

**Studying is an very personal academic activity. What works well for one student may not work for another, and that's okay. Everyone learns differently. Try different approaches and use what helps you start studying more easily. The goal is to make it seem effortless so you can build consistent habits for success.**

### Study Planning

Just like your classes are scheduled, your study time needs to be scheduled too. Your schedule can change week to week, but its important to make studying a consistent priority.



- Regular review keeps information fresh, strengthens memory, and reduces the amount of time you need to study before tests.
- If you struggle with time management, try scheduling everything, not just classes and studying. Include: sleep, meals, hygiene, chores, family time, work, and downtime. This helps you see exactly where your hours go.
- Schedule flex time for unexpected events and rest time for recovery. No one can be productive 24 hours a day.

Everyone has natural rhythms. Some people focus best early in the morning and others are more productive at night.



- Plan your study sessions for the times of day when you feel the most awake, alert, and comfortable.
- If you're a night owl, embrace it and study later in the day.
- Many campus spaces are open 24/7 if you need a quiet place outside your home.
- When possible, register for classes at times that match your natural productivity levels.

If your course schedule doesn't match your best focus times:



- Do essential prep work before class.
- Take the best notes you can during class.
- Schedule time to review and reconstruct the material later when your focus is stronger.
- It may be easier to plan study sessions around other academic commitments while you are still in an academic mindset.



## Study Environment

While many people recommend studying in a quiet, distraction-free environment, some students focus better in places with activity, like a café, Learning Commons, or the Wintergarden. These busier spaces can offer benefits:



- **Accountability:** Being around other students can help you stay on task.
- **Background noise:** Sometimes having movement and sound around you acts like white noise, making it easier to concentrate.

Pick a space where you actually enjoy being. If you prefer studying at home, set up a dedicated area that feels comfortable. If home distractions (roommate or responsibilities) pull you away from studying, don't feel guilty about choosing another location.

## Study Breaks

Taking breaks while studying is an important part of the process. The number, timing, and length of breaks vary from person to person. Regardless of how you go about it, breaks are essential for:



- Helping you recharge and stay focused.
- Improving memory by giving your brain time to process and retain information.
- Boosting productivity by keeping your energy and motivation high.
- Stepping away to stretch and refresh can help reduce stress and help you return with a clearer mind.

A common method recommended to students is the Pomodoro Technique. This method recommends the use of timers to help manage your study and break times:



- 25 minutes of studying
- 5 minute break
- (repeat 3 times)
- Take a longer 30 minute break before beginning another round.



If you find yourself distracted, stressed, or waiting out the clock, you can try task-based sets instead of time-based sets. Try breaking your overall study goal into smaller study tasks. For example, you are studying for a midterm and need to review three chapters from your textbook.





- Break the readings up by chapter, or even by chapter subsections.
- Set each chapter as a task and start reading.
- Once you complete a task, reward yourself with a break.
- Repeat the cycle until all the tasks are complete.

Task-based planning can help motivate you because you can't just wait out the clock—you have to accomplish your task. Just make sure that the tasks are small and manageable so you don't get discouraged.



| If you like....   | Try....  | Here's why...  |
|---|--|--|
| Studying in a group<br>  | <b>Teaching the material to someone else</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can be especially useful if they are not a student or not a student in your class/degree</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great for testing your understanding and spotting gaps.</li> <li>If you can explain it to someone unfamiliar, you likely know it well.</li> <li>You can also practice alone by “teaching” a pet or the wall (although slightly less effective as you cannot test understanding!)</li> </ul> |
| Studying on your own<br> | <b>Making Flashcards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical or online versions (e.g., Quizlet)</li> <li>Can be simple or more complex questions</li> </ul> <b>Making and answering your own potential test questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based off lectures and assigned readings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great for testing recall and complex concepts.</li> <li>Can be done with a partner or classmate.</li> <li>Reading questions and answers aloud helps retention.</li> <li>Mix up the order so you memorize content, not just the sequence.</li> </ul>   |

| If you struggle...  | Try....   | Here's why...   |
|---|---|---|
| With taking notes in class<br>  | <b>Prep before lectures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print and review slides beforehand</li> <li>Complete pre-readings and take notes, especially of content you have not mastered</li> <li>Record questions and look/listen for answers during lectures.</li> </ul> <b>Focus in class</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write key words, questions, and instructor's additions.</li> <li>Remove or decrease distractions (be mindful where you sit!)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing ahead reduces pressure during class.</li> <li>The more you work with and review material, the better your understanding becomes.</li> <li>Identifying questions before class helps you focus and listen for answers during lectures.</li> <li>When you simply record what the professor has written, you tune out what is being said - active notetaking encourages active listening.</li> </ul>   |
| With reviewing class notes<br> | <b>The Feynman Technique:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write the concept you are studying at the top of a page</li> <li>Explain the concept in your own words</li> <li>Review what you wrote and any mistakes</li> <li>Go back to your notes/readings to correct the answer</li> <li>Rewrite any complex sections in simple plain language</li> </ul> <b>Spaced practice:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Day 1: learn the information in class</li> <li>Day 2-3: read through the information</li> <li>Each week after: review the information</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are review and recall methods that increase your familiarity and understanding of material.</li> <li>The Feynman Technique builds from the idea that “if you want to understand something well, explain it simply.”</li> <li>Spaced practice is a simpler alternative to the Feynman Technique that may be easier to accomplish with a busy schedule.</li> <li>Active note reviewing can also include annotations like adding headings, colour coding, drawing diagrams/figures, etc.</li> </ul> |