

Studying 101

As a university student, studying takes up a large percentage of your time. Before you hit the books, here are some study strategies to help you achieve academic success.

1. **Create associations.** Visualize relationships and patterns between the information. Most students study all of the details, but do not connect how all of the pieces fit together. Most exams ask you to make correlations, prepare for these questions ahead of time.
2. **Learn it once – actively.** Make sure your brain is engaged while studying. If your brain is thinking about your date on the weekend, while your eyes are scanning the words from your lecture notes, nothing will be absorbed. Continually be asking yourself as you study, “do I understand that?”
3. **Practice retrieving the information from your memory.** The first time you retrieve a memory, it travels down a short road in your brain, the brain cell pathway. It becomes easier to travel down the same road each time it’s recalled. Retrieving information creates the neural pathway in the brain that you’ll use in subsequent recall. Self-testing (or quizzing) is one of the best ways of recalling information. Creating your own mock exam could be a useful method as well.
4. **Be aware of attitudes.** If you have a negative attitude about what you are studying, it is very difficult to stay engaged. Think about how the hard work today will help you get to your longer term goals.
5. **Teach someone else the information.** A conversation is an easy way to self-test, because it allows you to find out what gaps there are in your memory of what you’ve just studied. If a study buddy is not around, talk to your dog or cat? Or you can simply say it out loud to yourself. Try to explain the concepts using words and ideas a five year old would grasp.



6. **Take care of your physical health.** Make sure to get adequate sleep, exercise, and nutrition. A brain that is deprived of these essentials will not serve you well while studying.
7. **Know what you do not know.** The typical way most students study is to read and make notes ... reread notes ... read and make notes ... reread notes ... read and make notes ... With this method, you won't find out what you don't know until you get to the exam. After reading a section of a textbook or lecture notes, quiz yourself to see what you remember by writing down the key points. After this exercise, go back to the text or lecture notes and star the information you were unable to recall. The starred sections are what you want to spend the majority of your time studying.
8. **Take short breaks.** Our brains think more clearly after a break. The amount of time the brain can stay absorbed performing mental tasks and learning is around fifty minutes, maximum. For many people it's less than fifty. Forty minutes might be the duration to aim for any time you're studying, absorbing, reading, thinking or focusing on any mental task.
9. **Make use of mnemonics.** Mnemonics are poems, phrases or words to trigger your memory, for example: to identify if a month has 30 or 31 days - Thirty days has September, April, June and November...; in first-aid RICE treats a sore muscle - Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation; to remember the metric system, remember this funny saying - King Henry Died By Drinking Chocolate Milk (kilo-, hecto-, deca-, base unit, deci-, centi-, milli-).
10. **Remember, there is no quick fix.** The skill of studying takes time to learn. Be patient with yourself as you are trying these new strategies.
11. **Visit a success coach.** If you would like more information on how to incorporate these strategies into your study routine visit a success coach. To book an appointment, visit the student success office (2nd floor of south campus hall) or call 519-888-4567 ext. 84410.

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