

## Study Styles

Studying is an extremely personal academic activity and success depends on factors that are unique to each student. It is important not to be discouraged if a certain study technique that works for your friend is not successful for you; there are many other methods you can try!

### Study Planning

Just like your classes are scheduled, you need to schedule time for studying. Your scheduling can take different forms and can change from week to week, but it is important to make studying a priority.

- Regular review keeps the information fresh in your mind and further develops your informational recall, decreasing the amount of time you will need to study before tests later.
- If you particularly struggle with time management and organization, try scheduling in EVERYTHING, not just classes and studying. You can include sleep, eating, hygiene, family time, etc. so you can easily see where your hours are going.
- It is important to also schedule flex time so plans can be shuffled around as needed, as well as time for relaxation, because no one can be productive 24 hours per day.

Try to study when you are at your best!

- Studying should be planned for a time when you feel the most awake, productive, and physically comfortable. If you are more of a night owl, accept that about yourself and schedule your studying accordingly. The University is open 24/7 if you need somewhere outside of your home to study in the evenings.
- As much as possible, try to register for courses according to when you work best. If this is not possible, do significant prep work for your class, take notes to the best of your ability, and then allocate time to review the lecture material and class notes when you are more focused.

It may be easier to plan your study sessions around other scheduled academic commitments (i.e., after a class) so you're already in an attentive academic mindset. You don't have to be studying for the class you just had, but being in an academic mindset in general might make getting started on your studying easier. Maybe you get tired after classes and know that you need a break before starting a session. Try out both methods and do what works best for you. You want to make studying as easy as possible for yourself to set up for success.

## **The Study Environment**

While you may have been encouraged to do your studying in a quiet and “distraction-free” location, some students study better in environments that are filled with people. Busier environments such as a cafe, the public library, or the Wintergarden can provide some benefits:

- Accountability: you’re less likely to go off-task if there are other students studying around you
- Distractions: sometimes more distractions result in being less distracted; having other things going on around you can act as white noise

Your study space should be somewhere you really want to be. If you prefer to study at home, have a designated area for studying set up in a way you enjoy. If people or responsibilities distract you at home, don’t feel guilty about studying anywhere else.

## **Study Breaks**

The ideal number, timing, and length of study breaks comes down to what works for the individual. A common method recommended to students is the Pomodoro Technique. This method recommends 25 minutes of studying followed by a 5-minute break for 1.5 hours (three sets). After this time, the student takes a 30-minute break, and then repeats the process.

If this type of study regime works for you, great! 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, if you’re studying for a midterm and need to review three chapters from your textbook, you could break it up by chapter, or even by chapter subsections. Instead of setting a timer, you set a task, and you reward yourself with a break when you complete that task. Task-based planning can help to 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 studying...	Try...	Here's why...
In a group	<p><b>Teaching the material to someone else</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 challenging your understanding and exposing any gaps in your knowledge.</li> <li>If you can make someone who is unfamiliar with the content understand the points, you probably know the material well.</li> <li>You can still use this method if you're studying alone—just teach it to the wall! But it may not be as effective as teaching a real person because you cannot confirm understanding.</li> </ul>
Solo	<p><b>Making flashcards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical or online (e.g., Quizlet) versions</li> <li>Can be simple or more complex questions</li> </ul> <p><b>Making and answering your own potential test questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based off lectures and assigned readings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great to test your recall knowledge, but can also be used for more complex concepts (e.g., explain how x relates to y).</li> <li>These can also be done with a partner, but would be most useful if you're both in the same program and class.</li> <li>Reading flashcard questions and answer out loud can help the information stick.</li> <li>Make sure to switch up the order so that you memorize the content, not the sequence!</li> </ul>

If you struggle...	Try...	Here's why...
With taking notes in class	<p><b>Prepping for your lectures by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Printing out and reviewing lecture slides beforehand.</li> <li>● Doing the pre-readings and taking notes, especially of content you have not mastered.</li> <li>● Recording any questions you have so you can look/listen for answers in the lecture or ask them if they are not addressed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Focusing your in-class notetaking on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Key words or phrases (you can always search for definitions later).</li> <li>● Questions that arise for you as you listen.</li> <li>● Additions the instructor makes to the text on slides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preparing for the lecture ahead of time takes some of the pressure off your in-class note-taking.</li> <li>● The more you work with the same or similar material, the better your understanding becomes.</li> <li>● Addressing what questions or misunderstandings you have prior to class makes you more in-tune to resolving them in the lecture.</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	<p><b>The Feynman Technique:</b></p> <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> <p><b>Spaced practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Day 1: learn the information in class</li> <li>● Day 2: read through the information</li> <li>● Day 3: read through the information</li> <li>● After 1 week: review the information</li> <li>● After 2 weeks: review the information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These are review and retrieval methods that increase familiarity and understanding of the 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 can also include annotations like adding headings, colour coding, drawing diagrams/figures, etc.</li> </ul>