



Help for Trainees

Getting the most from your distance learning

The textbook and study guides are used to teach the theory related to your practical work.

How do I use my distance learning materials ?

(workbooks, study guides, textbooks, Building Codes, Standards etc)

Read the guide and the textbook and other recommended readings. Each guide has instructions telling you which parts of the textbook should be read along with the guide. Do the Practice Exercises in the guide as they come up.

What do I have to do?

Just reading theory does not mean you will learn and understand it. Highlighting and taking notes as you read helps you understand and remember what you are reading *and* apply the theory to your practical work.

Doing the practice exercises and reading the Study Guides helps you **prepare for the theory assessments and tests that you will do on the block courses.**

The theory assessments are open book (you are allowed to use your books in the room with you) so your own notes and references to textbooks and compliance documents will greatly assist you in answering the assessment questions.

The theory assessment questions will **not** be the same as the practice exercises, that's why you need to study and build up your knowledge of the subject.

Become a better reader – some reading strategies

Here are some strategies that good readers use. Try them out. You might not use all of them every time you read, but you'll find them useful when the reading gets difficult or complex.

Before you read:

Prepare yourself to read your learning guides and textbook by thinking about your own knowledge of the topic before you read.

Skim read the whole textbook chapter and learning guide before you read it in detail. This gives you an idea of what it's all about.

Skim read means just read the contents page, section headings, look at the pictures. Can you link this to any practical experience you have on the topic? This will help you learn more from the reading.

Set a purpose for your reading. For example "I am reading this section to find out about gas appliance regulators."

While you are reading:

Be an active reader. Ask yourself questions to check your understanding as you read.

Take notes in the textbook or learning guide margin or in a notebook. You can use these for review later on. Instead of having to read the whole book again, just read your notes.

Highlight important words.

Record new technical words in a notebook and find out what they mean.

Complete any activities in the learning guide.

After you have read:

Review your notes. What was new learning for you? Summarise the main points in your own words.

Talk to your employer and workmates about your study. Try explaining difficult concepts to them. (This means you really have understood it.)

Think about what will be in the assessment. Are you prepared?

How do I decide what's important when I'm reading?

Sometimes it can be hard to decide what's important on each page. Isn't everything important?

Yes, but try to look for just a few key words that will *remind* you what the page is all about.

Read a section through once before you start highlighting (otherwise you might find you highlight everything on the first reading).

Read the page heading or section heading and ask yourself: "What will I need to *remember* about this?"

What to do when reading gets difficult

If you have trouble understanding the textbook or learning guide:

- Re-read the guide or textbook section, but ask yourself some questions before you re-read. For example: What does...mean? How does...work? Then read to find the answer to your question.
- Read the guide or textbook section slowly aloud to yourself, or to someone else, or get them to read it to you, and try talking about how you understand it. Often just talking about it, even with yourself, helps sort out your thoughts and understanding.
- Ask your employer if you can get some practical experience on the topic. It's hard to learn theory if you can't relate it to practical experience.
- Ask your tutor.

If you have trouble understanding or pronouncing a word:

- Try sounding it out.
- Look at the word and see if you can recognise part of it (big words are made up of smaller words)
For example insulate has the words in and late inside it. It is the root word of insulating, insulated, insulation.
- Skip it and read to the end of the sentence. Think about the meaning of the sentence. Then go back, sound it out and see if you can put in a word that makes sense.
- Ask someone how to say it.
- Check the glossary. This is like a dictionary giving the meaning of the technical words in the textbook and learning guides. The words in the glossary will be words you will see and hear a lot in your work. Reading the definition often helps you recognise the word.

A strategy for reading theory questions

It can be easy to misread or misunderstand assessment questions. It's better to spend more time reading the question and checking your understanding, than having to resubmit your work.

Try this:

Take time to read each question. A good rule is to read it at least 3 times before you start to answer.

1. Read it once slowly. Ask yourself: What is the question about? (What are you being tested on?)
2. Read it a second time and do two things – **first highlight** the subject (one or two words that the question is about), **then underline** or circle the instruction word/s.
3. Read it again to check you absolutely understand it.

For example: List four **checks** that must be carried out before **re-roofing** work can begin.

- **What's the question about?** Re-roofing checks
- What do you have to do? List four

Become a better writer - answering theory questions

Take the time to write a full answer the first time, and avoid having to resubmit your work.

Try this:

Check the mark allocation if there is one, or the number of lines provided. This indicates the length of the expected answer.

Go back to your study notes, textbook and highlighted key words. Have you identified the key terms for the topic? You should be using these in your answer.

Write a complete answer. You don't always have to write a complete sentence, but usually you should at least be writing phrases that make sense and give more information than one word.

Remember the marker can't read your mind. All they have to assess your knowledge is your written answer. Write enough to show you know what you're talking about!

For example:

What should you do if you see **exposed wiring** in an **extension lead**? (1 mark)

Answer: Don't use it. *This is an acceptable answer, and it's correct, but compare it to the answer below.*

Answer: Don't use it and send it to an electrician for repairs, or replace it.

This really shows you know the topic and can provide a full answer to the marker.

The first answer would get ½ mark, the second answer would get the full 1 mark.

Common instruction words in theory questions

Here are some instruction words that are often used in theory assessments.

Hint: you might want to print this list and keep it handy when you study.

Define – give a precise statement of the meaning of a term

Describe – specify the features or characteristics of an object or process; (eg describe a process for testing and commissioning a gas appliance).

Explain – state what happens, and say how and/or why (eg. explain how a particular type of valve works). Note: This involves more than describe.

Give examples of – provide specific cases.

List – if you are asked to ‘list’ something, you only need to give names (you don’t need to give descriptions or explanations).

Name – give actual name(s) but no other details (eg name the legislation containing particular requirements).

Outline – give general ideas only without detail (eg outline how a pump operates).

State – say something without any detail (eg state three requirements that must be met when installing a particular system)

Suggest – propose; give a reasonable guess based on what you know and provide sensible possibilities; the specific interpretation will depend on what follows (eg suggest reasons for the failure of a device).

Some commonly misunderstood words:

Principle = underpinning theory or general law in science

The **purpose** of a piece of equipment is its reason for being, e.g. the main purpose of a ventilation ducting system is to mechanically ventilate a room or house to reduce indoor moisture, odours and pollutants.

The **function** of that piece of equipment is what it does to achieve the **purpose**, e.g. the function of a ventilation ducting system is to draw air from the outside and remove stale internal air. By doing this function the ducting system achieves its purpose which is to mechanically ventilate...