

Tips for Effective Study Habits

Plan a schedule of balanced activities. Using time to think and plan is time well-spent. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. If you need color and pictures, use a lot on your calendar, planning book, or To Do list. A good first step in planning is to determine which items are your highest priorities and schedule those first beginning with those at fixed times. Be sure to provide time for an appropriate balance of study, attention to personal needs, and social time.

Plan enough time for studying to do justice to each subject. Most courses will require 8 – 10 hours of study per week. If you are a slow reader or have other study hindrances, you may need to plan more time for studying. Of course, you may also find that some classes require less time.

Provide time for study soon after class meetings. One hour spent soon after class can do more to facilitate your understanding than several hours spent a few days later. During that hour, review your notes, class handouts, or your memory of the class while the class' events are still fresh in your mind. Write a summary of what you learned in the class, describe how it connects to the rest of the class material and the course objectives, begin practicing any new skills that you learned, and write down your reflections on that day's class activities. Write down any questions that come up so that you can review them with your classmates or the instructor. If you received an assignment, start work on it while your memory of the assignment is still accurate.

Limit your study time to no more than 2 hours on any one course at any one time. After 1½ to 2 hours of study you begin to tire and your ability to concentrate decreases rapidly. Taking a break and then switching to another course will provide the change necessary to keep up your efficiency. Do difficult work when your mind is freshest.

Trade time—don't steal it. When unexpected events arise that take up time you had planned to study, decide immediately where you can find the time to make up the study missed and adjust your schedule for that week. Consider the three weekend evenings. Most students can afford no more than two of them for recreation, but may wish to use different evenings on different weeks. This “trading agreement” provides for committing one night to study, but rotating it as recreational possibilities vary.

Eliminate the urgent. Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do so you'll have time for your important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.

Conquer Procrastination. One technique to try is the "Swiss cheese" method described by Alan Lakein. When you are avoiding something, break it into smaller tasks and do just one of the smaller tasks or set a timer and work on the big task for just 15 minutes. By doing a little at a time, eventually you'll reach a point where you'll want to finish.

Provide for spaced review. Schedule a regular weekly period when you review the work in each of your courses to be sure you are up to date. The review should cover briefly all the work done up to that point in the semester. Make sure that you know when all upcoming assignments are due and that you are on track to complete them on time.

Some Helpful Links

Upcoming events on campus:

<http://departments.edinboro.edu/academicsupportservices/workshops.html>

Find a tutor on campus:

<http://departments.edinboro.edu/academicsupportservices/tutoring/>

Ten tips for more effective study habits:

<http://www.isu.edu/departments/ctl/learnstrat/handouts/study-sched.html>

General advice for effective study habits:

<http://www.how-to-study.com/>

Find out which study skills need improvement:

<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/checklis.html>

Time management tips:

<http://learningcommons.allegheny.edu/faculty/13tips.php>

*Tips on this page taken and modified from

<http://learningcommons.allegheny.edu/faculty/13tips.php> and

<http://www.isu.edu/departments/ctl/learnstrat/handouts/study-sched.htm>