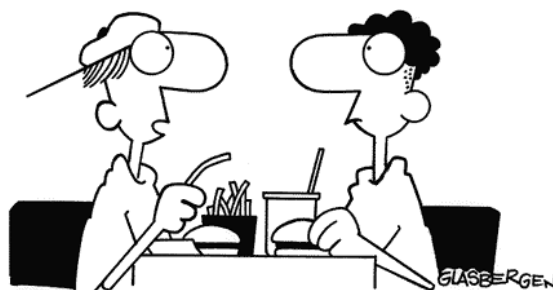


HOW TO STUDY EFFECTIVELY

Effective Study Practices

Getting the most out of your studies is very much an individual affair. There is no one way that will always produce the best results. It's more about plain old determination than great intelligence! Lack of success may have more to do with poorly developed study skills or starting to work too late, rather than intellectual ability. We can offer a few ideas for effective studying but it is up to you to find what combinations of strategies will work best for your learning style.



"I forgot to make a back-up copy of my brain, so everything I learned last semester was lost."

Factors that support an effective study routine

Independence in learning

Get organised early. Catching up can be difficult or even impossible.

Learning is your responsibility; no-one forces you to learn at university. Showing independence in your approach to learning is therefore an important aspect of effective study. Independence does not mean you have all the answers or that you will never need to ask for help. It means that you are willing to work out things, not waiting for someone to feed you the answers. Part of being an independent learner is the capacity to think critically. To think critically, you must be willing to consider and evaluate ideas and theories that are new, rather than simply accepting them because they are part of the course content.

HOW TO STUDY EFFECTIVELY

Self-organisation

You learn more by studying for an hour a day than by studying for ten hours on a weekend - and it takes less time!

Another important aspect of effective study is the ability to organise yourself and your study environment in a way that best suits your learning. Perhaps the biggest issue facing university students, particularly in their first year, is the problem of organising themselves to use their time in a structured and planned manner.

- ▶ Your study area is best limited to just this - study. If you devote this workspace solely for study then with each session it will take you less conscious effort to settle down to some concentrated study.
- ▶ Know when and how you study best. What part of the day or night is your preferred study time? Do you need complete silence or some music playing whilst you study?
- ▶ How long can you concentrate? An hour might be the optimum time for you to study before taking a break. Or can you study continuously for two or three hours before taking a longer break?

Actively engaging

You need to recognise what you do and don't know, and get your lecturers and fellow students to help you with what you don't know.

Learning is most effective when you have an active (or deep) approach, instead of a passive (or shallow) approach. A passive process (like watching TV) requires little or no action on your part and information is mostly soon forgotten. In an active approach to learning, you focus on maximising your understanding of the whole topic. Effective study requires you to become an active participant in the study process.

HOW TO STUDY EFFECTIVELY

There are many methods and techniques that allow you to develop an active approach to study. Some suggestions are given below:

- ▶ Preview course material by scanning through textbook chapters to pick up on themes and ideas. Ask yourself questions and make notes as you read (in your own words). This will mean that you come to lectures with some grasp of the material before the lecturer discusses it.
- ▶ Take lecture notes in abbreviated form, so the note taking does not interfere with active and critical listening. Don't attempt to write out full sentences, or every step of a derivation. Fill those in soon afterwards (preferably that night) when you revise your notes.
- ▶ Ask questions in lectures, tutorials and labs and discuss the course material with fellow students and lecturers.
- ▶ Get together with friends and form a peer study group.
- ▶ Re-read important material and review your own notes on a regular basis. Every so often, at the completion of each topic or chapter, write your own summary of the important parts. These summaries will serve you well as study aids when you prepare for exams. Concept maps are a good way to structure a summary.
- ▶ 'Reading' is not the same as 'studying'. Studying involves continually questioning, analysing, looking for logical connections, relating the material to previous study and to previous experience.
- ▶ Make sense of new knowledge and develop understanding, rather than simply learning facts. Look for what is of significance - key concepts and principles and relationships between ideas.
- ▶ Employ higher order thinking skills - clarify problems and think critically. Find the links between conceptual knowledge and real-world applications.
- ▶ Accept the challenge that learning involves actively constructing knowledge for yourself.
- ▶ Remember - good study habits throughout the semester make it easier to study for exams.

You should be actively engaged in the classroom.

Ask questions in class!

***Approach your lecturers with questions;
they will be pleased to see that you are interested.***

The 7 Ways to Success in First Year

- ▶ **Go to all your lectures, labs and tutorials.**
Lectures, labs and tutorials are learning 'opportunities'. You'll put yourself at a disadvantage come exam time if you haven't seen the lecturer's view of what's important in the course material.
- ▶ **Go to see lecturers and tutors to ask questions.**
Don't be shy or think you are being a nuisance. They want to help and to see you succeed. Get help from lecturers, tutors and/or your friends - sooner, rather than later.
- ▶ **Form a peer study group.**
A study group is a good way to get to know people when you first start uni and group learning can be very effective. This may mean setting a formal time to meet every week. It might just mean making sure you have a circle of friends you can ask for help.
- ▶ **Be disciplined with your study and learn to self-organise.**
Organising your own study time amongst your other activities is one of the most valuable skills learned at uni.
- ▶ **Take advantage of all the free academic help that's available.**
Make sure you know all the help that departments offer - e.g. Duty Tutoring in Physics. Find out how to learn more effectively by taking one of the workshops run by *The Learning Centre*.
- ▶ **Learn how to use the various libraries on campus.**
It's important to find out early how to retrieve information efficiently, much of it on-line.
- ▶ **Become computer literate.**
You don't have to be an expert but you'll have to use computers throughout your degree and later in your workplace, so get familiar early on.

Visit the Learning Physics Help Page at:
www.physics.usyd.edu.au/learningphysics/