Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Overview

Pintrich, P. R., Garcia, T., McKeachie, W. J., & Smith, D. A. (1991). *Motivated strategies for learning questionnaire*. Regents of the University of Michigan.

This document summarises the subscales contained within the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire and comes from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED338122.pdf>

## Intrinsic goal orientation

Goal orientation refers to the student’s perception of the reasons why they are engaging in a learning task. On the MSLQ, goal orientation refers to students’ general goals or orientation to the course as a whole. Intrinsic goal orientation concerns the degree to which the student perceives themselves to be participating in a task for reasons such a challenge, curiosity, mastery. Having an intrinsic goal orientation towards an academic task indicates that the student’s participation in the task is an end all to itself, rather than participation being a means to an end.

## Extrinsic goal orientation

Extrinsic goal orientation complements intrinsic goal orientation and concerns the degree to which the student perceives themselves to be participating in a task for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others, and competition. When one is high in extrinsic goal orientation, engaging in a learning task is the means to an end. The main concern the student has is related to issues that are not directly related to participating in the task itself (such as grades, rewards, comparing one’s performance to that of others). Again, this refers to the general orientation to the course as a whole.

## Task value

Task value differs from goal orientation in that task value refers to the student’s evaluation of the how interesting, how important and how useful the task is (“What do I think of this task?”). Goal orientation refers to the reasons why the student is participating in the task (“Why am I doing this?”). High task value should lead to more involvement in one’s learning. On the MSLQ, task value refers to student’s perceptions of the course material in terms of interest, importance, and utility.

## Control of learning beliefs

Control of learning refers to students’ beliefs that their efforts to learn will result in positive outcomes. It concerns the belief that outcomes are contingent on one’s own effort, in contrast to external factors such as the teacher. If students believe that their efforts to study make a difference in their learning, they should be more likely to study more strategically and effectively. That is, if the student feels that they can control their academic performance, they are more likely to put forth what is needed strategically to effect the desired changes.

## Self-efficacy for learning and performance

The items comprising this scale assess two aspects of expectancy: expectancy for success and self-efficacy. Expectancy for success refers to performance expectations and relates specifically to task performance. Self-efficacy is a self-appraisal of one’s ability to master a task. Self-efficacy includes judgements about one’s ability to accomplish a task as well as one’s confidence in one’s skills to perform that task.

## Test anxiety

Test anxiety has been found to be negatively related to expectancies as well as academic performance. Test anxiety is though to have two components: a worry, or cognitive component, and an emotionality component. The worry component refers to students’ negative thoughts that disrupt performance whilst the emotionality component refers to affective and physiological aspects of anxiety. Cognitive concern and pre-occupation with performance have been found to be the greatest sources of performance decrement. Training in the use of effective learning strategies and test-taking skills should help reduce the degree of anxiety.

## Rehearsal

Basic rehearsal strategies involve reciting or naming items from a list to be learned. These strategies are best used for simple tasks and activation of information in working memory rather than acquisition of new information in long-term memory. These strategies are assumed to influence the attention and encoding processes but they do not appear to helps students construct internal connections among the information or integrate the information with prior knowledge.

## Elaboration

Elaboration strategies help students store information into long-term memory by building internal connections between items to be learned. Elaboration strategies include paraphrasing, summarising, creating analogies, and generative note-taking. These help the learner integrate and connect new information with prior knowledge.

## Organisation

Organisation strategies help the learner select appropriate information and also construct connection among the information to be learned. Example of organising strategies are clustering, outlining, and selecting the main idea in reading passages. Organising is an active, effortful endeavour, and results in the learner being closely involved in the task. This should result in better performance.

## Critical thinking

Critical thinking refers to the degree to which students repot applying previous knowledge to new situations in order to solve problems, reach decision, or make critical evaluations with respect to standards of excellent.

## Meta-cognitive self-regulation

Metacognition refers to the awareness, knowledge, and control of cognition. We have focused on the control and self-regulation aspects of metacognition on the MSLQ, not the knowledge aspect. There are three general processes that make up metacognitive self-regulatory activities: planning, monitoring, and regulating. Planning activities such as goal setting and task analysis help to activate, or prime, relevant aspects of prior knowledge that make organising and comprehending the material easier. Monitoring activities include tracking of one’s attention as one reads, and self-testing and questioning: these assist the learner in understanding the material and integrating it with prior knowledge. Regulating refers to the fine-tuning and continuous adjustment of one’s cognitive activities. Regulating activities are assumed to improve performance by assisting learners in checking and correcting their behaviour as they proceed on a task.

## Time and study environment

Besides self-regulation of cognition, students must be able to manage and regulate their time, and their study environments. Time management involves scheduling, planning, and managing one’s study time. This includes not only setting aside blocks of time to study, but the effective use of that study time, and setting realistic goals. Time management varies in level from an evening of studying to weekly and monthly scheduling. Study environment management refers to the setting where the student does their class work. Ideally, the learner’s study environment should be organised, quiet, and relatively free of visual and auditory distractions.

## Effort regulation

Self-regulation also includes students’ ability to control their effort and attention in the fact of distractions and uninteresting tasks. Effort management is self-management, and reflects a commitment to completing one’s study goals, even when there are difficulties or distractions. Effort management is important to academic success because it not only signifies goal commitment, but also regulates the continued use of learning strategies.

## Peer learning

Collaborating with one’s peers has been found to have positive effects on achievement. Dialogue with peers can help a learner clarify course material and reach insights one may not have attained on one’s own.

## Help-seeking

Another aspect of the environment that the student must learn to manage is the support of others. This includes both peers and instructors. Good students know when they don’t know something and are able to identify someone to provide them with some assistance. There is a large body of research that indicates that peer-help, peer-tutoring, and individual teacher assistance facilitate student achievement.

# MSLQ Items

Below are all the items in the MSLQ, organised into their respective sub-scales. The participant’s score on each sub-scale is calculated by taking their mean score for all items in that sub-scale. The item\_name is the name that each question will be called in the data set.

***If you’re reading this in Week 1, don’t worry about this table just yet – it will help you when you come to do the data processing and analysis, but for now, just focus on the descriptions above.***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item No.** | **Question** | **Reversed** | **Sub-scale** | **Item Name** |
| 3 | When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students. |  | anxiety | anxiety\_1 |
| 8 | When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer. |  | anxiety | anxiety\_2 |
| 14 | When I take tests, I think of the consequences of failing. |  | anxiety | anxiety\_3 |
| 19 | I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam. |  | anxiety | anxiety\_4 |
| 28 | I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam. |  | anxiety | anxiety\_5 |
| 2 | If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course. |  | control | control\_1 |
| 9 | It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course. |  | control | control\_2 |
| 18 | If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material. |  | control | control\_3 |
| 25 | If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough. |  | control | control\_4 |
| 38 | I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in this course to decide if I find them convincing. |  | critical | critical\_1 |
| 47 | When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in class or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence. |  | critical | critical\_2 |
| 51 | I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it. |  | critical | critical\_3 |
| 66 | I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course. |  | critical | critical\_4 |
| 71 | Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives. |  | critical | critical\_5 |
| 37 | I often feel so lazy or bored when I study for this class that I quit before I finish what I planned to do. | R | effort | effort\_1 |
| 48 | I work hard to do well in this class even if I don’t like what we are doing. |  | effort | effort\_2 |
| 60 | When course work is difficult, I either give up or only study the easy parts. | R | effort | effort\_3 |
| 74 | Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish. |  | effort | effort\_4 |
| 53 | When I study for this class, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_1 |
| 62 | I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_2 |
| 64 | When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_3 |
| 67 | When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_4 |
| 69 | I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_5 |
| 81 | I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion. |  | elaboration | elaboration\_6 |
| 35 | I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work |  | environment | enviroment\_1 |
| 43 | I make good use of my study time for this course. |  | environment | enviroment\_2 |
| 52 | I find it hard to stick to a study schedule. | R | environment | enviroment\_3 |
| 65 | I have a regular place set aside for studying. |  | environment | enviroment\_4 |
| 70 | I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course. |  | environment | enviroment\_5 |
| 73 | I attend this class regularly. |  | environment | enviroment\_6 |
| 77 | I often find that I don’t spend very much time on this course because of other activities. | R | environment | enviroment\_7 |
| 80 | I rarely find time to review my notes or readings before an exam. | R | environment | enviroment\_8 |
| 7 | Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now. |  | extrinsic | extrinsic\_1 |
| 11 | The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade. |  | extrinsic | extrinsic\_2 |
| 13 | If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students. |  | extrinsic | extrinsic\_3 |
| 30 | I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others. |  | extrinsic | extrinsic\_4 |
| 40 | Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone. | R | help | help\_1 |
| 58 | I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don’t understand well. |  | help | help\_2 |
| 68 | When I can’t understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help. |  | help | help\_3 |
| 75 | I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary. |  | help | help\_4 |
| 1 | In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things. |  | intrinsic | intrinsic\_1 |
| 16 | In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn. |  | intrinsic | intrinsic\_2 |
| 22 | The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible. |  | intrinsic | intrinsic\_3 |
| 24 | When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade. |  | intrinsic | intrinsic\_4 |
| 33 | During class time I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things | R | meta | meta\_1 |
| 36 | When reading for this course, I make up questions to help focus my reading. |  | meta | meta\_2 |
| 41 | When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out |  | meta | meta\_3 |
| 44 | If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material. |  | meta | meta\_4 |
| 54 | Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized. |  | meta | meta\_5 |
| 55 | I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class. |  | meta | meta\_6 |
| 56 | I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructor’s teaching style. |  | meta | meta\_7 |
| 57 | I often find that I have been reading for this class but don’t know what it was all about. | R | meta | meta\_8 |
| 61 | I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course. |  | meta | meta\_9 |
| 76 | When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don’t understand well. |  | meta | meta\_10 |
| 78 | When I study for this class, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period. |  | meta | meta\_11 |
| 79 | If I get confused taking notes in class, I make sure I sort it out afterwards. |  | meta | meta\_12 |
| 32 | When I study the readings for this course, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts. |  | organisation | organisation\_1 |
| 42 | When I study for this course, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas. |  | organisation | organisation\_2 |
| 49 | I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course material. |  | organisation | organisation\_3 |
| 63 | When I study for this course, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts. |  | organisation | organisation\_4 |
| 34 | When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a class mate or friend. |  | peer | peer\_1 |
| 45 | I try to work with other students from this class to complete the course assignments. |  | peer | peer\_2 |
| 50 | When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class. |  | peer | peer\_3 |
| 39 | When I study for this class, I practice saying the material to myself over and over. |  | rehearsal | rehearsal\_1 |
| 46 | When studying for this course, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again. |  | rehearsal | rehearsal\_2 |
| 59 | I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts in this class. |  | rehearsal | rehearsal\_3 |
| 72 | I make lists of important items for this course and memorize the lists. |  | rehearsal | rehearsal\_4 |
| 5 | I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_1 |
| 6 | I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_2 |
| 12 | I'm confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this course. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_3 |
| 15 | I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_4 |
| 20 | I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_5 |
| 21 | I expect to do well in this class. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_6 |
| 29 | I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_7 |
| 31 | Considering the difficulty of this course, the teachers, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class. |  | self\_efficacy | self\_efficacy\_8 |
| 4 | I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_1 |
| 10 | It is important for me to learn the course material in this class. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_2 |
| 17 | I am very interested in the content area of this course. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_3 |
| 23 | I think the course material is useful for me to learn. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_4 |
| 26 | I like the subject matter of this course. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_5 |
| 27 | Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me. |  | task\_value | task\_value\_6 |