

Study Skills:

35 Quick Study Tips

Academic Success Center
Iowa State University

Preparing for Class:

1. **Read and outline the chapter before class.** This allows you to add important information to your outline, without having to write down everything your professor is saying.
2. **Take notes in the margins of your textbooks** with questions you have, personal experiences that relate, and specific information you found interesting or important to remember.
3. **Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class.** This will help you remember what was covered, and prepare you to receive new information from the professor!

During Class:

4. **Sit in the same seat every day** for each class, especially when you have a test. Your body will associate this area with learning and concentration will improve.
5. **Add illustrations to your notes.** For example, a timeline can be created from history dates, a scientific class system can be made into a diagram, and statistical information can be transformed into a graph or chart.
6. **Even when bored in class, TAKE NOTES!** This will help you remember the materials and stay focused.
7. **Try creating a highlighted color-coded note system** to help remember important information. For example: Yellow = people, Green = places, and Orange = dates.
8. **Bring a tape recorder to class** if your professor talks faster than you can write, but ask for permission first. This way you can listen to the lecture again later and fill in any information missing from your notes.
9. **Keep your attention focused on what the teacher is saying.** Listen for signals of important things to remember, i.e. "The most important point..." and "Remember that..." Be sure to include in your notes any info the teacher repeats or writes on the board.
10. **Create a method of abbreviation** you understand, like using symbols in place of words (% instead of

'percent', 'med' instead of medical', etc.). This way you can write more quickly during class.

11. **Place a '?' next to information you write in your notes but are confused about.** Talk to your professor or classmates later to clarify the details.

Your Study Atmosphere:

12. **Identify a 'study space'** where the bulk of your time spent in the same space is used solely for study purposes. After a week of using the same space for the same activity (to study), your body will associate that space with studying, and will help you focus.
13. **Schedule study times**, if possible in the same place and same time. Make a calendar of your daily routine including meals, class, and sleep time to find hidden free-time that can be used for a quick notes review.
14. **Study difficult or "boring" subjects first.** The courses we find most difficult often require the most creative energy. Save your favorite subjects for later.
15. **Be aware of your best time of day and study then!** Why force your brain to work when you know you cannot mentally function at that time?
16. **Turn off your cell phone and computer** during scheduled study times to reduce the risk of distractions
17. **Take consistent short breaks during lengthy study times:** 10 minutes for every hour of study, and 5 minutes for every half-hour.
18. **Keep your study space well lit.** If your study area is lit by a high ceiling light, use a smaller lamp to illuminate your workspace. This will reduce eye strain and headaches.
19. **Use waiting time;** five minutes waiting for a bus, 20 minutes waiting for the dentist, 10 minutes in between classes – waiting time adds up fast. Have short study tasks ready to do during these periods.
20. **Keep a notebook handy to write down any distracting thoughts** when studying, helping you to focus only on the information you are studying and putting your mind at ease that you won't forget what it is you are concerned about.

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Exam Preparation Tips:

21. **Make a one-page study guide with important information** the night before a test, after studying. Quickly review this material before the test. As soon as you receive the test, flip it over, and quickly write down any information you are likely to forget (called a "memory dump") - this way you can use it throughout the test.
22. **Don't stay up all night cramming** for a test the next day. Aside from being too sleepy to think effectively, your mind generally will only remember the first and last 30 minutes of what you studied.
23. **Get up and eat a good breakfast** on the morning of the test!
24. **When taking a test, if you come to material you are unfamiliar with or you find difficult, skip it.** Move on to other items you already know, then come back to it, time permitting.

General Tips:

25. **Each night, rewrite or type the notes you took in that day's class,** reinforcing key concepts while also making sloppy writing legible and changing abbreviations to whole words and shortened sentences to full length ones. Also answer any questions you had from class.
26. **Review your notes 10 minutes each day** to move the information to long-term memory.
27. **Set personal deadlines** on major assignments at least 3 days early and write them down in your calendar. Also, write a reminder of the assignment at least a week early. This will not only help you remember, but will also encourage you to complete the task on time or early.
28. **If your textbook came with an interactive CD or web site information for supplemental instruction, use it!** Often these materials include chapter study guides and sample tests.
29. **Promise yourself a suitable reward** (a piece of candy, a phone call, a walk) whenever you finish something that was hard to undertake.

30. **Break big jobs down into smaller steps;** tackle short, easy-to-accomplish tasks first.
31. **Form a supportive study group.** Declare to each other what you intend to accomplish before each meeting. Compare your notes to be sure you didn't leave out any pertinent information.
32. **Trick yourself into getting started.** If you have a paper due next week, say, "I'm not really going to outline this paper today. I'll just spend five minutes writing anything that comes into my head about the assigned topic." You might find yourself writing great ideas or completing the paper!
33. **Divide information into chunks!** Your mind will remember smaller chunks of related information better than it would remember an entire list (i.e.-break a group of fifteen items into three lists of related items)
34. **Apply what you're learning to real life situations.** Finding these applications will make your studying more exciting, and will help you remember what you need to know.
35. **Use academic support resources on campus.** Academic Coaching, Writing & Media Centers, Help Lab, Supplemental Instruction, and tutoring can help you succeed.

Source: University of South Carolina
ACE
<http://www.sa.sc.edu/ssc/resources/>