

Study Strategies

Studying is hard, but give yourself some credit. Humans actually have a great ability to retain information. The challenge is that we are often not creative when faced with the task of studying. Think about the first time you had to learn how to play a sport and figure out the rules, drills and plays. Initially these concepts were abstract and probably did not make much sense, but, once you started playing everything came together quickly. We learn by doing, so the more you do now, the better you will do later.

The Basics

- Designate a space to work that is free of distractions
- Make a schedule. Use reminders on your phone to help you stay on task
- Keep your notes organized
- Study in short bursts — read over your notes from class every day. Scheduled review time, even if you are just skimming, will help you remember the content
- Try to eat healthy
- Get enough sleep

Studying is by no means easy and the longer you wait, the harder it is. To be proactive, here are some key tips that help aid in the study process.

Getting Started

Ask yourself what works for you — how do you remember? Some of us are more visual, others more auditory, while others are more kinesthetic learners. Craft your study habits around what you feel is best, but don't be afraid to try something new. Rereading your notes is seldom enough, and will take much longer to study than if you combine multiple methods. This is called **active learning**. If you combine reading with visual, auditory and interactive methods you will have a much greater chance of recalling information. Below are some different methods to consider.

Methods:

- 1) **Chunking.** Think about how your phone number is grouped or the numbers on your credit card. Breaking things into groups helps you remember.
- 2) **Visualization.** When you are studying material, try to visualize it and create an image in your head.
- 3) **Storytelling.** Make a story about the information and relate it to you. The more parallels that you can draw, the better.

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Methods Continued:

- 4) **Rhyming.** Try to make a rhyme about the material (it is ok if it is horrible; the pattern still helps you recall the information).
- 5) **Find humor in the content.** If you can craft jokes around the material, you will retain it better.
- 6) **Association.** Similar to story telling, association or comparing one thing to another, can help you remember because you are actively engaged.
- 7) **Talking/reading out loud.** It may seem odd, but having a conversation with yourself can help you focus and reading out loud forces you to carefully examine the information.
- 8) **Re-write.** Try using different colored pens/markers. Re-writing information helps you retain it, and using different colored highlighters and pens is not only super satisfying, it gives you visual cues that prompt memory. So go ahead, make your notes rainbow-tastic.
- 9) **Use your phone as a tool.** Read your notes out loud and record yourself. Then you can listen to your recording throughout the day.
- 10) **Mnemonics.** Remember “Never Eat Soggy Waffles” for North/EastSouth/West? Or “Roy G Biv” for the color spectrum red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet? Mnemonics will help you remember content with ease.
- 11) **Study partners.** Find someone that you know will keep you focused and create a study plan with them.
- 12) **Make it into a game.** Studying with a group of people is helpful, and if you can make the studying competitive you incorporate a lot of the mentioned strategies while having some fun.
- 13) **Note cards.** What is a study session without them? Note cards (or flash cards) are a great way of utilizing many of the above strategies at once.

Exam day:

Stay rested and avoid cramming. Lay off the caffeine if you are feeling anxious. Caffeine in small doses is fine, but in larger quantities it can increase your stress, heart rate, and blood pressure. Take a short walk, go outside, or have a cup of tea to help you relax.

Some of this information was gathered from <https://learn.camden.rutgers.edu/sites/learn.camden/files/memory.pdf> and from <https://www.cbsnews.com/media/things-you-should-know-about-caffeine/5/> For more information on study skills check out <https://dus.psu.edu/academicsuccess/studyskills.html> or stop by the Pathways Tutoring Center on the 2nd floor of the Danforth Library. 603-428-2276