

How to Start a New Subject

Every student goes through many difficult phases in his academic life. Some of which are easy to tackle and solve while others need more struggle. Some can be solved with the help of others while some are unique to you and need more struggle, efforts and planning.

As a student I also went through many such situations which I would like to share with you all which may help you. I would also request you to share if you have some better solutions to these problems and which can help others.

Lets start with the common problem faced by almost all of us. **“How to Start a New Subject”**

When I got my CA Study material first time, I was happy and little tense also. First of all this was my first study material in English since I had done my entire studies upto 10+2 from Hindi Medium. I also knew I will not find a teacher in my small town to help me in these studies and I have struggle on my own. I was happy because it would be an adventure. Over the years I got more and more new subjects with no background and the techniques that I developed for myself at that stage have helped me till date.

Before you find solution for yourself to tackle problems, remember your strengths and admit your weaknesses. Your solutions need to be around those only. I have done that in all my solutions for myself.

I knew I am not a brilliant one who will read a new subject and get it all. I take my own time to grasp anything new. I am not the one who can mug-up anything without understanding, I lack that capability and I am happy about that. I cannot learn or remember anything unless I understand it. So here is what I used for myself. If you find it useful for yourself, use it. If you have a better solution, send it to me at Contact@GauravSangtani.com and we can share it with others.



1. First Meeting

Whenever you approach a new subject, remember it's like a stranger to you. Remember a fact, you can't understand it fully in your first visit. So don't expect it from yourself. If you expect yourself to know a stranger in first visit, chances are high that either you will get him wrong or get disappointed. Same with new subject, don't expect that you will understand it in first reading. If you expect either you will get it in bits and pieces and think this is it or you will get disappointed and feel frustrated. First meeting with a stranger and first reading of a subject is just for introduction. To get an overall overview, build a rapport which will help you in next meetings or readings to understand that stranger or subject better.

So your first reading of a new book or subject should be to get a basic understanding. Don't expect yourself to remember anything from book or subject, if you expect, your whole concentration will be on trying to remember things and miss the overall feel. You will get tense that why you are not remembering things, are you reading it correct. Nothing to get tense, it's just your first reading, you are not supposed to remember anything. Just read, give your full attention and just read. Even if you don't understand most of the things, it's ok, it's natural, just read first reading. You are just laying foundation for your next readings. I strongly believe it for myself, there are no tricks to remember things. Whatever is important, your mind has capability to remember it on its own. Trust that capability. To convince mind that it is important for you, you need to revise it again and again, but never mug-up. Give your mind its freedom to remember things. Don't torture it with some techniques.

So your first reading was about just reading without any expectation to learn, understand or remember. In the process of reading, you may learn few things but let it be natural, don't stop and read a line/para again if you are not understanding.

2. Separation and Relax

Once you have finished your first step of first reading, now you need to relax. Yes, I mean it. Relaxation is an important part of studies. So is with a relationship, give stranger and yourself time before you meet again. Let your heart work in that situation and here your mind. Always follow natural path, don't torture your mind or heart, be friend with it. Let it relax. Don't try to recall things you read in first reading, if these come naturally to mind, it's ok, don't force your mind. During this time, you may read other subjects, do other things. Give your mind break from this new subject just read.

How much should be time of this break? It depends on your schedule. We will talk more about importance of schedules later some day. For now, I can tell you that I will give at least 3-4 days of break depending on complexity of subject, but it will vary from person to person. At least give one full day's break.

3. Detailed Reading

Now after relaxation. the third step. It is 'Detailed Reading'. I do it with a note book. Start detailed reading, stop wherever you don't understand anything. Think, search and use other resources. Try to make notes of what you are understanding, also note down your doubts. I make bullet points, charts and small diagram to make concept understandable. Remember these notes will help you in revisions and also one day before exam, so make these in a way that you are able to refer these just before exams and these are comprehensive. Some day we will also discuss, how to make notes, it's an art.

Making notes, while doing detailed study, serves two purpose. First it will help you understand the concept better, while making notes you will come to know if you are missing some important part in concept, if diagram is not complete. Secondly, it serves as reference for quick revisions. It will take time but devote it, it's worth spending. You can't read full book one day before exam, these notes will help you. This detailed reading with making notes will take lot more time compared to your first reading. For me, it used to take at least four times more time compared first reading.

4. Small Nap/Short Break

Now that you have finished your second and detailed reading, you must have developed a better understanding of the subject. Now is the time to take another break. But remember, this time break should be smaller. During this time, discuss your doubts wherever or with whom you can clear these, but don't make it ever discussing story, just doubts and don't doubt everything. This time of break is small nap and not big sleep. During this time also, don't try to recall what you studied, just relax.

5. First Revision

Now next phase, first revision. Yes, this is your first revision, last reading was first effective reading. Now revise whole book with notes. Read both book and relevant notes side by side. This will also help you to make any correction needed in notes. Keep this reading also detailed one, but with notes. It should take less time compare to your last reading, for me it used to take half compared to detailed reading.

6. Revise Notes

Now, revise notes without book. It should take very less time. Make yourself familiar with notes that you are going to refer during exam time. Now that your memories of book are still fresh, you can think of any changes required in notes if these are not complete. I have not suggested any break between first revision and revision by notes.

All this will take time, but you need to plan for it. There are no shortcuts to success. Plan well, you can't do all this if you start studying one or two months before exam.

This was small post how I used to approach a new subject during my CA Studies. Hopefully it is useful for you. I will keep updating it with anything I have missed. If you have any suggestions or your own techniques, please share with me at Contact@GauravSangtani.com