

Study Skills 101

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Presented by Cram Crew, Inc.

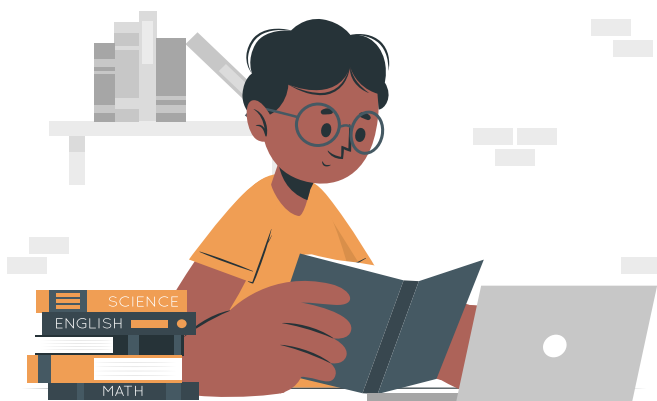


Basic Study Habits

Basic study skills are the foundation of a successful academic career. Whether you're shooting for valedictorian or you just want to get out of geometry alive, learning how to study well will help you get the job done.

Fortunately, developing good study skills isn't nearly as hard as it might seem—in fact, in just a few steps you can create a study system that both saves time and gets you the grades you want.

1 Find a study spot.



Be honest with yourself here—do you really get that much studying done when you're slouching on the couch with the TV blaring? You might be one of the rare students who could solve math problems in a mosh pit, but it's more likely you're someone who needs a little peace and quiet to study well. So, next time you sit down to study, pick a place that will minimize distractions. When your family is making dinner, stay away from the kitchen and set up shop in the living room. If your brother comes in to put the game on TV, head for your bedroom.

Remember, good study skills are about quality, not quantity. Half an hour of concentrated studying in your room will do you more good than three hours of watching TV with a math book open on your lap. And you'll probably find that without all those distractions, you get your work done a lot sooner, which leaves more time for guilt-free fun.

2 Get organized.



Staying organized might not seem like it's worth the energy, but when it comes to studying, putting in a little bit of time up front will save you a whole lot of time further down the road. You'll never be forced into a surprise all-night cram session for that test you forgot about when you regularly update your calendar with assignments and test dates. Similarly, if you take a few minutes every day to file away all those notes, quizzes, and worksheets, when finals time rolls around you'll be ready with all your study materials close at hand.

There's no right or wrong way to stay organized. You might keep a planner on your phone, put special shelves in your locker, or stock up on a rainbow of pens. But whether you color code all your notebooks with sticky tabs and highlighters or you just have a cardboard box marked "math quizzes," you'll be glad you're organized when you're getting ready for the next big test.

3 Be prepared.



Putting in all that organizational energy means you'll never be caught off guard. Got a chemistry test today? No worries—you've been studying for a week. That big project for history due on Friday? Already done.

The key here is to work smarter, not harder. You'll be much more likely to remember all those polyatomic ions if you take fifteen minutes a day to review your flashcards instead of trying to memorize them all fifteen minutes before the test starts. If that history project is going to take you three hours, work on it for just a few minutes every night instead of rushing the night before it's due. Not only will you be producing better work, but you'll also avoid those last minute oh-my-god-it's-so-late panic attacks.

Taking Notes

One of the most useful—and easiest—study skills to master is note taking. You probably already take some kind of notes during class, even if it's just jotting down whatever the teacher puts on the board. But note taking can be so much more than simply writing down what you hear in class. With a little bit of practice and planning, note taking can become one of the most useful tools in your studying toolbox.

1 Create a system.



You can keep class notes that will actually help you study by creating a system for both taking and storing notes. When you're systematic in what you write down and how you write it, you'll have a much easier time using those notes—instead of spending half your night looking through lots of loose notebooks and random bits of paper, you can open up to the right page and get started on that homework or test review sheet.

If you're having trouble coming up with a method of your own to use, there are already lots of great note taking systems out there. Cornell Notes, Power Notes, and the PQRS Method have all been proven to help students get the most out of their notes. But remember, you're the one taking these notes and you're the one using them, so feel free to do whatever you need to do to make these notes work for you.

2 Synthesize and summarize.



Good note taking isn't just about being able to study later—it's also about synthesizing and understanding material as you hear it. When your teacher starts solving problems on the board or lecturing on ancient history, try to summarize that material in your own words rather than just passively transcribing verbatim what your teacher says. This synthesizing and summarizing will force you to listen closely and can actually make note taking easier since you're not rushing to write down every single word.

When you do it right, taking notes will help you better understand and more easily remember what you've gone over in class—you may even find that you don't need to go back to those notes to get your homework done.

3 Don't write it and forget it.



The job of taking notes isn't done when class ends. You'll get a lot more out of your work if you take a few minutes after class or at the end of the day to go over what you've written while the day is still fresh in your mind. You can expand on those biology abbreviations you might forget by tomorrow or add back in the steps of a math problem you didn't get to finish. Think of this step as a time-saving pre-study: by going back over the material, you'll cement all those historical dates, vocabulary words, and math concepts in your mind. Then, when it comes time to prepare for your next test, you're already a step ahead.

Getting Help

If all that schoolwork starts to feel overwhelming, remember—you're not in this alone. There are a lot of people out there who really do want to help you succeed.

1 Teachers



When there's a concept you don't understand or a problem you can't solve, your teacher is a great resource. After all, they're up there all day, every day trying to make you learn, so it makes sense that they'd be the ones to give you a helping hand. However, they're not going to magically know when you're struggling—you need to take the initiative here. Raise your hand to ask a question, stay late after class, or hit up those after-school tutorial sessions. They can only give you as much help as you ask for.

2 Classmates



Even if you think that everyone in your class is just as confused as you are, chances are there's at least one person who can make sense of that crazy math problem or weird poem. So why not ask your classmates for help? Together, you and your friends are stronger than the sum of your parts, and no matter how lost you all are, you're more likely to figure it out if you work together. And, even if you never finish that problem, at least you'll be having more fun.

3 Tutors



Tutors can be a great way to get the academic support you need. Having an expert on hand to help you complete homework, study for tests, or just stay on top of your academic schedule can ease the strain of a busy school year. A good tutor can even help you perfect your note-taking and organizational skills. But remember, you'll only get out what you put in. If you show up empty-handed there's not much your tutor can do to help, so come prepared with questions and concepts to work on.



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