

Study Skills: Summer School Success

Academic Success Center



During summer school, the days are longer, classes are smaller, and you can actually get to know your instructors and classmates. Here are some hints to make the summer school experience both successful and fun!

Time management takes on more importance than ever. The summer session is much shorter than the spring or fall semesters. To keep yourself on track, try:

- ◆ Buying your books before classes start and familiarize yourself with them.
- ◆ Identifying what you already know about the subjects, anticipate what you will be learning, and think about what learning tactics have worked best for you in the past.
- ◆ Block out an eight week schedule with notations for dates of all major exams, papers, or projects.
- ◆ Create a weekly schedule indicating the hours you will be in class and the hours you will dedicate to study. Consider that you should spend at least two hours studying for each hour you spend in class. Many summer session classes meet for two or more hours. That means you may need four hours of preparation time for each class. Post these schedules where you and all living mates can see them.
- ◆ Avoid procrastination! You can fall behind quickly, and falling behind is not an option— there’s no way to make up for the lost time.
- ◆ Make daily “to do” lists with items prioritized so that you are certain to complete tasks of greatest importance.

Take advantage of cool, quiet early morning hours for study. The distraction of the bird’s song is slight compared to the demands of summer evenings. Plus, research says it takes only an hour in the morning to do what takes almost two hours in the evening. You are refreshed, unhampered by the day’s hassles, and ready to learn. To maintain concentrations and maximize retention, study in 45-50 minute segments with short breaks in between; alternate subjects if possible. “Chunk” text into units you can handle in that amount of time and monitor yourself.

When you aren’t concentrating on the text, close the book. Do not fool yourself and others! Acknowledge that you need a break and take it. If you find yourself spending more time with the book closed than open, you will be motivated to improve your attention.

Organize and reduce the information you need to know. The intensity of the pace during summer session requires that you do something to maximize your effort. You will not have time to reread entire chapters before a test. To maximize your reading, try the following:

- ◆ After you have read a chunk of text, summarize it by making notes in the margins of the book.
- ◆ Create an outline or diagram showing how the facts/concepts are related.
- ◆ Design flashcards using 3x5 index cards, putting important terms, concepts, names, formulas, etc. on the front of the card and definitions, descriptions, or examples on the back.

Integrate and synthesize information you get from lectures. This takes a little time as you study; buy pays big dividends as you prepare for tests.

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Improve your testing ability by practicing your recall of the material you are learning.

Keep your test anxiety low by incorporating a dress rehearsal into your test preparation routine.

Try the following:

- ◆ Use a clean copy of an old exam and give yourself a time limit.
- ◆ Write quiz questions for yourself while reading and during lectures.
- ◆ Quiz yourself using your flashcards.
- ◆ Have study partners or family quiz you.
- ◆ Put yourself under the same time pressure you will be under during the test. If you will have 50 minutes to solve 5 calculus problems on the test, be sure you practice doing problems against the clock. If you will have 50 multiple choice questions, practice retrieving 150 terms, facts, etc.

Finally, do not deny yourself all the fun of summer. Recognize when you will be unable to study because of events you really do not want to miss and schedule study around them. You may have to sacrifice some things, but effective time management and efficient study can mean that you will enjoy activities with diminished guilt. Take control of events; do not let events control you. Plan to reward yourself for your accomplishments at the end of the session—celebrate your achievement and commitment as you reap the benefits of your efforts.