EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS » STUDYING

How to Study

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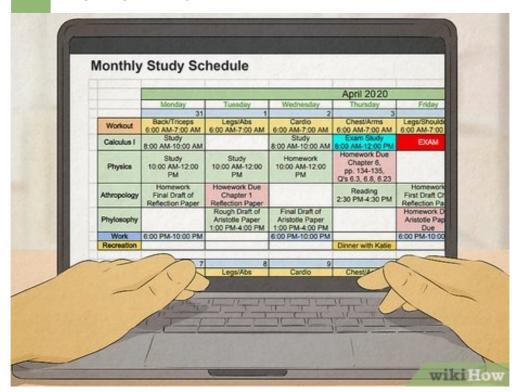
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Last Updated: February 10, 2022

When you sit down to study, how do you transfer that massive amount of information from the books and notes in front of you to a reliable spot in your mind? You need to develop good study habits. At first, it'll take a good deal of conscious effort to change your studying habits, but after a while, it'll become second nature, and studying will be easier to do.



Part 1 of 4: Preparing to Study



Manage your time. Make a weekly schedule and devote a certain amount of time per day to studying. This can be an hour or even 3 hours in total. This will also improve your grades. That amount will vary depending on whether you're in high school or college, and also varies by field of study. Make sure you stick to your schedule as much as possible but don't be afraid to go off of plan sometimes to study more for the most recent upcoming exam. Make sure this study plan is realistic and not impossible. [1]

- You need to balance school, work, and extracurricular activities. If you are really struggling with your classes, you may want to give up the after-school job or an extracurricular activity until your grades come up. You need to prioritize your time. Remember: your education is the most important thing because it is the foundation of your future success. [2]
- For college classes, you should base the hours you study per class on how difficult the class is and how many credit hours the class is worth. For example, if you have a 3-hour physics class that is really hard, you want to study 9 hours a week (3 hrs x 3 for hard difficulty). If you have a literature course that is worth 3 hours and is kind of hard, you may want to study 6 hours a week (3 hrs x 2 for medium difficulty).



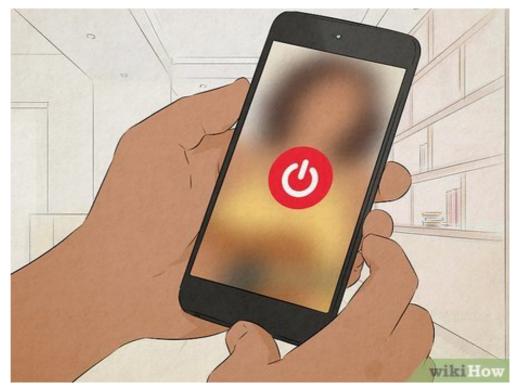
- Pace yourself. Find the best speed for you to study and adjust accordingly. [3] Some concepts or classes will come to you more naturally, so you can study those more quickly. Other things may take you twice as long. Take the time you need and study at the pace you feel comfortable.
 - Studying in 20-minute intervals will help you make it a lot easier to retain information.
 - If you study more slowly, remember that you will need more time to study.



- **Get enough rest.** [4] Make enough time in your schedule to get enough sleep. Get a good night's sleep every night and you'll be making the best of your study time. This is important as you lead up to the test, and especially important right before you take the test. Studies have shown that sleep positively impacts test-taking by improving memory and attentiveness. Staying up all night studying may sound like a good idea, but skip the all-night cram session. If you study throughout the weeks, you won't need to cram anyway. Getting a good night's sleep will help you perform better. You would not feel drained or tired^[5]
 - If you end up a little sleep deprived despite your best efforts, take a short nap before studying. Limit your nap to 15-30 minutes. After you wake up, do some physical activity (like you would do during a break) right before you start.



Clear your mind of anything that doesn't have to do with the topic you're studying. If you've got a lot on your mind, take a moment to write yourself some notes about what you're thinking about and how you feel before you start studying. This will help to clear your mind and focus all your thoughts on your work.^[6]



- **Eliminate electronic distractions.** One of the worst distractions for studying is electronic devices. They are hooked up to social media, you receive texts through your phone, and your laptop is hooked to the internet. Silence your cell phone or keep it in your bag so it's not there to distract you if someone calls or texts you.^[7] If you can, don't open your laptop or connect it to the internet.
 - If you are easily distracted by social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, or others, download one of the available applications to instantly block some of the distracting sites on your computer. When you are done with your work, you can unblock access to all the sites as before.[8]

Part 2 of 4: Setting Up Your Study Space



- **1** Find a good study spot. Gain control of your study space. You should feel comfortable so that studying is more enjoyable. [9] If you hate sitting at a table in the library, then find somewhere much more pleasant, like your sofa or a beanbag chair on your floor. Try studying in comfortable clothes, like a cozy sweatshirt or yoga pants. [10] The place where you study should be free from distractions and relatively quiet. [11]
 - Don't choose a place so comfortable that you risk falling asleep. You want to be comfortable, not ready to fall asleep. A bed isn't a very good study spot when you're tired.
 - Traffic outside your window and quiet library conversations are fine white noise, but interrupting siblings and music blasting in the next room are not. You may want to go somewhere away from people who may provide distractions or ask them to keep quiet for a while.



Choose background music carefully. Some people prefer silence while they study, others prefer music in the background. Music can be beneficial to your studying by helping you be calm, elevating your mood, and motivating you. If you listen to music, stick to instrumental music, which is music that has no words like classical, movie scores, trance, or baroque.[12]

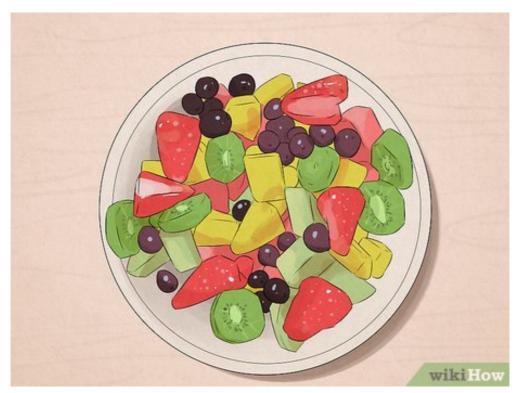
- If it doesn't distract you, listen to familiar music with words. Turn off anything that distracts you from your studying. You may be able to listen to rock music with words but not pop. Figure out what works for you.
- Make sure to keep the music at a moderate to low volume. Loud music can distract you while quiet music can help you while studying.
- Skip the radio. The commercials and the DJ's voice can bring you out of your study zone.[13] TVs can also distract you, so turn them off.



3 Listen to background sounds. Background sounds can help you "get in the zone" and focus on your studies without getting distracted. Natural sounds such as waterfalls, rain, thunder, and jungle sounds can give enough white noise to keep you focused and block out other sounds. There are many places online to find these kinds of sounds, including YouTube.[14]



4 Keep the television turned off. Having the television on while you study is generally a bad idea. It can distract you a lot and make you focus on the TV show or movie instead of the book. Plus, voices are extremely distracting because it engages the language center of your brain.[15]

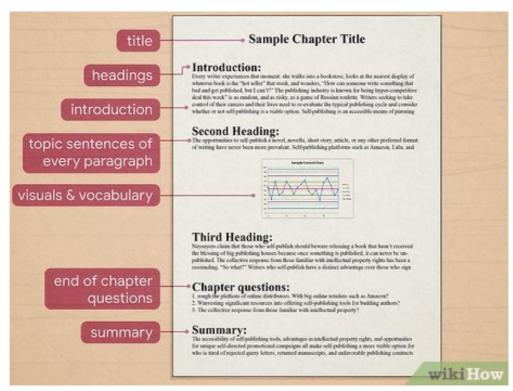


- **5** Snack smart. Eat healthy, nutritional foods while you study instead of foods filled with sugar and fat. Go for energy boosting foods, like fruit, or foods to make you feel full, like vegetables and nuts. If you need something sweet, eat dark chocolate. Drink water to keep you hydrated, and drink tea if you need a caffeine boost.
 - Avoid foods with high amounts of sugar and carbs, like instant noodles, chips, and candy. Don't drink energy drinks and sugary sodas; they contain high amounts of sugar which will cause you to crash. If you drink coffee, skip the sugar-heavy drinks.[16]
 - Have your snacks prepared when you begin a study session so you don't get hungry and go rummaging for food.

Part 3 of 4: Using Effective Study Techniques



- **1** Try a five step approach: survey, question, read, recite, and review. This is called SQ3R or SQRR and is a study method that involves active reading which helps with comprehension and learning the material. The method gets you to preview the material and actively read so you are more prepared when you read a chapter or article.
 - Start with *Survey*, which means to glance through the chapter to look for tables, figures, headings, and any bold words.
 - Then *Question* by making each heading into a question.
 - Read the chapter while trying to answer the questions you made from the section headings.
 - Recite the answers to the questions verbally and any important information you remember from the chapter.
 - Review the chapter to make sure you include all the main ideas. Then think about why this is important.

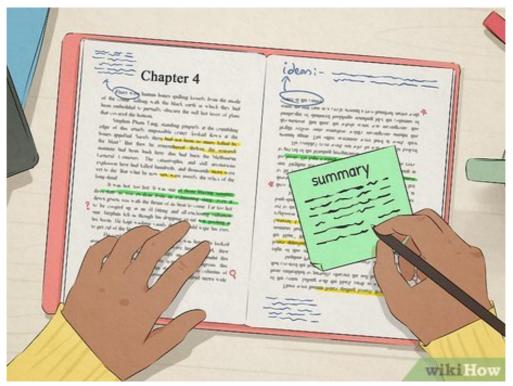


2 Use the THIEVES strategy. When you are beginning to study a new chapter, it will make the information it contains much more meaningful and easier to learn if you preview the chapter using THIEVES.

- Start with the *title*. What does the title tell you about the selection/article/chapter? What do you already know about the topic? What should you think about while reading? This will help you frame your reading.
- Scan the "headings" and subheadings. What do these headings and subheadings tell
 you about what you will be reading? Turn each heading and subheading into a
 question to help guide your reading.
- Move to the *introduction*. What does the introduction tell you about the reading?
- Read the *first sentence of every paragraph*. These are generally topic sentences and help you think about what the paragraphs will be about.
- Look at the visuals and vocabulary. This includes tables, graphs, and charts. More
 importantly, look at the bolded, italicized, and underlined words, words or paragraphs
 of a different color, and numerical lists.
- Read the *end of chapter questions*. What concepts should you know by the time you finish reading the chapter? Keep these questions in mind as you read.
- Look at the *chapter summary* to get a good idea of what the chapter is about before going on to read the chapter as a whole.



- Highlight important details. Use a highlighter or underline the most important points in the body of the text, so that you can spot them more easily when you review the material.[17] Don't highlight everything that defeats the purpose. Instead, only highlight the most important phrases and words.[18] It also helps to make notes in pencil in the margin in your own words to summarize or comment on important points.
 - You can also read just these portions in order to quickly review the material you have learned while it is still fresh in your memory, and help the main points to sink in.
 - If the textbook belongs to the school, then you can use highlighted sticky notes, or a regular sticky note beside the sentence or paragraph. Jot your notes on a sticky note and paste it beside the paragraph.
 - It's also a good way to periodically review in this manner to keep the main points of
 what you have already learned fresh in your mind if you need to remember a large
 amount of material for a longer period, like for a final examination, for a comprehensive
 exam in your major, for a graduate oral, or for entry into a profession.



4 Summarize or outline the material. One good way to study is to write the material in your notes and in the textbook in your own words. That way you can think about it in your own terms instead of textbook language. Incorporate your summaries into your notes, if there is a connection. You can also make an outline. Organize it by main ideas and only the most important subpoints.[19]

- If you have enough privacy, it also helps to recite your summaries aloud in order to involve more senses. If you are an aural learner, or learn better when verbalizing it, then this method could help you.
- If you're having trouble summarizing the material so that it sticks in your head, try
 teaching it to someone else. Pretend you're teaching it to someone who doesn't know
 anything about the topic, or create a wikiHow page about it! For example, How to
 Memorize the Canadian Territories & Provinces was made as a study guide for an 8th
 grade student.
- When making summaries, use different colors. The brain remembers information more easily when it is associated with color.



Make flash cards. This is usually done with index cards. Place a question, term, or idea on one side and have the other side contain the answer. These are convenient because you can carry them around with you and study them when you are waiting for the bus, for class to start, or have a few down moments.[20]

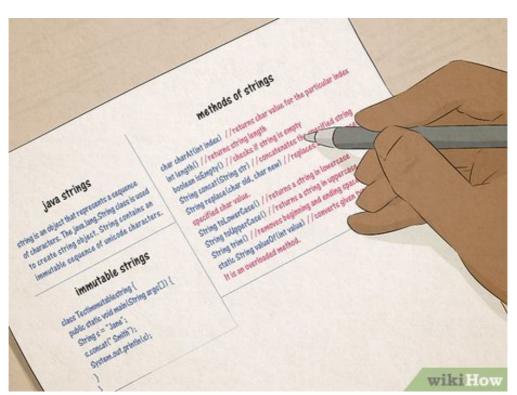
- You can also download computer programs that cut down on space and the cost of index cards. You can also just use a regular piece of paper folded (vertically) in half.
 Put the questions on the side you can see when the paper is folded; unfold it to see the answers inside. Keep quizzing yourself until you get all the answers right reliably.
 Remember: "Repetition is the mother of skill."
- You can also turn your notes into flashcards using the Cornell note-taking system, which involves grouping your notes around keywords that you can quiz yourself on later by covering the notes and trying to remember what you wrote based on seeing only the keyword.



- **Make associations.** The most effective way to retain information is to tie it to existing information that's already lodged in your mind. Using memory techniques can help you remember difficult or large amounts of information.
 - Take advantage of your learning style. Think about what you already learn and remember easily--song lyrics? choreography? pictures? Work that into your study habits. If you're having trouble memorizing a concept, write a catchy jingle about it (or write lyrics to the tune of your favorite song); choreograph a representative dance; draw a comic. The sillier and more outrageous, the better; most people tend to remember silly things more than they remember boring things.
 - Use mnemonics (memory aids). Rearrange the information is a sequence that's meaningful to you. For example, if one wants to remember the notes of the treble clef lines in music, remember the mnemonic Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge = E, G, B, D, F. It's much easier to remember a sentence than a series of random letters.[21] You can also build a memory palace or Roman room to memorize lists like the thirteen original colonies in America, in chronological order. If the list is short, link the items together using an image in your mind.
 - Organize the information with a mind map. The end result of mapping should be a weblike structure of words and ideas that are somehow related in the writer's mind.
 - Use visualization skills. Construct a movie in your mind that illustrates the concept you're trying to remember, and play it several times over. Imagine every little detail.
 Use your senses--how does it smell? Look? Feel? Sound? Taste?



Preak things into smaller parts. One way to study is to break things into smaller sections. This helps you learn the information bit by bit instead of trying to understand everything at once. You can group things by topic, keywords, or any other method that makes sense to you. The key is to lessen how much information you learn at one time so you can focus on learning that material before moving on.



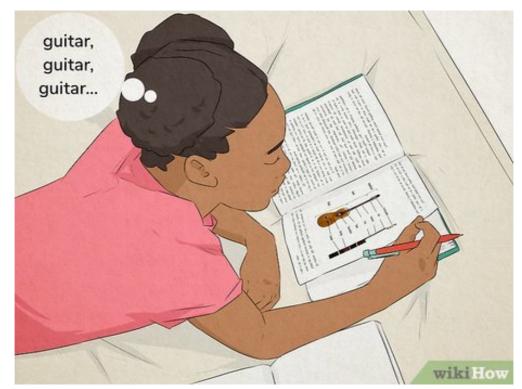
Make a study sheet. Try to condense the information you will need into one sheet, or two if absolutely necessary. Bring it around with you and look at it whenever you have downtime during the days leading up to the test. Take your notes and the chapters and organize it into related topics and pull out the most important concepts.[22]

• If you type it up onto the computer, you can get a lot more control over your layout by changing font sizes, margin spaces, or bullet lists. This can help if you are a visual learner.

Part 4 of 4: Studying More Efficiently



- **Take breaks.** [23] If you are studying for a few hours at a time, take 5-minute breaks every half hour or so. This helps your joints by moving them around after sitting for a long while; it also helps your mind relax, which can help you more effectively remember the material. This also helps keep you from losing focus.
 - Do something physically active to get your blood flowing and make you more alert. Do a few jumping jacks, run around your house, play with the dog, do some squats, or whatever it takes. Do just enough to get yourself pumped, but not worn out.
 - Try integrating standing into your studying. This may mean walking around the table as you recite the information to yourself or standing against the wall as you read your notes.[24]



2 Use a keyword to refocus yourself. Find a keyword related to what you are studying, and whenever you lose concentration, feel distracted, or your mind wanders to something else, start saying that keyword repeatedly in your mind until you come back to the topic at hand. The keyword in this technique is not a single, fixed word but keeps changing according to your study or work. There are no rules to select the keyword and whichever word the person feels that it will bring back his concentration can be used as a keyword.

• For example, when you are reading an article about the guitar, the keyword *guitar* can be used. While reading, whenever you feel distracted or not able to understand or concentrate, start saying the keyword *guitar*, *guitar*, *guitar*, *guitar*, *guitar* until your mind comes back to the article and then you can continue your reading.



- Take good notes in class. When in class, make sure you take the best notes you can. This doesn't mean going for neatness or writing everything in complete sentences. You want to catch all the important information. Sometimes, you may write down a term the teacher says, then go home and copy the definition out of your textbook. Try to write down as much as you can.
 - Taking good notes in class will force you to stay alert and pay attention to everything that is going on in the class. It'll also help keep you from falling asleep.
 - Use abbreviations. This helps you so that you can quickly jot down words without spelling anything out. Try coming up with your own abbreviation system, or use common ones like *b/t* for *between*, *bc* for *because*, *wo* for *without*, and *cd* for *could*.
 - Ask questions in class as they pop into your brain, or make a contribution to the class discussion. Another way to question or make a connection is to jot it in the margin of your notes. You can look the question up when you get home, or you can piece together the connection when you are studying that day.[25]



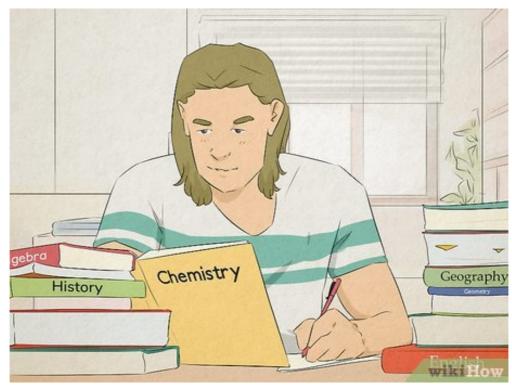
Rewrite your notes at home. When you take notes, focus on recording the information over understanding or neatness. Rewrite your notes as soon after the class as possible, while the material is fresh in your mind so that you can fill in any gaps completely from memory. The process of rewriting your notes is a more active approach to studying by making you actively engage your mind with the information. You can easily zone out if you're just reading. Writing them makes you think about the information.[26]

- That doesn't mean you shouldn't try to understand or organize your notes at all; just
 don't waste time doing something in class that you can figure out or neaten up at
 home. Consider your in-class notes a "rough draft." Try to refrain from copying
 everything down from your teacher's slides.
- You may find it easier to keep two notebooks--one for your "rough draft" notes, and another for your rewritten notes.
- Some people type their notes, but others find that handwriting enhances their ability to remember the notes.
- The more paraphrasing you do, the better. Same goes for drawing. If you're studying anatomy, for example, "re-draw" the system you're studying from memory.

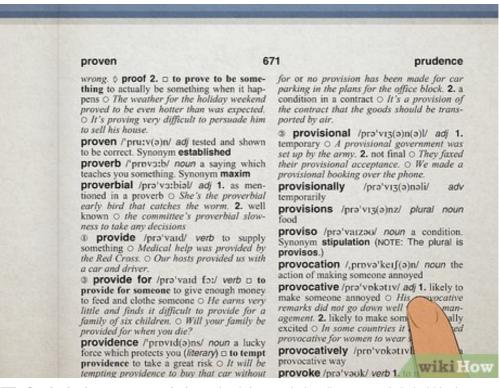


Make things interesting. Logical arguments will not give you motivation to study. Thinking, "if I study hard, I will get into a good university and get a good job," will not interest you. Find something interesting in what you study. Try to find the beauty of every subject, and most importantly, try to link it with the events of your life and things that interest you.

- This linking may be conscious, like performing chemical reactions, physical
 experiments, or manual mathematics calculations in order to prove a formula, or
 unconscious, like going to the park, looking at the leaves, and thinking, "Hmm, let me
 review the parts of the leaf we learned in bio class last week."
- Use your creativity to make stuff up. Try making stories to go along with the information
 you are studying. For example, try to write a story with all subjects starting with S, all
 objects starting with O, and no verbs containing V. Try creating a connected story with
 vocabulary words, historical figures, or other keywords.[27]



- **Study hard subjects first.** Start with the most difficult subjects or concepts at the beginning of your study session. That way you have enough time to study them and you are more energetic and alert. Save the easier stuff for later.[28]
 - Learn the most important facts first. Don't just read the material from beginning to end.
 Stop to memorize each new fact as you come to it. New information is acquired much more easily when you can relate it to material that you already know. Don't spend a lot of time studying things that won't be on the test. Focus all your energy on the important information.



TStudy the important vocabulary. Look for vocabulary lists or words in bold in the chapter. Find out if your textbook has a vocabulary section, a glossary, or a list of terms and make sure that you understand these completely. You don't have to memorize them, but whenever there is an important concept in a particular field, there is usually a special term to refer to it. Learn these terms, and be able to use them easily, and you will have gone a long way towards mastering the subject itself.



Make a study group. Get 3-4 friends or classmates together and have everyone bring over their flash cards. Pass them around and quiz each other. If anyone is unclear on a concept, take turns explaining them to each other. Better yet, turn your study session into a game like Trivial Pursuit.

- Divide concepts among the members and have each member teach or explain the concept to the rest of the group.
- Divide lectures among the group and have each group summarize the key concepts.
 They can present it to the group or create an outline or 1-page summary for the rest of the group.
- Develop a weekly study group. Spend each week covering a new topic. That way you study throughout the semester instead of just at the end.
- Make sure they are people who are actually interested in studying.



Expert Q&A

Question

How can I teach myself to study?



Jai Flicker
Academic Tutor
Expert Answer

Use studying as a self-knowledge exercise to see what works and what doesn't. For example, a very common practice is creating flashcards. Some people jump to it and love the idea of flashcards as a practical study tool. Others resist flashcards and may prefer typing out or rereading their notes. It's all a lesson in what works for you.

Helpful 19 Not Helpful 3

Do you have any tips on memorizing every lesson?



Community Answer

Pay attention in class. Sit near the front and avoid getting distracted. Try to follow each lesson carefully, and learn in class. Take quick notes every class, and make sure that they are short and to the point. At the end of the class, read back over your notes to see if they all make sense, and try to memorise and learn them.

Helpful 861 Not Helpful 96

The article says to turn off all devices, but also to play background music. Which one should I do?



Community Answer

It depends on if you see the device as a distraction, or if music helps you concentrate. If music and the device will distract you, keep it off. If music helps you study, play it. You can also take small breaks to listen to music if you get stressed out by studying.

Helpful 234 Not Helpful 26

What are some tips for avoiding distractions while studying?



Community Answer

Put all electronics in one room away from your study area. Make the study area comfortable and peaceful. Have snacks to hand. Ensure that all the textbooks and notes are within reach. Turn off your phone so that you cannot hear it ringing or pinging. Take care that any view you have isn't causing you to stare out the window instead of concentrate.

Helpful 557 Not Helpful 74

Question

How can I find a good place to study?



Community Answer

A desk in your bedroom is often a good place to study. Make sure that you have good lighting, a comfy chair and a bit of peace and quiet. Otherwise, the school library or local library is another good place to study, or if your school has 'afterschool study' sessions sign up for those.

Helpful 596 Not Helpful 78

How can I get myself in the mood for studying?



Community Answer

Think about how happy your parents and teacher will be with you because of studying. Print inspirational quotes on paper and make them tiny like 4 by 4 perimeter then place them in you study book so when you reach that place read them and keep studying. You can also award yourself by giving yourself a piece of candy or five-minute break every time you memorize something properly.

Helpful 644 Not Helpful 92

What are some tips I can use to stop procrastinating and get to studying?



Community Answer

Find sources of motivation. Unless you don't feel the need or pressure to review the topic you learned that day itself, you will procrastinate. Always choose the best option. Sacrifice your sleep, peace and relaxation for two days and not perform well, or study little by little every day and relax on the last day and perform well. Which one will you choose?

Helpful 553 Not Helpful 73

How do I study for long hours?



Community Answer

Studying for long hours is not effective. Study no more than 45 minutes, and then take a small break for 5 - 10 minutes.

Helpful 231 Not Helpful 39

What should I do if I become sleepy when I sit at my study table?



Community Answer

Try changing your surroundings - go somewhere that is not so comfortable. Temperature can also play a big part in keeping you awake. If coldness makes you sleepy, study somewhere warm, and vice versa.

Helpful 242 Not Helpful 33

What is the best way to go over a large amount of notes in one day?



Community Answer

Split up your notes into relevant topics, or subheadings, to stop the amount you have to complete being so overwhelming. Turn off electronics and get rid of any distractions that will prevent you from working to your maximum potential. If you can, take short breaks between study sessions to relax and refresh.

Helpful 325 Not Helpful 47

https://www.wikihow.com/video/7/76/Study+Step+0+Version+3.360p.mp4



Tips

- Most textbooks have a chapter review at the end of each chapter. You should take
 advantage of the chapter review as it is a good way of quizzing yourself about what
 you know and what you don't understand.
- Rather than just memorizing what you've learned, you should also make sure you
 understand it enough that you can explain it to a person who knows nothing of the
 subject.
- Keep an agenda or simply just a notebook to see where you need to be in your courses.
- When you study, you should have some background noises. If it is too quiet, it will
 be hard to learn, and you will probably space out. If it seems stressful when you
 study, take a deep breathe in, then breathe out, because you're probably not
 breathing and holding your air in.
- Organise your space and have anything you need by your side so you won't have to get up or waste your time to search for it.
- Switch off your mobile phones while studying.
- Studying with a partner who is as serious about the subject as you can be a good
 motivator to work harder. Organize the study session into parts, review notes,
 outline the chapter, and discuss concepts. (Try to teach it to each other so that you
 are sure you both get it.)
- Make sure you understand the concept you're studying about. Otherwise, it may be more difficult to understand what you are studying.
- When taking notes at school, make them neat and colorful, so that when you get home to study them it is a little bit more fun.
- Always study for the knowledge, not just for the grades, because if you are well-versed in the subject then you can score high in an exam about it.
- Take your notes wherever you go a good tip some people use is to study on your transportation to school the week of that test (ex. Bus to school).
- Instead of scanning your notes, read them word for word to make sense of the lesson. Try reading shorter versions of your notes, or make it simpler, to be less time consuming.
- It can be helpful to take a 5-minute break if you're having a hard time focusing. Stretch, listen to your favorite song, or take a walk to refresh your mood.
- Some people learn best in more than one way, so it may be helpful to combine
 methods. For example, if you are a visual learner and auditory learner, you can
 watch videos on the subject you are studying. This can also make studying a bit
 more interesting. If something really grabs your attention, it is more likely to stick in
 your mind.
- Don't procrastinate- start studying early to avoid stress. Get used to not
 procrastinating. This is a bad habit. You'll be happy that you studied immediately
 instead of procrastinating in the end.
- Ask doubts to the teacher whenever required, don't be nervous to ask!
- If you are studying at home and get any doubt, ask your parents or search the internet.
- Circle all the questions in which you have any doubt ask those and make running notes for the answers and explanation.

Marnings

- Watch out for inclinations to procrastinate. For example, are you reading this article
 instead of studying? All your efforts will not lead to success, and if you procrastinate,
 you'll end up blaming your tools. To avoid that from happening, try to put away
 whatever that is allowing you to procrastinate, such as a device, social media, etc.
- If you cannot study because you are just too tense, or something is worrying you, it
 may be necessary to gain control of your emotions before you are able to
 successfully study on a regular basis. If you are not able to do this on your own, you
 may need to consult a school counselor.

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About This Article



This article was co-authored by Jai Flicker. Jai Flicker is an Academic Tutor and the CEO and Founder of Lifeworks Learning Center, a San Francisco Bay Area-based business focused on providing tutoring, parental support, test preparation, college essay writing help, and psychoeducational evaluations to help students transform their attitude toward learning. Jai has over 20 years of experience in the education management industry. He holds a BA in Philosophy from the University of California, San Diego. This article has been viewed 4,818,747 times.

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