

Ten Study Traps

"I Don't Know Where to Begin"

Take Control. Make a list of everything you have to do. Break your workload into manageable chunks. Prioritize! Schedule your time realistically. Don't skip classes near an exam -- you may miss a review session. Interrupt study time with planned study breaks. Begin studying early.

"I've got So Much to Study . . . And So Little Time"

Preview. Survey your syllabus, reading material, and notes. Identify the most important topics emphasized, and areas still not understood. Remember previewing is not an effective substitute for reading.

"This Stuff Is So Dry, I Can't Stay Awake Reading It"

Attack! Get actively involved with the text as you read. Ask yourself, "What is important to remember about this section?" Take notes or underline key concepts. Discuss the material with others in your class.

"I Read It. I Understand It. But I Just Can't Get It to Sink In"

Elaborate. We remember best the things that are most meaningful to us. Try to integrate what you're studying with what you already know.

Chunking: An effective way to simplify & make information more meaningful.

Mnemonics: Any memory-assisting technique that helps us to associate new information with something familiar.

"I Guess I Understand It"

Self-test. Make up questions about key sections in notes or reading. Keep in mind what the professor has stressed in the course. Examine the relationships between concepts and sections.

"There's Too Much To Remember"

Organize. Information is recalled better if it is represented in an organized framework that will make retrieval more systematic.

Write chapter outlines or summaries; emphasize relationships between sections.

Group information into categories or hierarchies, where possible.

Information Mapping. Draw up a matrix to organize and interrelate material.

"I Knew It A Minute Ago"

Review. After reading a section, try to recall the information contained in it. If you cannot recall enough, re-read portions you had trouble remembering. You can't overstudy.

"But I Like To Study In Bed"

Context. Recall is better when study context (physical location, as well as mental, emotional, and physical state) are similar to the test context.

"Cramming Before a Test Helps Keep It Fresh In My Mind"

Spacing. Start studying now. Begin with an hour or two a day about one week before the exam, and then increase study time as the exam approaches. Recall increases as study time gets spread out over time.

"I'm Gonna Stay Up All Night 'til I Get This"

Avoid Mental Exhaustion. Take short breaks often when studying. When you take a study break, and just before you go to sleep at night, don't think about academics. Relax and unwind, mentally and physically. Otherwise, your break won't refresh you and you'll find yourself lying awake at night. Eat well, sleep, and get enough exercise.