



Sixth College Academic Advising Study Smarter, Not Harder!

Here are some useful tips to help you achieve academic success.

Using your Syllabus

A syllabus is:

- A contract, or agreement, between you and your professor. It states what the professor expect from you and what you should expect from the professor.
- Your professor's contact sheet. Information on how to contact your professor, and his/her office hours.
- An agenda for the semester. Your syllabus may let you know what readings to complete before the lecture, when assignments/projects are due, and when a speaker is expected in class.
- A preview of the semester. The syllabus allows you to see what the professor plans on covering during the semester.
- A valuable resource. The syllabus may include information on class participation, grading, absences, late assignments, extra credit, etc.

Listening Well and Taking Effective Lecture Notes

Before Lecture:

- Prepare: Be sure to complete required readings before lecture. If you haven't done the reading, you will scramble to keep up with the unfamiliar information coming at you.
- Arrive: Arrive early and take a seat where you can see the board and slides and hear the lecture clearly.
- Attend: Skipping lecture is not an option. Do not rely solely on your classmates' notes or online lecture notes.

During Lecture:

- Less is More: Do not attempt to write down the lecturer's words verbatim. Try to get down as much relevant information as possible using the fewest possible words. Use abbreviations and symbols.
- Listen for Signal Words and Phrases: Signal words and phrases can help you pinpoint when key ideas are being introduced.
"There are 3 reasons why. . ." Or "First...Second... Third..."
"And most important..." Or "It is worthwhile to note..."
"A major development..." or "A key concept..."

After Lecture:

- **Review:** Review your notes as quickly as possible after class when the material is still fresh in your mind.
- **Revision:** Be sure to spend time touching up your notes, filling in the blanks and clarifying any questions you have.

The How-to's of Studying

Where:

- Your study area should be *available* to you whenever you need it.
- It should also be *free from distractions and interruptions*.
- Your study place should have a *large enough work area/desk* to spread out everything you need.
- You should have *enough light and a comfortable chair*.

When:

- Make studying a *regular part of your schedule*.
- Choose study times and days when *you're likely to feel energetic*.
- *Use daylight hours*. Research shows that 60 minutes of study during the day is equivalent of 90 minutes of study at night (Walter Paulk, *How to Study in College*, 6th ed. [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989], p. 27).
- Plan to *study for blocks of time*. Studying in one-hour blocks is most effective (50 minutes of study with a ten minute break).
- *Determine how long you need to study* to fully engage with the material you are learning.
- *Study soon after lecture*.
- *List and do tasks according to priorities*.
- Start long or involved assignments *ahead of time*.
- Set an agenda for each study period.

Study Strategies:

- Use behavior modification on yourself. If you attempt to study the same subject at the same time in the same place each day you will find that, after a short while when you get to that time and place, you're automatically in the subject groove.
- Don't spend more than an hour at a time on one subject. Studies have shown that as much is learned in 1-hr sessions distributed over four days as in one marathon 6 hour session.
- Keep alert by taking breaks. You'll get your most effective studying done if you take ten minute breaks between subjects.

- Study similar subjects at separate times. If you are studying German follow it up with Chemistry or History, not with Spanish.
- Avoid studying during your sleeping times or when you are sleepy.
- Study at the most productive time for your course. If it is a lecture course, do your studying soon after class; if it is a course which students are called on to recite or answer questions, study before class.
- Memorize actively, not passively. Researchers have found that the worst way to memorize is to simply read something over and over again. Try to visualize in concrete terms to get a picture in your head.
- Take more time for your reading. Read with a purpose.
- Review and rewrite your lecture notes. Review lecture notes within 24 hours of class.

How to read effectively

- Read the Introduction and the Summary. Consider this a preview of the topics you will encounter.
- Ask questions about the reading and try to answer them as you go along.
- Look for visual clues. Bold print, underlining, bullets, font size, and color are often used to draw your attention to key concepts.
- Recall and Recite. After each session of required reading stop for a minute and ask yourself the questions you created.
- Review. Reread the introduction and summary sections.
- For more information on reading effectively visit <http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/en/studying/33/becoming-a-flexible-reader/>

Information from MIT Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming.
<http://mit.edu/uaap/learning/>