



Introduction



learning objectives

- To gain an overview of the key learning features of this book.
- To introduce the main topics that the book covers through an active reading exercise.

What Does this Book Aim to Do?

This book will help you focus on the skills you will need to develop to succeed as a social work student and as a professional social worker. Our view is that study skills are most relevant if they are directly related to the subject area of social work practice.

We recognize that today's students are expected not only to learn about the specifics of social work practice during their degree or postgraduate courses. There is also an expectation, from employers in particular, that students learn about and appreciate the significance of becoming lifelong learners. This means that as well as studying specific modules/courses on topics such as social policy and law and human justice, you will also be expected to 'tune in' to what your particular learning needs are and to think imaginatively and creatively about how you can help yourself to develop as a learner.

Of course, learning is not all about just 'thinking' – especially within the context of a hands-on, people-oriented discipline such as social work – it is also, crucially, about translating thoughts into positive action. The key aims of this book are to get you thinking about your own learning performance, preferences

STUDY SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

and developmental goals and also to prompt you to think about practical ways in which you can develop both as a learner and as a social work practitioner.

Will this Book Help me Pass the Course?

This book will *not* make you a better social work student on its own. However, our point is – and this is a *really important point* – that this book can provide guidance, ideas and suggestions for how you can become a more effective student and social work practitioner. Crucially, you need to try out the activities and exercises and think about what is helpful to you and what can help you succeed on your course.

Key Features of this Book

Each chapter of the book begins with a **Learning Objectives** panel which gives you an idea of what we hope you will be learning! There is also a **Summary of Key Points** panel at the end of each chapter which lists the key points that we have dealt with. Alongside this you will find a ‘Useful Resources and Further Reading’ section which lists books and websites which we feel are useful for further developing your understanding of topics. You will find that many of these texts are available through your institution’s library.

It is possible to work through the book in any order as each chapter is fairly self-contained. Where a topic in one chapter has links with a topic covered in another chapter, we have shown this in the text.

Reflection points

Throughout the book, we introduce **reflection points**.



Box 1.1 reflection point

What exactly are ‘reflection points’?

- Why do you want to improve your study skills?
- Will improved study skills help to make you a more effective social work practitioner?
- What will help you, personally, along the way to completing your course successfully?

These questions are examples of 'reflection points' which encourage you to think about your own responses to the key issues. You might decide that you want to record your responses in a journal or notebook – this is definitely something that we would encourage you to do. This is also something you would be expected to do when you go out on a social work placement.

Activities

We have developed activities to support the main topics and we would encourage you to complete each of them in order to get the most out of the book.

- Trying something out helps us to find out if we have understood it.
- Learning theory suggests that effective learning takes place when we take an idea that we have picked up from one context (e.g. reading about how to structure an essay in a study skills book), and apply it to another context (e.g. by actually having a go at writing and structuring an essay) (Petty, 2004: 29).
- We might also call this 'putting ideas into practice'.



activity 1.1

Getting intimate with this book!

Rather than provide you with a long description of the kinds of things covered in this book, we want you to GET ACTIVE and start investigating yourself!

- 1 Start by having a really good look through the **contents page** – what are the main chapter titles, and what are the topics within them?
- 2 Skim through the **index** at the back of the book – what are some of the key words here that might be of most use to you?
- 3 Browse the **Learning Objective** panels on the first page of each chapter to get a better idea of what each chapter focuses on.
- 4 Check out the **Useful Resources and Further Reading** sections on the last page of each chapter to get an idea of some of the other books and websites that will be of use to you.

This technique is a really useful way of quickly getting an overview of any new book, so try to make a habit of doing it whenever you pick one up.

STUDY SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Most of the activities in this book, including Activity 1.1, are based around fairly open questions. In other words, there is rarely a single 'right' or 'wrong' answer, so how well you respond to them will depend largely on the amount of thought and effort you put into them.

We have included some suggested answers which you can find at the end of the relevant chapters and which can be used as a guide. They are designed to encourage you to self-assess (i.e. mark your own work) which is proven to be a really good way of developing your own learning and understanding (Petty, 2006). As an alternative, you might want to consider partnering up with a 'study buddy' or even forming your own informal study group. You could each individually attempt the exercises and activities in this book and then get others in the group to peer-assess your work, and vice versa.

Useful Resources

As you would expect, the 'useful resources' boxes are designed to:

- Draw your attention to additional resources which could help with your study skills development.
- Encourage you to engage with a range of materials or learning environments including chapters in other books and websites.

Quick Tips

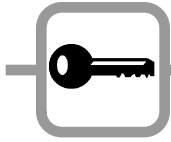
The 'quick tips' boxes contain useful pointers in relation to things that we know students can sometimes struggle with. For instance:

- Sometimes web addresses can change, so if you find a website is no longer accessible, try searching for it using key search words in a search engine.

Did You Know?

The 'Did you know?' boxes provide helpful summaries of some of the underpinning knowledge and background information.

Finally, at the end of the book, there is a glossary of key terms which should help if you come across any unfamiliar terminology or jargon.



summary of key points

- The more time and effort you are prepared to put into completing activities and exercises, the stronger your learning will be.
- Use 'Useful Resources' and 'Further Reading' to further develop your understanding of key topics.