



Study Strategies & Best Practices

Preparing for Class:

- Read and outline the chapter before class. This allows you to add important information to your outline without having to write down everything your professor says.
- Have a separate notebook or binder for each class to keep all of your notes organized.
- Take notes in the margins of your textbooks with questions, personal experiences that relate, and specific information you found interesting or important to remember.
- Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and prepare you to receive new information from the professor.

During Class:

- For each class, sit in the same seat every day, especially when you have a test. Your body will associate this area with learning, and your concentration will improve.
- Add illustrations to your notes. For example, a timeline can be created from historical dates, a scientific class system can be made into a diagram, and statistical information can be transformed into a graph or chart.
- Try creating a color-coded note system to help you remember important information. For example, Yellow = people, Green = places, and Orange = dates.
- Keep your attention focused on what the teacher is saying. Listen for signals of important things to remember, such as "The most important point..." and "Remember that..." Be sure to include any information the teacher repeats or writes on the board in your notes.
- Create a shorthand method of note-taking that allows you to write more quickly, using abbreviations (*med* instead of *medical*) and symbols in place of whole words (% instead of *percent*).
- Place a ? next to any information you write in your notes but are unsure of its meaning. Talk to your professor or classmates later to clarify the details.
- Listen actively and practice AAA listening:
 - **Attitude (maintain a positive attitude and an open mind)**
 - **Attention (strive to focus and pay attention)**
 - **Adjustment (be flexible, go with the flow of the lecture)**
- Don't try to write everything down. Listen for key points. Copy information on the board. If the instructor writes it down, it is probably important.
- Swap notes with a classmate and compare to see what things they may have noted that you missed, and vice versa.
- If you need more time to take notes, ask your professor if you can record the lecture so you can listen to the lecture again, and ensure you take notes on all of the information.

Your Study Atmosphere

- Identify a study space where the bulk of your time spent in the space is used solely for study purposes. After a week of using the same space for the same activity (to study), your body will associate that space with studying, and you will be able to focus more easily.



- Schedule study times, if possible, in the same place at the same time. Make a calendar of your daily routine, including meals, class, and sleep time, to find hidden free time that can be used for a quick review of notes.
- Be aware of your best time of day and situations that work for you and study then. If you enjoy hanging out with your friends, schedule time to study whenever they are busy. If you study your notes before the class starts, after class, or at the end of the day. These are a few examples of study techniques.
- Turn off your cell phone and computer notifications during study times to reduce distractions.
- Take consistent short breaks during lengthy study times: 10 minutes for every hour of study and 5 minutes for every half-hour.
- Keep your study space well-lit. If your study area is lit by a high ceiling light, use a smaller lamp to illuminate your workspace. This will reduce eye strain and headaches.
- When studying, keep a notebook handy to write down any distracting thoughts. This practice ensures you won't forget other concerns while helping you remain focused on the task at hand.
- If you choose to study with friend(s), ensure you are on the same page about how you are going to study/hold each other accountable to stay on track with studying.

Exam Preparation Tips

- The night before a test, after studying, make a one-page study guide with important information. Quickly review this material before the test.
- Don't stay up all night cramming for a test the next day. Aside from being too sleepy to think effectively, your mind generally will only remember the first and last 30 minutes of what you studied. Set up specific times during the day or over the week to study rather than cramming at the last minute.
- Limit distractions! Put your phone away and turn off your music.
- Know what will be covered on the test and how the questions are going to be asked (i.e., multiple choice, true/false, essay, matching), and the point value of each question. The test structure may suggest study strategies or study aids. Also, understand the consequences of each exam. How is this test going to affect my overall grade?
- Gather all the materials needed for the exam. Do you need #2 pencils? Take a couple. Do you need an erasable pen for possible essay questions? If your calculator is not solar-powered, do you have good batteries? Do you need to take paper or a blue book? Getting to a class and realizing that you are not prepared simply increases anxiety and interferes with performance.
- Be on time! If you are commuting, leave early enough to deal with potential traffic delays and parking issues. This is one more way to keep anxiety under control.
- Sit in a quiet spot. Talking a great deal with other students right before the exam about the material on which you will be tested can interfere with your prior learning. You may want to glance over key terms or mnemonic devices one last time, but do not try to learn any new information at this time.
- If you need more time while taking exams, ensure that you talk to your professor and your university's Academic Support Office in advance.



Test-Taking Tips

- As soon as you receive the test, flip it over, and quickly write down any information you are likely to forget (called a *memory dump*). Refer to these notes throughout the test as needed.
- Read over the whole test before starting, ensuring you understand all directions. See what types of questions there are and develop a plan regarding how much time to spend on each section. Make sure you know whether you have to answer all questions or only a certain number of questions. Also, determine if you get credit for all correct answers (thus making it worth your while to guess if you are unsure of an answer), or if a certain percentage will be counted against you for incorrect answers.
- Explore all the questions, and then begin with the ones you can answer most readily. Answering what you are sure of first will help you bring out all you know and remember. Jot down any key words or mnemonics that go with particular questions right away. Then you can come back later and complete these questions. Identify doubtful answers by marks in the margins and recheck these as time permits after all questions have been answered. If you do not know the answer, put a mark in the margin next to the question and return to it later. You may find the answer hidden in other questions as you go through the test. Stay focused on all of the questions.
- Objective test questions are based on recognition and recall. Try remembering a forgotten fact by some association. Think of the book in which you read it, the page, or an illustration. Possibly stating the question in a whisper may cause recall. If you can't recall it, drop it and come back to it later.

General Tips

- Each night, rewrite or type the notes you took in that day's class, reinforcing key concepts while also making sloppy writing legible and changing abbreviations to whole words and shortened sentences to full-length ones. Also, be sure to answer any questions you had from class. Review your notes 10 minutes each day to move the information to long-term memory.
- Create pre-tests using quizzes or old tests. Set personal deadlines on major assignments at least 3 days early and write them down in your calendar. Also, write a reminder of the assignment at least one week prior to the due date. This will not only help you remember but will also encourage you to complete the task on time, if not early. If your textbook came with an interactive CD or website information for supplemental instruction, use it! Often these materials include chapter study guides and sample tests.
- Break large assignments or projects down into smaller steps. Tackle short, easy-to-accomplish tasks first.
- Form a supportive study group. Declare to each other what you intend to accomplish before each meeting. Compare your notes to be sure you didn't leave out any pertinent information.
- Trick yourself into getting started. If you have a paper due next week, say, "I'm not really going to outline this paper today. I'll just spend five minutes writing anything that comes into my head about the assigned topic." You might find yourself writing great ideas or completing the paper!
- Divide information into chunks! Your mind will remember smaller chunks of related information better than it would remember an entire list (i.e., break a group of 15 items into three lists of related items).



- Focus on understanding what is being taught rather than just memorizing facts. Apply what you're learning to real-life situations. Finding these applications will make your studying more exciting and will help you remember what you need to know.
- Don't be afraid to ask your instructor for help. Make note of professors' office hours and visit them early in the semester so they can begin to get to know you.

Additional Resources:

- The Fraternity Service Center [Campus Resources List](#)
- Tutoring centers
- Writing Labs
- Office of Academic/Student Success