

Self Help-Basic Study Techniques

Basic Study Techniques

Attitudes and Goals

1. Set your goals and priorities for the semester and then develop a plan for achieving each goal. Some of your goals may relate to your education; others may concern such areas as personal growth, physical fitness, relationships, etc.
 - a. Example goal: To give academics top priority this semester.
 - b. Example Plan
 1. Attend all classes.
 2. Turn in all homework on time.
 3. Study 4 hours daily.
2. Gain control of your study environment.
 - a. Find a place to study that is free from distractions. Study only in that place and do nothing else there but study.
 - b. Arrange to study regularly; allot some time each day for study.
3. Learn to manage your time effectively.
 - a. Make a time schedule and stick to it.
 - b. Make a daily list of things to do. Assign each item a priority rating, and assign each "A" priority a time slot.
 1. "A" priority is assigned to tasks that have high value to you. These are tasks that you want to do because they will help you meet your goals. Also included in this category are tasks that have immediate deadlines.
 2. "B" priority is assigned to tasks that have medium value.
 3. "C" priority is assigned to tasks that have low value; these tasks can be put off or left undone entirely.
 - c. Recognize that priorities can change. What was a "C" task last week may become an "A" or "B" task because the deadline is approaching.
 - d. Ask yourself two questions.
 1. "Is what I'm doing now helping me achieve my goals?"
 2. "What will happen if I don't do this?"
4. Encourage yourself to study through rational thinking.
 - a. Recognize your irrational ideas about studying and replace them with more helpful ideas. For example, "There's not time for both study and fun" can be changed to "There's plenty of time for both study and fun when I use my time effectively."
 - b. Eliminate thinking that results in procrastination. For example, statements like "I have plenty of time to do my project" often result in putting the project off until the last minute.
 - c. Develop a positive attitude toward schoolwork.
 1. View school work as helping you achieve your long range goals.
 2. Look for points of interest and practical application in each subject.
 3. Get to know each of your professors. Knowing your profs will help you become more positive about your courses, and it will make it easier to seek help from them if you need it.

Study Techniques

1. Read the assignment before class. Active involvement in reading the text is important for comprehending the material. One frequently suggested method for reading textbooks is the SQ4R method.

2. *S=Survey* Briefly survey the chapter, noting the divisions, headings, tables and figures. Read the chapter summary. This provides an overview of the chapter content and a framework for organizing the material.
3. *Q=Question* Turn each section heading into a question that you want answered. Also, try to guess questions that might appear on the exam.
4. *R=Read*
Read the chapter, section by section, trying to answer your questions.
5. *R=Recite* Answer the questions and state the main points verbally. You may also write down the answers and key points for later reference.
6. *R=(W)Rite* First, write the question and then write the answer to the question using only key words, lists, etc.
7. *R=Review* Briefly look back over the material to assure that you have included all the main points. Reflect on the meaning and application of the major points.
8. Use 3" x 5" index cards. Write the questions on one side and the answers on the other side, and use them as flash cards. If you carry them with you, you can get through several cards while waiting for the shuttle bus, riding the elevator, walking to class, etc.
9. Work all assigned problems, and then work some more, even if the assignment will not be collected. In math and science courses where memorization is crucial, it is helpful to *over* learn the material. Small amounts of practice spread over several days is more efficient than one long memorization session.
10. Recognize the importance of regular review. Review class notes on a daily basis, and set aside review time for each course on a weekly basis.
11. Start studying the first day of the semester and keep up. It is easy to spend the first month of classes "adjusting" and "organizing", but often the result is falling very far behind in your work. That sets up the vicious cycle of dropping everything to prepare for an upcoming exam in one class, and following that routine for each class in turn. The best way to deal with such a cycle is to prevent it from happening.

Taking Lecture Notes

It is important to take lecture notes so that you will have a record of what the professor thinks is important. You should take down the main ideas and as much additional information as necessary in order for you to have a fully developed concept for later review.

Preparation For Note-taking:

1. Read the assignment before class.
2. Review your notes from the previous class.
3. Sit where you can hear the professor and see the chalkboard.

Signals That Indicate Main Ideas:

1. Enumerations (first, five steps, four causes)
2. Summations (therefore, consequently)
3. Verbal cues such as pauses, voice inflections, repetitions
4. Everything written on the chalkboard and all handouts are important.

Mechanics Of Notetaking:

1. Write your notes legibly the first time; do not plan to rewrite them because you probably will not have time.
2. Write on only the right 3/4 of the page. Use the left 1/4 of the page for your own questions, summaries, comments, notes from outside readings, etc. When reviewing the notes, cover the right portion of the page and try to recall the covered information using the cue words on the left.
3. Try to take notes in your own words rather than writing verbatim what the prof says. Use abbreviations where appropriate, but do not abbreviate so much that you are unable to "decode" your notes later.
4. If you miss a point, skip some space and continue taking notes. You can get the information later from the prof or a classmate.
5. Pay attention the entire class period.
6. Immediately after class review your notes; add or clarify information while the lecture is still fresh.
7. Review your notes on a daily basis.

Example:

Use left quarter of page as a recall column	Take lecture notes on right 3/4 of the page
Note-taking prep	Preparation for note taking: - Read assignment before class - Review notes before class - Position yourself to see and hear
How main ideas are shown	Main ideas are indicated by: - Verbal cues (pauses, tone of voice, repetitions, etc.) - Summaries (at beginning and end of class) - Lists of things (five steps, first, four reasons) - Handouts, overheads, material put on chalkboard

Test Preparation Check List

Did You...	Yes	No	Points for a "Yes" Answer
1. Attend all classes			1
2. Review your notes daily			3
3. Read material prior to it being covered in class			1
4. Study daily			3
5. Have at least one conference with the professor			1
6. Develop and learn a word list for the course			2
7. Read materials to improve your background in the course (other than text)			1
8. Attend help session			1
9. Attend learning resource lab when available			1
10. Develop a list of possible questions			2
11. Ask questions in class			1

12. Study an old exam (when available)			1
13. Avoid a last minute cram session			1
14. Sleep at least 8 hours the night before			1
Add your total points, plus one point for each hour you spent in preparation over 20 hours; in other words if you spent 25 hours, add 5 points.			

25-30 points: Good preparation 20-24 points: Fair preparation 20 or less points: Poor preparation

Work Smarter - Not Harder

Time Management

Self-Talk

Ask yourself: "What is the best use of my time right now?"

Practice asking yourself that question until it becomes a habit!

Your Job: Student

Being a student is job and it's a full-time job. In order to function effectively, you need to learn to manage your time effectively. Remember, part of your learning experience as a student consists of learning to manage your own time.

All Time Is Free Time

Everyone has the same amount of time available to do whatever it is they need to do- 168 hours per week. But, you say, how can all of my time be free time when I have classes, labs, work, and so on? True, but remember YOU have chosen to be a student, YOU have chosen to participate in whatever extracurricular activities you are involved in, YOU decide when to eat, sleep, socialize, etc. So remember - YOU make the choices as to how you spend your own time.

Where Does Your Time Go?

Remember - Time which is unplanned tends to be frittered away on nonessential or low priority tasks which could better be postponed or even completely ignored and forgotten.

How To Plan Your Time

Self-Monitoring

1. Keep a diary of your daily study activities for one week. Record the date, place, the time you start and stop studying, the type of study activity engaged in, any thoughts and feelings which you may have had before and after studying.
2. After collecting data for 1 week, implement a program for gradual self-improvement. How much time did you spend in study? Was it good, quality time or were you daydreaming or distracted? Did you avoid certain subjects which you dislike? Were the places in which you studied conducive to good study? What were you telling yourself about studying? Did you associate any particular feelings with study, e.g., anxiety, depression, anger, joy, well-being?

Make Up A Living Schedule Not Just A Study Schedule

1. Record all fixed time commitments throughout the week - classes, labs, working hours, etc.
2. Schedule other routine daily activities - eating, sleeping, dressing, etc.
3. Schedule your study times in twenty to fifty minute blocks followed by 5 to 10 minute breaks. Schedule specific subjects for specific times.
4. Schedule times for recreational and social activities following your periods of study.
5. Avoid too much detail and over-planning.
6. Allow adequate time for sleep, well-balanced meals, and exercise.
7. Adjust your schedule when necessary - BE FLEXIBLE. Your schedule is meant to allow you to control your own time, not to let time control you.
8. If you deviate from your schedule or if you don't follow it for several days or even weeks, *don't be discouraged!* Get back to your schedule or revise it if it is unrealistic.

How Much Should You Study?

There is no hard rule. The old maxim of 2 hours of study for each hour of class-time is probably unrealistic and even unnecessary for most students. Experiment in order to find the amount of study time appropriate to meet your needs. As a rough guideline, try spending at least 30 to 35 hours per week in academic activities (classes, labs, and study).

Make A Daily List of "Things To Do Today"

And arrange priorities on your list.

Time Management Tips

1. Learn to say "No!" to those who would interrupt your study periods.
2. Use waiting time to study notes, read your text, etc.
3. Beware of perfectionism.
4. Remember you need personal and social time as well.
5. If you have been putting something off, decide to work on it for five minutes at a time.
6. For projects that have a due date of 3 to 6 weeks later, it's easier to put in half an hour a week than to ruin the whole weekend just before it's due.
7. Don't blow off the weekends! Getting all your work done during the week plus feeling comfortable with your study progression then allows the weekend to be yours.
8. Make notes on easily portable cards or cassette tapes.
9. The high school setting is different than college. The amount of time you spent in weekly study for high school academics will probably get you behind at Texas A&M. Gradually adjust yourself to the faster pace.

Self-talk that Interferes with Studying

When confronted with the decision to study or not to study, you engage in a little talk with yourself. In the list below you will find some of the statements you make to convince yourself not to study. These statements lead to the conclusion "I will not study now." However, the statements are not always true, rational or realistic ways to describe your situation. By learning to identify your self-defeating self-talk you may be able to talk to yourself in more helpful ways, thus leading to more self motivation, less procrastination, and better study attitudes. Some of the more common negative self-talk is listed below. When you hear yourself talking or thinking these thoughts, recognize that you are giving yourself permission not to study. Although you may enjoy not studying at the moment, the long-range outcome is often one that you do not enjoy (for example, poor grades, cramming, or feeling guilty).

Check this list every day to see how many negative self statements you are using. Try to eliminate as many as you can.

1. ☐ I don't feel like studying...
2. ☐ I'm hungry...
3. ☐ I'm sleepy...
4. ☐ I'm bored...
5. ☐ I'm not in the mood to study...
6. ☐ This material is too difficult..
7. ☐ This is too hard...
8. ☐ I don't have the background for this...
9. ☐ It's hopeless...
10. ☐ I'll never need to know this...
11. ☐ This is stupid stuff to spend time on...
12. ☐ I don't need to study now...
13. ☐ I studied this yesterday (in the past)...
14. ☐ I can do it later..
15. ☐ I have plenty of time to do this...
16. ☐ If I study this now, I'll forget it by test time...
17. ☐ This is too much material to cover...
18. ☐ I won't have time to finish anyway...
19. ☐ The prof just expects too much...
20. ☐ It doesn't make any difference whether I study or not...
21. ☐ It's really no use to study...
22. ☐ Studying doesn't help in this course...
23. ☐ I don't like the prof..
24. ☐ The prof doesn't care...
25. ☐ I can't concentrate...
26. ☐ My mind wanders too much...
27. ☐ People distract me...
28. ☐ I can't study here, (or any other place)...
29. ☐ I can't study now; I'll miss...
30. ☐ I'll miss things I want to do if I study now...
31. ☐ I can't study *and* do things I want to...
32. ☐ I have other things I need to do now...
33. ☐ Things are happening that I'll miss if I study now...
34. ☐ Nobody else is studying...

How to Avoid Study Without Really Trying (avoid these at all costs)

1. Don't have the appropriate materials that you'll need. This will allow you to get in a lot of conversations with others who live on your hall.
2. Realize after you begin studying that you need to go to the bathroom, or are hungry, or that you need to write a letter, or that you aren't clear about an assignment, or that you have to find out the details of a friend's date.
3. Dwell on how dull the course is and thoroughly believe that if you just had a half-way decent instructor all the material would be easier to understand and be more interesting.
4. Plan to study all the time and schedule no recreational time. This will allow you to feel virtuous and help keep you from seeing that you actually put in very little productive study time.
5. Develop a kind of smug, superior attitude that can be used to impress others with the fact that you don't need to study, that it somehow is beneath your dignity and that it is not worth your serious consideration.
6. Only study in your residence hall room with the door open. This will assure you of being there if friends call or drop in.
7. When people do come and interrupt your study, don't send them away because you'll hurt their feelings.
8. If your room is too quiet, find a place to study in the library where there is a lively social gathering. (An alternative to the library would be in the snack bar, next to the TV, and sitting at a table with a group of people playing cards.) Why be bored when you study?
9. Remember and practice the things you learned about studying when you were in high school. College isn't any different.
10. Always drink beer while you study. It helps you relax, and popping all those cans builds strength in your hands and arms.
11. Remember that "A clean and uncluttered desk is a sign of a sick mind."
12. Never study material you don't enjoy since you'll obviously never use it anyway.
13. Always remember that people will think you're smarter if you flunk a test because you didn't study rather than flunking it when you *did* study.