

Study Skills

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Study Tips

- Make sure you are processing the information as deeply as possible.
 - Know the difference between *familiarity* (“Oh yeah, I remember reading that.”) and *recall* (“I can recite that information without looking.”)
 - Think about how you prove to yourself that you know something – do you have to say it out loud? Re-draw a chart? Explain it to someone else?
 - The more times you see it and think about it in a slightly different way, the deeper you are processing. Pre-reading before a lecture and review/organization after a lecture are very helpful.
 - Use *elaboration* to help you remember. Link the information to what you already know and make it meaningful.
 - Reorganize the information using charts, outlines, or diagrams.
 - Use vivid visualization.
 - Act out a situation where the information would be needed.
 - Organize your studying by layering. Learn the major, overarching concepts first. Then learn the big categories under those major concepts. Follow up with the major headings, sub-headings, etc. Learn successively smaller layers of details as you have time.
 - Use practice exams/questions from study aids to help guide your studying, rather than saving them for the night before the exam. Use the questions to show you where you need read/watch more. Look at both the right and the wrong answers for clues about what is important to study.
 - Cumulative review, rather than cramming is important – there is no major secret to learning other than TIME and REPETITION.



Reading

- Take care with highlighting. Rather than highlighting as you read, which can easily become mindless, highlight after you have finished a paragraph or section. Take a minute to think about the most important information and go back to highlight it.
- After finishing a section, think about some possible exam questions that might be asked about that section. Try to predict how the question might be worded, what the correct answer would be, and what misleading answers would be.



Your textbook should not look like this!

Lectures

- Prepare in advance to get the most out of lectures
 - Pre-read by looking over the major concepts. Pre-reading should involve a basic skimming of the material and take about 10-15 minutes.
 - Try to get a basic understanding of new words/ideas.
 - Think about what might be most difficult to understand in lecture and where you will really need to pay attention.
 - Have an idea of what your notes will look like ahead of time.
 - How will notes be organized?
 - Will you try to write everything down or try to pull out only the most important information?
- During lecture
 - Sit where distractions will be minimized (e.g. looking at what others are doing; temptation to check email).
 - If you are not feeling focused or find a section difficult to understand, make sure to note where you stopped paying attention so you can go back to it later.



- Briefly review notes within a day or two
 - Mark what was clear and what needs clarification
 - Reorganize , restate, reformat – this will help you process at a deeper level.
 - Integrate/cross-reference notes with previous lectures, books, other study aids.
- Think about your own personal learning style – do you get more out of lecture if you read beforehand, or do you get more out of reading if you hear the lecture first?

Study Atmosphere

- Know where you learn best.
 - Do you need absolute silence or a bit of noise?
 - Do you need to go somewhere or is studying in your room best? Should you go to same place every day or does variety help?
 - Do you focus best sitting at a desk? On the couch? Walking around a room? Writing on a large white board? Try not to use your bed for studying so you can connect it only with relaxation.



Social Studying

- Be thoughtful about whether you are the kind of person who studies better with others, and if so, whom those people might be. Your best friend is not necessarily your best study partner. In fact, studying with someone who is quite different from you may yield better results because you will be getting a new perspective.
- Agree on the goals and norms of the partnership or group.
 - How much preparation is necessary? Are you learning together or are you testing each other?

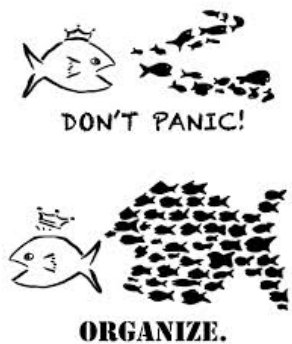
- How will time be spent? Will you actually be going over material together, or do you just need an accountability partner to check in with, but you do not actually want to talk?
- Check in periodically to make sure the partnership/group is still working for everyone.

Know What Your Body Needs While Studying

- When do you need to take a break? How often? Make sure that a break is really a break. Get up, go outside, walk around.
- Keep track of when you get hungry and what you need to eat to give you an energy boost so you can plan ahead with snacks and meal breaks.
- Note your caffeine intake. When do you need it the most? What is the ideal amount but keep you alert, but not jittery? At what time of day do you need to stop drinking caffeine so you can fall asleep easier?

Plan Ahead for Difficulty Focusing

- Know what type of studying is best at different times of day. For example, if you are a morning person, study the hardest material in the morning and keep the evenings for tasks that do not require a lot of attention, but will prepare you for the following day, such as making flashcards or rewriting charts.
- Have strategies to ease yourself into studying when you just do not feel like it or cannot focus. For example, if you cannot focus on reading, do not just sit there, stare at the book, and mentally beat yourself up. Do something that is a bit easier or more enjoyable for you (in terms of study activity and/or content) and then try again in 30 minutes.



Understand Your Learning Style(s)

- Some examples:
 - Visual/graphic
 - Auditory
 - Reading/writing
 - Kinesthetic/movement
 - Interpersonal

- Some websites that can help you in figuring out your learning style and how to match your studying to your needs:
 - <http://www.varklearn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>
 - <http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz>
 - <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/index.shtml>
- Keep in mind that the more modalities you use, the easier it will be to understand, store, and retrieve the information. For example, even if you are primarily an auditory learner, also try to integrate studying graphics or acting out the information. In addition, be flexible and willing to analyze your strategies; change them if they are not working. Give yourself time to adjust to new methods of studying.



If you are concerned about mastering the material, don't hesitate to ask for help. Ask early and ask often! Ask a variety of people for advice, and then follow what suits your needs. Professors, TAs, classmates, colleagues, professional mentors, advising deans, E4C faculty, and, of course, your Education Specialist, are great resources.

Resource Websites:

<http://medicalmnemonics4u.blogspot.com>

<http://ankisrs.net>

<http://picmonic.com/store/medicine/>

<http://blog.firecracker.me/2014/04/23/firecracker-overview/>