



Some Tips for Making the Most of Your Study Time

The Difference Between “Studying” and “Homework”

- Your instructors assume that you know the difference between the two.
- “Studying” is about learning new information, so that you can use it later (e.g. answering questions on tests, solving new problems on the job, impressing a graduate school interviewer, etc.).
- “Homework” (e.g. papers, projects, worksheets) may help you practice skills. They may or may not help you learn new things. They may just help (or hurt your grade). However, they are not the same thing as “studying”.

Make Time for “Study”

- Many new students assume that the absence of “homework” equals free time.
- Your instructors assume the absence of “homework” equals time for “study”.
- Unfortunately, it is only after the first round of midterm exams that many students find out about this difference of opinion.
- If you budget time for extra “studying” when you don’t have a lot of “homework” assignments, you will be better prepared for what is coming.

Study Environment

- Finding a place to study can be difficult. Many places are too loud or have too many distractions.
- Find a location that you can easily focus in. This could be your dorm, the library, the study place, or anywhere you are able to stay on task for long periods of time.
- Some people like to play music to cancel any outside noise out. Others find it difficult to focus while listening to music. Find out if music helps or hinders your studying.
- It can be helpful to switch up study locations. Some days you can study in a coffee shop, or you can go to the library. Just find a place or two that works well for you.

Have a “Study Pack”

- Wherever you choose to study, it is helpful to have all the things you need in one bag so you don't forget anything.
- Depending on how you study, the contents of the bag may be different, but some things that are helpful to have are: pencils, pens, notebooks, scrap paper, your laptop, highlighters, colored pencils or pens, sticky tabs, any books or text books you need, an iPod or mp3 player, a water bottle, and a snack.

Form a Study Group

- If you and some friends (or acquaintances) have a class together, study groups can be a great tool. People all have different ways of studying, and by sharing those skills, each member can be better prepared for the class. **However, this does not replace attending class.**
- By comparing notes, you can find topics that you have overlooked or better ways to organize the information.
- Ask each other questions. See if you can answer questions and explain concepts.
- Study groups also provide a support group if exams become stressful.

Use Study Groups Wisely

- Study groups do not replace quiet time independent study.
- In fact, study groups can slow down the learning process. Study groups often make studying more fun and less stressful, but they do not always make it more effective.
- One approach is to first study independently. Then, when you think you know the material, use a study group to check your understanding.

Try to Maintain Good Health

- A healthy mind requires a healthy body. It is much harder to retain knowledge when you are feeling sick or lethargic. In addition, this makes it much harder to focus in class and to do well on tests and quizzes.
- Try to get enough sleep. It is suggested that you get 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Also try to minimize your use of technology late at night.
- Get enough exercise! Whether you go to the gym, play a recreational sport, or take long walks exploring the great outdoors, you will find that you get more out of your studying.

And finally...

- Don't get discouraged. You will encounter stuff that is hard! Believe it or not, that is the point of college.
- Don't skip over the stuff you do not understand. That is the stuff you should study the *most*! Try to figure it out on your own. Read it again (and again). Google it for a different understanding.
- Give yourself time to think about the stuff you don't really understand. Then, come back to it later (but come back to it).
- If you really cannot figure it out, seek out help from your professor or ASAP. If you don't know where to go, talk to one of your facilitators... they have all been there!