

Tips for the ultimate study experience in 2023

This guide, you will explore scientifically-proven study techniques from scientific journals and some of the world's best resources like Harvard, Yale, MIT, and Cornell.

Part A

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2. Create your perfect study space
3. Pick a study method that works for you
4. Effective study skills

Part B

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This comprehensive guide covers everything from studying for exams So. Let's get started!

Part 1 – How to Prepare for Success

1. Set a Schedule

“Oh, I'll get to it soon” isn't a valid study strategy. Rather, you have to be intentional about planning set study sessions.

On your calendar, mark out chunks of time that you can devote to your studies. You should aim to schedule some study time each day, but other commitments may necessitate that some sessions are longer than others.

Harder classes require more study time. So, too, do classes that are worth several credits. For each credit hour that you're taking, consider devoting one to three hours to studying each week.

2. Study at your own pace

Do you digest content quickly, or do you need time to let the material sink in? Only you know what pace is best for you.

There's no right (or wrong) study pace. So, don't try matching someone else's speed.

Instead, through trial and error, find what works for you. Just remember that slower studying will require that you devote more time to your schoolwork.

3. Get some rest

Exhaustion helps no one perform their best. Your body needs rest; getting enough sleep is crucial for memory function.

This is one reason that scheduling study time is so important: It reduces the temptation to stay up all night cramming for a big test. Instead, you should aim for seven or more hours of sleep the night before an exam.

Limit pre-studying naps to 15 or 20 minutes at a time. Upon waking, do a few stretches or light exercises to prepare your body and brain for work.

4. Silence your cell phone

Interruptions from your phone are notorious for breaking your concentration. If you pull away to check a notification, you'll have to refocus your brain before diving back into your studies.

Consider turning off your phone's sounds or putting your device into do not disturb mode before you start. You can also download apps to temporarily block your access to social media.

If you're still tempted to check your device, simply power it off until you're finished studying.

5. Relax

Research shows that stress makes it harder to learn and to retain information.

Stress-busting ideas include:

- Taking deep breaths
- Writing down a list of tasks you need to tackle
- Doing light exercise

Try to clear your head before you begin studying.

Part 2 – Create your perfect study space

1. Pick a good place to study

There's a delicate balance when it comes to the best study spot: You need a place that's comfortable without being so relaxing that you end up falling

asleep. For some people, that means working at a desk. Others do better on the couch or at the kitchen table. Your bed, on the other hand, maybe too comfy.

Surrounding yourself with peace and quiet helps you focus. If your kids are being loud or there's construction outside your window, you might need to relocate to an upstairs bedroom, a quiet cafe or your local library.

2. Choose your music wisely

Noise-cancelling headphones can also help limit distractions.

It's better to listen to quiet music than loud tunes. Some people do best with instrumental music playing in the background.

Songs with lyrics may pull your attention away from your textbooks. However, some folks can handle listening to songs with words, so you may want to experiment and see what works for you.

Just remember that there's no pressure to listen to any music. If you do your best work in silence, then feel free to turn your music player off.

3. Turn off netflix

If song lyrics are distracting, just imagine what an attention sucker the television can be! Serious studying requires that you turn off the TV.

The same goes for listening to radio deejays. Hearing voices in the background takes your brainpower off of your studies.

4. Use background sounds

Turning off the television, talk radio, and your favourite pop song doesn't mean you have to study in total silence. Soft background sounds are a great alternative.

Some people enjoy listening to nature sounds, such as ocean waves or cracks of thunder. Others prefer the whir of a fan.

5. Snack on brain food

A growling stomach can pull your mind from your studies, so feel free to snack as you work. Keep your snacks within arm's reach so you don't have to leave your books to find food.

Fuel your next study session with some of the following items:

- Lean deli meat
- Nuts

- Grapes or apple slices
- Dark chocolate

Go for snacks that will power your brain and keep you alert. Steer clear of items high in sugar, fat and processed carbs.

Part 3 – Pick a study method that works for you

Mindlessly reading through your notes or textbooks isn't an effective study method; it doesn't help you process the information. Instead, you should use a proven study strategy to help you think through the material and retain the information.

Strategy #1 – SQ3R Method

With the SQ3R approach to reading, you'll learn to think critically about a text.

There are five steps:

- **Survey:** Skim through the assigned material. Focus on headings, words in bold print and any diagrams.
- **Question:** Ask yourself questions related to the topic.
- **Read:** Read the text carefully. As you go, look for answers to your questions.
- **Recite:** Tell yourself the answers to your questions. Write notes about them, even.
- **Review:** Go over the material again by rereading the text and reading your notes aloud.

Strategy #2 – PQ4R Method

PQ4R is another study strategy that can help you digest the information you read.

This approach has six steps:

- **Preview:** Skim the material. Read the titles, headings and other highlighted text.
- **Question:** Think through questions that pertain to the material.
- **Read:** As you work through the material, try to find answers to your questions.
- **Reflect:** Consider whether you have any unanswered questions or new questions.
- **Recite:** Speak aloud about the things you just read.

- **Review:** Look over the material one more time.

Strategy #3 – THIEVES Method

The THIEVES approach can help you prepare to read for information.

There are seven pre-reading steps:

- **Title:** Read the title.
- **Headings:** Look through the headings.
- **Introduction:** Skim the intro.
- **Every first sentence in a section:** Take a look at how each section begins.
- **Visuals and vocabulary:** Look at the pictures and the words in bold print.
- **End questions:** Review the questions at the end of the chapter.
- **Summary:** Read the overview of the text.

Ask yourself thought-provoking questions as you work through these steps. After completing them, read the text.

Studying online

Although these three study strategies can be useful in any setting, studying online has its own set of challenges.

Dr. Tony Bates has written a thoughtful and thorough guide to studying online, *A Student Guide to Studying Online*. Not only does he highlight the importance of paying attention to course design, but he also offers helpful tips on how to choose the best online program and manage your course load.

Part 4 – Effective study skills

1. Highlight key concepts

Looking for the most important information as you read helps you stay engaged with the material. This can help keep your mind from wandering as you read.

As you find important details, mark them with a highlighter, or underline them. It can also be effective to jot notes along the edges of the text. Write on removable sticky notes if the book doesn't belong to you.

When you're preparing for a test, begin your studies by reviewing your highlighted sections and the notes you wrote down.

2. Summarise important details

One good way to get information to stick in your brain is to tell it again in your own words. Writing out a summary can be especially effective. You can organise your summaries in paragraph form or in outline form.

Keep in mind that you shouldn't include every bit of information in the summary. Stick to the key points.

Consider using different colours on your paper. Research shows that information presented in colour is more memorable than things written in plain type. You could use coloured pens or go over your words with highlighters.

After writing about what you read, reinforce the information yet again by reading aloud what you wrote on your paper.

3. Create your own flashcards

For an easy way to quiz yourself, prepare notecards that feature a keyword on one side and important facts or definitions about that topic on the reverse.

Writing out the cards will help you learn the information. Quizzing yourself on the cards will continue that reinforcement.

The great thing about flashcards is that they're easily portable. Slip them in your bag, so you can pull them out whenever you have a spare minute. This is a fantastic way to squeeze in extra practice time outside of your regularly scheduled study sessions.

As an alternative to paper flashcards, you can also use a computer program or a smartphone app to make digital flashcards that you can click through again and again.

4. Improve recall with association

Sometimes your brain could use an extra hand to help you hold onto the information that you're studying. Creating imaginary pictures, crafting word puzzles or doing other mental exercises can help make your material easier to remember.

Try improving recall with the following ideas:

- Sing the information to a catchy tune.
- Think of a mnemonic phrase in which the words start with the same letters as the words that you need to remember.
- Draw a picture that helps you make a humorous connection between the new information and the things that you already know.
- Envision what it would be like to experience your topic in person. Imagine the sights, sounds, smells and more.

- Think up rhymes or tongue twisters that can help the information stick in your brain.
- Visualise the details with a web-style mind map that illustrates the relationships between concepts.

5. Absorb information in smaller chunks

Think about how you memorise a phone number: You divide the 10-digit number into three smaller groups. It's easier to get these three chunks to stick in your mind than it is to remember the whole thing as a single string of information.

You can use this strategy when studying by breaking a list down into smaller parts. Work on memorising each part as its own group.

6. Make your own study sheet

Condensing your most important notes onto one page is an excellent way to keep priority information at your fingertips. The more you look over this sheet and read it aloud, the better you'll know the material

Furthermore, the act of typing or writing out the information will help you memorise the details. Using different colours or lettering styles can help you picture the information later.

Just like flashcards, a study sheet is portable. You can pull it out of your bag whenever you have a spare minute.

7. Be the teacher

To teach information to others, you first have to understand it yourself. Therefore, when you're trying to learn something new, challenge yourself to consider how you'd teach it to someone else. Wrestling with this concept will help you gain a better understanding of the topic.

In fact, you can even recruit a friend, a family member or a study group member to listen to your mini-lesson. Reciting your presentation aloud to someone else will help the details stick in your mind, and your audience may be able to point out gaps in your knowledge.

8. Know when to call it a day

Yes, you really can get too much of a good thing. Although your studies are important, they shouldn't be the only thing in your life. It's also important to have a social life, get plenty of exercises, and take care of your non-school responsibilities.

Studies show that too much time with your nose in the books can elevate your stress level, which can have a negative effect on your school performance and your personal relationships.

Too much studying may also keep you from getting enough exercise. This could lower your bone density or increase your percentage of body fat.

Source: 2023

