

ACTIVE STUDYING

In a test or examination you have to be able to do 3 things:

- Understand the topic.
- Remember the content of the topic.
- Apply the skills and techniques of the topic to different types of questions.

There are three aspects to doing this:

1. Making study notes or summaries.
 - helps you discover if you really understand the topic
 - think about the information and put it into your own words in point form
 - this helps you start to move the information into long-term memory
 - also makes it easier to learn from a structured, condensed, organised set of notes
2. Learning the information means.
 - ensuring you understand and asking questions if you don't
 - studying the information in an active way
 - testing yourself to see whether you can remember it
3. Practising the skills of the subject.
 - do lots and lots of questions to practise the skills of the subject
 - helps you find out if you really understand it

Techniques for Learning and Remembering:

- Read through information and highlight key points.
- Make study notes: it is a form of studying and will then be easier to study from.
- Read your notes then see what you can write down without looking and check what you knew or didn't know.
- Read your notes out loud to yourself then see what you can recite or repeat out loud without looking and check and see what you knew and what you still need to review.
- After you have read a section see if you can sum up the three most important points in that section.
- Make flashcards of rules, formulas or things you need to learn with questions on the front and answers on the back and test yourself on them.
- Explain what you just studied to someone else - this is a great way to see if you really understand it.
- Try and teach it to someone else. It could be just the right time for your mum to learn algebra!
- Test yourself by reading your notes and writing a list of questions as you go then at the end seeing if you can answer these questions.
- Write out lists of key definitions, vocab etc, cover up one side and see if you can fill in the other side.
- Before you sit down to study, write down everything you know about the topic then compare that to what you need to know.
- Try and write out what you just read in your own words.
- Study with a group of friends and discuss the content and test each other on the content.
- If you can, act out the information in some way.
- Put notes up all round the house of the things you need to remember.
- Make a big poster or get a whiteboard in your room of the things you are trying to learn.
- Record your notes and download as MP3s onto your iPod and listen to the info over and over.
- Make a question and answer recording where the recording asks a question then gives you time to think of the answer then tells you the answer and you can see if you were right.
- Make a recording and then go for a jog while you are listening to it.
- Make up a rhyme or song to help you remember.
- Make a mind map or brainstorm the information.
- Turn it into a story to help you remember.
- 3Rs: read, recite, recheck (other version of this is look, cover, check).
- Break the information up into new categories.
- Use mnemonics: take the first letter of each word to make a nonsense word to help you remember everything on a list.
- Try and think what else this information is associated with as the more links you make in your mind the better chance you have of remembering it.
- Pace around your room while you are reading the info or saying it out loud or testing yourself on it.
- Memory likes repetition. Do the above techniques over and over and over again.

Practising should be done under examination conditions. This means:

- Set things up so you won't be interrupted while you are working under the time limits.
- Take all your notes away so you are not tempted to peek.
- Set up a clock and sit and start the exam fully under examination conditions.
- Find out the time limit for the paper or set what would be a reasonable amount of time for the piece of work and only allow yourself this amount of time to complete the task.
- Work without breaks or interruptions for this time so you become more used to writing and concentrating for the length of the examination.
- Don't refer to any notes or materials at any time during the period of completing the past paper or piece of work.
- Have your watch in front of you and try to stick to allocated times for each section of the paper.
- Experiment with different approaches to find what suits you best: you could do easy questions first then go back to the harder ones, or do the questions with the most marks first.

You can find questions to practise in the following sources:

- Go back and re-do any questions in the topic that you found difficult or select a random sample of questions to try.
- Do any chapter reviews in your textbook.
- Do any revision sheets from your teacher.
- Practise essay writing / planning by doing typical exam questions (you might ask your teacher if they have time to look briefly at these and give you some feedback).
- Do as many past papers (or old tests) as you can under exam conditions.
- Make up some questions for yourself or ask someone to make up some questions for you.
- Practise writing outlines for essays or actual essays: focus on being relevant and answering the question.
- Ask your teacher for extra revision sheets.
- Buy or borrow extra revision guides and do their questions.
- Use websites with review questions (but only if you know of specific sites, don't go aimlessly looking for them).

If you get stuck on a question:

Spend a reasonable amount of time trying to decipher and understand the information. You could:

- look through any examples or worked examples
- re-read sections of the textbook
- give a friend a quick call and see if they can explain it to you
- see if you have any other books where the explanation is clearer
- find similar questions
- try and work backwards if it is a numerical problem with an answer
- take a short break then come back fresh
- see if there is anyone in your family who could help
- read through your class notes again
- do a quick search on the Net
- post a question on a student chat site
- look at earlier or later sections of work and see if they help bring it into perspective
- add reminders to your study notes
- use answers, worked solutions or sample essays to help you understand
- take a break and return to the problem with a fresh perspective
- work with another student to learn from their point of view
- see your teacher in class or after class for some extra help
- keep a list of questions that you need to ask about and cross off once resolved
- form a study group as two heads are better than one
- find someone in your family or a tutor who can give you some one-on-one help
- go over and over the material until eventually it clicks
- find other books or study guides to help you understand it



What changes do you need to make to the way you study?



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LEARNING STYLE/PREFERENCE TECHNIQUES

No-one can be pigeonholed into just 'one' type of learner, every study technique actually works for every person - it is just that some techniques will be more effective for you than for others.

And so this means you should keep an open mind and experiment with lots of different techniques to see what works best for you.

Although many people find they have a dominant or preferred learning style, some people have a mixed or evenly balanced blend of the three styles. So you may find you are a combination of two, or even all three, of the learning styles discussed below. If this is the case you should try and use techniques from all the learning styles you are strong in.

Your learning preference may not always be the same for some tasks. You may prefer one style of learning for one task, and a combination of others for a different task.

VISUAL LEARNING CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES:

- Sit in a seat where you have a clear view of your teacher and their facial expression.
- Always take notes when you are listening to information (and try things like concept or mind maps).
- Make an extra effort to participate in discussions if this does not come naturally for you.
- Pre-read sections of the textbook before class so you have an idea of what is coming.
- If you have a teacher who is big on just talking and discussion lessons, ask them (politely) if it is possible to also get some handouts on the material.

VISUAL LEARNING STUDY TECHNIQUES:

- Read the information then see what you can write down without looking.
- Include lots of pictures, charts, maps and diagrams in your study notes.
- Use colour to highlight important points in your notes.
- Try and illustrate your notes with pictures, symbols and brainstormed ideas.
- Use multi-media (computers, videos etc).
- Study in a quiet place, by yourself, away from noises (particularly people talking).
- Visualise the information you need to learn as a picture to make it easier to remember.
- Practise visualising your notes on the page, almost as though you can see the page.
- Make mental pictures and associations of the things you need to learn.
- Make and use flashcards to study.
- Put up notes around the house, make a poster of the info.
- Colour code the information to learn.

AUDITORY LEARNING CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES:

- Participate in classroom discussions and debates but don't take over the discussion.
- If an assignment has the option of giving a speech or presentation, this is a good option for you.
- If you have a teacher who talks a lot in class (and it is really valuable and useful stuff that they are saying) ask them (politely and outside of class) if it would be ok if you could record some lessons so you can listen to it again.

- If you are brainstorming ideas for an assignment, record them first then listen to them and write them down after that.
- Make more of an effort with your written work as this does not come as naturally to you as it does to visual learners.
- Never miss a class, you pick up lots of key info in the classroom.

AUDITORY LEARNING STUDY TECHNIQUES:

- Always read information out loud to yourself rather than reading it silently.
- Create songs, rhymes, musical jingles to help you remember study information.
- Discuss what you are studying with someone else.
- Make up stories about what you are studying and say the story out loud.
- Play classical music softly in the background while studying.
- Study with a group of people.
- Get someone to test you on what you are studying.
- Recite the info to be learnt over and over.
- Explain what you have studied to someone, even if it is to the cat.
- When trying to understand something, talk your way through the information.
- Tap out a rhythm as you are studying.
- Read out loud the info then see what you can say out loud without looking at the notes.
- Make a recording of your notes and listen to them over and over.

KINESTHETIC LEARNING CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES:

- Bring a rubber band to class and wrap and unwrap it around your hand or pencil. Or a piece of bluetack you can squeeze and twist. This is better than clicking your pen which annoys everyone else, but you need to do something to get the fidgets out so you can listen and concentrate in class.
- Tense and relax your muscles when you have to sit for long periods of time.
- Underline, highlight or make notes while you read so you are at least doing something.
- If you have double lessons that are quite long, ask your teacher (politely) if it is possible to have a few minutes break in the middle to get up and stretch and move around.

KINESTHETIC LEARNING STUDY TECHNIQUES:

- Study in short 15-20 minute blocks. Better to do multiple focused blocks of work than one big block where you get distracted by everything.
- Remove ALL distractions when you are trying to study.
- Move around to learn new things (e.g. read while on an exercise bike, shoot hoops, mould a piece of clay to learn a new concept).
- Walk or pace while you are reading info you have to learn.
- Chew gum while studying.
- When studying, bounce a tennis ball against the wall or floor when you're answering questions (but make sure you are not annoying someone else when you do this).
- Put lots of examples in your study notes to make it seem more real.
- Ride an exercise bike and test yourself on your study notes at the same time.
- Rewrite notes or type them to reinforce by sense of touch.
- Make a recording of your notes and go for a jog while you are listening to them.
- Do exercises as you repeat your notes to yourself.