

Based on the works of L. Ron Hubbard

# The Study Handbook

PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES  
FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

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# Studying: An Introduction

## THE ABILITY TO LEARN

In order to teach somebody something, it is necessary that he be able to learn. If someone can't learn, then he can't find out how to do anything.

This is terribly fundamental. Yet all great successes are built on attention to fundamentals. Unless you can isolate these fundamentals, you leave your building with an incomplete foundation. You wouldn't build any skyscrapers if you didn't first put down a foundation.

In learning, that foundation is, of course, the ability to learn.

## THE IMPACT ON CIVILIZATION OF AN INABILITY TO STUDY

When individuals can't study, knowledge gets lost. It is common in a civilization for a body<sup>1</sup> of knowledge to come into being, then for some piece of it to get grooved into a certain special use. That piece of information then gets poorly passed on and the rest of the knowledge gets lost.

It would be interesting to talk to James Watt<sup>2</sup> on the subject of steam engines. He probably could tell you all about high-pressure boilers<sup>3</sup>. He just didn't have

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1 **body:** a large collection or amount of something. *Over a period of twenty years, he collected quite a body of unusual postage stamps, all from foreign countries.*

2 **James Watt:** (1736–1819) Scottish inventor and mechanical engineer whose advances on the steam engine made it a practical device for converting steam into work. Watt made significant new inventions regarding the steam engine, dramatically increasing its efficiency and enabling the engine to drive many types of machinery as opposed to just pumping water, its original use.

3 **high-pressure boiler:** mechanisms that produce steam under great pressure, which when released can be used to do work. A *boiler* is a metal container in which water is *boiled* (heated until it turns to vapor) to produce steam. In a *high-pressure boiler*, a larger quantity of steam is produced under greater pressure than in other boilers, thus allowing more work to be done. *Sarah was expert in repairing high-pressure boilers.*

the time, money or materials to build one. But there may be dozens of methods of utilization of steam which have just been lost.

One might say that the civilization goes forward and wins anyway. Actually, almost anywhere one can find civilizations that are no longer with us. They are all gone on the basis of lost technology<sup>4</sup>. Civilizations tend to rise to a certain level. Then under the stress of combat and various other factors, they start losing their technology.

But the only real reason it gets lost is because people can't study.

## UNDERSTANDING

If one studied without any ability to evaluate<sup>5</sup> what he was studying, his ability to study would be very poor indeed.

Now and then you will find a “straight-A student” who is able to tell you the page number and the paragraph of every one of his assignments. He will be able to give you back the information verbatim<sup>6</sup>. This is a sort of perfect memory trick. Unfortunately, there is no understanding connected with it.

When you ask for his opinion on the material<sup>7</sup>, he falls apart.

That isn't how to study.

Study has to do with understanding.

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4 **technology**: the methods of application of an art or science as opposed to only knowledge of the art or science. *The technology of wing design has changed surprisingly little since the Wright brothers.*

5 **evaluate**: to look at something to see what is important or useful about it compared with other similar things; to judge the quality, truth or usefulness of something. *After quickly evaluating the book's usefulness to her, she decided it wasn't worth buying at that time.*

6 **verbatim**: in exactly the same words as originally said or written. *His ability to quote long sections of his favorite books verbatim was always entertaining to his friends.*

7 **material**: information used in creating a book, movie, etc., or information put into a form that others can read it. This book contains material on study. *The teacher directed the student to the page of his material where the answer to his question could be found.*

## WILLINGNESS TO KNOW

In any study, the first little gate that has to be opened is this: *willingness to know*.

The first thing that impedes learning is the idea that you already know all about it. This is not only true for the beginner to a subject, but is true for the more experienced person—and even the professional<sup>8</sup>.

A student who finds himself bogging down<sup>9</sup> and having trouble moving through the material may find, if he takes a good look, that he is studying it through a screen of “I know all about this.” He may even find that he has been pretending to himself that he is studying it.

Unless he realizes that he is pretending, that there is actually something there to study and learn that he doesn’t already know, he will not be able to bring himself into a relaxed frame of mind, which is simply, “Here is something to study. Let’s study it.”

A student’s ability to learn depends on his willingness to learn.

## STATUS VERSUS RESULTS

An individual can get into feeling like he has to protect his own status<sup>10</sup> by pretending that he knows something or by appearing very clever, even to himself.

This could fit under the subject of “self-esteem<sup>11</sup>.” There’s nothing particularly wrong with self-esteem. It’s necessary that an individual feel somewhat confident in some direction.

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8 **professional**: having, showing or characterized by a high level of competence or expert skills; a person manifesting these qualities in his work, especially one who makes a living using these skills. *Edna seemed to take a professional approach to everything she did, never settling for “pretty good.” What made him a professional was the quality of results he consistently achieved.*

9 **bog (down)**: to get stuck as if in a *bog* (a soft, wet section of ground that is hard or impossible to walk across). *The student bogged down on his homework and gave up.*

10 **status**: a person’s standing in relation to others; one’s social position, as viewed by the individual or others. *He felt his status would be lowered if he admitted his error.*

11 **self-esteem**: confidence in one’s own ability, value or worth; pride in self, high regard for self. *She was surprised to find out that his high self-esteem was only pretended and that he really didn’t feel confident at all.*

But this need for status and self-esteem fades away in the presence of real knowledge, and a real esteem takes its place. It's this real esteem which is most impressive to self and to others because it is producing results.

It doesn't then really come down to a test of "What does a person *know*?" but it comes down to a test of "What can a person *do*?"

## SUMMARY

On the subject of learning, the first thing to teach and the first barrier to crack is this: "Why are you studying it if you know all about it to begin with?"

If you get that door cracked open, then the student can learn anything from there on like a shot<sup>12</sup>.

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12 **(like a) shot**: very rapidly, in a manner that reminds one of a bullet being shot from a gun. *The little boy heard the sirens and took off like a shot to see the fire engines go racing down the street.*



# Education and Learning

## MISSING TECHNOLOGY OF STUDY

Though some teachers and professors may work to invite the understanding, interest and participation of the student, the way the educational system actually works is more like this: the student is told he is supposed to study something, and if he doesn't like studying it or has difficulty, he suffers some sort of punishment or penalty. This approach just makes the student feel guilty for not learning.

What one is looking at here is a missing technology. It's like trying to fix a radio without understanding the basics of radios and with no instruction book of any kind.

One could look in vain up and down the library aisles at big universities for a book which simply tells the student how to study, the actual basics of study and learning. It sounds fantastic, but not even in their major courses of education have they had such a textbook.

Here are all these students in a university being told that they don't know how to study, but there has been no textbook on the subject.

## EDUCATION AS A CORRECTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The only "technology" of education, as it is practiced today, is a sort of complicated corrective technology that isn't really education at all. In other words, the educational system is built around the fact that education has already failed—the student failed to learn the information, so now various things will happen to correct this.

It isn't that a corrective technology is useless. When a train engine has gone into the ditch, it's quite useful to know how to operate a wrecking train<sup>1</sup> to get that train engine back on the rails again. But this doesn't mean that lifting trains out of ditches and putting them back on rails is the whole subject of railroading. Railroading done right has the train on the rails all the time.

How about modern education? Actually, one doesn't have trouble getting a student to study something he sees the need or use of. Yet there's a tremendous amount of force and duress<sup>2</sup> applied to students to get them to study. Well, if there's this much duress needed to get the student to learn, it must be some kind of a corrective technology being applied to remedy his having missed it all in the first place. Johnny failed to learn what *A* is. Now we find all this duress involved in trying to get him to learn what *B* is.

Suppose one was giving a student an oral examination on his text and couldn't get past the second paragraph—the student couldn't seem to remember anything in that paragraph. The study technology would have him look just a little bit earlier to find the word he didn't understand. And sure enough, one will be found in the area just before the student went blank. He gets this word defined and straightened out, and all of a sudden, magically, he understands that paragraph.

Now suppose one didn't straighten out the word, and suppose one told this student that there were going to be “consequences<sup>3</sup>” if he didn't learn the paragraph. Now, imagine multiplying this by thousands of times for each student.

Imagine if every time this student hit a rough spot on the road he was threatened one way or another with, “Now, if you don't get that next paragraph...!” In what sort of state of mind do you think the student would finally wind up?

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1 **wrecking train:** a train used for removing wreckage, debris, etc., from railroad tracks and repairing wrecked trains and tracks. *They used a wrecking train to clear the wrecked train engine from the tracks.*

2 **duress:** force, demands or threats used to make somebody do something. *The signed contract was ruled invalid by the court when it was proved that it had been signed under duress.*

3 **consequence:** a result or effect from something done or occurring earlier, sometimes implying an unpleasant result or effect. *His parents told him that if he chose to move out of the house and get an apartment of his own they wouldn't stop him, but that he would have to deal with all the consequences himself.*

Schools, communities and educational systems have tried various things to solve this problem of a missing educational technology. At one point in England they came up with something called “sandwich training<sup>4</sup>”. They had discovered that their engineers couldn’t build bridges and they decided to do something about it. The plan they came up with was to have the student go to school for six months and then spend six months actually working in the field he was studying before returning to the classroom full-time.

That was a corrective action which was a recognition of the fact that educational methods had failed. But at least it was a corrective action in the right direction.

### THE EFFECTS OF DURESS IN EDUCATION

With no technology of study in the field of education, the child goes into kindergarten and starts running into things he doesn’t understand. He then moves on into the first grade and is shown the word *cat*. He says it’s *tac*. The teacher looks sad, paces up and down and writes notes to the parents. The father holds his head in his hands for half an hour, and goes into a decline<sup>5</sup>.

This has become the accepted reaction to such a situation. “What is going to come of you?” is the question which is left hanging in the middle of the air. As the school failures mount, the child is repeatedly told how he “will never succeed in life,” and all that sort of thing.

Why do they have to put this much duress on study? It’s because they don’t know how to teach the child to read *cat* instead of *tac*.

In place of a workable technology of education, one gets this terrific cultural pressure and a lot of, “How do you keep youth in line?” The society hires a police force to try to control the child when he becomes a teenager—one gets things like street gangs. By the time these children arrive in their teens, they

4 **sandwich training:** a British term for a type of educational program in which students have a period of practical work experience between two periods of formal instruction and study. The term comes from the image of a sandwich with some sort of filling between two slices of bread. *The sandwich training she did while studying architecture involved work on actual building plans between classes.*

5 **decline:** a gradually worsening state of mental or physical health. *After his wife passed away, he went into a three-month decline before recovering his strength and a renewed determination to continue creating a worthwhile life for himself.*

have become convinced that they don't own anything and aren't a part of anything, and that's the way they act. They've been cut off from understanding and participating in the world around them.

For comparison, it's quite interesting to watch some young boy who's been thrown into the responsibility of the care of a family or something like that at ten, eleven or twelve years of age. Today you can, in spite of child labor laws<sup>6</sup>, occasionally find such an individual. He bears no resemblance to the modern teenager, because he's already had to wrap his hands around this thing called *life* and carry on somehow. He hasn't had time to sit in school and be subjected to this continual duress, forced to study past all these points of noncomprehension.

### A STARTING POINT

A person is very happy to learn that there are ways of studying. He's very happy to learn there are ways of broadening his information about the world and about his life.

How *do* you learn about things? You learn about things by looking at them, by feeling them, by hearing about them, by reading books about them, by seeing what they relate to.

The student can be introduced to concepts such as *observation* or *inspection* or *familiarity*. These are very unexciting words, yet they represent the true basics, a starting point on the subject of learning.

In the field of education, you are not up against an uncaring or unwilling society. You're up against the incorrect study technology of the society, which stultifies the intellect<sup>7</sup>, freezes the individual into a noncomprehension of anything, and puts him into a woodenheadedness<sup>8</sup> which nobody should be put into.

6 **child labor laws:** laws that control the working conditions and the amount of hours children can work, depending on their age, created to protect the health and safety of children and to allow time for their schooling. *In the early 1900s, before major developments in the area of child labor laws, nearly one-third of American factory workers were children between the ages of seven and twelve.*

7 **intellect:** the ability to think and reason. *Having found a school that truly helped him develop his intellect, he was thrilled to be learning things he'd never even thought about before.*

8 **woodenheadedness:** a condition of feeling, thinking or acting like one is very stupid, uncreative, slow, etc., as if one's head was wooden. *The sculptor became so frustrated by the woodenheadedness of his apprentice, he let him go and found a new one.*

Using study technology basics, and such simple concepts as *observation*, *inspection* and *familiarity*, one can begin to bring an individual out of this condition.

## THE STUDENT'S REALITY AND POWER OF CHOICE

The first real rule in teaching somebody something is this: One has to find a point of reality<sup>9</sup>, a point of agreement, which can be achieved by the student. In other words, the teacher's view and the student's view coincide<sup>10</sup>.

It's not necessarily true that one must start with a very simple point. Nor must it be a complex point. It is only true that one must start with a point which the student agrees is *vital* and necessary.

Additionally, the teacher must always preserve the student's power of choice over the data he is being taught. He must permit the student to examine whether or not the data is true in his experience or in his environment, and to operate accordingly. Only in this way would anything be useful to the student.

In the field of knowledge, nothing is sacred.

It's a sure test of whether a teacher knows his business or not if he insists that a great number of data be assimilated without further analysis or question in any way, shape or form. If what is being taught is true, the student himself will recognize its truth.

Education is not just about increasing his speed as a learner but about increasing his power of choice over what he has learned. With that achieved, a student can lead a much better and more successful life.

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9 **reality**: that which appears to be; an agreement among people about what is real. *She was tired of hearing about all his safety concerns, which she felt were not based on reality. Bertrand and Stephen discussed the plan for the mural until they reached a high level of reality between them.*

10 **coincide**: to be exactly the same, to agree as in thought or opinion. *She married a man whose profession was different from hers but whose goals coincided with her own.*

## EDUCATION, A DEFINITION

Education, as it has been practiced, could be defined as *placing information into the memories of others*. If the student could “remember” it, that meant he had “learned” it. But putting information into the memories of others causes them to rely on experience, not perception<sup>11</sup>. These are two different things. Remembered experience is quite different than perception and estimation of the situation.

Here is a better, if somewhat longer, definition for education:

*Offering data for assimilation and use by others, and facilitating their absorption of it to the end of permitting them better control of a better life.*

Students should be given data in such a way that it gives them control of it. They should be permitted to use that data, to align and evaluate and apply that data to specific actions in life. Data should not be left hanging there unconnected to anything.

## LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

Learning, most simply, means *communication*, by which is meant not only *the interchange of ideas* but also *the use of those sense channels with which the individual contacts the physical universe*. You want to learn about something? Look at it, touch it, listen to it, and so on—in other words, communicate with it.

The things that a person is unwilling to learn something about are the things that are giving him trouble.

To educate a student, all you have to do is teach him that it doesn't hurt a person to communicate with anything, anywhere, at any time. He gets to be mighty smart if he knows personally from experience that it won't harm him to know about something. If he learns that, then he learns the most important thing to know about learning.

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<sup>11</sup> **perception**: the use of the senses in contacting the physical world. *The consumption of alcohol inhibits a person's perception of his environment.*