

STUDY SMARTER, NOT HARDER

Study Skills for Successful Students

1

UTILIZE A PLANNER

Find a planner you like, or use an app like Google Calendar. Go through your course syllabi and record any major due dates and test dates. Also mark down events like athletic practices and games, work shifts, etc. This can help you form and stick to a study schedule.



2

PLAN AHEAD

Last-minute cramming is one of the worst things you can do. Not only are you unlikely to do well, but it can cause burnout. Use your planner to figure out the time you need to do an assignment or study for that exam and schedule that into your life.



3

DEVELOP A ROUTINE

Develop, and stick to, a healthy routine. Wake up at the same time each day and get something accomplished immediately. Eat nourishing meals before classes and practices. Study according to the schedule you have planned out. Have some “me” time and a good night’s rest. Having a routine helps your brain retain focus.



4

EXERCISE BEFORE STUDYING

Exercising for a short time before sitting down to work can help fight fatigue, increase your energy, kickstart your brain function, improve your memory, reduce your stress levels, and improve your mood. Even a short workout or walk around campus can help your performance.



5

PRIORITIZE GOOD EATING AND SLEEPING

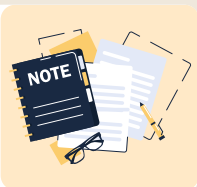
Eating sugary snacks and drinking caffeine will ultimately lead to a “crash.” Eat healthy snacks, like nuts or fruit, to help fuel your brain and give you sustainable energy. Additionally, get enough sleep on a consistent basis in order for your brain to function well.



6

TAKE GOOD NOTES

Pay attention to verbal cues like, “This is important,” or repetition from a professor. Write down anything the professor puts on the board or screen. Write note by hand to assist with memory formation. Put notes in the margins of your book while you are reading.



7

REORGANIZE AND REVIEW YOUR NOTES

Within a day or two of taking notes, re-organize them so they make sense and are easy to read. Create outlines or flashcards to help you study. Then read through your materials for 10-15 minutes each day. This will help your performance more than last-minute cramming.



8

LEARN FROM PAST MISTAKES

Keep every quiz and test you take in a class and pay attention to the items you missed. Review the correct answers, then add these to your notes to review before the next test or final exam. Do the same for essays: see the professor’s feedback and use it to help you write better essays in the future.



9

CREATE A VOCABULARY LIST

Vocabulary words often pop up in multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and essay questions. It is important that you master the relevant vocabulary so you can answer the questions. Make a vocabulary list or flashcards, with the word and definition, to study from. There may also be apps that you can use to help you study.



10

MAKE AND STUDY FLASHCARDS

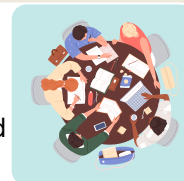
Flashcards can be used to study anything and can be quickly reviewed in a few spare minutes. Make note of which cards you consistently answer correctly and incorrectly. This will let you know which concepts you need to spend more time focusing on.



11

FORM A STUDY GROUP

Form a study group with friends or classmates. This allows you to meet new people, bounce ideas off of each other, hear different perspectives, get clarification on a topic, and learn in a positive social environment. Just make sure you don't spend all of your time socializing instead of studying!



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SUMMARIZE THE MATERIAL

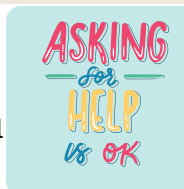
One good way of testing our understanding of a topic is by summarizing it, or explaining it in our own words as simply as possible. Write down your summary of the concept as if you were teaching it to someone else. Review your writing and see if there are any mistakes or important details you left out. Review your notes and attempt to correct the mistakes.



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BE WILLING TO ASK FOR HELP

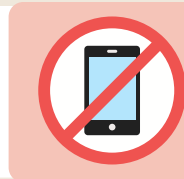
If you do not understand something, don't be afraid to ask for help. Your professors have office hours so that students can come by to get help or ask questions. You also have student support services such as ACE and the Writing Center, or you can ask a peer for help. Do not fail an exam or class when you can simply get help understanding a concept.



14

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Distractions can ruin your concentration and make studying take longer and be less effective. Turn off your phone, social media, television, iPod, computer, and anything else that may distract you. If other people distract you, find a quiet place where you can be alone. You can schedule in short breaks where you can check your phone or social media.



15

TAKE SMALL, FREQUENT BREAKS

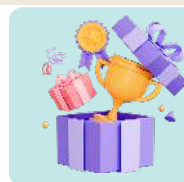
Allow yourself a short (5-10 minute) break every once in a while. To make sure you don't abuse your own break system, set a timer for how long you want to study before taking a break, then set another timer for how long you want your break to be. Once your break is over, reset both timers and get back to studying.



16

SCHEDULE IN SOME REWARDS

Bribe yourself to sit down and study effectively. Find something you like that will motivate you to keep going. For example, eat a piece of candy for every five math problems you solve. Go get a treat at Starbucks after studying for a solid hour. Watch one episode of your favorite TV show after a study session is over. Remember that your greatest reward is a good grade.



17

RE-READ MATERIALS AND QUIZ YOURSELF

Reading the materials more than once will help your long-term memory improve. Also, occasionally set everything aside and quiz yourself on the information. You can use flashcards or have a friend ask questions based on your notes. Pay attention to questions you struggle with so you'll know what to focus on more. This practice helps your memory retrieval.



18

USE THE SQ34 METHOD

This is a reading comprehension method that will help you retain information better. Survey the assigned pages, looking at graphics, charts, and headings. Formulate questions about what the reading is about and what you already know about the topic. Read the chapter completely, summarizing each section in your own words. Make sure it includes the major points and answers all of your questions. Finally, review everything to be sure that you fully understand it.

**See the following for these and other helpful hints:**

CVO Staff. "Learn How to Study: 30 Proven Tips and Techniques for College Students." *CVO: College Values Online*, 11 May 2023. <https://www.collegevaluesonline.com/lists/effective-study-tips-techniques/>

PREPARING FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF TESTS

Preparing for Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Blank, Matching, or True/False Tests

- These often require you to remember and understand a lot of factual data.
- Preparing index cards with a term or concept on the front and details about them on the back can help.
 - Look at the front of each card and see if you can recall what is on the back. As you go through the stack, separate them into two piles: ones you know, and ones you could not remember the answer to.
 - Go back through the stack that you did not know, re-test yourself, and again separate it into two stacks. Continue with this procedure until you feel you have learned all of the material. Review several times before your exam.
- Create a concept map or a graphic organizer: These can help you relate large concepts with meaningful details. Some examples may include Venn Diagrams or T-charts (shows similarities and differences); timelines or process chains (shows the order of events or how something happens); webbing or clustering (shows the relationship between a main idea and supporting details); outlines; or other charts or tables.
 - Identify a concept, then create a graphic organizer from what you can remember about this concept. This lets you know what you already understand and need to review.
 - Go back through your notes and readings and fill in the gaps. Focus on how concepts are related to each other.
- Make up songs, rhymes, or mnemonics about the material. For example, the name Roy G. Biv can help you remember the colors of the spectrum (Red Orange Yellow Green Blue Indigo Violet). PEMDAS helps you remember the order of operations (Parenthesis, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction).

PREPARING FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF TESTS

Preparing for Essay Exams

- **Predict possible essay questions by using all of your course materials (textbook, class notes, supplemental materials). The following can help you predict some possible questions.**
 - **Look at the course objectives on your syllabus, as these show the concepts you are expected to master.**
 - **Look at your textbook's Table of Contents, the individual chapter titles, headings, and bold or highlighted terms. These all indicate important ideas. Develop some possible questions based on these ideas.**
 - **Study and organize your notes into larger themes.**
 - **Listen carefully when your instructor discusses or reviews for an exam. It is likely that they will reveal important information to study.**
- **Write rough draft answers. After identifying possible questions, practice answering them. You do not need to write out full sentences, but list or outline the ideas you would include in your answer.**
 - **Develop a key word outline: For each idea in your draft, identify a key word that will help trigger your memory of that idea. Then list and learn these key words.**

Preparing for Problem-Solution Exams

- **These are likely to occur in math and some branches of science. Anticipate what types of questions you may be asked to answer (calculations, word problems, etc) and develop a strategy for answering them.**
 - **Prepare study sheets with the formulas and principles.**
 - **Practice solving actual problems, perhaps textbook questions your instructor did not already assign.**
 - **Identify the types of problems you have more difficulty with, and spend extra time on these. Try to identify at what step the difficulty occurs.**