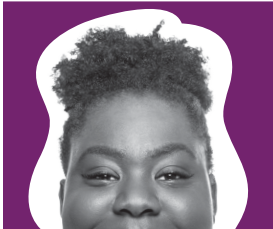


Practical learning strategies



College classes can be challenging. Developing practical learning strategies can help you become a more independent and active learner which will help you make a smooth transition to college.

Consider the following as you refine your study skills in preparation for college courses.

Learning Assessment

Do you know how you learn best? Consider taking a learning assessment to discover your preferred mode of learning. Instructors may not provide information to you in your preferred mode, but if you understand yourself and how you learn, you, the student, can adapt classroom material to a method that will help you more readily absorb and retain information.

- **Auditory learners** find strategies such as recording lectures, listening to audio textbooks and studying aloud very helpful in the learning process.
- **Visual learners** should review notes and PowerPoints, highlight, color code and rewrite notes into visual forms, such as flashcards, charts, diagrams or mind maps.
- **Kinesthetic learners** learn by “doing,” so adding physical movement to study time is essential. This could include pacing or taking a walk while studying from index cards, reading textbooks while pedaling a stationary bike, listening to music, keeping one’s hands busy with a stress ball, studying with others by verbally reciting and discussing the content, and taking a five-minute break for each 30 minutes of study.

Memorization Techniques

Memorization techniques are very important skills to have while in college, as the amount of information to be memorized increases in the postsecondary environment. New vocabulary, complex processes and the fast pace of learning new material are just some of the reasons memorization skills are crucial for college students.

- **Stay interested.** Keep your attention and focus on the material you need to learn.
- **Time.** Make a determined effort to carve out quality study time that is free of distractions.
- **Memorization order.** Memorize the information from general to specific.
- **Organize.** Sort or arrange the information you need to remember in groups, such as how they are similar or different.
- **Visualize.** Use a visualization technique, such as a mind map or picture.
- **Relate.** Form associations between new ideas you wish to remember and things you already know.
- **Repeat.** Rephrase information in your own words and use multiple senses to help you encode information. See it, say it, write it.



Understand yourself and how you learn and then adapt classroom material to a method that will help you more readily absorb and retain information.

Study Skills

How you approach your studies in college will have a direct effect on your academic success. Remain positive, remind yourself of the goals you have set, and use effective study methods such as these listed below.

- **Study in one-to-three hour shifts**, taking a break every 30 minutes to stretch or drink a beverage.
- **Study when you feel well rested and relaxed**, making sure to study during the time of day when you are most productive and alert.
- **Study the more difficult information first** when you are the freshest, saving for last the homework and projects you most enjoy or are not as strenuous.
- **Stay nourished with healthy foods** so you have energy and your brain can function well.
- **Study before and after class.** A good strategy is to read the text assignments before class and review your class notes while they are fresh in your mind.
- **Study two or three hours** for each hour of class you attend.
- **Meet with instructors** during their office hours if you are having difficulty learning new material.
- **See a tutor** from the college tutoring center, join a study group or use an online tutoring service that may be available for the course.

Test Taking Strategies

To do well on tests, you need to know the material and be mentally prepared to show your knowledge of the subject. Try the following strategies for taking tests in college.

Before a test:

- Review over time the material presented in class before the date of an exam. The more prepared you are, the more confident you will be; cramming is not an efficient learning method.
- Learn the exam format before the test if possible so you know if the test questions are multiple choice, short answer, true/false or essay.
- If you are anxious, try some stress-reducing techniques: Take a walk, listen to music, or write down your anxieties 10 minutes before taking a test.
- Arrange for testing accommodations before an exam if it is an effective accommodation for your disability. Testing accommodations may include extra time, a quiet place, audio and enlarged print.

During a test:

- Think positively! Remind yourself that you studied hard and are prepared for the test. If allowed, use scratch paper to write down what you think you will need to remember, such as formulas, facts or names.
- While taking the test, read the directions carefully, look over the sections of the test and budget your time for each section.
- Do the section of the test that you know the best first.
- Concentrate on your own test, not what others are doing.



Remain positive, remind yourself of the goals you have set, and use effective study methods

- Read each question carefully before answering so you are sure to understand the question completely.
- When stuck on a question, cross off the answers you know are wrong. If you are not sure of the answer, move on to the next test question.
- Before you hand in your test, look it over to be sure you did not miss anything.

After a test:

- After your test is graded, carefully read any comments from your instructor so you understand any mistakes you may have made.
- Ask your instructor for clarification for anything you still don't understand.
- Look back at your book and notes, and jot down information you learned from the test.

Note Taking

Note taking is an essential skill in college that can only be refined through practice. Because tests usually cover material that was presented in class, it is important to study from a good set of notes. There are many methods and systems for taking notes, so experiment and find a system that works for you.

- **Take notes** that are clear and concise, which are more effective than long, complicated notes.
- **Organize your notes** for each class session by writing the name of the class, topic and date that the notes were taken.
- **Leave space on the page to add key words** or other information. You can try taking notes on the right side of the paper and leaving a wide margin on the left side.
- **Audio record the lecture** so that you can listen to the material again using a digital recorder or smartpen.
- **Review your notes soon after class** and rewrite sections that are unclear. Add missing information. Highlight the most important information for later study. This will also help you know if you need to check the book, the recording of the lecture, or with your instructor for further content clarification.



Because tests usually cover material that was presented in class, it is important to study from a good set of notes.

Time Management

Learning how to manage your time effectively is absolutely essential to success in college. An effective time management plan includes prioritizing tasks, implementing due dates, breaking down assignments, and scheduling times to be in class, study, work, do errands and attend appointments.

- **Choose a time management system.** This could be a planner, assignment log or a calendar in paper format, phone application or computer application. Choose one that will work for you, and use it daily.
- **Prioritize your tasks** and handle the top priorities first.
- **Set realistic goals.** It is common to underestimate how long an assignment will take to complete, so it is best to start assignments well before the due date.
- **Use your planner to break down assignments.** Determine all of the steps needed in order to complete an assignment and include those steps in your planner.
- **Overcome stumbling blocks and procrastination.** Evaluate the time spent on leisure activities such as video games, movies or texting with friends since it may have a negative effect on your study time. Be proactive in scheduling your leisure activities so they don't take over the time you have allowed for study.
- **Check your planner daily.** Update what you have completed, and track your progress so you can make adjustments as needed. Don't forget to reward yourself for working hard and completing your projects.

Reading Strategies

In college, you will be responsible for reading assigned textbooks, supplemental materials and online resources, so it is important to use effective reading strategies for comprehension. Common reading tips may include:

- Read in a quiet, well-lit area with comfortable seating.
- Take breaks to rest your eyes and your mind.
- Read aloud or use audio books to improve concentration.
- Take notes from the reading assignment and highlight important concepts.
- Take note of unfamiliar vocabulary and generate a list for study.

Read with a Purpose, Using SQ3R Strategy

- **Survey.** Preview the assignment/material to be studied by scanning the text quickly to discover the central concept. From your preview, formulate an overall picture and purpose of what you are going to study.
- **Question.** Question what you need to learn in terms of what, why, how, who, and where to support the central concept. Write these questions in the margins of your textbook or at the top of your study notes.
- **Read.** Read specifically to answer the questions. Most paragraphs contain one or more main ideas in support of a concept. Locate and highlight them with a marker, make notes in the margins, and pay attention to bolded or italicized type, graphs and illustrations.
- **Recall.** Pause periodically to recall in your own words the important ideas you have read.
- **Review.** See if you answered all of your questions and understood the new material. Go back and re-read difficult parts you may have missed in the recall. If there are review questions in the material, make sure you can answer them all.

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