

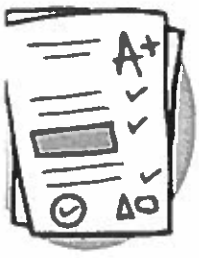


Dealing With Test Anxiety

It's completely normal to experience anxiety at some time or another – we all do. And while we may not enjoy feeling anxious a little bit of anxiety can be beneficial. A little bit of anxiety helps to keep you motivated, focused and alert. However, too much anxiety may interfere with your ability to study, learn, remember things and perform well when taking tests. Too much an anxiety about taking tests is referred to as test anxiety.

The following are a few tips for dealing with too much test anxiety:

- **Develop good study habits.** Good study habits will not only prepare you to address test material but they will also provide you with confidence that will help to reduce unhealth test anxiety.
- **Be prepared.** Being totally prepared for a test is the most important thing you can do to reduce anxiety. Knowing that you know the material on the test will provide you the confidence you need to overcome anxiety and the ability to perform. You've got good reason to be overly anxious if you go into a test unprepared.
- **Don't cram!** Cramming for tests can leads to text anxiety. If you'll prepare for your test ahead of time you'll be able to reduce a lot of test anxiety associated with last minute cramming.
- **Get adequate exercise** getting adequate exercise and staying in shape is believed to help sharpen the mind.
- **Get plenty of sleep** Getting a good night's sleep before an exam can help reduce test anxiety dramatically. Conversely, not getting a good nights rest before an exam will make you tired while taking an exam and will lead to increased test anxiety.
- **Get plent to eat** Don't take an exam on an empty stomach. Its quite common not to want to eat before an exam due to anxiety. However, if you'll get a good meal before taking an exam you'll experience less anxiety and you're mind will be more keen.
- **Stay positive** Don't focus on failing the test. Focus on acing the test and you probably will. Thinking about what might happen if you fail will lead to unnecessary anxiety and just might become a self fulfilling prophecy.
- **Focus on the learning experience** Don't think of a test as the final judgement. Rather view each test as a learning experience and you'll get much less stressed out.
- **Stay relaxed** Take slow, deep breaths and stay in control.



Test Taking Strategies

Different kinds of tests require different kinds of test-taking strategies. This study guide will provide you with some helpful approaches for taking a variety of different tests.

GENERAL TEST TAKING GUIDELINES

1. Be prepared.

- Concentrated hours of effective study to force facts into your memory is the best way to prepare for any test.
- However, teachers often try to test your memory of the material by slightly altering it. In this case, practice and some test-taking skill will help.

2. Always arrive early and take a moment to relax.

- This brief time period will boost your confidence
- Use this time to focus your mind and think positive thoughts.

3. Listen attentively to last minute instructions given by the instructor.

- Teachers often make last minute changes.
- Missing instruction causes extreme anxiety.

4. Read the test directions very carefully and watch for details.

- You may find that more than one answer may be possible on multiple choice.
- A key detail may require only three out of the five essay questions.

5. Plan how you will use the allotted time.

- Estimate how many minutes you will need to finish each test section.
- Determine a pace which will ensure completing the whole test on time.
- Start with the easiest section to build your confidence.

6. Maintain a positive attitude.

- Don't let more difficult questions raise your anxiety and steal your valuable time. Move on and find success with other questions.
- If you are not penalized for wrong answers, guess and move on.
- Avoid watching for patterns. Noticing that the last four answers are "c" is not a good reason to stop, go back, and break concentration.

7. Rely on your first impressions.

- The answer which comes to mind first is often correct.
- Nervously reviewing questions and changing answers can do more harm than good.

8. Plan to finish early and have time for review.

- Return to difficult questions you marked for review.
- Proofread your essays and pay attention to grammar and spelling.
- Make sure you answered all questions. More than one student has failed to notice questions on the back side of the paper.

9. Consider every test a practice session - analyze your performance.

- Test taking is an art which needs refinement. One can not refine the art without practice and serious evaluation.
- Go through each test thoroughly and see if your plan worked.
- Look at each section to identify your fault patterns. Do you need to work on true/false, multiple choice, or essay?
- Talk to teachers regarding low scores, especially on essays.



Multiple Choice Test Taking Tips

Multiple-choice tests are one of the most common testing formats for classroom tests, competency tests and for entrance exams to college. Learning a few tips for taking multiple-choice tests can go along way towards helping you do well in school and preparing for both college and a career.

- Read the multiple choice question before you look through the answers.
- Develop an answer for the question in your head before looking at answers presented, this way the choices given on the test won't trick you or influence your thought process.
- Before figuring out which answer you believe is correct eliminate the answers you know aren't correct.
- Read all the answer choices before choosing your final answer.
- If there isn't an penalty for guessing, always take an educated guess and select the answer you feel is most correct.
- Usually your first choice is the right one, unless you misread the question. Don't keep changing your answers once you've made an educated decision
- In "All of the above" and "None of the above" choices, if you are certain one of the statements is false don't choose "All of the Above" or one of the statements is true don't choose "None of the above".
- In a question with an "All of the above" choice, if you are certain that at least two correct statements, then "All of the above" is most likely the correct answer.
- A positive choice is more likely to be true than a negative one.
- Usually the correct answer is the choice with the most information. However, this isn't always the case. But if you have to guess we recommend selecting the choice with the most information.



General Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for tests and improve test performance.

- The sooner you start preparing for your first test the better you'll perform. You should begin preparation for your first test after the first day of class; this includes studying regularly, completing all your homework and reviewing study materials regularly.
- Manage your time effectively. Make sure you allocate enough time to study so that you're well prepared when your test time comes.
- Make sure to attend all review sessions and pay close attention to hints that the instructor may provide for the test. Take detailed notes and ask questions about concepts and topics that you don't completely understand. Don't be embarrassed to ask questions.
- You should ask your instructor to identify those areas of study that will be emphasized on the test.
- Arrive at class early the day of the test; this is a great time for your instructor to give some last minute hints, guidance or instruction that will help you perform better on the test.
- Before each test make sure to review all material from practice test, homework assignments, textbook readings, review material, lecture notes, etc.
- Being in good physical and mental condition is important to effective test preparation. Make sure to eat before taking a test – you need the energy to help you focus. Don't eat junk food that will make you groggy.
- Make sure to get at least 4 hours of sleep before you take any test. Don't pull an all nighter. While this may seem like a good idea you'll show up to your test tired and unfocused.
- Outline the main ideas, concepts, and information onto a sheet that can be easily reviewed many times. This will make it easy to remember key concepts as well as the information related to each concept.
- Allow yourself to show up at least 5 minutes before the test starts.
- Visit the restroom before you start your test. You don't want to waste valuable test time using the bathroom during the test. This is especially important if you're taking a timed test.



Essay Test Preparation

The following are proven essay test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for essay tests and improve essay test performance.

- The first thing you need to do when answering an essay question or test is to read the directions carefully. Don't assume you know what the answer is until you've carefully read the directions. Sometime an essay test will only require you answer a portion of the essays (i.e. "Answer 4 of the 6 essays").
- Read the entire essay question and make sure you understand what its requesting you to answer. If you're unsure what the questions is asking make sure to have your instructor explain it to you.
- Answer the essay question as completely as you can. Typically the more details, facts and explanation you provide for each essay question the higher your grade is going to be.
- Make sure to budget your time efficiently. Don't spend all of your time on just one hard essay question. Make sure to allocate your time so that you can answer all of the questions. If you have extra time once you've answered all the questions go back and spend more time on those questions that are worth more points or that you can provide additional information.
- If an essay question is requesting facts, make sure that you provide only facts. Don't provide your personal opinion when the question specifically asks for facts.
- When writing your essays make sure to be as clear and concise as possible. Sometimes its better to short and to the point than to provide a lot of useless and irrelevant information. Its okay to provide a lot of information -- just make sure its relevant.
- Keep your essays as neat and easy to read as possible. The neater your paper the higher your grade will likely be.
- Before you write your essay prepare an outline. An outline will help ensure that your essay is organized, easy to understand and complete. Also, many instructors will provide partial credit for putting together a good outline even if you don't have time to complete the essay.
- Make sure to focus your essay on answering the question asked. Don't spend too much time writing an introduction and conclusion. While these are both important they will not usually make up for an essay that is lacking quality information and analysis.
- Make sure to develop a new paragraph for each main idea you want to address.
- If you get done early reread your essay answers to make sure they're correct.
- One of the biggest mistakes people make when answering essay questions is that they don't budget their time effectively. Before you start answering any one essay question make sure you count how many essay questions you must answer, how much each essay is worth and how long you have to answer each question. Make sure to spend only the allocated time per essay until you've answered all the essay questions. If you get done with your test early you can go back and complete any underdeveloped essays.
- If you don't know the exact date or number to include in an essay answer than approximate.



True/False Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven true and false test preparation tips that will help you improve your performance on true/false tests.

- There are usually more true answers than fall answers on a true and false test. So if you're going to guess -- guess "true".
- If there is not penalty for guessing, then guess. You have a fifty fifty change of getting the answer correct.
- Make sure to read the entire question carefully. Pay attention to keywords and qualifiers that may indicate whether the answer is true or false.
- Qualifiers include words like "never", "always" and "every". When a question includes one of these qualifiers the statement being proposed in the question must always be true -- which typically means the answer is false.
- Other qualifiers include words such as "usually", "generally" and "sometimes". When a question includes one of these qualifiers the statement being proposed may be true or false depending on the circumstances. More often than not these qualifiers mean the answer is true.
- Often a statement may be partially true but not entirely true. Just because part of statement is true doesn't mean that the answer is true. If any part of the question is false, then the entire statement must be false -- even if there is some truth in the statement.



Oral Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven oral test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for oral tests and improve oral test performance.

- Make sure to prepare for your oral exam as you would any other exam. There is no better preparation than preparation itself. Learn everything there is to know about the test material. Try to think of all the question your instructor might ask and be prepared to answer them.
- Confirm the time and place of your oral exam and make sure to arrive a few minutes early. Arriving late can have a negative affect on your performance and your grade.
- Find out what topics you'll be tested on and if you are allowed to bring any props, visual aids, and how you should dress. If you decide to use visual aids make sure not rely on them entirely. Visual aids are intended to support what you say and should not be used as replacements.
- Use your voice effectively. Ever listened to someone speaking monotone? I have and it's not fun. Make sure to vary the tone of your voice. Speak clearly, at a normal pace and never speak to quickly.
- Create practice questions. Based on the subject mater cover during your class try to anticipate what questions might be asked on the exam and prepare answer for the questions. Then practice answering the questions with someone from your class who is also familiar with the material.
- If you're using a computer, overhead projector or other equipment for your exam, make sure to test it several times to ensure its functioning the way you want it to.
- Practice talking and answering your exam questions in front of a mirror so that you evaluate your body language. You may also consider recording your answers and then playing them back to see how you sound.
- Make sure to dress appropriately. Showing up unkempt and messing can adversely affect your presentation and your grade.
- Pay close attention to each question asked. If you don't completely understand a question ask your teacher or instructor for clarification or to repeat the question. You don't want to answer a question until you're certain you understand the question.
- Speak clearly and in complete sentences. Don't give one or two answers.
- Be polite. When you're done with your exam be sure to thank your instructor for his or her time.



Short Answer Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven short answer test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for short answer tests and improve your test performance.

- Preparation is the key to success on short answer tests. Pay attention to the themes, topics and content matter emphasized by your instructor during class or lectures as this is likely to be on a short answer test.
- Try to anticipate what questions will be asked on the test and put together a set of practice questions you can use to prepare yourself for the actual test.
- Using flashcards is an effective way to prepare for short answer tests. Write key terms, dates and concepts on the front of each card and the definition, event and explanation on the back.
- You rarely get penalized for trying to answer a question on short answer test -- even if you don't exactly know the answer. Try to answer all the questions even if you're not certain about your answer. Make sure to show your work, share your thoughts, and jot down any relevant facts or information.
- If you come across a question and you don't know the answer to skip it and come back to it later. Other questions on the test may provide you clues to what the correct answer may be.
- Some short answers may have more than one answer. Make sure to reach each question carefully to make sure you provide everything in your answer that the question is asking for.



Quantitative/Math Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven quantitative test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for math tests.

- Practice makes perfect -- and that especially true about math. If you want to succeed in math repetition is the key. Learn how to recognize when and why you should use a specific method to solve a math problem and then keep on practicing.
- Make sure to work on practice math problems for each topic -- ranging in levels of difficulty.
- Always try to figure out practice problems by yourself first. Only refer to the answers if you're unable to figure out the problem or for checking your work.
- Practice a variety of different questions in a different order when you're reviewing so you'll learn when to use a specific method or formula.
- Create a study sheet with all of the formulas and methods you need to know and memorize them.
- One of the testing taking strategies that many successful students employ is to write down all of the important formulas and equations in the margin as soon as they receive their test. If you quickly write down all of the key formulas in the margin as soon as you receive your test you'll be able to refer back to the formulas during the test and you'll be sure that you don't forget them.
- As with any test, make sure to read all of the directions before answering each question. Many questions may have multiple parts so make sure to answer each part of each question.
- When you are able, estimate the answer to each question before figuring out the correct answer. For example, if you are asked to provide an answer for $108 / 11 = ?$ you can expect your answer should be around 10. So if you end up with an answer such as 30, you'll know your answer probably isn't correct.
- On math tests it is especially important that you show all your work. For many professors and teachers how you arrive at your answer is often just as important as the answer itself. Providing your work will show your thought process and will often get you partial credit if you have the wrong answer.
- If you aren't sure what the right answer is try to figure it out anyway -- and show your work. Don't give up and don't erase your answer. Write down everything you think is relevant because you may get partial credit.
- If you have extra time after finishing test make sure to go back and check all your answers. One of the best ways to check your answer is to redo each math problem on a separate sheet of paper. Redoing each problem and comparing your answers will help you determine if you answer each problem correctly the first time. If your new answer to a question doesn't match your first answer then reread the directions carefully to make sure you understand the question, check to make sure you copied all the numbers correctly and verify that your arithmetic is correct.



Openbook Test Preparation Tips

The following are proven openbook test preparation tips that will help you better prepare for openbook tests.

- A lot of students think that just because a test is open book that they don't need to prepare as much as they would for a closed book test. This couldn't be further from the truth. Believe it or not, open book exams are typically more difficult than closed book exams. You should spend as much time, if not more time, preparing for open book tests as you would for closed book tests.
- A big mistake that students make is to assume that since a test is open book they don't need to become really familiar with test material and topics before the test. They think that they'll just look up the answer in their book if they can't produce it from memory. Most open book tests are longer and more involved than closed book tests and consequently time is of the essence. If you have to look up the answer to each question in your book you'll never get done with your test in the time allotted. Make sure you are intimately familiar with the book, relevant materials as well as the subject matter before you take an open book test.
- As with a math test, it is highly recommendable that you write down all important dates, formulas and key information on a separate sheet of paper or in the margin of your test so that you don't have to search through your book for these items. Again, if you rely 100% on your book to figure out and answer each test question there is a very high likelihood that you won't have time to finish the test.
- When preparing for an open book test focus on familiarizing yourself with the main ideas and concepts covered in your class AND make sure you know where each is located in your book. At first, don't get too caught up in learning all the details -- you can do this later.
- If you're allowed to write in your book then make sure to (1) mark the pages in your book where major concepts and ideas are addressed, (2) highly important points in each major section so that you can find them again easily during your test, (3) make notes in your book that will help you to recall information and concepts during your test and (4) use post-it notes to help book mark important pages and information.
- A very useful strategy for taking open book tests is to answer all the questions you know the answer to first. Once you've answered all the questions you know the answer to go back and start answering the questions that require you to look in your book. This will ensure that you're able to complete as many questions as possible before the test is over.
- It is a common tendency for students taking an open book test to take information directly from the book and put it on the test. Remember, your teacher or instructor wants to see what you've learned and test your understanding of the subject matter covered during the course. You can use quotations and information from the book to support your views but make sure that your answers include your own personal insight, analysis and commentary.



Study Groups

One of the most effective ways for preparing for class discussions and exams is by using a study group. Study groups provide a number of benefits to the learning process. For starters studying with others in a small group is helpful to everyone because you think out loud, share ideas and learn from one another. Below we've listed some of the major benefits of study groups, guidelines for putting together and some ideas for how to maximize the value of each study group session.

Benefits of a Study Group

- **Improve you notes**
Study group members can help the individuals improve their class notes but sharing notes.
- **Sharing talents**
Everyone has different strengths and weakness. By participating in a study group you are able to benefit from the talents of other group members.
- **Support system**
Study groups can provide by emotional and physical support. If you're feeling down a study group member can help motivate you. If you're going to miss class one day a study group member can take notes for you when you gone and fill you in on the details when you get back.
- **Cover more material**
Study groups can help you cover more material. Having three people working on a difficult math problem is more effective than having just one person work on it. Also, when you have a lot of ground to cover you can make assignments and then report back to the group what you learned. Study groups can be very effience.
- **Its makes learning fun!**
Sitting in a library cubicle studying day in and day out can get very boring and tedious. Working with a study group can make learning fun. Consequently, you apt to spend more time learning and studying.

Putting Together An Effective Study Group - When putting together an effective study group there are five questions you need to answer. How many? Who? Where? How long? and When?

- **How many**
The best size for a study group is four to six people. In smaller groups its too easy to get off track and you don't have the man power to get things done. Larger groups are harder to manage and you end up having individuals that get left out or a few free lopers.
- **Who**
The best study groups are composed of individuals that share the same interest in doing well in class and on tests. You'll want to include individuals who pay attention in class, take good notes, ask questions and generally participate in class discussion.
- **Where**
Study group sessions should be held in a location free from distractions and that has room to comfortably study and interact.
- **How long**
Study group session should be not longer than two to three hours. If study sessions are longer members tend to loose interest and focus. Conversely, if you don't spend a least an hour in each study session you typically can cover all course material adequately and the study group becomes ineffective.

- **When**

Try to meet at the same time and place each week. Creating a set routine will help each member to plan ahead and come prepared to each session.

Maximizing the value of each study group session - Here are few tips for getting the most out of each group study session:

- **Create clear objectives and goals**

Set clear objectives and goals for each study session. This will ensure that study sessions stay focused and that time is well spent.

- **Be prepared**

It's hard to contribute to a study session if you come unprepared. It's also difficult to benefit from other members if they come unprepared. Make sure that you and your group members always finish your assigned reading, that you each review your class notes, and list topics you want to go over in the next study session.

- **Ensure participation**

Each member should take turns teaching the other members in the group. Teaching reinforces what you learn and also ensure your understanding of the subject matter is correct and comprehensive.

- **Stay focused**

Each group study session should have a leader. It's the leader's responsibility to make sure that the group stays focused on the correct topic(s). It's also useful to schedule breaks every half hour or so so that team members don't get worn out.



Identifying Your Learning Styles

There are a number of different learning styles and learning preferences. The most common include Visual Learning Style (the most common), Auditory Learning Style and Tactile (Kinesthetic) Learning Style. Additional learning styles and preferences include Logical (mathematical), Social (interpersonal) and Solitary (intrapersonal). There is no right mix. Nor are your styles fixed. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. You can develop ability in less dominant styles, as well as further develop styles that you already use well.

Visual Learning Style

Individuals that learn best when ideas or subjects are presented in a visual format, whether that is written language, pictures, diagrams or videos are visual learners. Visual learners usually learn best when the teacher provides written study notes, writes on the chalkboard and uses an overhead projector to explain concepts. Visual learners frequently take detailed notes in class, when studying from a textbook or listening to lectures. They also create diagrams and use pictures to understand and remember concepts and ideas. If this sounds like you then you are probably a visual learner – many people are.

Auditory Learning Style

If you learn best by participating in class discussion, by listening to your teacher lecture, listening to audio tapes or by listening to other language formats then you are probably an Auditory Learner. Auditory Learners, unlike Visual Learners, are able to learn, understand and retain information better when they hear it rather than see it.

Tactile Learning Style

Tactile Learners, also commonly referred to as Kinesthetic Learners, are hand-on learners. They learn best when they are able to physically participate directly in what they are required to learn or understand. Tactile learners usually excel when they are able to handle something in order to learn about it. Tactile learners may do especially well in classes where lab work is required. Unlike Visual Learners that learn by seeing and Auditory Learners that learn by hearing, Tactile Learners learn by touching and feeling.

So why is identifying and understanding your learning style so critical to your study preparation? By knowing how you learn best you can select those classes, teachers, subjects, majors and ultimate careers that appeal to your unique way of learning things.

Logical Style

If you find that you like using your brain for logical and mathematical reasoning you probably prefer the logical learning style. Logical learners can recognize patterns easily and are good at making logical connections between what would appear to most people to be meaningless content. If you're a logical learner you'll learn better if you classify and group information to help you learn and understand it better.

Social Style

If social learning is your style, you'll communicate well with others, both verbally and non-verbally. You're good listeners and are able to understand other's views. People listen to you and come to for advice. Social learners prefer learning in groups or classes and typically like to spend one-on-one time with a teacher or an instructor.

Solitary Style

If you have a solitary style of learning you tend to be private, introspective and/or independent. You're able to concentrate and focus on a specific subject, topic or concept without outside help. You are very self aware and able to analyze the different ways you think and feel. Solitary learners prefer to work on problems by retreating to somewhere quiet and working through possible solutions by themselves. However, solitary learners need to be careful as they may spend too much time trying to solve a problem that they could more easily solve by talking to someone or working with a group.

Identifying the learning style and preferences that best suits you is an important part of developing effective studying.



Improving Your Note Taking

Learning how to take good notes in class is an important part of study preparation. The information provided and topics covered by your teacher are what you will be studying. If you don't take good notes in class you won't know what to study once class is over.

The following tips can help you take effective notes:

- **Make clear and accurate notes**
Clearly written, accurate notes help to capture information for later study and review. Often when taking notes in class you'll understand what the teacher is saying so you decide not to take clear and accurate notes only to find out later that you can't remember what the teacher was saying and that your notes aren't clear or accurate enough for you remember the details of the lecture. Taking accurate and clear notes will (1) ensure that you understand the subject matter being discussed, (2) help to concrete what is being taught in your mind and (3) will provide you the means to go back after class and review the subject matter being taught.
- **Come to class prepared**
There is nothing that will help you take better notes than coming to class prepared. Before coming to class make sure that (1) you have read all assigned readings and (2) that you have reviewed your notes from the previous class. Coming to class prepared will help you take much better notes. You'll be able to take more detail notes on items you don't fully understand. You'll be able to ask questions that will lead to more accurate and useful notetaking. And you'll be better prepared to learn new information not covered in previous class lectures.
- **Compare your notes**
When class is over compare your notes to those taken by other students. Sometimes other students will pick up on things discussed by the teacher that you missed or didn't find important. Comparing notes will help ensure that your notes are complete and accurate.
- **Minimize distractions**
If you're serious about your education then you'll want to remove any distractions that keep you from concentrating on class lectures and taking copious notes. Site close to the front of the room, don't sit next to individuals your tempted to talk to during class and try to stay away from any other situation that would distract you during class.
- **Organize your notes**
We recommend starting each class with a clean sheet of paper. We also recommend that you put the day's date at the top of your notes along with any other relevant information (i.e. history notes, chemistry notes, etc.) This will help you to keep track of each days notes and increase your ability to go back and review your notes for exams and quizzes.
- **Use abbreviations and symbols**
In some classes it can be difficult to write down everything that the teacher or professor is saying. We recommend using short sentences and phrases and easily remembered abbreviations and symbols in order to make sure you're able to keep up with the lecture. The following are few common abbreviations and symbols that student can use to speed up their note taking: cf (compare), ie (that is), eg (for example), w/ (with), w/o (without), &, + (and), = (equals, is). There are number of other abbreviations that you can come up with to increase your note taking speed must make sure you remember what each abbreviation is or that you have a key that tells you what each abbreviation means.
- **Write clearly**
It doesn't matter how many notes you can take if you can't make sense of your notes after the

lecture is over. Make sure to write clearly -- especially if you're using abbreviations. Its also useful to leave plenty of blank space in the left margin or in between ideas or new concepts so that you can come back later and add more information.

- **Review your notes**

Review your notes as soon as you can. Reviewing your notes directly following a lecture will make sure that (1) you understand your notes, (2) you understood the lecture and (3) it will help you to concrete in your mind the concepts and information you learned.

- **Write down questions**

Quite frequently you're going to find -- especially as you enter college -- that is can be difficult if not impossible at times to understand everything the teacher is talking about. Make sure to write down any questions you have or concepts you didn't completely understand so that you can go back after class and ask the teacher specific questions or use reference resources to better understand difficult concepts.

Effective note taking is one of the keys to effective studying. Most successful students, whether they be in highschool or college, are excellent note takers



Improving Your Memory for Information

Remember information is essential to your ability to excel in school and later in your career. If you are unable to remember what you've learned then you won't be able perform well on tests and you will be unable to apply what you've learned in the real world. Remembering information is an essential skill.

The following are a few proven tips and strategies for improving your ability to remember information.

- **Make the information meaningful**

One of the most common reasons that students don't remember is because material is presented in a way that is confusing or doesn't make sense. Students who try to memorize information they don't fully understand struggle to remember what they've read or heard. Don't try and memorize the author's words. First, put the information you're reading or hearing into your words as your own words are going to be meaningful and easy to understand. If you can't put information, a concept or idea in your own words its very unlikely that you're going to be able to remember the material for very long.

- **Organize the information**

Organizing material into to logical categories will help you learn, memorize and recall information more effectively. For example, if you have several dates you need to remember for a history test putting the dates in chronological order according to a sequential storyline can make recalling each date much easier. Instead of memorizing random dates you associate each date with specific event that lead to another event. Information that is well organized is much easier to learn and remember than information that is unorganized.

- **Use pictures to improve memory**

More often than not a person's memory for pictures or images is far better than their memory for words. Creating a mental picture can enhance a person's memory of verbal and written information. Mental pictures are especially helpful when attempting to learn and remember abstract words and concepts. Try to create vivid mental pictures that represent the concept or term. When you employ pictures to learn verbal and written information you are encoding the information in your memory system in two ways instead of just one. Consequently, your ability to remember the information is greatly enhanced.

- **Active Studying**

You can not passively study material and expect to remember it. Remembering material requires active studying. The best way to ensure active studying is to think about the information you're learning by explaining it out loud to yourself or other people in your own words. Another way to actively study and improve your memory is to think critically about the material you're studying by comparing and contrasting, asking "how" and "why", determining its significance, etc. Active studying will improve comprehension and enhance retention of the material study.

- **Frequent Reviewing**

Ever waited to start studying until the night before a final exam? I think we all have at least once. While cramming is a solution it is not a good solution if you want to accurately and effectively remember information. The way to remember information is by frequently reviewing the information. You should review class notes after each lecture and reading assignment. Review your notes and highlight key points. As you review your notes you can also make additional notes in the left hand margin that indicate important information including vocabulary terms, major concepts and possible questions that would appear on an exam. After reading text book assignments you should go back and reread chapter headings and section subheadings. Review the portions of the text that you highlighted or marked. By reviewing frequently you'll greatly improve your ability to remember information both in the short term and long term.

- **Mnemonic devices**

Mnemonic devices are memory tricks that can be used to remember factual information such as a list of words or phrases, and they often produce a visual image in the learner's mind. Some common mnemonic devices include acronyms (the most common), nonsense words, nonsense sentences, and rhymes.

Creating an acronym is a good strategy to use to remember information in any order. An acronym is a word that is formed from the first letter of each fact to be remembered. It can be a real word or a nonsense word you are able to pronounce. For example, MADD is an acronym for Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.



Effective Listing

Learning requires listening. Learning effectively requires effectively listening. Even though listening is one of the most important skills for effective learning most students are not good listeners. Since most of what you are required to learn in school is going to be communicated to by a teacher or professor it is imperative that you learn to listen. And don't make the mistake of thinking that hearing and listening are the same thing – they are very different. When you listen to what someone saying you are not only hearing what they are saying you are also processing what they are saying.

The following are tips for improving your ability to listen:

Listen for meaning

Pay attention not only to the words being spoken by your teacher but to the thoughts and messages they convey. Identify the main idea, concept or subject being addressed and the relating issues. Listen for explanations, descriptions and clarifications. Again, don't just hear the words. Listen to the meanings being communicated.

Adjust your note taking style to the lecture

Poor listeners try to write down everything, believing a detailed outline and effective notes are the same thing. They get frustrated when they cannot see the meaning behind what they are writing down or they go to review their notes and don't understand the concepts that were taught in class. Effective listeners adjust their note-taking to the lecture style. They listen to what's important, they try to understand concepts and they take notes that clarify, organize and reiterated important details of the lecture.

Tackle difficult to understand material

Frequently, when a teacher starts to lecture on a topic or concept that is difficult to understand students stop listening. They are hearing what the teacher is saying but they are not processing the information they are hearing. Effective listeners tackle difficult material and expend the brain power required to process what they are hearing even when it is difficult.

Concentrate and pay attention

Poor listeners frequently are poor concentrators. Effective listening requires that you concentrate and pay attention. Remove all thoughts of home, friends, fun and ancillary activities from your head while the teacher is speaking. Learning to focus and concentrate will help you become an effective listener and much more effective student.

Be prepared

It is difficult to listen and mentally process what you're hearing when you come to your class unprepared. If your teacher gives you a reading assignment or homework designed to prepare you to understand a topic it's important that you are familiar with the topic before it is discussed in class. Being ready to listen means being prepared for each class ahead of time.

Focus on what's important

Poor listeners focus on fact. They may retain a few of those facts, but the information is usually garbled. Effective listeners focus on main ideas, fundamental concepts and vital issues.

Choose to be interested

One of the most tell tale signs of a poor listener is that they just can't find what the teacher is talking about to be interesting. As a consequence they don't listen with real intent and often miss important topics and details being addressed. Good listeners are able to decide to be interested in the subject matter being addressed by the teacher. As a result they listen more intently and effectively.