



The Study Habits of Successful Students

College students face many challenges. They have to take care of a large number of responsibilities in a limited amount of time. There are plenty of distractions that can divert students' attention from their studies. Most students struggle at one point or another to maintain focus on their schoolwork. But if you're a student, don't despair. All of the study tips listed below have been proven to help students to be successful in their studies.

TIP 1: Figure out how much time you need to devote to each subject. The general recommendation is to study two hours outside of class for every hour spent in class. If you're taking fifteen credits, plan to allocate approximately thirty hours a week to school study. That may sound like a lot of hours, but that's just the general recommendation. Bear in mind that you shouldn't study constantly either. All the aspects of your life—work, recreation, socializing, study, exercise—need to be kept in balance. If you find yourself overloaded, take fewer classes the next time around.

TIP 2: Make yourself a study schedule. There are basically two types of schedule: time orientation and task orientation. In time orientation, you get out your weekly calendar and list the precise time and number of hours you will devote to each subject. So, for example, if you're taking a zoology class, you might write down something like this: Tuesdays/Thursdays 2 to 4 p.m.: study zoology. In task orientation, you delineate¹ the number of tasks you have to accomplish each week but don't specify times or exact numbers of hours. Instead, you might lay out the week's tasks like this:

History: read chapters 1 and 2.
English: write draft 1 of next week's essay. By the end of the week: write the final draft.
Chemistry: do lab experiments on Monday. Thursday: write up the results....

I personally have found task orientation to be the superior method, but that's just me. Determine which method works better for you. Both types of orientation are basically "to do lists." The trouble with lists, though, is that people sometimes spend a lot of time writing down what they need to do and a little time actually doing it. Just make a general outline of what you want to accomplish in a particular week so that you won't forget any important things.

TIP 3: Put things in order of priority, from most important to least important. Study the harder subjects first, when you have more energy and focus. If your grade needs improvement in a certain class, put in more work on that class. If you have a large project, such as a major term paper, break it down into smaller, more manageable segments. Get started and do a bit of work on it each day. That way you can avoid the misery of having an assignment due imminently² with not enough time to finish it. While you're doing this, avoid perfectionism. You can refine things later.

TIP 4: Find yourself some study partners. If you join a study group, you will complete assignments more quickly because you will be working with several other people who have the same goal. You can ask for help when you are having a little trouble understanding something. If you understand a topic well, explaining it to your study partners will help you to remember it better. However, make sure that you choose the right study partners. No study partner is preferable to the wrong study partners. You don't want to waste any time studying with people who are not prepared or who aren't serious about their work.

TIP 5: Find yourself the right study environment. A great many people work well in quiet locales³ with few distractions. Many find they accomplish little real work when they are interrupted by cell phone calls and text messages. But not everyone is like this. Some people actually work well in situations where there's a great deal of noise, music, or other activity going on around them. If you're like this, that's fine. Any locale that allows you to put in quality study time will ultimately help you succeed in your classes.

TIP 6: Always remember why you are doing all this studying. If you don't already have a positive attitude toward learning, adopt one. Be eager to learn. Participate in class as much as possible. Above all, make the most of your present opportunity. It may not come around again.

¹ delineate: outline

² imminently: very soon

³ locales: places

AFTER YOU READ

A VOCABULARY

Match the words in bold with their meanings.

— 1. If you feel stressed, don't despair.	a. in the end
— 2. Allocate thirty hours a week to study.	b. improve
— 3. That amount of study is approximate.	c. decide to use
— 4. Each aspect of your life needs to be in balance.	d. direction or type of thought
— 5. Two strategies are time and task orientation.	e. close but not quite exact
— 6. List the precise time and number of hours.	f. exact
— 7. You can refine things later.	g. lose hope
— 8. Good study locales will ultimately help you succeed.	h. part

B COMPREHENSION

Complete the sentences based on the reading.

1. Students have to take care of many responsibilities in a limited _____ of time.
2. It's not how much or how little time you have; it's how you _____ your time that's important.
3. If you feel overloaded this term, take _____ classes next term.
4. For the author, _____ orientation is the superior method to make a schedule.
5. The author's recommendation is to study the _____ subjects first.
6. The author recommends avoiding _____ when studying day by day.
7. The author says some people work well when there's _____ going on around them.
8. The author says that a student should _____ in class as much as possible.