



## APPLYING THE CREAM STRATEGY IN ENGLISH STUDY SKILLS

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the effectiveness of the CREAM strategy in study skills, created by Stella Cottrell. The strategy consists of five components — Creative, Reflective, Effective, Active, and Motivated. These elements help students improve their independent learning, enhance their study skills, and organize a more impactful learning process. The study also examines the difficulties students face when applying the strategy directly, the teacher's guidance during these stages, and the benefits of group work. The results show that the CREAM strategy strengthens language learners' skills such as creativity, reflection, active participation, time management, and motivation, thereby increasing their overall learning effectiveness.

**Key words:** CREAM Strategy; Study Skills; EFL Learners; Language Acquisition; Motivation; Active Learning; Reflective Practice, study techniques.

**Introduction:** As modern educators, we constantly seek new techniques that offer the benefits mentioned above. This research focuses on using the CREAM strategy in language teaching. English language learners frequently look for ways to manage their language acquisition more effectively. In her book Study Skills, Stella Cottrell introduces the CREAM strategy and emphasizes its advantages for students. Although the handbook is primarily written for undergraduates aiming for academic success, many of its insights can also be beneficial for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students.

CREAM stands for: C - Creative R - Reflective E - Effective A - Active M - Motivated C - Creativity is especially important for creating ideas in the early stages



of new assignments. This is particularly true about learning English: we have to constantly imply imagination while speaking, constructing sentences, writing essays thinking up situations, etc. Creativity stimulates different areas of the mind and makes learning fresh and effective. The author encourages to foster creativity by doing some exercises:

- Finding connections between two random objects, for example, a cup and a plant.
- Combining the front half of one animal and the rear of another to create another one.

R -Reflection is an effective habit for learners. Apart from formal assessment, they need to reflect on how they learn (progress, motivation, gaps in knowledge). Learning journals, progress sheets, and self-evaluation questionnaires are good tools for reflection.

Example of self-evaluation questions from ‘Study Skills’:

1. Generally, how well am I living in this house?
2. In this unit, I am best at \_\_\_\_\_. What makes me better at these aspects?

E - Effectiveness doesn’t necessarily mean working hard. Students can spend too many hours working instead of applying smart strategies. Stella Cottrell suggests that:

- The organization of the workplace is essential for being in the right state of mind for study. This is true about working online. Storing information in the right way can save time in the long term.

A -Active learning techniques make success. The author opposes “active learning” to “passive methods”:

- Being more involved in the educational process instead of waiting for directions and information.
- Looking for links between different things contrary to treating pieces of information as separate units.



- Understanding and relating new information to what is already known. In other words, long-term memory versus surface processing.

- Taking charge of training and development treating it like a project rather than expecting others to instruct what needs to be done.

**M** -Motivation is one of the key points which has the biggest influence on the success of learning a language. According to Sarah Cottrell factors like the clarity of purpose, confidence in the outcome as well as managing ‘boring bits’ affect our desire to learn. Students with weak motivation usually lose direction, are bored because of poor study techniques, experience a crisis of confidence, and are not challenged or challenged too much. Motivation is built by self-drive to achieve success. The condition to communicate the maximum points in each answer encouraged students to prioritize the questions they had to master to achieve the desired scores.

In applying the CREAM strategy, students must understand what they want to achieve, what steps need to be taken, and how big the chances of success are. This will build students’ motivation, internally and externally.

Students were not able to apply the CREAM strategy directly. For the CREAM strategy to be applied outside of class hours, students joined study groups according to their learning styles. To be able to apply the Reflective strategy, students are assisted by guiding questions. To be able to learn effectively, students must be guided intensively in determining priorities, by providing views of the causes and consequences of the priorities set. Students learn actively because they are involved in groups with similar learning styles. To be able to motivate themselves, for example in exam preparation, students must know what material they have to master and organize each part of each material.

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