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Effective Study Techniques

Finding what works for you

Learning how to study effectively is a process that takes **many attempts** until you find the one that works best for you. If you're trying to improve your study routine and are not sure where to start, check out these popular techniques:



Common studying techniques

These techniques are popular as they've been proven to **increase your efficiency** when studying. Remember – everyone learns differently, and what works for others may not work for you.

1. Pomodoro technique

This is a **time management technique** that is useful if you are easily distracted or want to know how long a task takes. For this technique, you pick one subject or task to focus on and set a timer for **25-30 minutes** during which you'll study. Once the timer goes off, you take a **2-5 minute break** and **repeat**. After approximately four sessions, take a longer break. This is a good technique to use if you're able to switch between work and breaks easily without going off schedule.

2. Feynman technique

The Feynman Technique, also known as **teaching**, is useful in making sure you understand a subject as opposed to remembering it. One of the best ways to learn something yourself is by teaching it to others. While studying, you choose a topic you want to learn and **pretend to explain it to a 12-year-old**. Based on your explanation, you can identify which parts you may need reviewing. When studying, it can be easy to get lost in the specific wording and jargon, but when you can explain a subject in simple terms you begin to understand it on a deeper level.

3. SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, review)

SQ3R is a **reading comprehension method** divided into five steps: survey, question, read, recite, and review. **Survey** — scan the title, summary, introduction, headings, subheadings, and notice any graphics or bolded or italicised text. **Question** — write as many questions you have about what you've seen so far. This helps improve concentration. **Read** — read the text, find the answers to your questions, and highlight main ideas. **Recite** — in your own words, reflect on what you just learned. **Review** — go over the material you just learned to understand and remember the content.



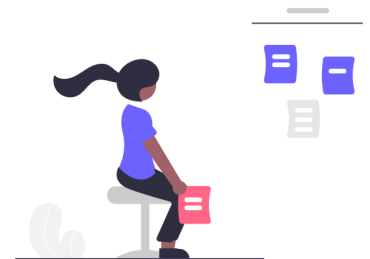
This strategy should be done in one session, but can be repeated as many times as needed. It helps you **engage with the readings** and better remember the content eliminating the need to cram for exams.

4. Mnemonics

A mnemonic is a **memory technique** that helps you recall information by assigning a pattern of letters to a concept. For example, H.O.M.E.S stands for the names of the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior). Take the first letter of a key word in a list and write it down. Repeat for all remaining words. **Create a sentence using the letters in front of you.** Switch between writing the sentence out and saying the term the acronym represents, and vice versa. The **more fun you have** with them, the **easier they will be to remember!**

5. Quiz yourself

Creating **flash cards** or other tools to quiz yourself are a great way to determine which areas of a subject you need to review. Write down **key concepts, definitions, and dates** as answers on one side of a cue card with a question linking to the answer on the front. As you work through your cards, **create two piles**: one for the **questions you got right** and were quick to answer, and the other for **questions you got wrong**, or may have taken too long to get right. As you go through your cards, your incorrect pile should shrink. There are many online flash card tools you can use if you'd rather not write out all those cards by hand.



6. Retrieval practice

Retrieval practice is **recalling information** after studying to see what you processed. A common method is to **close your notes after studying** and **write down everything you understood**. Then, go back to your notes and check if the information you wrote was correct, and look over the content you didn't understand. Repeat this process at least twice a week, or when new information is discussed that can link to your previous notes.

Factors that can improve your studying

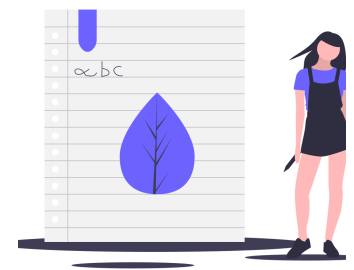
To study effectively, you must also take into consideration other factors that can influence your ability to study. Where you study, what you eat, and how you take notes may be affecting your ability to study.

1. Your environment

The most important factors you should consider when choosing where to study are **comfort, lighting, and cleanliness**. Choose a seat that is comfortable and helps your posture. If you're uncomfortable, you're more likely to get distracted. Natural lighting is also beneficial as it boosts positivity and prevents the inevitable headaches we get from fluorescent lights. Make sure your study space is clean. Any clutter can make you feel stressed and anxious.

2. Colour-coordinate your notes

Writing all your notes in one colour can make the content more forgettable and easier to skim. The best way to take notes is by **colour-coding key information** to maximize retention. For example, write all important words and definitions in red and larger concepts in blue. Try to limit your colours to three or four to avoid confusion and stay organized.



3. Cornell method for note-taking

The Cornell note-taking method is best for recording lecture notes while also **actively engaging with the content**. For this method, you **divide your page into three sections**: a large column on the right, a smaller column on the left, and a short row at the bottom. In the column on the right, you will write your class notes as you normally would. The column on your left is a “**cue column**” where you will **record questions** based on the main ideas in the lecture notes which you can use later to quiz yourself. The bottom row of the page is meant to write down a **summary of the main points** on that page.

Practice makes perfect

Remember, finding the best study routine for you takes time. You may have to try a variety of study techniques before you find the one that works best for you, but **don't give up!**

