

Success in History

Students committed to learning will find many possible paths to success. No path is error free, but the path best for you may not look like the same path as another student. For this reason, students should continuously assess their academic progress in courses and adjust their academic strategies accordingly.

While there is no magic formula, the following suggestions may improve your ability to succeed in history and increase your retention of knowledge.

The information was adapted from: <http://www.historyguide.org/guide/guide.html>;
<https://www.examttime.com/blog/how-to-study-history/>; <http://www.saburchill.com/history/hist002.html>

Tips:

- Remember:** There are two sources of history information:
 - Primary sources* are things such as newspapers, diaries or letters written at that time. Also included as primary sources are drawings, paintings and, in later periods, photographs.
 - Secondary sources* are things such as books, CD ROMs, Internet sources films, videos, plays, museums and visits to historical sites. The authors of history textbooks, CD ROMs and web sites use other secondary sources and primary sources of information to help them write their texts. You will usually learn history through secondary sources.
- Use the SQ4R method of reading:** Reading a book and studying a book are two different things. Before you read, **S**urvey the chapter. **Q**uestion while you survey by turning the title, headings and learning objectives into questions. When you begin to **R**ead, look for answers to your questions, re-read captions and study graphics. **R**ecite by orally asking yourself questions after each section. **R**elate what you have already studied in class – how are these new concepts similar/different? How do they build on one another? **R**evise is an ongoing process.
 - In order to make the reading of history more satisfying and more purposeful, you must make an effort. This means that you must have a general sense of the subject matter. You can't just jump into a text and expect to get much out of it especially if the subject matter is genuinely alien to you. If you do just jump in, you will quickly become lost as the information presented will make little sense. The only way you are going to get through all the reading is to approach it with the proper attitude. Approach the reading in a positive way--don't build brick walls!
- Keep tabs:** If you come across a term, place, person, or event you do not understand, make a note of it and use another source to find out more.
- Question what you read:** Think critically when you read secondary sources. These are only the author's interpretations of past events. Different authors have different beliefs and if you read enough on your topic you will start to see differences. This in turn will help you to form your own opinions.

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5. **Connect:** Find out how to relate historical events since many times they are inter-related. Nothing occurs in a vacuum – things are causal.
6. **Visuals:** Use charts and diagrams or mnemonics to study names, places and dates of important events.
7. **Maps:** Learn maps by drawing them. Trace the outline, photocopy the map, and then practice filling the details!
8. **Connect and Develop Ideas:** Organize your notes into chronological order. Split your notes by topics, then years, decades, and centuries. Establish connections between facts: the utilization of a mind map can be quite helpful when trying to visualize a lot of information at once. From your mind map, you can add extra notes. One beneficial technique is to divide each event into Causes, Events, and Consequences.
9. **Key data retention:** Some memorization skills are required and should therefore be a part of your learning process when studying history. Using flashcards can be helpful, but also consider different memorization techniques such as rhyming or acrostics.
10. **Watch movies!:** Watching films and documentaries *that are true to historical fact* can be a fun way to “study” history. Some movies take a lot of artistic liberties to make the story more dramatic, so just be sure that the movie you choose is accurate.

How to remember what you have read:

1. Be an active listener and participant in class.
2. Read ahead and be prepared with questions to ask.
3. Research topics you are assigned to read with secondary sources other than your book. Even looking at pictures and reading captions from other books helps to cement historic events. Find out how ordinary people dressed, lived, what they ate, how they traveled, what technology was available anything to help you paint a fuller picture for yourself.