UNIT 3 STUDY SKILLS

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have given you some useful information regarding study skills. After working through this unit, you should be able to:

• define the term ‘study skills’;
• state the significance of teaching/learning study skills;
• relate the teaching/learning of study skills to distance education;
• arrive at a conclusion that study skills are essential for distance learners and distance teachers; and
• employ all the study skills successfully in your own studies.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Studying has long been the primary means by which learning—irrespective of the levels of learning and modes of teaching—takes place outside the classroom. Through take home assignments, independent study on special projects and guided study under a supervisor, the learner organises materials, formulates ideas that may be evaluated by the teachers and works on exercises to gain specific skills.

Besides course materials, the learner very often relies upon a library to collect specialised information, as also upon new learning sources such as audio/video cassettes, filmstrips, etc. Whatever be the educational atmosphere, study habits, a motivation to learn and a positive general attitude are the key factors in determining the success or failure of a learner’s educational pursuits.

With the advent of new educational technology—systematic approach to writing course materials, programmed learning, television and computer-assisted instruction—studying has become less distinct from the instructional process itself and more intertwined with the presentation of subject matter. Yet, there have been and still are cases of dropouts. One’s failure in educational pursuits may be attributed to the fact that little systematic effort is made in teaching one the study skills required for success.
In this unit, we highlight the significance of and the need for teaching study skills. At many places we have referred to formal classroom situations. It should not, however, be construed that we restrict ourselves to teaching of study skills in the context of formal classroom. We have devoted an entire section (3.4) to discuss the relevances of teaching study skills in the context of distance education.

This unit is closely related to the previous one which focuses on reading skills. These two units together should give you a reasonable command over your studies.

### 3.2 DEFINING ‘STUDY SKILLS’: AN ATTEMPT

Depending upon different needs, different thinkers give different labels or definitions to the term ‘study skills’. The labels commonly associated with study skills are:

- a tool kit;
- the best ways of acquiring knowledge;
- a set of organisational skills;
- micro-skills or sub-skills; and
- systematic study habits and so on.

For some, study skills are ‘strategies’ to be developed by a learner to derive the greatest possible benefit from activities like listening, speaking, reading and writing. For others, study skills are ‘advanced skills’ which are not purely mechanical but essentially involve some amount of creative thinking. These skills require active mental exercise on the part of the learner.

The idea in presenting a brief sketch on how the term ‘study skills’ has been interpreted differently is not to deny the significance each definition deserves but to show you the difficulty in describing this concept.

Therefore, by collapsing all the labels or definitions which have hitherto been in existence, we use this term to mean all the essential skills that a learner requires in order to gain maximum benefits from his/her studies. To elaborate, study skills are the skills or strategies that a learner employs to study and come to grips with the study materials independently and efficiently. It is, however, difficult to categorically specify all the skills that a learner uses either to get across his/her message or to decode someone’s message.

The failure or success of the learner in his/her academic career is, thus, chiefly attributed to the poorly or well developed study habits respectively.

*Why is it difficult to define or list study skills?*

Obviously, each one of us approaches a problem in many different ways. Wide variations in methods and habits of studying typically practised by learners make it difficult to define and list study skills comprehensively.

Let us elaborate on this.
The time of day/night preferred, the time lapse between study sessions, the degree of noise or music tolerated or invited as background, the physical conditions in which one studies, the extent to which extra curricular activities interfere, and the particular study mechanics employed are only a few of the many such factors that vary in every conceivable way from individual to individual. Many study habits appear detrimental to efficient learning, whereas others would seem to be conducive to learning.

By implication, we mean that a definition of study skills is open. It would be futile, therefore, to attempt to define study skills conclusively and list the skills a learner uses to tackle a problem or an issue. Thinking and re-thinking over this issue will add more and more dimensions to the existing definitions.

Before we go any further with our discussion on study skills, we should better try to come to a consensus regarding what the term ‘study’ means.

Consider the following statements:

The term ‘study’ refers to

- following a course of lectures and taking notes;
- being acquainted with and being taught all that is necessary to know about a subject;
- cramming chunks out of, or the whole of subject matter;
- the diligent and systematic pursuit of understanding; and
- dedicating one’s thoughts and energies to learning.

Given an opportunity to define ‘study’ some of you would have chosen any one of these statements and some others a combination of them. A few of you would prefer to have a combination of all the statements. Still, there will be some who do not agree with any of these statements. What is our reaction to these statements? We are with those few of you who go in for a combination of these statements.

We shall elaborate on this.

Any one statement or a combination of a few statements will not explain ‘study’ sufficiently. Study involves you in setting up goals and choosing methods, solving problems, performing experiments, going through tests, collecting information, segregating facts from opinions or suggestions, comparing facts, weighing up opinions and considering suggestions and finally looking for proof and truth.

‘Study’, thus, demands you to analyse and criticise not only your own ideas but also those of other people—whether you hear them in lectures or discussions or read them in books. You will have to, further, make brief but sufficient notes and summaries to help yourself remember what you have read and to clarify your thinking. In fact you will have to apply all your critical powers to the quick and effective handling of information as you make your way towards definite goals. Having said this, we should also touch upon the importance of motivation. We agree that not all learners are really prepared to put in the amount of effort and practice needed to learn new habits, i.e., study habits. Some tend to believe that they can manage as
they are. Such learners are obviously not motivated to learn. Lack of motivation thus mars effective learning.

Having attempted to understand *study skills*, we shall now look into the significance of teaching *study skills*.

### 3.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING STUDY SKILLS

On many occasions you may have heard learners making the following statements. Or many times you yourself as a learner would have uttered them.

"I spent the whole day studying but could not fare well in my exams."

"I don’t even remember what I read, though I spent the whole night studying."

"I don’t know how to study."

"I always listen to music when I study."

Perhaps, you have heard or made many more statements of this kind.

The fact is that difficulties with studies are not uncommon. Many of us have felt this pinch only when we go for higher education.

Higher levels of education demand more ‘studying’ than we did at school. Accordingly our approach to ‘studying’ also changes. The help given to us at the school level is gradually withdrawn at every step we take towards higher education. That is, the learner is held responsible for his/her learning. Of course, the teacher or the tutor may help create a stimulating atmosphere in which learning can take place, but it is not the kind of teaching which we experience at school. At higher levels the learner should develop his/her own study habits/methods, set his/her target and be his/her own guide.

In order to enable the learners to do this they should be taught study skills at the school level itself.

Many learners do poorly in their studies because they have never learned how to study. Elementary school teachers usually do not spend or find time in helping children to acquire study skills. Moreover, they tend to believe that it is the job of the high school teachers. Ironically, many high school teachers do not spend time in this area because they assume that their learners have already acquired the skills they need. Consequent upon this, at no stage do the learners get any help to acquire study skills. It affects their studies when they go for higher education or take up courses through distance education. Learners should be helped to acquire good study strategies as early as possible, certainly before they develop either poor study habits or wrong concepts concerning studying. Teaching study skills would help the learners spend less time in studying and learn more. We have already mentioned that it is difficult to make an exhaustive inventory of skills to be taught. Nevertheless, we have here attempted to list a few essential skills that a learner should acquire to study independently and efficiently. We should admit that there is no simple formula that will apply
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to all learners. Yet educational psychologists have found that some procedures help all learners. Our discussion in the following sub-sections centres around the teaching of these procedures in the classroom. In section 3.4 we shall discuss the significance of study skills for a distance learner and how he/she may be helped to improve his/her study strategies.

3.3.1 Building good study habits

Planning and organisation are the two major factors that accelerate the progress of a learner's academic activities. He/she should therefore be taught to plan and organise his/her work—how much time he/she needs to devote to his/her studies; which subject(s) he/she will study and when; what he/she intends to achieve during each study session, and how to organise these activities in order to accomplish his/her goals.

Can a person relax and study at the same time?

Studying requires a certain amount of tension, concentration and effort in a specific direction. Of course, the amount of tension varies with different individuals. The point that we want to make here is that studying is essentially hard work, and learners who are not prepared to make the required and appropriate efforts are wasting their time. Keeping this in view, we have suggested three vital concerns in building good study habits. They may sound elementary, because they are the oft-repeated suggestions, yet they are vital. The three concerns are:

- when to study?
- where to study?
- how much time to spend on study?

We do not attach any less or more importance to any of these steps. Therefore, there is nothing sacrosanct about the order in which they are presented.

When to study?

Some learners study only just before the terminal examination or an announced test. Some may even study the whole night and cram answers. All of us, have probably done this at least once or twice. Rote-learning, however, does not bring about any real learning.

To be a good learner, one must plan one’s study time and spread it over a period of time. Of course, the ability to study and more so, the ability to plan our studies is not something we are born with. It is a set of skills that must be learned. Teaching the learners to plan their study is therefore a major responsibility of the teacher. Learners should be made to realise that regular planning would prevent confusion and help them to retain and organise what they are studying.

In a classroom situation, for example, the learner may be advised to study each subject as close as possible to the class period for that subject—before or after the class period. This chiefly depends on the form that class period usually takes. That is, if it is a straight-forward informational lecture, a study session right after the lecture will be useful to review notes and check
whether it has been understood. A study session just before a seminar/discussion gives learners a chance to read upon the background information that will help them make an effective contribution in the classroom. We should admit here that we have not touched upon the whole range of forms of class periods. We have presented just one example, you could yourselves think of others.

Where to study?

Ideally you should be able to study anywhere—in a quiet library or on a crowded bus or train. But let us be realistic. Most of us cannot entirely shut off our minds to distractions. By implication, the place of study should be as free as possible from such surroundings as might steal away the attention of the learner. As for the conditions for study, the place should be well-lit and properly ventilated and neither too hot nor too cold. We should also mention here that it can be difficult to get everything the learner wants; for example, if staying in a hostel or someone else’s house he/she cannot find everything of his/her own choice.

Let us see whether our physical postures have something to do with our study. The best position for study is to sit upright at a table or a desk. Bed, of course, may be attractive and enticing but once you lie down, the ensuing sleep is inevitable. Even an easy chair may prevent you from effective effort.

How much time to spend on study?

The third step is to determine the amount of time to spend in studying. It must be recognised that the amount of time the learners spend in studying will depend on the subject and how well they know it. It is, therefore, unrealistic to set a hard and fast rule about the amount of time learners should spend on a specific subject. It varies, yet ‘overlearning’ is generally helpful. It helps learners retain information over a long period of time. (‘Overlearning’ happens when individuals continue practising activities, exercises, etc. even after they think that they have learned them.) In this context, it should also be remembered that recreation and leisure activities are vital. They should also find their places in the timetable. Fortunately, the more a learner plans his/her work the more time he/she will get for repose.

Besides making learners aware of these three concerns, teachers need to help learners recognise that even though they acquire some good study habits, they may still have some difficulty in studying.

3.3.2 Knowing the text

The learners should be introduced to the various parts of their textbooks. Helping them know the parts of the textbooks can save their time and effort. Here are a few suggestions that you should take note of:

i) **Survey the textbook:** A quick glance through the text helps the learners to see how the author presents the information—whether he/she presents topic headings in bold print or in the margins, has introduced diagrams, charts, graphs, etc. or not.

ii) **Read the preface/introduction/foreword:** It contains the author’s explanation of the book—his/her purpose/plan in writing the book, and
his/her description of the organisation of the book. The preface also explains how the book is either different from others in the field or a further contribution to the field of knowledge.

iii) Read the contents: The list of contents will give the learners a comprehensive idea of what to expect from the book. This also helps the learners to locate the topic(s) they want to lead.

iv) Glance through the index: The index helps the learners identify whether or not what they need is included in the text. It really is a valuable aid because it helps learners find specific information that they need.

v) Check for a glossary: A glossary is helpful because it gives the learners the meanings of specialised words or phrases used in the book. (Before we go further we should mention here that not all books will necessarily have a glossary.)

**Interpretation of non-verbal items**

By non-verbal items, we mean maps, charts, tables, graphs, etc. It is not unusual to bring in non-verbal items in course materials. Many textbook writers employ these techniques to make their ideas clearer. If learners are given opportunities to work with various types of illustrative materials, they will certainly be in a better position to decipher what they are reading. But unfortunately, the learners tend to overlook the non-verbal items. What could be the reasons for this? Perhaps

- the teachers have not taken any time to stress the value of non-verbal items; and
- the learners do not know how to interpret them.

Whatever the reasons, the learners need to gain skills in interpreting illustrative materials. Maps, charts and graphs are the items the learners generally come across in the course materials.

**Maps**

There are many different types of maps, and each stresses a particular feature or a bit of information. Each one of these maps has a key that needs to be interpreted correctly to get the relevant information. For example, political maps use colour coding and definite boundary line types to indicate political divisions, administrative divisions, etc. Usually, maps present keys indicating what various colours represent.

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**Check Your Progress 1**

Suggest in about 10 lines at least two activities you would use to stimulate a learner's interest in map-reading.

**Notes:**

a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.
Graphs and charts

These are used to display data concisely. Most of us have at one time or the other prepared a chart to exhibit some information.

There are a number of different types of charts and graphs. The kinds of information that can be charted, moreover, are too numerous to state. It would be superfluous to list all the different types of charts, graphs and kinds of information. Our purpose is to give a general awareness of the use of charts and graphs.

We should mention here that a graph is more limited in what it can illustrate than a chart because the former is usually more structured and gives some specific information, while the latter is a broader display and it can display many different kinds of information at one and the same time.

There are mainly three kinds of graphs—bar graph, line graph and circle graph.

Bar graph: It is used to show comparisons between or among the qualities, quantities or measures of something, some persons, some places, etc.

Line/profile graph: It is helpful in showing whether there has been an increase or decrease in something over a period of time. This type of graph is useful in showing ‘trends’.

Circle graph: It is used to show how a total amount of something has been divided. We could also say that the entire graph is equal to 100% and each bit or segment is a fraction of the 100%. The total is represented by a circle and the components by appropriate segments of this circle.

Using reference sources

Because of the vast amount of knowledge that already exists and the information compounded each year as it grows very fast, it is unrealistic to say that a person knows everything. However, a person can learn about any particular field or area, if he/she knows where to look for the details. For example ‘Guinness Book of World Records’ will help one to find ‘world records’ in any field. There are reference books on language and usage, such a ‘Roget’s Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases’ which would help us in finding synonyms and less trite words to use in writing. There are reference
books available that can supply information about a famous writer, a player, an eminent scientist and so on. What is important is to know which reference source/book to go to for the required information.

Probably the most often used of all reference sources is the ‘dictionary’.

Let us therefore make a special mention of the use of the dictionary.

*Dictionary*

Teachers should help their learners recognise that the dictionary supplies a great amount of information, besides word meanings and pronunciation.

The items generally found in a dictionary can be grouped into two main headings:

i) information concerning words (spelling, definitions, tenses, etc.);

ii) other useful information (i.e., list of abbreviations, forms of address, etc.).

The learners should be taught what dictionary they may use, for which purpose as there are different kinds of dictionaries for different purposes. To enhance the learners’ awareness of the amount of information they can gain from the dictionary, the teachers may pose a number of questions related to the particular field he/she is teaching. We give you some samples:

i) *Is litter* a term in the metric system?

ii) *Is ‘haiku’* a garment or a Japanese verse form?

iii) *What system of money is used in Sweden?*

(You should note here that the difficulty level of the questions depends on the levels of learning.) Broadly speaking, we have so far talked about some of the crucial sub-skills (study strategies) pertaining to ‘reading’. In the following sub-section we shall talk about study skills directly related to ‘writing’.

### 3.3.3 Concept mapping

When learners study, they can make a chart like graphic representation of the material they are studying or have studied. This chart is the ‘concept map’ representing what they have studied. Preparing a good concept/semantic map requires that learners be good critical thinkers because they must make insightful judgements on what format, words and phrases best represent the information which they have gone through and what will help them to recall the information whenever they need it.

Here is a technique learners could use:

i) Choose and determine the amount of information for studying.

ii) Read through the whole material that has been chosen for studying.

iii) Locate the central idea/theme of what is being read.

iv) Re-read each paragraph. This will enable them to identify the main topic (of each paragraph).
Note down the central idea and the topics of the paragraphs studied in an easily accessible format. This is the concept map we are talking about.

There is no correct way to construct a concept/semantic map because what works for one learner will not necessarily work for another. The test as to whether or not the semantic map is correct comes when the learner uses it for study purposes and finds that it does help him/her to recall significant amount of information.

The correct way, therefore, is the one that works for the learner.

Related to this concept are outlining, note taking/marketing and summarising. We shall touch upon each of these, though briefly.

**Outlining**

Outlining helps learners organise long, written compositions, assignment responses, etc. An outline is useful also for study purposes because it serves as a guide for the logical arrangement of the material.

The learner should be, therefore, taught ‘outlining’. The teachers can give activities asking the learners to identify and write the main topic and sub-topics of a given paragraph. Yet another technique of teaching ‘outlining’ is to ask the learners to complete a partially completed outline of a chapter or a lesson.

**Note taking**

It is a study skill which helps the learners to learn better. The teacher should therefore convey important information about note taking to the learners and give them practice in taking notes. Notes usually consist of words and phrases that help one remember important points. They need not be complete sentences. However, unless an individual’s notes are clear and organised, he/she will have difficulty in using them for study purposes. Notes can be taken while listening to a lecture, reading a text, watching a video programme, participating in a discussion or even while thinking on a subject/issue.

**Summarising**

Summarising learning materials is a mode of learning that helps one to retain the most important concepts and facts in a unit/lesson/long passage. It forces learners to think about what they have read and to identify and organise the essential information.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Summarise the following paragraph:

Humans are either male or female. This seems obvious, but until recently in sociology, the existence of two sexes has been given scant attention. Sociologists have of course studied courtship, marriage, family, divorce, labour force participation and other social patterns where sexual differences are involved. Yet they have
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typically ignored the fact that virtually all facets of the human system are punctuated by sexuality, by the existence of two sexes. Social interaction patterns of social organisation, cultural symbols, socialisation practices and processes of deviance and social control involve components of sex. The sex and gender are thus a basic element of the human system. (Rubin, 1983)

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.
   b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

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Having talked about the study strategies which are generally being associated with the sub-skills of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’, we shall now look into yet another crucial skill which the learners need in order to get through examinations—the skill of test-taking. In the following sub-section which deals with this theme, we use ‘test’ and ‘examination’ interchangeably.

3.3.4 Test taking

There are no short-cuts to studying, and the best way to do well in a test is to be well-prepared. However, it is important to note that persons do better on tests, if they know test taking techniques and are familiar with the various types of tests. Teachers could acquaint learners with various kinds of tests by giving them sample questions and discussing with them how they would answer those questions.

We shall, however, briefly touch upon essay tests and objective tests as they are the most commonly used test types.

On an essay test, learners spend most of their time in thinking and writing, whereas, on an objective test, they spend most of their time in reading and thinking. Learners are free to express their ideas on an essay test than on an objective test. But the latter has a drawback—it may encourage guessing. The implication is that a test should be properly constructed.

Many tests are composed of both objective and subjective (essay) test items. On such tests the learner must plan his/her time wisely. The teachers normally suggest that the learners should:

- read through the whole test;
- notice how many points/marks each part of the test is worth;
- put down any special formulas, principles, ideas or other details they have memorised and may be relevant to essay questions; and
do the objective parts first (it may give the learners clues for the essay questions).

The suggestions given alone may be the often repeated ones. We admit, however, that they deserve to be mentioned repeatedly. Having, thus, touched upon some of the relevant study skills, we shall now talk about how they may be used in the context of distance education.

3.4 STUDY SKILLS AND DISTANCE TEACHING/LEARNING

In the previous section we talked about the significance of teaching study skills in general. In this section we shall highlight how essential study skills are for a system in which teachers and learners are at a distance for most of the teaching/learning process. We shall also touch upon the means used in distance education to improve the study skills of distance learners.

Study strategies play a vital role in distance education. The learner, being away from the teacher and the institution, depends mainly upon his/her course materials for his/her studies. If he/she has not developed proper study skills to tackle the text, he/she is certainly at a disadvantage. He/she has to await for the tutors' comments (see the unit on Tutor-Comments in Block 3, ES-313 for details) to clarify his/her doubts. But then he/she should be able to interpret the comments rightly. (A major part of the responsibility, thus, lies on the tutor, the way he/she writes the comments.) A distance learner for his/her study depends also on audio and video materials. Again how efficiently he/she deduces meaning out of them primarily depends on how well he/she has developed his/her study strategies. However, we should mention here that whether audio/video materials have any impact on the learner depend on how well the materials are prepared.

How do we, then, help the distance learners develop study strategies?

Distance learners are mostly adults. The assumption then is that they know how to study. But many, for one reason or the other, drop out of courses. Lack of effective study strategies is one of the major reasons for this problem.

The design of distance teaching materials, however, helps develop the study skills of the distance learners.

Appropriate questions

The use of questions that elicit higher level comprehension responses is regarded as one of the important study strategies. Appropriate questions are asked at crucial junctures, primarily for:

i) developing the skill of questioning the text, and

ii) registering the important points.

The types of in text questions which are usually incorporated in distance teaching materials are those which ask the learners:

i) to derive ways to solve a problem; and
ii) to find analogies between certain problems/views to analyse, synthesise and evaluate.

(In distance teaching materials, these questions are either dovetailed into the body of the text itself and/or asked in the form of self-check exercises and assignments. If a learner takes these questions seriously and works on them properly, his/her study skills improve considerably.)

**Non-verbal aids**

Illustrations, diagrams, charts, tables, etc. play a vital role in distance teaching materials. The reason behind this is that non-verbal aids are more effective than verbal representations, when it comes to registering information. However, non-verbal items are not looked upon as an alternative technique of presenting knowledge as they cannot present all types of knowledge or information, and therefore they are not a substitute for written/printed exposition. They are simply complementary or supplementary aids to the interpretation of verbal representations. The use of non-verbal aids helps learners develop the skill of information transfer and information storing.

**Conjunctive features and glossaries**

Distance teaching materials use conjunctive features such as, ‘however’, ‘moreover’, etc., to ensure easy reading and better comprehension. Besides helping to link sentences and paragraphs, these markers help the learners understand easily where the writer contrasts or supports a statement.

In distance teaching materials, ‘glossaries’ either precede the reading passage with the aim of preparing the learner beforehand for his/her encounter with possible problems in the passage, or appear as explanations to particular problems as the learner actually encounters them in the context. (The former are called ‘priming’ glossaries and the latter ‘prompting’ glossaries.) Glossaries may appear at the end of the text also; in such a case, they may be called ‘reference’ glossaries. We need not discuss which of these is more effective—their effectiveness primarily depends on the habits and attitudes of the learners.

**Advance organisers**

Distance teaching materials shun the idea of compartmentalisation of units or lessons. Each unit/lesson usually contains a brief introduction which, while summing up what the learners have already read in the previous unit, introduces the new items to the learners. This helps in establishing a bridge between the two units. Such bridges, in turn, help in building coherence more economically. Advance organisers, i.e. information given to learners prior to their reading of the unit, provide educational scaffolding for the retention of the material that follows.

**Sum-ups**

The use of ‘sum-ups’ is self-explanatory. They are introduced within a lesson when a move is made from a particular idea over to another. Thus the shift in theme is made explicit or highlighted. Sum-ups are also used at the end of each unit to help the learners integrate what they have already read.
Moreover, sum-ups help make the process of reference easier. The learners need not read the whole unit just to grasp the main ideas presented.

**Narrative style**

Distance education materials usually favour the narrative style. It makes the learners feel that they are constantly interacting with the author/teacher. Moreover, narratives are more easily read and better retained than expository texts.

The features discussed above help the distance learners develop many important study skills such as the following:

- determining word meanings from the context;
- finding main ideas;
- drawing inferences;
- drawing conclusions;
- making generalisations;
- recognising cause-and-effect relations;
- recognising analogies;
- categorising and concept mapping;
- distinguishing between facts and opinions;
- finding inconsistencies; and
- detecting propaganda and bias.

But then, incorporating helpful features in the distance teaching materials alone does not improve the study skills of the learners. It also demands serious and systematic efforts from them.

‘Print’ has been the chief medium of instruction in distance education in most countries. Accordingly, we dealt with ‘study skills’ pertaining to ‘print’ at great length. But considerable attention has been given to other media too. We should, therefore, touch upon some of the ‘study skills’ pertaining to these media. Here we use ‘media’ in a broader sense encompassing audio/video cassettes, telephone, radio, television, etc. and counselling.

The basic skills we talked about with reference to print are also applicable to media, for example, note taking, summarising etc. The learner should be able to take notes, summarise, deduce the meaning implied, etc. when he/she listens to or watches a programme—as he/she perhaps does while reading a text.

What do these media usually cover in terms of academic inputs? Some of the media, especially learning materials presented on audio/video cassettes, share many of the advantages inherent in a written text—skimming, reviewing (i.e., the learner can pause, rewind and stop whenever he/she wants to) control of pace, etc. Further, the use of media, on the whole, makes the learners feel the physical presence of a teacher.
What perhaps we would suggest that the learners should do is that they:

- pay close attention to what is said or shown;
- pick up the main line of argument from the programme;
- make a few key notes;
- recollect/reconstruct the programme in mind so that they can retrieve it whenever the need arises; and
- take notes on crucial items in order that they may be discussed with the peers or tutor(s) whenever such a provision is available.

(We should, however, accept that the socio-economic situation in India does not allow all the learners to own media-equipment, but open universities make it available at study centres usually.)

The distance learners should also gain maximum benefit from counselling. (That counselling is significant in distance education, etc. will be discussed in Block 2 of this Course. What we are interested here is in suggesting how distance learners can gain optimum benefit from counselling.)

Distance learners lack the assurance which regular contact with other learners and/or with the teaching staff would bring. They may have pre-conceptions/prejudices about what constitutes the relationship between a teacher and a learner, what the course should cover, how the tutor should teach and what learning is, etc. This implies that the learner needs more than a prospectus and course materials. This learner needs particular help at various stages in his/her distance learning career. The stages may be:

- the stage prior to enrolment;
- at the time of entry to the course/first tutorial;
- at the time of tackling the first assignment;
- while on the course for maintaining the momentum;
- at the time of the examination; and
- after the course is completed successfully.

The learners should be thus able to say 'where' and 'for what' they need academic-counselling. Unless they have clear answer to these questions, they may not benefit from academic-counselling as much as one would like them to.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we:

i) said that it is not easy to define study skills conclusively;

ii) attempted to explain the term 'study skills' appropriately;

iii) highlighted the significance of teaching study skills and said that what is discussed with reference to classroom situations is also relevant to the context of distance education;

iv) listed the important study skills—building good study habits, knowing the text, concept mapping and test taking; and
v) talked about the significance of study skills in distance education and about the responsibilities of the learners in developing their study skills.

**Check Your Progress: Possible Answers**

1

i) Teachers can ask learners to bring in a road map of the community area in which they live and challenge one another to find the shortest route for a certain destination.

ii) Another activity could be for teachers to bring in maps of foreign countries and challenge learners to find certain locations or the distance between two different locations.

iii) Teachers could ask learners to prepare their own maps of regions they are studying. Practice in constructing maps is probably one of the best ways to have learners gain an appreciation of their importance. It also helps learners understand maps better.

2

"Gender" is a basic element of all human systems. However, sociologists until recently have ignored this fact even in studying all the social patterns where sexual differences are involved.