

Study Skills - Tips and Strategies



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Each person develops their individualized approach to studying and learning in a manner that meets their personal needs. This guide is meant to offer tips and strategies to improve study skills. Over time, you will develop and adjust your study skills based on what works best for you.

Getting Organized to Study

An essential step in effective studying is organization. During the course of a semester, you will encounter and accumulate information in several forms, including but not limited to electronic materials, printed materials, readings, and lecture notes.

- The best way to ensure that you remain organized is to develop a filing and labeling system to keep all relevant course material together and easily accessible. This will also reduce time wasted finding materials when you are ready to study.
- Condense all course material into effective study materials composed of key concepts, main ideas, and supporting details. An outline may be effective.
- Make a checklist of what you need to study.
- Create a study routine.
- Keep track of important timelines and dates.

Preparing for Study

- You want to make sure you have access to all relevant content that needs to be studied. The best way to do this is to:
 - Attend class, participate, and ask questions.
 - Complete all assigned readings and assignments.
 - Take effective notes from readings and lectures.
- Avoid procrastination. Refrain from finding yourself in a situation where you must cram for an exam or write a paper at the last minute.
- Do not multitask. Focus on completing one task at a time.
- Get adequate sleep.

Finding the Ideal Place to Study

Finding a space that is conducive to studying is vital. You should understand what locations and conditions will promote effective studying and what situations or circumstances will sabotage your study efforts. Here are some helpful tips for choosing an ideal space in which to study.

- Establish a study location for which you can study regularly.
 - This may be an office at work, home, university, or public library.
 - A regular study place reminds your body that you are preparing for study.
- Select a space with few distractions that could be more comfortable.
 - You need your mind to remain alert.
 - If you must study in a shared space, establish rules that give you the time and space (free from other responsibilities) to study uninterrupted.
 - Avoid selecting a space where you could be interrupted by friends, relatives, phone calls, work responsibilities, and social media.
- Choose a space that allows you access to all your study materials, including notes, books, writing materials, prior assignments, and a computer.
- Select a location with a good light source and work surface.

Finding Time to Study

- Determine the best time of day to study. Do you study best during the day, evening, or after work/classes? Schedule each day to use your peak learning time for studying.
- Complete a time management timetable. Identify study time and keep track of all assignments, tests, and papers. Prioritize and complete essential tasks first.
- Optimize time between classes or activities.
 - Identify short study tasks that can be accomplished during waiting times.
- Preview notes and/or lecture slides before class to get familiar with the material.
- Review notes immediately after class or a lecture. This is a great time to fill in missing notes and highlight areas you need to revisit.

Managing Time when Studying

- Study in shorter time blocks and take regular study breaks.
 - Study for 50 minutes, followed by a 10-minute break.
 - Use breaks to hydrate, eat a light snack, or stretch
 - Avoid getting sidetracked when taking your breaks.
- As a rule, plan about two hours of study time for each hour spent in class.
- Study the most challenging or tedious subjects first while energized, fresh, and receptive to learning.

Effective Study Tools/Strategies

- Create flashcards, diagrams, graphs, charts, mind or concept maps, acronyms, etc., to aid your studying.

- If time permits, get feedback from a classmate, study group member, teaching assistant, graduate assistant, tutor or instructor to ensure accuracy, completeness and organization of your study materials.
- Participate in a study group.
- Take practice or timed tests.
- If you find yourself getting bored or tired, switch tasks or topics, apply interleaving.
- Stop studying if find that you are not being productive.
- Keep positive and remind yourself of the value of studying.

Sources:

Downing, Skip. On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life. 2nd edition. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. Boston, MA. 2014.