

What is your personal learning style?

The first secret to making learning easier and faster is understanding your personal learning style. The second secret is to know the most efficient learning style of the task you have chosen to learn. When these two styles match, you will have virtually effortless learning and recall.

ABOUT THE THREE STYLES

If you are an **AUDITORY** learner, you may wish to use tapes. Tape lectures to help you fill in the gaps in your notes. But do listen and take notes, reviewing notes frequently. Sit in the lecture hall or classroom where you can hear well. After you have read something, summarize it and recite it aloud.

If you're a **VISUAL** learner, then by all means be sure that you look at all study materials. Use charts, maps, filmstrips, notes and flashcards. Practice visualizing or picturing words/concepts in your head. Write out everything for frequent and quick visual review.

If you are a **TACTILE** learner, trace words as you are saying them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes will be very important. Make study sheets.

How to Study in Five Steps.

Step 1: Where do I study?

If you find yourself repeatedly being interrupted by outside distractions such as friends, phone calls, or pets, you need to find a way to curtail or even remove these annoyances completely. An easy way for you to see how much time and energy you do drain off from your study time via these interruptions would be for you to take an accurate baseline observation of your study times for one week. This means that each time you study, you should write down how long you worked, what subjects you covered, where you studied, how many and what kind of interruptions you had and how much work you actually accomplished. Once you have this information, you can use it to analyze your study habits. You may discover for example, that you managed to read more or do more problems at a particular time of the day. Whatever the results are, you now have some concrete evidence on where you weak points and your strong points truly are and you can then decide what you want to change.

Step 2: How comfortable do I want to be when I study?

All of us know the theory that the best study position is to be seated in front of a bare desk in a straight back chair. Sometimes this works well, but often it doesn't. Most of us have trouble staying in one position for a long time without getting tired - and muscle fatigue will interfere with concentration. Common sense will tell us that it is important to be comfortable in order to study but not too comfortable. Lying on your bed, for example, can encourage falling asleep. We suggest

changing position often enough to avoid muscle fatigue and perhaps even learning a couple of exercises to relax neck and shoulder muscles during long periods of study. (Note: a good place to study that does have comfortable, padded chairs, desks, and a quiet atmosphere is Clemons Library.)

Step 3: How do I get settled enough to begin work?

Before you set out for the library or settle yourself in your study corner at home, check over your assignments and your materials to make sure that you have all you need. All too often students waste valuable time because they have to find pencils, a particular notebook, or a book that just isn't at hand. We suggest that you make a habit of keeping your homework materials and books together in one special part of your room or apartment rather than scattering things wherever they happen to fall from your hands. In addition, designate a particular spot and make it a practice to utilize that area for study at all times. If you only take study materials with you to this study area, you can set up an association in your mind between that spot and studying which will make it progressively easier for you to sit down and start working. You are making a good habit for yourself.

Step 4: It sure is hard to concentrate!

If you are like most students, you probably find it difficult at times to concentrate on a particular task for very long. Your mind may wander. You may even have trouble becoming settled enough to attempt to study. Although there is no magic solution for this, application of some simple behavioral techniques may be very helpful. Again, the first thing to do is to figure out what is happening when you "don't concentrate". Are you daydreaming about things that are happening in your social life? Are you instead worrying - that is, running over and over lists of things you have to do and thinking about how far behind you are? Are you simply doing other things - like reading the newspaper or writing a letter instead of getting down to the homework? Once you have pinpointed what you are doing instead of working, try and work out a way of controlling yourself. This is generally a very individual thing since you know the most about yourself. However, we can suggest some examples that you can use as a guideline.

Begin by making a contract with yourself. This means that you tell yourself what you want to do, when you want to do it, and how you will reward yourself for doing it. Sometimes finishing homework is a reward in itself, but other times it really helps to promise your self something more tangible - like a soft drink, an ice cream cone, a phone call to a friend, etc. You might, for example, say to yourself: "Tonight at 7 o'clock I will go to the library and I will study Spanish and math. I will try to study for 50 minutes and then take a ten minute break, but if I find my mind wandering, I will get up from the desk and walk out into the hall, calm myself down, and then return to studying." You should then work out a reward system for yourself contingent upon your needs and your earning potential. If you do sit for the desired amount of time, you should reward yourself according to your system. The reward should be an immediate one - one that you can give yourself as soon as you finish studying. A reward such as a movie next week may not be as powerful as even a bit of a candy bar now!

Step 5: What if I just procrastinate a lot?

We suggest some of the following counter-measures for procrastination:

1. List all of the things you have to accomplish and check them off, as they are finished. This is a way of rewarding yourself because you can see that tasks are actually being done.
 2. Try piling your books and notebooks on a desk or nearby table so you can see the pile getting smaller as you go through it until the desk or table is cleared.
 3. Do those subjects you don't enjoy as much first so you can look forward to doing your favorites (such as Human Biology).
 4. You can also set mock deadlines for writing assignments so that you have a rough draft done before the day the work is actually due. This gives you time to edit your paper and even rewrite sections if you choose. This also makes you think ahead about a paper and helps you avoid regrets about how terrific an idea could have been if you had time to work on it.
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Improve Your Studying Skills

Above All, Review Regularly and Plan To Study Ahead, So That the Night Before an Exam, All You Do Is Review Material. Avoid All - Nighters! These Study Tips include:

1. [Good Study Habits](#)
 2. [Preparing for Exams](#)
 3. [Ten Traps of Studying](#)
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Study Habits

1. Decide what to study (reasonable task) and how long or how many (chapters, pages, problems, etc.). Set and stick to deadlines.
 2. Do difficult tasks first. For procrastination, start off with an easy, interesting aspect of the project.
 3. Have special places to study. Take into consideration lighting, temperature, and availability of materials.
 4. Study 50 minutes, and then take a 10 minute break. Stretch, relax, have an energy snack.
 5. Allow longer, "massed" time periods for organizing relationships and concepts, outlining, and writing papers. Use shorter, "spaced" time intervals for rote memorization, review, and self-testing. Use odd moments for recall/review.
 6. If you get tired or bored, switch task/activity, subject, or environment. Stop studying when you are no longer being productive.
 7. Do rote memory tasks and review, especially details, just before you fall asleep.
 8. Study with a friend. Quiz each other, compare notes and predicted test questions.
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Preparing for Exams

1. **When the Exam is Announced:**
 - Find out what the exam will or won't cover.
 - Find out what kind of exam it will be: objective, short essay, long essay, or a combination.

2. Exam Study:

- Prepare summary sheets for large amounts of lecture and textbook notes.
- Spend several nights before an exam making a final review of notes.
- Stress the following areas in your review:
 1. **Points emphasized in class or in the text;**
 2. **Areas the professor has advised for study;**
 3. **Questions in study guides, past quizzes, and reviews at the end of textbook chapters.**

3. Preparation by Type of Exam:

- **Objective exams:** Study as if it were an essay exam.
 - Stress specifics:
 - Definitions of key terms and examples;
 - Lists of items;
 - For True/False, write some false statements.
 - **Essay Exams:**
 - Stress concepts.
 - List probable questions.
 - Prepare a good outline answer and practice it.
 - **Problem Exams:**
 - Memorize formulas if needed.
 - Practice problems.
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Ten Traps of Studying

1. **"I Don't Know Where To Begin"** Take Control. Make a list of all the things you have to do. Break your workload down into manageable chunks. Prioritize! Schedule your time realistically. Don't skip classes near an exam -- you may miss a review session. Use that hour in between classes to review notes. Interrupt study time with planned study breaks. Begin studying early, with an hour or two per day, and slowly build as the exam approaches.
2. **"I've Got So Much To Study . . . And So Little Time"**

Preview. Survey your syllabus, reading material, and notes. Identify the most important topics emphasized, and areas still not understood. Previewing saves time, especially with non-fiction reading, by helping you organize and focus in on the main topics. Adapt this method to your own style and study material, but remember, previewing is not an effective substitute for reading.
3. **"This Stuff Is So Dry, I Can't Even Stay Awake Reading It"**

Attack! Get actively involved with the text as you read. Ask yourself, "What is important to remember about this section?" Take notes or underline key concepts. Discuss the material

with others in your class. Study together. Stay on the offensive, especially with material that you don't find interesting, rather than reading passively and missing important points.

4. "I Read It. I Understand It. But I Just Can't Get It To Sink In"

Elaborate. We remember best the things that are most meaningful to us. As you are reading, try to elaborate upon new information with your own examples. Try to integrate what you're studying with what you already know. You will be able to remember new material better if you can link it to something that's already meaningful to you. Some techniques include:

- **Chunking:** An effective way to simplify and make information more meaningful. For example, suppose you wanted to remember the colors in the visible spectrum (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet); you would have to memorize seven "chunks" of information in order. But if you take the first letter of each color, you can spell the name "Roy G. Biv", and reduce the information to the three "chunks".
- **Mnemonics:** Any memory-assisting technique that helps us to associate new information with something familiar. For example, to remember a formula or equation, we may use letters of the alphabet to represent certain numbers. Then we can change an abstract formula into a more meaningful word or phrase, so we'll be able to remember it better. Sound-alike associations can be very effective, too, especially while trying to learn a new language. The key is to create your own links, and then you won't forget them.

5. "I Guess I Understand It"

Test yourself. Make up questions about key sections in notes or reading. Keep in mind what the professor has stressed in the course. Examine the relationships between concepts and sections. Often, simply by changing section headings you can generate many effective questions. For example, a section entitled "Bystander Apathy" might be changed into questions such as: "What is bystander apathy?" "What are the causes of bystander apathy?" and "What are some examples of bystander apathy?"

6. "There's Too Much To Remember"

Organize. Information is recalled better if it is represented in an organized framework that will make retrieval more systematic. There are many techniques that can help you organize new information, including:

- Write **chapter outlines** or summaries; emphasize relationships between sections.
- **Group information** into categories or hierarchies, where possible.
- **Information Mapping.** Draw up a matrix to organize and interrelate material. For example, if you were trying to understand the causes of World War I, you could make a chart listing all the major countries involved across the top, and then list the important issues and events down the side. Next, in the boxes in between, you could describe the impact each issue had on each country to help you understand these complex historical developments.

7. "I Knew It A Minute Ago"

Review. After reading a section, try to recall the information contained in it. Try answering

the questions you made up for that section. If you cannot recall enough, re-read portions you had trouble remembering. The more time you spend studying, the more you tend to recall. Even after the point where information can be perfectly recalled, further study makes the material less likely to be forgotten entirely. In other words, you can't over study. However, how you organize and integrate new information is still more important than how much time you spend studying.

8. **"But I Like To Study In Bed"**

Context. Recall is better when study context (physical location, as well as mental, emotional, and physical state) are similar to the test context. The greater the similarity between the study setting and the test setting, the greater the likelihood that material studied will be recalled during the test.

9. **"Cramming Before A Test Helps Keep It Fresh In My Mind"**

Spacing: Start studying now. Keep studying as you go along. Begin with an hour or two a day about one week before the exam, and then increase study time as the exam approaches. Recall increases as study time gets spread out over time.

10. **"I'm Gonna Stay Up All Night 'til I Get This"**

Avoid Mental Exhaustion. Take short breaks often when studying. Before a test, have a rested mind. When you take a study break, and just before you go to sleep at night, don't think about academics. Relax and unwind, mentally and physically. Otherwise, your break won't refresh you and you'll find yourself lying awake at night. It's more important than ever to take care of yourself before an exam! Eat well, sleep, and get enough exercise.

Website Addresses for Further Research

www.howtolearn.com/personal.html

www.wsrv.clas.virginia.edu/~rjh9u/howstudy.html

www.sp.uconn.edu/~phlo/vc/study/Improve.html

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