourself. After reading an article or a chapter, see if you can explain the core message to someone else. If you find yourself forgetting about the supporting details, use flash cards to initially practice the explanation before you test yourself again. Also, flash cards are not necessarily limited to key terms. You can use flash cards to test your knowledge about big-picture concepts as well. For instance, you might be reading about the core principles in your profession, the principles that everyone in this profession should be able to recite. Create one flash card that asks you to list them out loud, and then prepare separate flash cards that ask you to elaborate on each of the core principles. Of course, this is one example of using flash cards. As mentioned previously, use flash cards in such a way that makes sense to you, so that the material makes sense to you.

Click [here](#) to view sample flash cards created in Microsoft PowerPoint. If you would like to use this template to create your own flash cards, click [here](#) to download the Microsoft PowerPoint file.

**Categorizing Concepts: Organizing and Including Examples**

The last study technique mentioned in this lesson is the idea of categorizing concepts, and this can be a powerful way to remember the material, identify where concepts belong, and perhaps identify where concepts do not belong. Very similar to a T table, the technique of categorizing concepts can be accomplished by using a slightly more detailed table within a document (or columns on a sheet of paper). Suppose we were interested in categorizing specific foods as a good source of certain nutritional value: carbohydrates, protein, fiber, and vitamins. In this case, we could place each main category at the top of a column in the table. Then, we can begin inserting specific foods beneath the appropriate category: carbohydrates, protein, fiber, and vitamins.

Here is another way categorizing concepts can be helpful. Suppose you finished a reading assignment that contained four theories for your profession, and the theories are all used to accomplish a similar goal. With such similarities, it can be difficult to distinguish among the theories and to even know when to use one or another. To help identify the differences, try the following exercise. Like the first example, prepare a table with four columns and place each theory at the top of each column. Beneath each column, list an example of the theories and how they have been used. Such examples can come from the reading, or ask your professor for examples. As you analyze the theories and each example, try answering questions such as *why was this theory used in this case?* And, *how was this theory used in this case?* Before long, hopefully you will be able to identify the differences and have the knowledge to effectively explain it to someone else. If the clarification
does not come to you immediately, try to continue reading and processing the information—it may come to you later. Also, know when to take a break from it, clear your mind, and return to it later.

Click here to view a sample of categorizing concepts.

**Test Taking**

This unit also mentions the types of tests you will encounter at Waldorf University and how to prepare for them accordingly. First, let us discuss a little terminology.

**Test (I mean... Assessment)**

At Waldorf University, you are very likely to attend a course with one or more assessments within it. *Assessment* is the term Waldorf University uses in place of *test*. So, if you see the term assessment or hear someone (i.e., professor or administrator) mention the term *assessment*, please know that this is Waldorf lingo for *test*. As you read through Chapter 4 by Feldman, consider the terms *assessment* and *test* to be synonymous.

Assessments are included to help you and the professor gauge your own efforts toward the learning outcomes—basically that you have retained the main concepts of a unit. They are intended to help you, the learner, ensure that you grasp everything you need to move on to the next unit or even the next course.

**Types of Assessments**

Throughout the courses that you attend at Waldorf University, you will be asked to complete various types of assessment (test) questions, exercises, papers, and projects. No matter the type of question or exercise, the instructions should contain everything you need to begin and then finish it. If you feel that something might be missing from a set of instructions (or a question), contact your professor as soon as possible.

Assessments can contain any or all of the following types of questions:

- **Multiple choice**: A question or statement followed by answer options (usually four).
- **Matching**: Match each item with its correct pairing (usually contains four or more items).
- **Ordering**: Place a set of items in the correct order (usually contains four or more items).
- **Multiple answer**: Not to be confused with multiple choice, multiple answer asks you to choose each answer that correctly applies to the question or statement (usually contains four or more answer options).
- **Hot spot**: A hot-spot question asks you to identify a specific spatial point by clicking on it to answer the question or respond to a statement.
- **True or false**: You may not see many of these, but if you do, identify if the statement is true or false by selecting one or the other as the answer.
- **Essay**: Essay questions can range from very short (75 or 100 words) to somewhat lengthy (500 words), and the question itself should contain the expectations for an appropriate answer. If it seems unclear, be sure to contact your professor as soon as possible.

The textbook does a great job of explaining how you can prepare for each type of question. As you prepare for multiple answer, ordering, and hot spot questions, use the same preparation strategies as multiple choice and matching.

**Test Anxiety**

Test anxiety is a very real emotion that several students experience. Unfortunately, test anxiety can make it difficult for students to perform as well as they otherwise could. The anxiety has a tendency to take over and interrupt our ability to perform at our utmost potential. The good news is that there are ways to combat test anxiety, and the textbook offers some great methods of doing just that. No need to repeat it here, so be sure to read the section in Chapter 4 about test anxiety. Here is one last thought to consider about test anxiety:
It can be advantageous for you to stop for a moment and think about how testing might affect your emotions. Do you think you experience test anxiety? Identifying that the anxiety exists is a great first step. If it does exist, the next step is to dig a little deeper to identify what it is about testing that provokes the anxious feelings. By asking yourself these questions and identifying what affects you as you complete a test, you can do everything in your power to prepare for such situations and potentially perform better on an assessment (test).

Several of the concepts in this unit contribute to your intellectual wellness by offering several methods for continuously improving as a lifelong learner. Use the study techniques (note-taking techniques) that seem to work best for you to maintain the intellectual dimension in your life.

The material in this unit also mentions test anxiety, which has a direct impact on one’s emotional wellness.