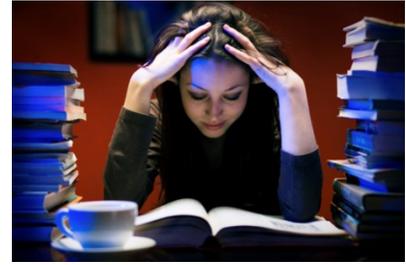


Where and When You Study:

Choosing Your Best Places

Your surroundings have a big effect on your efficiency. Recent studies have found that it's a good idea to plan 3+ study sessions a week (per class) in 2-3 different places. To make the most of where you study, ask yourself...



1. Is my study place **available** to me whenever I need it?
2. Is my study place **free from interruptions and distractions**?
 - It is important to have uninterrupted study time. Even one hour of study without distraction is more effective than four hours of study with interruptions.
 - Turn off your cell phone or set it to silent. No ring tones + no vibrations = no distractions.
 - Turn off the email alert and IM features on your computer (or just mute all sounds)
 - Don't check your email while studying. Set aside time to read it once you have finished.
 - A great way to take care of distractions is to create several user profiles on your computer. Set one, perhaps called Study, to block access to the internet altogether. Set another to Research, allowing internet access but blocking games and perhaps email. The third, with full access, can be My Time or something similar.
3. Does my study place **have all the materials I need**?
 - Be certain that your study place includes reference sources and all of the supplies you generally need (e.g., graph paper, pens/pencils, rulers, calculator, a computer with internet access).
 - If you study best outside your room, check your backpack or bag before heading for the library or Athena cluster to make sure you have everything you'll need.
4. Does my study place have **a large enough desk/table**?
 - Use a desk or table large enough to spread out everything you need, so that you don't waste time moving things around.
 - Allow enough room for writing.
 - Try to avoid clutter.
5. Does my study place have **a comfortable chair**?
 - A chair that makes you stiff or fidget will interfere with your studying.
 - A chair that is too comfortable might make you sleepy.
 - Find a chair in which you can sit for at least an hour and still maintain your attention. Then take a stretch break.
6. Does my study place have **enough light**?
7. Does my study place have **a comfortable temperature**?
 - If it's too warm, you might become sleepy.
 - If it's too cold, you may become distracted.
 - Wear layers so that you can be working at a temperature at which your mind and body function best.

When to Study

Schedule what subject you'll study when and stick with it. Let it become routine like brushing your teeth or tying your shoes. Write down all your class/meeting times and then schedule your study times. Do not ever schedule something else at those times: make them sacred!



Choose study times and days **when you're likely to feel energetic** and have enough time to complete assignments before class.

Use daylight hours (as much as possible). Research shows that 60 minutes of study during the day is the equivalent of 90 minutes of study at night

(Walter Pauk, *How to Study in College*, 6th ed. [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989], p. 27).

Plan to study for blocks of time. Generally, studying in one-hour blocks is most effective (50 minutes of study with a ten-minute break). Shorter periods → reading, studying notes committing things to memory; longer periods → problem-solving tasks, research, writing papers.

Determine how long you need to study to fully engage with the material you are learning. You should plan for at least 2 hours of studying for every hour a week you're in class.

Schedule time to review notes before class, and increase the likelihood of absorbing what you're taught. You'll be more primed to soak up information if you first "dampen your sponge" (prep your brain with a review of your last notes) before each class.

Summarize new class notes soon after class. THIS IS KEY TEST PREP! You'll remember and understand more if you review your lecture notes immediately after class and write a summary of them. Recognize this "summary of notes" time is information retention and exam preparation. You wouldn't expect to get buff by going to the gym 5 days before day you want to be in great shape, right? Approach planning for tests in the same way! If questions arise as you review your notes soon after class, you'll have plenty of time to check with a classmate or the instructor to clarify what you missed; it may be something important that you need (and will be tested on) and now's the time to be sure you have it.

List and do tasks according to priorities. Remember Parkinson's Law: "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." If you allot two hours to read ten pages, it will probably take you the full two hours to complete what might be a 30-minute task. Make a dent in large projects first and then treat yourself with easier, more enjoyable assignments.

Start long or involved assignments as soon as they're assigned. Seriously. You'll be so glad that you did. Just get them started, and then whittle away at them. There's no doubt you know that cramming and rushing = poor quality work. Give yourself internal deadlines. If they're hard to stick to, arrange with someone else (like a tutor, a friend, or your prof) that you'll bring specified work to them on a specific date—and then do!

Set an agenda and goal for each study period. Be specific, and plan ahead so that you know exactly what task you will accomplish during each study period.

Set a time each week to review your plan for the upcoming week.

Once you find a schedule that works for you, **stick to it.** Some days you may not feel like studying at the appointed time, but unless you deem it essential, it won't become the habit you need it to be. **Reward yourself with something fun when you're done!**