

## **Study TIPS**

Whether you are a "traditional" on-campus student or a participant in a distance learning program, you can use several techniques to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your efforts!

### **1. Know your learning style**

Some people work best in the (early) morning, while others excel in the evening. Some like background music, while others insist on silence. Some like to work in small groups, while others prefer to work alone. And so on.

Whatever your personal learning style is, chances are that you will do best by following it, rather than going against it. Obviously, this may not be possible at all times; but you can often improve your results by finding out which learning style works best for you, then stick to it when you can.

### **2. Learn to remember**

As much as 80% of the information that enters your short term memory will be forgotten again within 24 hours, without ever making it into your long term memory, which is where you would like it to end up... However, there are several things that you can do to help you remember important facts over a longer period of time.

Most importantly, repeat. Honestly: you should repeat. The more often you go over the material, the better your chances of remembering it permanently. So that's why you will do best if you repeat --OK, I think I've made my point :-)

It can also help to involve as many senses as possible. For example, you can read a text; then read it out loud, so that you can also hear it; and finally write it down yourself, to involve your "kinetic memory". Of course, by doing so, you will automatically be applying the principle of repetition. (Did I mention that's a good thing to do?)

If for some reason (e.g., limited time) this isn't possible, then you should concentrate on whatever sense works best for you --which would be another example of "following your learning style".

### **3. SQ3R --come again?!**

There's a well-known system that goes by the name of SQ3R because of its components: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.

**Survey:** Before you actually read a chapter, take some time to "survey" it. Read the headings and the subheadings to get a quick idea of what the text will be about. Scan the introduction and the conclusion, if present.

**Question:** Ask yourself one or two questions about the material. What are the main points of the chapter? What are the key things you'd like to get out of reading it? By asking yourself this question, you have created an active purpose for reading the text --you will be looking for answers, which will help you keep your interest, and will also help with retention.

**Read:** Now that you've surveyed the text and asked yourself a key question, go ahead and actually read the text. Be active, not passive; highlight important points, and from time to time jot down a quick summary in your own words.

**Recite:** After you have read a few pages, stop and formulate answers to the questions you have asked yourself in the second step. Check the text to see if your answers are indeed correct. If you can't remember what you have read, or if your answers are wrong, go back to the previous step and re-read the text.

**Review:** That's just our old friend, repetition. Every now and then, return to the chapter and

review your notes and the key points you have highlighted. You can expect much better results from regular revisions than from a one-time cramming session (say: the night before the exam...)!

You may think that following this method takes more time than just reading the chapter once -- and you'd be right: your initial reading will take around 10-15% more time. However, research indicates that you'll remember around 70% more after two months if you use the SQ3R method!

Listed below are some more tried and true methods for studying.

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**Focus!**  
**Jamie Jennemann**  
**Concordia University - Nebraska**

The thing that has helped me the most in college is finding a place that helps me to focus. For example, I'm the kind of student who can't study in complete silence so I like going into town to the local coffee shop to study. Yes, it's busy. And noisy. But I love it. Believe it or not, I actually accomplish more when I'm at The Mill than when I'm in my room.

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**Find a Quiet Place**  
**Tim Roland**  
**Kutztown University**  
**Kutztown, Pa.**

Young socialites tend to attempt studying in high traffic areas such as the library or student lounge. I found these areas to be teeming with distractions. If I was really serious about absorbing & retaining information, I sought out the most remote, quiet place around.

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**Take a Break**  
**Laura E. Davis**  
**Napanee District Secondary School, Napanee, Ontario Canada**

If you find yourself frustrated, whether it's math or French, push your books out of the way and relax. If you're at home, go to your room and lie down. DON'T sit in front of the TV. Otherwise you will find yourself too distracted to work. If you're at school ask the teacher to let you go to the bathroom and freshen up.

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**Compacting Your Notes**  
**Paul Sutphin**  
**Indiana University**  
**Bloomington, IN**

One technique that I use to study is a process called "Notes'-notes." This is where I go back and reread all the notes I have taken for a class, then rewrite those ideas which I feel are most important. Also, I copy an example problem that covers a large amount of materials. This works very well for subjects such as mathematics and science. Rewriting my notes really helps me to remember the information I need. This process also works very well while studying for final exams. Slowly you can compact your semester's worth of notes, writing, then rewriting them again until you have a compact group of the most important ideas covered. By the time you are done, you are ready to take the final exam.

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### **Relax, Relax, Relax**

Wherever you are, even in the middle of a test, if you feel yourself getting uptight and nervous, try this little trick. Close your eyes and consciously control your breathing. Slow yourself and your breathing down and picture a relaxing scene in your mind's eye. It can be a real place or an imaginary place. Just be sure to keep your eyes closed, your focus on your slower breathing and on your mental image. One to two minutes of this will calm you down enough to get back to the task at hand with a fresher mind.

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#### **When you take a test,**

you are demonstrating your ability to understand course material, or perform certain tasks.

#### **The test forms the basis of evaluation or judgement**

for your course of study.

#### **There are many *environmental* conditions,**

including your own attitudes and conditions, which influence how you perform during tests.

#### **These suggestions may help:**

- **Come prepared; arrive early for tests**  
Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens, a calculator, a dictionary, and a watch.  
This will help you focus on the task at hand
- **Stay relaxed and confident**  
Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well.  
Don't let yourself become *anxious*; if you feel anxious before or during a test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax  
Don't talk to other students before a test; anxiety is contagious
- **Be comfortable but alert**  
Choose a good spot to take the test.  
Make sure you have enough room to work.  
Maintain an upright posture in your seat
- **Preview the test** (if it is not timed)  
Spend 10% of your test time reading through the test carefully  
Mark key terms and decide how to budget your time  
As you read the questions, jot down brief notes indicating ideas you can use later in your answers  
Plan to do the easy questions first and the most difficult questions last
- **Answer the test questions in a strategic order**  
Begin by answering the easy questions you know, then those with the highest point value.  
The last questions you answer should

- be the most difficult,
  - take the greatest amount of writing, or
  - have the least point value
- **When taking a multiple choice test, know when to guess**

First eliminate answers you know are wrong  
Always guess when there is no penalty for guessing or you can eliminate options  
Don't guess if you have no basis for your choice and if you are penalized for guessing  
Since your first choice is usually correct, don't change your answers unless you are sure of the correction
- **When taking essay tests, think before you write**

Create a brief outline for your essay by jotting down a few words to indicate ideas you want to discuss.  
Number these items in your list to indicate the order in which you will discuss them
- **When writing the essay test, get right to the point**

State your main point in the first sentence  
Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay.  
Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail.  
Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings and notes
- **Reserve 10% of your test time for review**

Review your test  
Resist the urge to leave as soon as you have completed all the items  
Make sure you have answered all the questions.  
Proofread your writing for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.  
Check your math answers for careless mistakes (e.g. misplaced decimals). Match your actual answers for math problems against quick estimates
- **Analyze your test results**

Each test can further prepare you for the next test.  
Use your tests to review when studying for final exams
- **Decide on and adopt which study strategies worked best for you**

Identify those that didn't work well and replace them.