

Applying Analytical Talents in Academics

These insights and action ideas can help you apply Analytical talents to achieve in various aspects of your academic life.

General Academic Life

- Examine data, collect facts, and read material for discussions. Anticipate problems. Ask questions to discover others' perspectives on issues. Clarify your own position.
- Reduce situations, problems, opportunities, projects, assignments, and debates to their key components. Stay two to three steps ahead of everyone else's thinking by pinpointing cause-and-effect relationships.
- Deduce the consequences of someone's decisions, inaction, and pronouncements. Use logic to trace the effects of scientific breakthroughs, ethical lapses, and legal judgments.
- Prove to your classmates that there is an equal and opposite reaction to every action.
- Read assignments before class. Find information to support or discount the position taken by the author of the textbook.
- Reinforce your understanding of the subject matter by reorganizing and expanding your classroom notes. Insert sub-topics and sub-points.

Study Techniques

- Notice the subtle nuances of a subject. Question the authors' conclusions. Flag topics for scrutiny. Refuse to accept blindly whatever appears on the printed page.
- Assess why you do quite well in one course but not as well in others. Evaluate your study habits, note taking, listening, capacity for asking questions, and reading comprehension.
- Draw "mind maps" to illustrate the placement of each element of a theory or aspect of a concept as well as a story plot. Investigate until you logically link facts or numerical data with results.
- Record questions as you read. Ask: "What is missing here?" "What questions should the author have answered?" "What biases are evident and not so evident?"
- Make sense of discussions. Write what you heard and said. Identify comments, conclusions, and arguments that lack supporting facts or data.

Relationships

- Break down situations. How is the same set of facts likely to be interpreted by someone older than you? Younger than you? From a different cultural, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, or racial background?
- Identify your biases before taking sides on an issue. Evaluate your own thinking before challenging others' biases.
- Incorporate into your study group individuals who thoughtfully assess the value of information, details, research findings, evidence, people's comments, and events.

- Refrain from saying what is on your mind until you have figured out everything. Realize that this reduces the tension between yourself and others.

Class Selection

- Select professors with reputations for presenting lessons in a logical, sequential manner. Avoid instructors who present a confusing jumble of unrelated ideas, facts, theories, illustrations, or philosophies.
- Select courses that will use your talent for critical thinking. Be open to the sciences and mathematics as well as literature, history, and the arts.
- Consider the soundness, validity, and reliability of information presented in your textbooks and by your professors.
- Dismiss erroneous statements, flawed theories, and illogical conclusions, as well as prejudiced opinions. Risk being the solitary voice of reason.

Extracurricular Activities

- Gravitate to organizations known for their commitment to the use of logic and reason.
- Volunteer to serve on campus committees charged with proposing recommendations to key decision-making bodies such as the student senate, the school board, and the state legislature.
- Join the debate team. Delve deeply into the chosen topic. Fully research both sides of the issue. Prepare logical arguments from both perspectives. Continue to build both cases to clearly define strong positions.
- Accompany an athletic coach to scouting and practice sessions for a week. Identify three to five ways you can combine your love for a particular sport with your analytical abilities. Consider plays the team could run, or the types of physical talents required for the various positions.