
Study Smart

Each course has 3-4 hours in class and ~7 hours self-study per course per week. This implies ~42-56 hours class time and a further 140 hours total study time in 12-14 weeks per semester.

If you have 5 courses this would mean maybe 15-20 hours timetabled and 45 hours self-study per week! Plus recreation! Were you thinking about employment? It may not be possible...

This explains why you need to organize and prioritize your time!

Many Ways to Study Smarter

- Attend classes. Get involved. Sit at the front of the class. Ask and answer questions.
- Take time to study the course requirements. Know what your instructor wants you to learn.
- Schedule regular study periods. The most effective way to learn anything is to rehearse it regularly.
- Have a focus for each study session. What are you studying? Where does it fit with other materials? How will you know if you have learned?
- Be realistic. It's better to spend an hour on each subject than to plan two hours for each one and not follow through.
- Read the textbook! Read the textbook! Read the textbook!
- Take good notes and review them regularly. The Cornell Method of note taking works well in conjunction with the SQ3R Method of textbook reading. See a Learning Strategist for details.
- Learn Key Concepts. No one retains everything they read or hear so be selective by reviewing the main points that you get from the text and instructor.
- Map Key Concepts through analysis: What are the major sections, concepts, ideas of the materials I am learning? What do I need to know for each one?
- Categorize materials. Use pictures diagrams, charts, or lists to organize.
- Create an organized study area at home with all the resources and space that you need. When you are in this study space, you will automatically kick into study mode with everything at hand.
- Be prepared to study in a variety of locations: classrooms, the library, study rooms, etc. as well as at home.
- Avoid Distractions. Don't give yourself a chance to be diverted. Television, Netflix, phone calls, and even nearby loud conversations will all hamper your concentration.
- Study short and often. Your brain takes in information faster and retains it better if you don't try to overload it. Four short study periods a week are more effective than two long ones.
- Study when you are wide awake. You accomplish more when you are alert so schedule your study time accordingly.
- Study your most difficult subjects first. You'll be in the best shape to tackle the tough stuff. You'll also feel better getting the hardest out of the way.
- Write out or say out loud what you think you know. If you are unable to find the words to



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express your knowledge, then you have gaps in your understanding that may cause problems on the exam.

- Study with others. Discussing and debating theories, concepts, case studies, and problems will help you to mentally organize your thought, reinforce your learning, and help you prepare for your exams.
- Look for the meaning and personal connections. Information that means something to you is learned more quickly, and is easier to retrieve from long term memory.
- Connect the key concepts in the course syllabus with your notes, and look for how your classes have addressed these concepts, themes, and issues within the course.
- Like what you learn. When you are interested in something, the details are easier to remember. If you can turn the material into a personal interest, it will be easier to retain.
- Create questions about the course content. What questions help me understand, recall, and relate these sections, concepts, and ideas? How can I structure these questions and information relevant to answering them into visually or spatially organized memory aids?
- Problem solve. Spend half of your study time working on problems. This will prepare you for exam time. If you get stuck on a homework question, go on to the next question and ask for help the next day.
- Complete practice exams if they are available. This gets you into the habit of answering the types of questions that you will encounter when you take exams for marks.
- Start assignments as soon as they are given. Your workload will be spread out, so you'll avoid being overwhelmed as you get near the deadline.
- Keep your body and brain alert by choosing foods that aid concentration and memory, such as fish, nuts, seeds, yogurt and blueberries. The same applies on exam day - eat a good meal before the test, based on foods that will provide a slow release of energy.
- Reward yourself. When you complete one of the goals you set for yourself, give yourself a reward and a short break. This gives incentive to reach your goals and achieve success.
- Keep on top of it. Work at your courses every day and don't let work pile up.
- If you find yourself falling behind, identify the problem and address it as soon as you can. Don't let it become unmanageable.
- Try not to worry about what you can't change. Work on putting your problems aside while you're studying. Consider talking things over with a friend or making an appointment to see a Learning Strategist in the Learning Centre or a Counsellor through Counselling.
- Keep up the good work!

Adapted and extended from: Fraser, L. (2003). Making your mark (6th ed) and
<http://www.thelearnwellprojects.com/mental-exam-metrics-three-better-than-cramming-study-tips/>

