

## Four Concepts Your Students Need to Know about Homework Assignments

✓ Present learning sets the stage for future learning, so learn today's lesson for understanding.

✓ Understanding what you see in class is not the same as understanding how to work problems on your own.

✓ Practice is essential for internalizing processes, understanding, fluency, and mastery.

✓ Fluency and understanding helps you perform well on tests and to finish on time.

### Way to Succeed Can Help!

We designed Way to Succeed to accompany first-year math and other STEM classes. Our goal is to help your students become aware of and develop academic skills and strategies in a personal way while freeing you to focus on your math or other STEM content. The online program works outside of class, providing personal learning profiles and actions for improvement, short, thought-provoking readings, videos, and short quizzes that highlight the skills, attitudes, cognitions, and learning strategies in which successful students engage so they can quickly make changes to become better learners.



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Part 1 of a three-part series on the benefits of independent assignments for students

## The Principles of Homework: Benefits for the Experienced Learner

Elementary and secondary schools are rethinking the idea of homework with an eye on reducing or eliminating it altogether. However, colleges and universities are continuing to assign tasks, readings, and other homework assignments as part of improving the learning experiences of students, and with good reason. Not only is independent study in college an established way for students to learn more effectively at the post-secondary level, homework provides many additional benefits besides the more tangible course credit the student receives for completing assignments.

Ideally, when assigned and completed appropriately, independent homework has the potential to

1. Increase academic achievement
2. Increase self-regulation of learning, including strategy use, metacognition, motivation, and persistence
3. Improve self-efficacy, a belief in one's ability to complete an assignment, positively associated with time and effort
4. Encourage the development of time management skills

5. Develop a more internal locus of control
6. Develop control over environmental distractions
7. Encourage development of an ability to delay gratification

The benefits listed not only establish knowledge of course content for the students, but move them toward attaining the characteristics of an ideal skilled and mature learner. Unfortunately, many of today's college-level students are not aware of these benefits, and have not experienced the positives of homework assignments while in high school. Support for homework at the high school level is declining, or at least the emphasis for assignments have changed. "Homework" is now worked on in class under the control of the teacher, and is often completed in groups instead of independently. Many districts have adopted no-fail and minimum grade policies that prohibit teachers from failing non-performers. The "bad rap" of assigning homework has resulted in a decline of assignments and reduced expectations for learning. Students graduate from high school and enroll in post-secondary schools woefully underprepared for the expectations of the independent learning required at the college level.

**In Part 2 in this series**, we will examine the damaging and unhelpful homework behaviors adopted by novice learners, and look at the reasons why students engage in these behaviors that have a negative effect on learning and achievement.



Way to Succeed  
Mindful Insights for Learning

## Advice for making your classroom more “Introvert-Friendly”

According to Susan Cain, author of *Quiet*, several ideas can be introduced easily into most classrooms to encourage introverted students. Estimates are that one-third to one-half of us are introverts. Therefore, you may have more introverted students in your classes than you think. Most of these ideas have benefits for non-introverted people as well.

- Learn to celebrate the way more introspective students learn as a difference, not as something to be “fixed.”
- Keep your small group work small—two to three in a group. Introverts feel more comfortable expressing ideas to one or two peers than to large groups.
- Define group roles well. Shy students benefit from performing a specific task or role in well-managed groups. Some ideas for this include a note-taking role, or keeping a discussion on track.
- Teach all students to work independently. In many fields, independent work is essential to mastery.

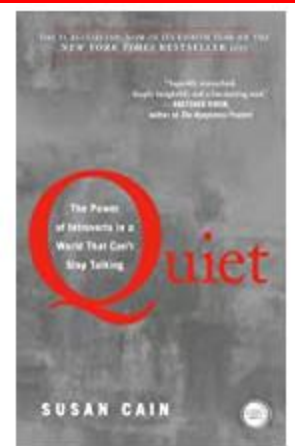
# Book Review: *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

First published in 2012, *Quiet* describes the often-overlooked positives of being an introvert. Those who are introverts are often overlooked or dominated by a society and educational system that values and rewards extrovert behaviors. To be sure, extrovert behaviors, such as risk taking, social, and expressive personalities can be advantageous to certain careers and social situations. Current educational trends favor the students who display extrovert tendencies such as answering questions, taking leadership positions in group work, and volunteering to present findings to the class.

In fact, at all levels of the educational spectrum, many instructors design classrooms around endorsing extrovert tendencies, inspiring students to become more vocal, social, and activity oriented. Group projects and problem-based learning activities, popular at every level of the educational spectrum, encourage students to sit together and work together, and ask our students to discuss ideas and explain their reasoning to others. Research has shown that many of these activities are beneficial to learning.

However, according to Cain, the relatively quiet and solitary behaviors of the introvert are not always recognized, valued, or encouraged by classroom instructors. Cain describes the learning characteristics of introverts as highly valuable in both the classroom and the workplace, and society may be disregarding these beneficial qualities. As Cain defines introversion, the reader can realize the benefits these behaviors bring to learning, especially at the college level.

- Introverts listen more than talk
- They believe they express themselves better when writing than talking
- Whereas extroverts can be impulsive, introverts work more purposefully and deliberately
- Introverts pay attention to thought and meaning instead of actions
- They prefer alone time when learning instead of the stimulation of groups or crowds



Imagine if our extroverted students engaged in these behaviors together with their more natural tendencies.

Cain documents the efficacy of the way introverted people get things done. Social interactions are fine but not when they break concentration on work. Interruptions and distractions disrupt thoughts and account for one of the greatest time-wasters in the workplace and on a college campus. Work done alone in the introvert style is focused and efficient. Our students can benefit from learning about and practicing learning in the introvert's style.

This is not to say that all students should become loners or hermits, but educators should be encouraging a balance of the best of both worlds of the extrovert and of the introvert when teaching our students to be great learners. While current pedagogy has shifted towards promoting the adoption of extrovert tendencies, perhaps educators should also include promoting the positive characteristics of the introvert learner.

# Knowledge vs. Skill

## Are STEM classes different?

Knowledge, skill, or experience: Which contributes most to competency especially in math and other problem-based STEM subjects?

Knowing what contributes most to quality learning should drive our instructional experiences for students. Using Merriam-Webster's definitions that most relate to classroom learning, we can begin to piece together a logical understanding of the similarities, differences, and relationships between these ideas.

**Knowledge:** the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association.

**Skill:** the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance

**Experience:** the fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation (Note: observation and participation can occur in the traditional classroom, the problem-based classroom, or through independent study)

**Expertise:** the skill of an expert (Note: an expert has knowledge and skill)

**Expert:** one with the special skill or knowledge representing mastery of a particular subject

**Mastery:** possession or display of great skill or technique

The ideal learning in a Math or other STEM classroom therefore, appears to be founded on knowledge. Without knowledge, skills are empty and mechanical with no understanding or mastery of concepts. Without knowledge, Math and other STEM students find problem-solving, real-world applications of ideas, and making meaningful connections difficult because skills alone are isolated memorized exercises without meaning or associations.

Knowledge and skills can be developed through observation and participation, which can occur in the traditional classroom, the problem-based classroom, or through independent study. To move students towards mastery, faculty must provide instruction and experiences, including sufficient skills practice and thought-provoking problem-solving to encourage deep and meaningful building of both a knowledge base and fluent skill.



**Knowledge: The condition of knowing something**

**Skill: The ability to use one's knowledge**

**Mastery: Great skill or technique**

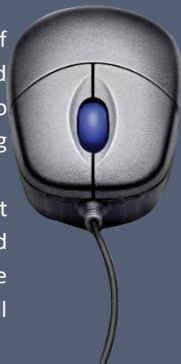
## This Month's Q&A About Way to Succeed

**Q: Do students take the same assessment three times?**

**A: No.** The Way to Succeed learning assessment have been recently redesigned to better personalize the learning diagnostic for each student in your course.

The first assessment asks a standard set of questions to assess learning practices and attitudes. We make recommendations to students based on their individual learning profiles.

The second and third assessments are different in that the questions reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the student discovered in the previous assessment results. The student will experience more questions about weak areas,



giving a deeper assessment of areas of difficulty. In the same assessment, questions of areas of strength are reduced. The scores and reports are therefore focused on improving deficiencies, while not overcorrecting strengths. The resulting recommendations help students become more aware of good learning practices.

Each of the three assessments can result in 1,620 different personalized learning reports for students based on their three strengths and three weaknesses. Our goal is to provide the best and most personalized assessment instrument available to help your students maximize their learning potential.

## WATCH

### Current Industry Trends:

A [study](#) by Microsoft compared the attention spans of people in the year 2000 and the year 2015. Shockingly, the attention span in 2015 had decreased from 12 seconds to 8 seconds, a four-second decrease. What is more alarming is that a goldfish has the attention span of 9 seconds!



Researchers blame the internet and resulting accessibility to personal entertainment and instant information. Smart phones, fast-paced and responsive, have changed the way people interact with other people and with the world around them. Some see this trend as positive, citing an ability to multi-task and find answers to questions through the "collective intelligence" of the world.

However, today's students seem to be "wired" differently. They favor social media relationships over face-to-face communications often lack the social and coping skills when faced with life's stressors

Bland, H. W., Melton, B. F., Welle, P., & Bigham, L. (2012). Stress tolerance: New challenges for millennial college students. *College Student Journal*, 46(2), 362-375.

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Where is all the knowledge we lost with information?"

T.S. Elliot



## Visit our Website

We offer a unique research-supported approach to helping students become more independent and successful in your classes.

Visit [Way To Succeed](#) for more information about our product, pricing calculator, and how to order.

## Be ready for Fall Semester 2021 classes!

First-year, at-risk, and probationary students typically need more support than most other returning students, especially when these students enroll in online classes. [Way to Succeed](#) can help you to assist these students with a personalized, stand-alone success program that works well with mathematics and other STEM courses. [Way to Succeed](#) helps them develop their own self-regulating and metacognitive skills so they can become more independent and effective learners.

- No grading required
- Personalized for each student
- Accompanying eBook for better student accountability
- Focused on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition, and accessing on-campus resources
- Research-based process
- Low, department/per-student costs
- Compatible with any STEM text or curriculum, online or face-to-face
- Easy-to-access instructor report

## Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. The Principles of Homework, Part 2
2. Organizing your Space
3. Encouraging Intentionality of Learning

....and more!

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