Study Smarter, Not Harder
Study Smarter, Not Harder

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To my parents, Doreen and Clive Paul. I love to learn. That wonderful gift is from them and I carry it with me always.

And to students of all ages who want to be the best learners they can possibly be — and to the parents who wish this gift for their children.
Laws are constantly changing. Every effort is made to keep this publication as current as possible. However, the author, the publisher, and the vendor of this book make no representation or warranties about the outcome or the use to which the information in this book is put and are not assuming any liability for any claims, losses, or damages arising out of the use of this book.

The reader should not rely on the author of the publisher of this book for any professional advice. Please be sure that you have the most recent edition.
This book contains many of my own ideas and interpretations of the ideas of others. However, I would not be in a position to have ideas and interpretations had it not been for the opportunities I was given at the beginning of my career and the work of inspirational researchers and writers in the field of learning and study skills.

I want to thank Dr. Horace Beach for the leap of faith he took when he hired me as an inexperienced study skills instructor. I am deeply indebted and grateful to Dr. Joe Parsons and Shirley Henderson for being my mentors and colleagues in the Learning Skills department of Counselling Services at the University of Victoria.

There are several superb books that, over the years, have been the foundation of my own view of study skills. The best of these come from the work of Walter Pauk, Howard Gardner, Colin Rose, and Tony Buzan. I recommend that you read them as well as this book.

Karin Paul provided insight from her vantage point as a high school teacher and university instructor. I also thank her for being patient with me while this book came together.

Speaking of patience ...

Ruth Wilson deserves some kind of medal for her understanding and forbearance as the manuscript came to her in several pieces. Her professionalism, creativity, and talent, and that of her editorial department, have taken this book to a much higher level than I could ever do on my own.

Notwithstanding the notable vigilance of the editors (I am constantly amazed at the level of detailed work that goes on in the editing process), any errors you might find should be attributed to me alone.
Free Bonus Features

Get access to all the latest *Study Smarter, Not Harder* information at:

www.studysmarternotharder.com

Readers and learners will be able to keep up with the latest information and access a wide range of additional material, including:

- The latest in neuroscience that will improve study skills
- New developments in study techniques
- Answers to questions sent to the author by email
- Links to useful and interesting websites

Contact Kevin Paul directly with your questions, comments and suggestions at: kevin@studysmarternotharder.com.
Part I
Introduction
Chapter 1

The Knowledge Explosion — And How You Can Keep Ahead of the Curve

New knowledge is doubling every six months. Soon, the amount of data in the world will be doubling every twelve hours. That means most of the content you learn in school will be obsolete within a year.

Are you worried about how to keep up? Are you bewildered by the information explosion at school? At work? At home? Does it make you feel worried? Stressed? Absolutely overwhelmed?

Buckminster Fuller’s concept of the “Knowledge Doubling Curve” leads to a very scary scenario in the not too distant future. There is already more information swirling around than humans can handle.

Take heart ... and take a deep breath. The solution to dealing with this fire hose of information and data is closer than you might think. The answer is already between your ears — the power of your very own brain.

Training your brain to become a hyper-efficient learning engine is the best strategy for living in the age of knowledge explosion. Why is this the best strategy? Because it won’t matter how fast content becomes obsolete, you will have the superpower capacity to learn all the new stuff that’s relevant to you.

Knowledge is the eye of desire and can become the pilot of the soul.

Will Durant
I was brought up to believe that the only thing worth doing was to add to the sum of accurate information in the world.

*Margaret Mead*

Remember *Thomas Edison’s* words if the going gets a little tough along the way: “Many of life’s failures are those people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

The good news is that, in the midst of all this change, the fundamentals do not change. Math principles stay the same in the face of Big Data. Good writing is still vital despite the whining about bad grammar on social media. Critical thinking skills matter even more now that the Internet makes garbage as easily availability as the very best in human achievement.

But the most important fundamental that does not change is what it takes to learn. The skills and principles in this book will help you hone your brain into your own lifelong learning engine. Two core principles are woven into every chapter: 1) to learn you must study, and studying is hard work – there’s no way around that; 2) there are smart ways to study that make sure you are not wasting your hard work.

That’s how your brain becomes a hyper-efficient learning engine. Past a certain point, studying harder is not enough. You must train yourself to study smarter, not just harder.

Most people reading this book are concerned with getting better grades. The good news about that ambition is that no matter what your present level of learning ability and achievement may be, YOU CAN DO BETTER!

- If you’re failing, you can pass.
- If you’re passing, you can get Bs.
- If you’re getting Bs, you can get As.
- If you’re earning As, you can achieve true mastery.

If you have the desire, and the determination to apply what you read in this book, you are not limited to moving from failing to As in slow steps. You can accelerate quickly — if you work hard and smart.

It takes three things to achieve the kind of improvement you desire:

1. **Desire to be a better learner.** Opening this book is a good start. It shows you are sincere about expanding your horizons.

2. **Belief in yourself.** Chapters 2 – 6 will show you how to build belief in your ability to learn anything, and how to activate it in each study session.

3. **Toolbox of skills.** Desire and self-esteem are good things, but they are useless without some ways to build on that foundation and make practical use of it. The chapters in Part III
show you how to develop study tools that will serve you well in any learning situation.

It is up to you to take the next step: a step away from the anxiety about your schoolwork and the eruption of information in the world, and a step toward developing the kind of mind that handle any learning situation with ease and fun for the rest of your life.
Chapter 2
You Can Learn Anything

Congratulations on taking the first step along the path of lifelong mastery.

Mastery of what? You can master anything you want to learn. Whether it’s your high school diploma, college career program, university degree courses, sales training seminar, or professional licensing exam, there is no limit. You can learn anything you want — if you unlock the genius inside you. The possibilities and potential are extraordinarily exciting.

1. You Are a Genius

Yes, you read that correctly. It does say GENIUS!

This book is about how to bring out the genius inside you. That’s right! You have the potential to learn and achieve learning results at the true genius level.

This is not an exaggeration. There are ways of studying and learning that are painful, arduous, and, ultimately, fruitless, and you are left worse off than before. You probably have some personal experience of this kind of “education.”

Conversely, there are ways of learning and patterns of study that not only help make you more knowledgeable, but also increase your inherent intelligence. Does that sound impossible? Isn’t intelligence set in stone when you’re born and there is nothing you can do to change it?

Think about it. Research shows that spending countless hours as a couch potato in front of the TV will actually reduce your IQ. And if it can change in a negative direction, then it can certainly be coached into the positive.

Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Believe it or not, you are already an incredibly efficient learner. Acquiring a language and walking are two of the most complex activities in which humans engage. It takes a very sophisticated learning capability to achieve language and walking. Research shows that even driving a car takes more brain power than piloting the lunar excursion module that landed on the moon.

Just to give yourself a review of what a good learner you already are, do the following exercise. Write down all the things in your life that you have learned that have nothing to do with formal classroom schooling. Here is a list to start with — some or all may apply to you:

- Walk and run.
- Talk — in at least one language.
- Ride a bike.
- Drive a car.
- Swim.
- Give directions.
- Plant a garden.
- Paint your house.
- Iron clothes.
- Babysit.
- Build model airplanes.
- Bake bread.

Make your own list. It will show you just how proficient you have become as a basic learner without really trying. Imagine what you could accomplish if you worked at it with the right coaching.

The achievement we think of as “genius” is not beyond your current capabilities. In fact, genius level is only utilizing a marginally higher percentage of the brain’s enormous potential. Genius seems exclusive and unattainable only because so few people actually perform at that level. But it is there for you with the proper kind of training. It’s there for you if you’re willing to work for it.

There is no magic involved: no drugs, divine intervention, or mind-altering tricks. There is nothing extraordinarily difficult involved. In fact, when you begin to follow the strategies and “mind workout” exercises provided in this book, you will be amazed at how much common sense is involved. Once you know the keys to gain access to the brain’s power, the skills needed to develop that power seem obvious.
You have to commit yourself to a persistent, consistent practice of the kinds of skills that can transform you into a superlearner. But if you spend your time wisely, if you study smarter and never give up, the results will amaze you. There will be noticeable improvements almost immediately, but the permanent leaps forward in performance won’t come until after several months of work. If you stick with it, your results and achievements will shout to everyone that you are a genius.

2. Who Can Do This?
The only limitation to this approach is that it works best for young adults (senior high school) and older. Younger children generally need more guidance, although some of the exercises can apply. In fact, it’s never too early for parents and teachers to encourage young children to enjoy learning using all the different kinds of “intelligences,” but the specific study skills in this book are not appropriate for them.

There is no upper age limit to using this approach. Any age. Any time in life. No matter where and when you’re starting from, you can increase your intelligence and learning ability. It’s a misconception that you lose the ability to learn new things or learn them fast as you get older. The truth is that your intelligence is like a muscle: If you don’t use it, you lose it. Conversely, if you exercise it, it does get stronger. Chapter 3 covers some of the physiology of the brain that makes this possible. The key concept is called “neoplasticity,” and it tells us just how remarkably resilient our brains can be. (See Chapter 3, section 3.2)

This use-it-or-lose-it approach will work on any learning task. You will achieve unparalleled success in any setting: formal schooling, formal training and exams, personal learning projects, and informal learning settings. You will see positive results regardless of any previous bad experiences with formal learning in schools. Your past does not have to equal your future. In fact, the worse you did in school, the more quickly you will see the difference now.

3. How Is This Possible?
Your brain is like a supercomputer that has been installed and activated, but didn’t come with an instruction manual. Consider this your introductory course in how to use your supercomputer.

The belief in your genius potential is based on the reality of the brain’s biology and physiology and what the last 30 years of

What counts is not the number of hours you put in but how much you put into those hours.

*Anonymous*
scientific research tell us about intelligence. Chapter 3 gives you some background on how it all works, and then Chapters 4, 5, and 6 show you how to use it to help you work on improving three of the basic foundations of superlearning: preparation, memory, and concentration.

Why does this approach work? Because it is natural. It recognizes the way you naturally learn and helps you to rediscover how to use it.

4. Why It Is Important to Unlock Your Genius

Being a successful learner is no longer a matter of choice or mere preference. It is a necessity in order to survive and thrive in the “information age.” The future belongs to learners. As we are constantly told by the various media, we live in a time of rapid change. And the pace of that change is faster than at any other time in human history. Every year, half of what we learned and understood about our world is obsolete.

Until recently — the late 19th and 20th centuries — it has been muscle power that has dominated individual success. Despite humankind’s growing intellectual capabilities, most individual successes as a hunter/gatherer in the Stone Age, farmer in the Agricultural Age, or factory worker in the Industrial Age depended on physical capacity for hard manual work.

Today and in the future, it is mind power that will dominate. Wealth and jobs are no longer in the land or physical commodities. Knowledge is wealth. Knowledge is where the careers and security are.

When you combine the astonishing rate of knowledge obsolescence with the fact that knowledge is now the most valuable commercial commodity on earth, you begin to understand the value of learning how to learn. You also begin to see school and university subjects in a whole new light.

It isn’t the content that matters necessarily, because that will likely be meaningless in a few years — especially in the sciences and technology. Rather, it is the training you are receiving in learning how to learn a contribution to training.

You can develop superlearning skills on your own if you’re not in school at the moment. But, if you are in school, you have the perfect variable training ground to use the techniques and concepts in this book. Just as an athlete uses different approaches to improve Mediocrity is self-inflicted. Genius is self-bestowed.

Walter Russell
various areas of his or her physical capabilities — running to develop aerobic capacity, weight training to increase muscle strength, stretching to enhance flexibility — the superlearner must become comfortable with developing many aspects of intelligence, not just the dominant one or two with which he or she feels comfortable.

Teaching yourself how to learn is the most valuable skill you can learn today. It’s no longer enough to have the attitude that your learning days are over at high school graduation or when you have your bachelor’s degree. To be successful in a world where knowledge is the key, you must be skilled and fluent in acquiring knowledge and making it part of you. This will be a continual process. Learn to learn, and love it, or you will fall behind and struggle all your life.

I believe that the biggest mistake educational planners make today is to bleat on about the necessity of making our schools, colleges, and universities more relevant by focusing on skills training. This is a foolish waste of time. Our fast-paced, technological society is changing so quickly that any specific skills taught and knowledge imparted will be 50 percent useless by the time the graduate is finished the program. It will be almost 100 percent useless by the time he or she has been in the workforce for two years. In an age when knowledge is the chief source of wealth, the only truly timeless skill is that which gives you the ability to keep learning for the rest of your life. If your formal schooling doesn’t give you that, then you have to get it for yourself. Reading and using this book is your first step.

But if outside circumstances force you to become a lifelong learner, it is the sheer joy of the achievement that will keep you on that path. Learning is natural and fun — just ask any infant (if you can master the intricacies of the child’s language). The key to your future is entirely in your control and the possibilities it opens up are truly exciting.

5. Where to Start

This book first gives you a short overview of the theory and foundation skills (Part II) and then provides a series of practical exercises and strategies that will become the starting point of your own lifelong love affair with learning (Part III). The practical hints and strategies in Part III can be put to use immediately if you have an urgent need to improve a certain area.

Some are geared toward a “get fit” attitude about getting your brain in shape and learning anything you want to in life. There are
also specific strategies and exercises that focus on the particular kind of learning in the formal education settings of school, university, or professional courses; for example, for insurance and real estate licenses.

You should begin by reading Chapters 3 and 4 together. Then you should take the basic principles of Chapter 4, prepare yourself properly, and study Chapter 3 again. The ideas in these two chapters form the thread that runs through the rest of the book and ties all the exercises and suggestions together. Even the smallest study hint is designed in keeping with the way the brain works.

6. What to Expect

Expect to fail ... at first. You won’t fail because you are dumb or because it’s too hard to do this stuff, but rather because of humankind’s normal resistance to change. The condition called homeostasis resists change in any organism, even if that change is ultimately beneficial. It takes time to get your system accustomed to doing things differently. Therefore, startling positive results won’t be immediate; they will be slow and incremental. But they are real. In fact, if you truly make a commitment to lifelong learning as an unending part of your life, the results will come faster than you might expect — just not quite as fast as you would like.

Failing and making mistakes are the only ways to make true progress in something new. It has been said that the only way to be staggeringly successful is to double your rate of failure. That is not as silly as it may seem. If you don’t make mistakes, you aren’t pushing yourself into new realms of possibility. Failure is normal at the beginning of something new or unfamiliar. Failure also fades away as you make an effort and the successes far outnumber mistakes.

Therefore, you must also expect to put in a lot of effort. The work that’s needed to be done is easy and relatively simple, but it’s also new and, therefore, likely to be uncomfortable at first. It takes effort to overcome that discomfort and explore new things. Find the energy for that effort and you will be richly rewarded!

Expect to be persistent. If you fail a lot, put in a lot of effort, and still do not see the promised results, do not give up. Change strategies, review what you are doing, try something new. But if you stick to the principles in this book, you will succeed.

Most important, expect to see a vast array of positive results:

- Develop a toolbox of learning techniques that can bring you success on any learning task.
• Quadruple your study efficiency.
• Expand your memory capacity up to 100 times and beyond.
• Double and even triple your reading speed and comprehension.
• Develop unstoppable motivation to achieve your learning goals.
• Learn how to use music and ancient relaxation techniques to supercharge your studying.
• Discover how to make each learning task fit your personal learning style for amazing results.

Expect to find some tips and hints that will work immediately. You will experience the best results if you take time to load up your “toolbox” with many skills and new viewpoints on learning. However, if your problem right now is getting through one particularly difficult textbook, Chapter 10 on reading will work very well just by itself.

Finally, throughout the book, ideas and concepts are repeated in several different places. This is done on purpose. As you will read in later chapters, repetition is the mother of skill — it is how things get into your long-term memory.

7. Beyond What’s Comfortable

Push yourself beyond your comfort zone. You don’t need to go overboard, but you won’t progress to exceptional levels unless you push yourself into areas you’ve never been before — such as singing your algebra lessons to yourself as a means of remembering formulas for the exam. (No one has to be around to hear you!)

8. You Are 100 Percent Responsible for Your Own Success

There is only one secret to success in any enterprise, and becoming an excellent student is no different. You must understand that you are 100 percent responsible for the results you achieve. Your success depends on your efforts, not on any external force.

If your grades are not what you want them to be, it is not the fault of your teachers, your parents, fate, or any other circumstances in your life. Too many people take the easy way out and blame something other than themselves if they fail to achieve their A genius! For thirty-seven years I’ve practiced fourteen hours a day, and now they call me a genius!

Pablo Sarasate

In the long run you hit only what you aim at. Therefore, though you should fail immediately, you had better aim at something high.

Henry David Thoreau
goals. Too many students with poor grades think the fault lies with their teachers, an unfair society, or a flawed school system.

You have to throw all such worthless ideas out the window and focus on yourself. You must make a commitment right now to become a highly skilled, self-motivated, personally directed, independent learner. Developing that mindset is the only sure path to success.

If you have an insightful teacher or supportive parents, your path may be smoother. But that is no guarantee of success if your personal commitment is inadequate. The only way to be certain that you will achieve your full potential is to resolve that there will be no more excuses. Once you make that resolution, the rest of this book will become an opportunity for you to create your own future.