

How TO STUDY – A TO Z



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This is Complete How to Guide for Student..Covering the
Basic and How to for Subjects..Its compiled with a View to
Help students of Every Profession

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How to Study

When you sit down to study, how do you transfer that massive amount of information from the books and notes in front of you to a reliable spot inside your head? The best way to facilitate that kind of "file transfer" is to develop good study habits, as outlined below. At first, it'll take a good deal of conscious effort to change your studying ways, but after a while, it'll become second nature, and studying will be easier to do.

Steps

Manage your time. Make a weekly schedule and devote a certain amount of time per day to studying. This will improve your grades also. That amount will vary depending on whether you're in high school or college, and also varies by field of study.

Study in 20-50 minute chunks. It takes time for your brain to form new long-term memories, and you can't just keep studying flat out. Take 5-10 minute breaks (no more!) and do something physically active to get your blood flowing and make you more alert. Do a few jumping jacks, [run](#) around your house, play with the dog, whatever it takes. Do just enough to get yourself pumped, but not worn out.

- Make enough time in your schedule to get enough sleep. Think of it this way: If you sleep only 4-5 hours, you'll probably need to double your study time in order to be as effective as if you'd gotten 7-9 hours of sleep. Study more and sleep less? That doesn't sound like a very good deal. Get a good night's sleep every night and you'll be making the best of your study time. If you end up a little sleep deprived despite your best efforts, take a short nap (20 minutes) before studying. Then do some physical activity (like you would do during a break) right before you start.

Find a good study spot. You should feel comfortable, but not so comfortable that you risk falling asleep--a bed isn't a very good study spot when you're tired! The place where you study should be relatively quiet (traffic outside your window and quiet library conversations are fine, but interrupting siblings and music blasting in the next room are not).

- As far as music is concerned, that's up to you. Some people prefer silence, others prefer music in the background. If you belong to the latter group, stick to instrumental music (music that has no words like classical, soundtrack, trance, or some celtic) and that you're already familiar with (not something that's bound to distract you)--otherwise, your brain will "[multi-task](#)" and not be able to retain information as well. ^[1]
- Having the television on while you study is generally a bad idea.

Clear your mind. If you've got a lot on your mind take a moment to write yourself some notes about what you're thinking about before you start studying. This will help to clear your mind you focus all your thoughts on your work.

Snack smart while you study. Have your snacks prepared when you begin a study session--don't wait till you get hungry and go rummaging for food. Avoid any snacks or drinks that will give you a rush of energy, because with every rush comes a crash in which all the information you studied is lost to an intense desire to sleep. Focus on "slow release" carbohydrates, which not only give you a steady stream of energy, but they also boost serotonin, a brain chemical that makes you feel good:^[2]

Rewrite your notes at home. When you're in class, emphasize recording over understanding or neatness when you take notes. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try to understand or organize your notes at all; just don't waste time doing something in class that you can figure out or neaten up at home. Consider your in-class notes a "rough draft" of sorts. Rewrite your notes as soon after the class as possible, while the material is fresh in your mind and so you can fill in any gaps from memory. The process of rewriting your notes is a more active approach to studying--it engages your mind in a way that just reading the notes doesn't.

- You may find it easier to keep two notebooks--one for your "rough draft" notes, and another for your rewritten notes.
- Some people type their notes, but others find that handwriting enhances their ability to remember the notes.
- The more paraphrasing you do, the better. Same goes for drawing. If you're studying anatomy, for example, "re-draw" the system you're studying from memory.

Learn the most important facts first. Don't just read the material from beginning to end, stopping to memorize each new fact as you come to it. New information is acquired much more easily when you can relate it to material that you already know.

- When you are beginning to study a new chapter, it will make the information it contains much more meaningful and easier to learn if you first take a few minutes to read the *introduction*, the *headings*, the *first sentence of every paragraph*, and the *chapter summary* to get a good idea of what the chapter is about before going on to read the chapter as a whole. (Word for word, these portions also contain more information that is likely to be asked about on a test!)
- If you can, use a highlighter, or underline the most important points in the body of the text, so that you can spot them more easily when you review the material. It also helps to make notes in pencil in the margin in your own words to summarize or comment on important points. (These practices may make your textbook worth less when you sell it back to the bookstore, but it may make it worth a great deal *more* to you at test time!)
- You can also read just these portions in order to quickly review the material you have learned while it is still fresh in your memory, and help the main points to sink in.

- This is also a great way to review the most important ideas just before a test, when your time is especially limited.
- It's also a good way to periodically review in this manner to keep the main points of what you have already learned fresh in your mind if you need to remember a large amount of material for a longer period -- for a final examination, for a comprehensive exam in your major, for a graduate oral, or for entry into a profession.
- If you have enough privacy, it also helps to recite your summaries aloud in order to involve more senses in the activity of learning, like listening to music over several channels at once. Incorporate your summaries into your notes, if there is a connection.
- If you're having trouble summarizing the material so that it "sticks" in your head, try teaching it to someone else. Pretend you're teaching it to someone who doesn't know anything about the topic, or create a wikiHow page about it! For example, Memorize the Canadian Territories & Provinces was made as a study guide for an 8th grade student.

Make flash cards. Traditionally, this is done with index cards, but you can also download computer programs that cut down on space and the cost of index cards. You can also just use a regular piece of paper folded (vertically) in half. Put the questions on the side you can see when the paper is folded; unfold it to see the answers inside. Keep quizzing yourself until you get all the answers right reliably. Remember: "Repetition is the mother of skill."

- You can also turn your notes into flash cards using the Cornell note-taking system, which involves writing grouping your notes around keywords that you can quiz yourself on later by covering the notes and trying to remember what you wrote based on seeing only the keyword.^[3]

If your textbook has a vocabulary section, a glossary, or a list of terms, make sure that you understand these completely. You don't have to memorize them, but whenever there is an important concept in a particular field, there is usually a special term to refer to it. Learn these terms, and be able to use them easily, and you will have gone a long way towards mastering the subject itself. (Besides, teachers frequently draw from these lists as a quick and easy way to make up test questions!)

Make associations. The most effective way to retain information is to "tie" it to existing information that's already lodged in your mind.

- Take advantage of your learning style. Think about what you already learn and remember easily--song lyrics? choreography? pictures? Work that into your study habits. If you're having trouble memorizing a concept, write a catchy jingle about it (or write lyrics to the tune of your favorite song); choreograph a representative dance;

draw a comic. The sillier and more outrageous, the better--we tend to remember silly things more than we remember boring things!

- Use mnemonics (memory aids). Rearrange the information in a sequence that's meaningful to you. For example, if one wants to remember the notes of the treble clef lines in music, remember the mnemonic Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge = E, G, B, D, F. It's much easier to remember a sentence than a series of random letters. You can also build a memory palace or Roman room to memorize lists like the thirteen original colonies in America, in chronological order. If the list is short, link the items together using an image in your mind.
- Organize the information with a mind map. The end result of mapping should be a web-like structure of words and ideas that are somehow related in the writer's mind.
- Use visualization skills. Construct a movie in your mind that illustrates the concept you're trying to remember, and play it several times over. Imagine every little detail. Use your senses--how does it smell? look? feel? sound? taste?
- Make a study sheet. Try and condense the information you will need into one sheet, or two if absolutely necessary. Bring it around with you and look at it whenever you have downtime during the days leading up to the test. If you type it up onto the computer, you can get a lot more control over your layout by changing font sizes, margin spaces, etc.

Make it a group effort. Get some friends together--friends who are actually interested in studying, that is--and have everyone bring over their flash cards. Pass them around and quiz each other. If anyone is unclear on a concept, take turns explaining them to each other. Better yet, turn your study session into a game like Trivial Pursuit.

Tips

- **Try to stop being distracted** resist the urge to go on msn or facebook. This way, you can manage your time efficiently and get work done faster which leaves more time for sleep.
- Ask before you sign up whether or not a particular instructor gives six credits of work in a three credit class, or whether or not he or she is a good teacher. If the answers to these questions are not to your liking, and it's still a class that you have to take, be sure that you are not taking too many other difficult classes at the same time.
- **Keep Hydrated.** A 2% decrease in hydration can cause up to 20% loss of focus. (Just make sure that your "hydration" is non-alcoholic!)
- **You should be alert** and your mind should be calm before you begin your studies.
- **Study the most challenging subjects first.** Tackle them when you're most alert.
- **Studying with a partner** who is as serious about the subject as you can be a good motivator to work harder. [Organize](#) the study session into parts, review notes, outline the chapter, and discuss concepts. (Try to teach it to each other so that you are sure you both get it.)
- **You can use [hypnosis](#) or [self hypnosis](#)** to make sure you get enough [sleep](#), overcome [mental blocks](#), and experience the positive emotions associated with the achievement of your goals *now*, in the present when they are most needed for motivation.^[4]

- **Begin to study 30-90 minutes after a meal.** If possible, study no more than 20-50 minutes at a stretch.
- **Late night studies** are usually a waste of time.
- **Try not to just memorize whatever you have learned.** Understand it and say/write the answer in your own words, and try to teach the material to friends or to an imaginary audience. (For example, how would you explain it to your mother, or your boyfriend or girlfriend, or your little sister?)
- **Pay attention in class.** Sit where you are able to see and hear what is going on.
 - **Don't hesitate to ask questions** or seek extra help during office hours if something is not clear to you. Many instructors have said, "The only dumb question is the one that isn't asked!"
 - **Try not to be absent** when an important subject is going to be discussed.
 - **If you are absent,** try to borrow the notes of somebody who is a good note-taker.
- **Try typing.** (If your word processor has an automatic outlining feature, this is often a great help in rapidly organizing and making your notes more meaningful!) Word process all your notes into multiple summaries. Print out and highlight the important pieces. Word process these pieces, print out and summarize again. This will take the stress off writing with your hands, and it may speed up the process, as well as allowing you to study longer.
- **Another strategy** is to make a Powerpoint Presentation on the subject.
- **If you can, it helps to "treat yourself"** by giving yourself a special reward when you finish a meaningful unit of work.
 - **Just don't make the intervals between rewards too long,** or the rewards too weak.
 - **If you stop and take time to think about the possibilities,** you should automatically be able to sense what will work for you and what won't.

Warnings

- **Watch out for inclinations to procrastinate.** For example, are you reading this article instead of studying? All your efforts will not lead to success, if you procrastinate, and you'll end up blaming your tools.
- **Your [attitude](#) greatly helps the outcome of your studying.** If you're so excited you can't breathe, you are not going to want to [sit](#) down and read about the Mesopotamian Era. Try to regulate your moods when it's time to hit the [books](#) (e.g. don't sign on to instant messaging to talk with your friends about that cute new guy ten minutes before you have to study the table of elements).
- **If you cannot study because you are just too tense,** or something is worrying you, it may be necessary to [gain control of your emotions](#) before you are able to successfully study on a regular basis. If you are not able to do this on your own, you may need to consult a school counselor.
- **Make sure you're not too comfy;** you can fall asleep doing so! Sit in a sturdy chair with all your notes on a desk. Pillows are not needed to study. Don't relax too much and think that the test is going to be so easy; if you do, you might end up leaving something out because you think it's not worth studying!

How to Cram for a Test

Whoops! It's the night before the big exam, and you haven't done a lick of studying all semester. Looking back on it, you know that you should have been hitting the books all those nights you were watching TV, but there's nothing you can do about it now. Don't throw in the towel yet, though--it's time to get cramming.

While cramming probably won't get you an "A," it can definitely save you from an "F." So suck it up and get ready for a long, hard night. And vow to be a better student from now on.

Steps

Find out what you really need to study. If your teacher holds a review session before the exam, take advantage of the opportunity. You'll find out what topics the teacher thinks are important, and you'll have an opportunity to ask questions (although if you're having to cram, you probably have a few too many questions at this point). Many teachers hand out study guides; be sure to use them. While they probably won't cover everything that will be on the test, you'll at least be able to focus on the key topics.

 Don't forget to take good notes in class so that you can refer to them later!

1. **Get out your lecture notes.** Assuming you attended class regularly, you should have some notes to look over. If you don't have any notes, try to get copies from a classmate. Your class notes are a treasure trove of important knowledge, because your teacher covers what he or she thinks is most important.

Note your notes' notable notions. As you go through your notes, find important definitions, concepts and equations. If you don't know them by heart, write them down on a separate piece of paper--your cramming notes-- or, better yet, on 3X5 note cards. This will help you identify what you need to know, and you'll have a handy set of flash cards. The process of rewriting may also help you memorize the content.

Go through your study guide and your cramming notes and look up the important topics in your textbook. Scan the key sections of your text and write down any new information you find that seems important. The idea here is not to write down everything, but rather to identify the specific ideas, facts or equations that are likely to be on the test and focus on those topics as much as possible.

Look at the beginnings and ends of textbook chapters. The first page of a chapter often identifies key points that will aid your understanding of the material. The last couple pages will often summarize the chapter, define or highlight key terms, and--in the case of math texts--list important equations. Again, write any new important material down on flashcards or your list of cramming notes.

Review your flashcards or cramming notes. Go through the key topics quickly. If you feel you understand and can remember a certain topic or equation cross it off the list or set its flashcard aside. If you come up with additional questions, look them up in your notes and text.

Test yourself. If your teacher handed out a practice test, do it now. If not, do the practice tests or review questions at the ends of your textbook chapters. Only do the questions that are directly relevant to the concepts you've identified as important. Don't spend a lot of time on each question. If you get stuck on a question, note it and come back to it after you grade your test.

Grade your self-tests. Be honest with your grading--if you don't fully understand something, don't pretend you do. Look at the questions you got wrong and compare those to your cramming notes or flashcards. You may need to make some new flashcards, and you may need to revisit some of those you thought you knew.

Repeat step 6. You'll want to review your cramming notes or flashcards as much as possible between now and test time. Each time you do so you should be able to set aside more flashcards or cross out more topics on your list.

Contemplate possible essay questions (if applicable) and how you would answer them. By now you should have at least a light grasp on the material. Think about the overarching concepts involved and outline (preferably on paper) your approach to essay questions.

Repeat step 6. Again, you'll want to review those important topics again and again until you remember them all.

Get some sleep. Sometimes, you just don't have enough time for sleep, but do try to get as much sleep as possible before your test. It's a good idea to get the bulk of your cramming in before going to bed and then get up with enough time to review a bit more.

Review all your cramming notes or flashcards one more time. Right before the test, go through every one of your flashcards or notes--even if you think you have memorized them. You want everything to be fresh in your mind when you take the test. If you are having some trouble remembering a certain definition or equation, write it down six or seven times in a row. That should firmly imprint it on your brain.

TIPS

- If you're having trouble staying alert while you're cramming, and you have no time for sleep, drink some coffee. If you're tired right before your test, drink some more. Caffeine aids mental alertness. Tea has also been proven to aid concentration. (Just remember, you can have *too much* Caffeine and you may find that you have a crash after it has given you the initial boost)

- It has recently been proven that the smell of cinnamon (i.e. cinnamon gum) helps you concentrate, so pack some Big Red
- You may find it easier to review with a study partner. You can quiz each other and answer each other's questions as you go along. Some people find this a distraction, so see what works best for you.
- Eat nutritious food. It's harder to concentrate if you're loaded up on junk. Even though sugar is a fast source of energy, sugar lows happen shortly after the highs and they are hard to come off of. Bananas in particular are a great source of slow release sugar and energy.
- Eliminate as many potential distractions as possible. If you can study without a computer, then make sure to work away from one. If your assignment is on the computer, disable the internet temporarily before you start. If you're working on the internet, (researching, etc.) then you need to exercise self-control.
- Right before the test, try to get some exercise. Run up some stairs or do some jumping-jacks. Exercise gets blood flowing and relaxes you. It also increases your alertness.
- Take frequent, short breaks. Breaks help you stay alert, and they can also prevent burnout.
- Drinking plenty of water helps you to think and most importantly it hydrates you. Remember: caffeine is a diuretic. So if you have been downing the coffee in order to cram for your test you need to re-hydrate yourself.
- Finally, read aloud, you may sound stupid but believe it or not this is a better way to learn in a hurry than reading off a page and staring into nothingness.
- Put on a strong smelling lotion while cramming. Put the same lotion on before the test. The smell will bring memories of studying. This technique also works with a strong candle.

How to Cheer Yourself up After a Crummy Test

Just had a test? Certain you've done really badly in it? Exhausted from the effort, worried by the knowledge that you didn't do well? This usually happens to everybody some point or other during the course of their lives. If you've just taken a crummy test, you'll probably be feeling upset, worried, frustrated or down. But don't let it get you down-read this article to learn how to cheer yourself up after one of those crummy tests.

Steps

Promise Yourself It Won't Happen Again. Tell yourself that next time, you'll be prepared and properly educated on the test topic. Believe in yourself and make sure you stick to your word. You can prevent it from happening again by [paying more attention](#), studying harder, and/or just trying to [learn](#) as much as you can.

Talk to a parent or teacher. It may sound silly, but once you choose the right adult, things can go pretty smoothly!

Talk to a Friend who you *know* will understand. It may seem pointless and a waste of time, but just getting everything off your chest can really help. Confide in your friend about *why* you feel bad, what *specifically* is getting you down-every detail.

Distract Yourself. Keep yourself busy all the time. Don't leave yourself with any time to start thinking about the test, or you'll start feeling down again. It's good to get your feelings out, but after that's over, accept life and move on.

Do Something to Make You Laugh. Whether it be hanging out with your friends, watching a funny T.V show or reading a joke book, do something that you *know* will make you laugh. You may not feel like it at first, but once you get into it, you'll feel better.

Do An Activity That Makes You Feel Good About Yourself. Try exercising-Exercise often gives you a boost in not only health and energy, but confidence and happiness. You can hang out with your friends, draw, write, read-anything that makes you personally feel better about yourself.

Pamper Yourself. Give yourself a manicure. Listen to some relaxing music and close your eyes. Give yourself a massage. Take a bubble bath-anything that gets you feeling really good and like you're living a glamorous life.

Tips

- For more help on preparing for tests, see Study for a Casual Test or Quiz, Study for Exams, and Study Better.
- Try asking your teacher what you can do to earn extra credit-this will help you top up your grades.
- Always concentrate in class. It's hard, but it's also essential. You can prevent crummy tests by paying attention and studying.
- When you hear about a test, write it down immediately. Then you can start studying early, and get yourself prepared.
- Do not turn to junk food for comfort. It may make you feel better, but in the long run, it's not good for you.

- If you can help it, try not to talk to a friend who did excellent on the test-it may just make you feel worse.
- Check out the related articles-they're all helpful.

Warnings

- Doing badly on tests can effect your overall grades quite significantly, so try to always be prepared.
- You can try to bring up your grade by trying harder on other assignments



How to Take Lecture Notes

Here's how to get the most out of a lecture, and have amazing notes to show for it.

Steps

Before the Lecture Begins

Prepare for the lecture so that you will be more likely to predict the organization of the lecture. Check the course outline to see if the lecturer has listed the topic or key ideas in the upcoming lecture. If so, convert this information into questions, or structure your notebook according to the headings provided in the outline. If no outline is given, try to structure the presentation yourself when you revisit the notes later.

If an outline or handout is given out at the beginning of class, skim it quickly. Underline or highlight topics, new vocabulary, key questions and/or main ideas.

Ideally, you will come to class having read the assigned material. Attending the lecture with the information fresh in your mind will undoubtedly help you follow the presentation with greater ease and less confusion.

Sit as near to the front of the room as possible to eliminate distractions. You may even want to come five or ten minutes early to get a good seat and have time to set up your pen and notebook or laptop.

Have a proper attitude. Listening well is a matter of paying close attention. Be prepared to be open-minded about what the lecturer may be saying, even though you may disagree with it.

Have extra pencils sharpened and ready, or extra lead for mechanical pencils in case a pencil breaks during the lecture.

Write down the title of the lecture, and the date. Keeping your notes organized will pay off when it comes time to study.

If you miss a lecture, make sure to write it down in your notes as well, so that you will not forget. This way you ensure that you will get the notes from a friend or colleague instead of missing out on the material entirely.

During the Lecture

Listen carefully to the introduction (if there is one). By knowing this outline, you will be better prepared to anticipate what notes you will need to take. Decipher this outline by listening for:

- A **topic** for each section.
- **Supporting points** or examples for the topic.

Copy what's written on the whiteboard, or overhead projector, especially the outline. To make sure that you get everything, get in the habit of skipping words like "the" and "a" and make use of shorthand and abbreviations. Summarize your notes in your own words, not the instructor's.

Remember: your goal is to understand what the professor is saying, not to try to record *exactly* everything he or she says.

Recognize main ideas by signal words that indicate something important is to follow. See the tip on signals below.

Jot down details or examples that support the main ideas. Take down **examples** and **sketches** which the lecturer presents. Indicate examples with "e.g." Give special attention to details not covered in the textbook.

Come up with symbols for words used often that you can remember easily.

Take detailed notes if possible.

Draw diagrams for concepts you can't remember easily or don't understand.

If there is a summary at the end of the lecture, pay close attention to it. You can use it to check the organization of your notes. If your notes seem disorganized, copy down the main points that are covered in the summary. It will help in revising your notes later.

At the end of the lecture, ask questions about points that you did not understand.

If (s)he begins to get off topic by telling a story...write it down anyway. Stories help people remember. The story might be related to what you are learning, and may even be on the test.

If it becomes apparent that he or she is trying to stress or emphasize something, be sure to get it down...maybe even a couple times.

After the Lecture

Revise your notes as quickly as possible, preferably immediately after the lecture, since at that time you will still remember a good deal of the lecture. Also it is a good idea to reread your notes within 24 hours of the lecture. It may be a good idea to **rewrite or type** your notes to make them clearer and more organized.

Revise it with a class mate or two. Two students see and hear more than one. Your notes will have different gaps than that of your class mates.

Review the lecture notes (again) before the next lecture.

Tips

- Collect notes for each course in one place, in a separate notebook or section of a notebook.
- Use an '*erasable pen or pencil*'.
- Use a loose-leaf notebook rather than a notebook with a permanent binding.
- Enter your notes **legibly** because it saves time. Make them clear.
- Draw a box around assignments and suggested books so you can identify them quickly.
- **Mark ideas** which the lecture emphasizes with a **highlighter, arrow** or some **special symbol**.
- When the teacher looks at his/her notes, pay attention to what they say next. Check any notes you may have missed with a classmate.
- **Do an outline.** For every new section of your subject, you have a new bullet then title it and use smaller bullets, (-), or number them to put information down.
- One helpful strategy is, if your teacher writes on his or her black or whiteboard, use a bullet for anything he writes, and a dash for anything he says, and use a plus for any combination. This can help distinguish exact facts with inferences.
- Incorporate different **colors of ink, diagrams, drawings** of your own. Make your notes *your* notes. Take advantage of how you learn (visually, orally, or actively) and write/draw your notes according to that style.
- Watch for **signal words**. Your instructor is not going to send up a rocket when He/she states an important new idea or gives an example, but she will use signals to telegraph what she is doing. Every good speaker does it, and you should expect to receive these signals. For example, she may introduce an example with "for example" as done here. Other common signals:
 - "There are three reasons why...." (Here they come!)
 - "First...Second... Third...." (There they are!)
 - "And most important,...." (A main idea!)
 - "A major development...." (A main idea again!)

He/She may signal support material with:

- "On the other hand...."
- "Pay close attention to this"
- "On the contrary...."
- "For example...."
- "Similarly...."
- "In contrast...."
- "Also...."
- "For example...."
- "For instance...."

He may signal conclusion or summary with:

- "Therefore...."

- "In conclusion...."
- "As a result...."
- "Finally...."
- "In summary...."
- "From this we see...."

He/She may signal very loudly with:

- "Now this is important...."
- "Remember that...."
- "The important idea is that...."
- "The basic concept here is...."
- If you can, bring a tape recorder. Still take notes but listen to the lecture later where you can stop and play while taking notes on the Lecture. A better way is to record the lecture in a small camera. However, do not let this become a crutch. The important thing is to **process** the information in your head, not: to record it on your recorder. Note taking -even when only 70% is taken down- is more beneficial than 100% recording, because you you make yourself process the information while jotting it down.
- Consider investing in a small laptop, if you type faster than you write.
- Afterward, go back with your red pen and highlighter and point out the importants.

Warnings

- Do not perform manual activities which will detract from taking notes. **Do not doodle or play with your pen.** These activities break eye contact and concentration. Although some people learn best while fidgeting (an active learning style), it is distracting to others. Therefore, if you learn best while doodling or tapping your foot, sit near people who do the same or who don't keep glaring in your direction.
- **If you are gathering together your personal belongings when you should be listening**, you're bound to miss an important point--perhaps an announcement about the next exam--or, at the least, insult the teacher.
- Some professors may not want you to record their lectures, in case they end up shared or posted online without the professor getting credit or financial compensation for their expertise. It could even be illegal to make a recording without their permission! Ask permission before using recording devices, and delete your recordings as soon as the final exam is over.
- Remember that you are there to **analyze** and **process**, not: to **record**. Pieces of electronics can record better than you, but they do not get an academic degree or diploma. Make sure you keep processing and analyzing *despite* having a recorder at hand.

Tools to Help

Several tools can help you maximize your retention and help you take better notes.

1. PerfectNotes software works on your laptop to help you make sure you never miss a thing. It records your lecture while you take notes. At any time, you can bookmark important points. Later, you can quickly go back and hear what you missed by clicking on your bookmarks. Or, if

part of your notes are unclear, simply click in your notes, click a button, and the audio will be available for you to browse through. In just seconds you can hear the exact part that was unclear. Free demo available from www.perfectnotes.com. Full version is \$29.95.

2. Live Scribe Smart Pen is a great tool for those who don't want to take a notebook to class. Take notes using the Smart Pen on special paper. Whenever you want to hear something again, just click on the notes that are unclear and hear them again. Available from www.livescribe.com for \$149 or \$199 depending on the size of memory.

3. Microsoft OneNote is a great tool for organizing a lot of data into once place. You can put together web pages, pdf's, emails, and your own notes. It lets you record voice only, or with video and save it right there in the OneNote-document. A great search tool helps you quickly find what you are looking for. Free demo available from www.microsoft.com, or purchase for \$99 or \$79.

4. If you take notes on a laptop or type up your notes into study guides, check your Microsoft Word project gallery for something called a "notebook layout". This a really cool and useful type of document that looks just like a notebook. You can put tabs into it for different sections, title each page for easy retrieval later, and even draw diagrams or record little audio notes on the pages! It's built especially for note-taking, so bullets are easy to use and organize. The best part is that if you already have a more recent copy of MS Word, it's free.

How to Relieve Stress

Stress. We all deal with it. Whether it be our jobs, family life, drama with friends, a relationship problem, or finances, stress is there. While a little stress is probably good for you, it's the excess that does the harm. But there are ways of relieving it or destressing.

Steps

Quick Relief Stress. Breathe, Smile, Visualize, Evaluate, Fight.

Take a deep breath. This is your first, most immediate defense against stress. If you can get in the habit of pausing and taking a nice, deep breath every time you feel stress beginning to take hold, you'll have won half the battle just by preventing it from taking over. The other half is won by addressing the causes of your stress.

Communicate. Whether you talk to a friend or talk to your cat, getting it off your chest will help a lot. If you don't feel like talking about it, write it down. Keep a journal and write down whatever it is that's bothering you. Writing is a therapy of its own.

Laugh. Rediscover your sense of humor by making fun of your situation. View it from your future self's perspective, telling this story to a bunch of your friends over pizza and soda. Crack some jokes. Do your goofiest impression. Tickle a child that you love. Laughter, whether it's yours or someone else's, is the best medicine--and it's contagious!

Get fit. Perhaps your health and appearance are stressing you out, but even if they're not an issue, being physically fit can *directly* help relieve stress, which exists on both a mental and a physical level. Sometimes there's nothing like a long run, an intense yoga session, or a fresh swim after a stressful day to help you feel relaxed and stress-free again. Also, exercise releases endorphins; a feel good hormone. Chocolate releases endorphins as well (just only in moderation)!

Be organized. For the most part, stress arises from feeling overwhelmed. There's just too much to do, and not enough time to do it. Being organized and getting your priorities straight can help you break responsibilities down into manageable pieces and focus on the things that really matter to you, rather than getting caught up in details and creating extra work for yourself--all of which leads to more stress.

Soothe the senses. Light a scented candle that has a calming fragrance like lavender. Listen to your favorite, most relaxing music or, better yet, go somewhere that you can listen to wind rustle through trees or waves crash on the beach. Enjoy the scenery, whether you're outdoors or viewing an art exhibit. Drink some warm tea or taste--**really** taste--some dark chocolate. Treat yourself by getting a massage or, if you want to be alone, take a bath (bubbles are recommended).

Be aware of your choices; you *always* have a choice.

Learn to say no; you cannot do everything you are asked.

Learn how to delegate.

Be thankful. It does wonders for your state of mind.

If you need to apologize to someone, and it will not make the situation worse, find a way to do so. More importantly, learn to forgive, particularly to forgive yourself. Guilt adds pain to stress.

Do nothing. That's right, folks, do nothing *at all*. Close the door, open the window, have a seat, and take a little break from life. If your mind is racing, learn to meditate and just let that stress *go*.

Listen to music. Listening to music does wonders and is a great way to relieve stress, if it is not something that'll make you feel worse. Listen to good songs that get you in a happy mood; and just forget about your problem. Music is known to be a significant mood-changer and reliever of stress. Ocean sounds tend to simulate calmness and serenity so, listening to a sound machine while lying down could help.

Tips

- Relieving stress in the short term is a good idea, but resolving the underlying *causes* of stress is even better. If the same issues keep driving you up the wall time and time again, give some serious thought as to how they can be dealt with **permanently**. The following two examples illustrate the variety and usefulness of the self-help information which is available.
- Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) teaches that **it is not *what* happens to you, but what you *believe* about what happens to you that makes you stressed and depressed.** (Ellis, 1975). You can do a lot to get rid of these feelings on your own by finding the irrational ideas which produce them, and debating with yourself until you have cast them out. Here is Ellis's list of potential culprits:
 - *I must be perfect in all respects in order to be worthwhile.*
 - *I must be loved and approved of by everyone who is important to me.*
 - *When people treat me unfairly, it is because they are bad people.*
 - *It is terrible when I am seriously frustrated, treated badly, or rejected.*
 - *Misery comes from outside forces which I can't do very much to change.*
 - *If something is dangerous or fearful, I have to worry about it.*
 - *It is not easier to avoid life's difficulties and responsibilities, face them.*

- *Because things in my past controlled my life, they have to keep doing so now and in the future.*
- *It is terrible when things do not work out exactly as I want them to.*
- *I can be as happy as possible by just doing nothing and enjoying myself, taking life as it comes.*
- **In addition to getting rid of negative beliefs, it is necessary to acquire a set of positive ones,** such as the following widely quoted *Desiderata*, written by Max Ehrmann in the 1920s:
 - *Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.*
 - *As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit.*
 - *If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.*
 - *Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.*
 - *Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.*
 - *Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.*
 - *Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*
 - *Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.*

Warnings

- **Be wary of escapism.** Do not alleviate stress by doing something that'll only make it worse in the long run (e.g. buying a new pair of expensive shoes when what's stressing you is debt or taking someones problems into your own "hands.").
- **Don't just suffer in silence.**
 - Just as you would not hesitate to contact a physician for ongoing physical pain, you should not hesitate to contact a therapist for continuing mental pain.
 - A therapist is a professional problem solver, who can bring to bear all the insights of psychology to point out choices that you are not aware of.
 - Your physician may be able to prescribe medication to control anxiety and depression, or to help you to handle a particularly stressful situation.

- Symptoms such as hearing voices that are not there, seeing things that are not there, or staying awake for several nights in a row, are signs of serious mental illness which require immediate psychiatric attention.
- **If you are feeling suicidal or feel like you might hurt yourself, get help immediately!**
 - Call your local suicide prevention hotline, or the psychiatric hotline of a hospital in your area.
 - If you do not know where to call, your local police department will be able to provide you with assistance.

How to Study for a Test Without Cramming

There is a way to study for a test without cramming. Only if you don't leave it until the last minute. The first and most important way for this to work, is based on notes taken in class. If you are not willing to take notes, then this is *not* for you. Start by trying this method with a class you are comfortable in. When you see how well it works, you will definitely want to put it in place for your other classes.

Steps

Get about ten sheets of copy (computer) paper, a spiral notebook large enough for the class you are attending, and a three-ringed binder, either large enough for the class you are attending, or to contain notes for several classes, which ever is best for you.

1.

Fold and cut the copy paper sheets in half, making them 8.5" x 5.5". At the top of the first sheet for that day, write the class you are in and the date. This will help with the organization of your information at a later time. You should never mix up your notes with several classes. Each group of note taking sheets should be kept in the associated book.

Use these sheets to take notes on in class. Don't worry about how they look, if you scratch something out, if you have to write things out of order, or upside down. If you find the need to draw instructional pictures, or lines drawn from one point of information to another, definitely do so. This is for your use only, and the only person who needs to understand the information is you.

Turn the pages over, or go to another sheet, as necessary, progressively numbering each page in the top right hand corner. By numbering them, if they were to get out of order, you can easily find how they should be organized. Again, do not worry about how things look. The most important thing here is to get the information given in class so you are able to use it at a later time.

Remember that as soon you get home from class, if any reading is required to correspond with the day's lessons, it would be worth while to take notes, again on your note paper.

Know that as soon as possible, preferably that evening, but before a test is scheduled, rewrite the information you took in class, and any associated reading notes, into a spiral notebook. This spiral notebook should be for this particular class only. There should be one notebook for each class. At this time, just rewrite the information in an more organized manner than on your note sheets.

When a test is scheduled for that class, a day or two before the test, rewrite the information from the spiral notebook into the three ringed binder. At this time, you should take care to make sure all of the information is as organized as possible. Using an outline form can be very helpful.

- If there are any associated drawings, for example, a drawing of a plant cell and all of it's components versus an animal cell, include it in your binder in as much detail as possible. Do not worry about your skills as an artist, but concentrate on the accuracy of the information. Also, coloring in items in your drawings will help you to remember how things look. Once you have completed the above steps, put everything away, and don't look at it anymore before your test.

Get to bed at a reasonable hour the night before your test, and get a full night's sleep. Make sure you have all of your materials needed for your test; i.e., pens, pencils, calculators, etc.

- The morning of your test, get up early and eat a healthy breakfast. Taking a test on an empty stomach, or a stomach without the proper food, is like trying to drive your car 100 miles on two gallons of gas. You will move along fine for a while, but will eventually poop out.
- Arrive to your test a little early to avoid panic and rushing. When you are in your class at your desk, don't panic about the test. Take a couple of deep breaths and relax. You have

done a lot of work preparing for your test, and the information is in your brain ready to be called on.

- As you take your test, you will find you will be able to recall the information you wrote or drew. Sometimes, after reading a question, you can close your eyes, and you will actually be able to see your notes in your mind. The idea is, you have seen the information so many times, you have actually stored that information in your brain without trying to cram it in there.

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Understand that what this method works, is your persistence in following the above noted steps. If you don't do all of the steps, most likely you will not be able to retain the information as well. Good luck! Everybody has their own way of studying.

Tips

- Cut about 10 sheets of copy paper so they are 5.5" x 8.5".
- Take accurate notes in class not worrying how neat the information is.
- Indicate the class and the date at the top of the first note sheet.
- Number each note sheet to keep the information in order.
- Take notes from any associated reading.
- As soon as possible after your class, preferably that evenings, copy all of the notes into a spiral notebook just for that class in a more organized manner.
- A day or two before a scheduled test, rewrite the notes from the spiral notebook into a 3 ringed binder as neatly and as organized as possible using an outline format.
- If any drawings are needed, do not worry about the artistic quality of your drawing but the accuracy of the information.
- Highlight very important information, and use color for the illustrations.
- The night before your test, organize the materials needed for the test.
- Get a good nights sleep.
- The morning of your test, eat a healthy breakfast.
- Get to your testing area early.
- Take a few deep breaths, and relax.
- The morning of your test, do a few short exercises like jumping jacks, running in place or sit-ups. This will get the blood flowing and help motivate you.

Warnings

- If you are not a note taker, this method will not work for you. But if you want to get good grades then perhaps you should learn to take notes.