



HOW TO

STUDY



OVERVIEW

Before analyzing small tips and tricks, it is important to be aware of the overall process of what it means to study diligently. In an article by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, they divide studying into a cycle of five stages that go chronologically from before the lesson to after the test.



PREVIEW



Review the agenda/syllabus to get insight onto the materials and topics of the coming class. Check class resource pages to read material, take notes on the slideshow, or if left without any class material, think about the past, current, and coming lesson topics and **how they relate to offer context** that would formally be unknown.



SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

Obviously, at the higher education level, attendance in class is not enough. Attendance is a passive and reactionary behavior which depends on the behaviors of others to predict their outcomes. Contrastingly, **participation is assertive and proactionary** which takes education into the control of the student instead of others. Active engagement and listening observes beyond the lesson and seeks connections to overarching topics, the purpose behind principles, and most importantly, takes note of what the teacher's intentionally emphasizing to determine your focus. Note taking is highly recommended but **only is effective if paraphrased** to increase personal relevance and memorization surrounding the topic. However, even the best of students get confused, and **the best, ask specific questions**. Instead of saying "I don't understand it," include questions in notes where you lose focus to allow for deeper exploration and understanding of topics.





REVIEW

No teacher was kidding when they state the importance of time, or rather “freshness” when learning about a new concept. Revisiting notes and class materials right after class allows for instant identification of difficult topics that might need assistance from the teacher or additional time to study. However, the easy problems will evolve into difficult topics if correct precautions are not taken. Revisiting the materials through skimming is ineffective since it embodies a passive action, allowing the text to translate itself to the student. However, annotating and summary increases memorization as it involves proactive engagement from the student and places understanding into the control of the student’s abilities.



STUDY

Studying, as well as the other stages, are not as successful without the combination of the others. To begin, **hours of studying does not equate to abundance of knowledge**. Rather intense, **compact study sessions that last half or a third of an hour** that occur regularly and frequently before the exam date have been proven more effective. Allowing more time to process the information is called distributed practice and it gives the information more time to be memorized as some say it takes at least 7 times to memorize something. In addition, it is **important to create goals, incentives, and reasonable expectations** before beginning the study stage to set yourself up for success and a positive experience that keeps you motivated to repeat in the future and stay disciplined.





REFLECT

Oftentimes, as students, we find ourselves in situations of critical thinking in regards to performance since perfection is inherently unobtainable. Therefore, after the exam, it is **necessary to examine what worked and what did not during the previous stages of the study cycle**. Important questions to ask yourself are, but not limited to: “How reasonable were my expectations of results versus the reality?”, “How balanced and focused were my goals and their execution in my study plan?”, “How has this compared to my previous processes and choices and how did it influence my results?”



After reading this study guide, measure your study process with the cycle to identify missing steps or stages that need growth. When reaching a conclusion, look under the topic(s) that you felt were most lacking in your academic routine to find tips on how to develop those stages.



A grayscale photograph of three students sitting at a table, looking at a laptop. The student on the left is a young man with dark hair, the middle one is a young woman with blonde hair, and the one on the right is a young woman with dark hair. They are all smiling and appear to be engaged in a study session. The background is slightly blurred, showing what looks like a library or study area with bookshelves.

Good study skills can increase your confidence, competence, and self-esteem. They can also reduce anxiety about tests and deadlines and improve your ability to learn and retain knowledge. If you can use the tips outlined throughout this How-to Guide, your effective study skills will make your work and effort feel more worthwhile.

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