

Tips for efficient studying

Stressing out over impending tests and exams is counter-productive – it can cause you to “freeze” on a test and has a negative impact on your health. Using proper study techniques will remove the stress factor and improve your grades – and your health!

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Tests and exams can be very stressful. Being prepared removes the stress, gives you a clear head and raises your confidence level. Using proper study methods will help you achieve the best results. Try some of this advice to help you maximize your study time.

Rewrite for review

Rewriting your notes is good way to review. By rewriting the notes taken in class, you will refresh your memory of the discussion, perhaps even recall topics you forgot to note, as well as give you a better understanding of the material. The physical act of writing helps reinforce the information in your brain.

Stay on schedule

It helps to have an achievable plan before you start studying. Schedule your study time so it doesn't have to compete with a 10-hour day at work or a major project deadline. If you have carved out specific time for studying your materials, it's less likely an unexpected event will throw you off track. It also doesn't help to try to study when you're tired – it's less likely you'll retain the material for the test.

Use your schedule to plan by subject as well. Organize the material so you get the easy stuff out of the way first so you have ample time to work on more difficult material.

Don't overload yourself

Cramming the night before is just about useless. You can only take in so much information at a time and it will be impossible to memorize it all in a short amount of time. Plus, you'll be tired when you take the test so it's even harder to recall what you've learned.

When you take in too much information at once, it's impossible to memorize it at all. Studying a little at a time, making sure you understand it, then going over it again, is the best way to retain the information. This is especially true with things like history and subjects dealing with theory – memorization is achieved by repetition.

Different subject, different approach

Different subjects require different approaches to your method of study. Math exams call for you to work on problems. You can't just read over the chapter as you would for a history class.

The different subjects, such as history and math, are retained in different areas of your brain. Adjust your method of study of how you will need to complete your test. For math, practice solving the problems –if you can't solve it beforehand, you won't be able to solve it on the test. For social studies, research the particular topic so you can show you know what you're talking about when writing about it on the test.

Adjust your setting

Ask yourself "Where and how do I study the best?" Your concentration level could be at its best when you're sitting in your bed or, perhaps, you require a desk to keep your focus. Identify what is a distraction for you and what is an advantage to improving your attention. There are some who require complete silence. Others need "background noise" such as music or the television playing on low. Be careful, though, with the television. It could take away your attention when your favorite show comes on!

Lighting

Statistics say that 75% of men who study in dim lighting will focus better. For 90 percent of women, a brighter room with little noise is best for their focus.

Take time to chill

Breaks need to be scheduled into your study time. Your body needs a break from sitting and a short break will give you time to let things simmer in your brain for a few minutes. You'll be better able to make any revisions or start a new area in the material when you're relaxed. But keep the break short – it's easy to walk away and not walk back.

Review

When you've finished a page of your notes or a certain section of the material, stop and ask yourself questions before moving onto the next. Make sure you understand the material – ask yourself questions about it and say the answers out loud. By saying it out loud, as though explaining it to another person, helps drill the material deeper into your brain.