

# Dos and Don't While Studying

## Study Habits to Adopt

### Use Note Cards (not just as Flash Cards)

Keep a card or two for each paper or project to organize your thoughts and reminders. Ask friends if they have thoughts about topics you will be writing about and have the cards ready to jot down reminders or notes.

### Prepare & Present a Lecture

For papers or exams, pretend that you are the professor for your course and that you are going to give a lecture on the material covered by the exam or paper. Get a friend or two to attend your “lecture” and teach what you are studying. You will quickly discover what you know well and where the gaps are.



Pro tip: This is a great exercise to use in a study group!

### Work First, Then Give Yourself a Break/Reward

If staying on schedule is challenging, be sure to reward yourself when you do. For example, if you complete your homework, then reward yourself with one episode of your favorite show (no bingeing!). Or if you finish all of your weekly reading, then go out with friends.

### Practice Testing

Regular practice testing not only prepares you for the sort of questions that may appear on your exam, but also cements the information in your mind. Answer the review questions at the end of a chapter, use flashcards to recall important snippets of information, or work with a roommate or classmate to quiz each other.



**Try this:** After every lecture, add questions to an on-going practice test. By the time you get to test week you'll have a complete practice test that you've been studying all along!

### Tackle the Difficult Things First

It is easier to concentrate on difficult subjects when you are the most alert. Start with the hard stuff and move to easier things afterward. You can also try the “sandwich technique:” sandwich a particularly difficult or distasteful task between two more pleasant ones.



## The Review Cycle (It's scary how quickly we forget)

**Daily Review** - recopy notes, outline chapters, work problem sets, etc. If you do not review and revisit material, it leaves your memory very quickly.

**Weekly Review** - move notes into a study guide format or create a weekly practice test with a study buddy.

**Pre-Exam Review** - if you keep to a cycle of daily and weekly reviews, you'll be doing your memory a huge favor - much of the class content will now be in your long-term memory. Now very little time is required to brush up and be ready for an exam.

Try two or three new techniques this semester. It's never too late to try out (or retry) good study habits and techniques. However, not all techniques are equally appealing to all learners, and for good reason.

## Study Habits to Avoid

Various study and memorization techniques yield different values for the effort spent.

Among all the most common used strategies, these are the **LEAST EFFECTIVE**:

- **Highlighting and Underlining**  
Most students fall into a trap of marking too many words and phrases, so the markings lose their value.
- **Rereading Text Over and Over**  
Passively scanning information repeatedly without interaction or questioning does not move it into long-term memory or increase comprehension.
- **Just Summarizing Class Content**  
Summarizing isn't useless, but it makes no connections among topics and does not change the form of the information. To be effective, summarizing must be used along with some of the strategies you'll learn about next.



# Utilize Professors Office Hours

- Professors want to see you succeed and will generally be open and welcoming to your questions. Consider the following when you ask your questions:
- **Ask “how do you think through this question or problem?”** The answer will give you insight in how knowledge is applied. This increases memory of concepts and flexibility in answering future questions.
- **Avoid “show-me” questions.** A professor showing you how to solve a problem or what to notice in a reading is unlikely to be very helpful in deepening your own understanding or committing material to memory for later application.
- **Don’t just put a returned exam away.** Find out why you lost points and what was expected in a correct answer. Don’t delay; schedule a meeting with your TA or professor during the week following the exam to explore this while the material is still fresh in your mind.

# Make a Study Group

- To get the most out of a study group, work together to fill gaps in your collective knowledge. What do you grasp that the others don’t? What does someone else see that you are missing?

- **Make rules and guidelines:** For example, restrict social time to five minutes before and after studying together; turn off phones; laptops closed unless needed.
- **Choose a convenient, comfortable space:** Consider moving it around every once in awhile to keep things fresh and interesting.
- **Stay focused:** Set a time boundary for the group (1 hour, 1½ hours, etc.) and stick to it. Have clear objectives to meet in that block.



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