

Scientific Literacy Center

Scientific Literacy and College Retention

Activity 1 Class Time: 30 minutes

College Bound Assignment Type: Homework

Grade Level: College

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How to Study and Take Notes

Unfortunately, a large number of students in high school have never learned how to effectively take notes and study. This is because in many high schools, students are not taught how to take notes and study effectively. Please be advised, you will have to study “a lot” to be successful in college. If you know how to take good notes and if you know how to study, you will likely increase your chances of making good grades in college.

Below are 12 very important tips you need to know about studying, taking notes and how to be successful in college. Associated with many of these tips are links in which you can find out more information. We urge you to visit as many of these links as possible, but the only required link that you must visit is in Tip 8: Learning in Teams.

Tip 1: Study Styles

Different students have different study styles. One of the best ways to learn, develop and master your study style is to be forced to learn a lot of material in a short period of time, which will happen in college.

So do you know your study style? Are you a visual learner, who needs images as well as words? Could it be that you are an auditory learner, that can better have information imprinted upon your brain when you hear words out loud.

To find out more about learning styles please take a look at the infographics on the first page of this site <http://www.edudemic.com/styles-of-learning/>

Tip 2: Avoid All Night Syndrome

Don't get caught in the all night syndrome. Too many students fall into the trap of staying up to 3am or 4am every night studying or just socializing. Then the next day their minds are not clear, to say the least, in class. In the afternoon they take a nap and then start the cycle all over again. Time management is extremely important for success. Yes, there may be times when you stay up all night studying for a test, but when the all night syndrome becomes part of your time management strategy then you may find yourself in a self-defeating cycle.

Tip 3: Time Management is Important

College, for most students, represents “freedom at last”. In fact, the very structure of college in which you may only be in class 16 hours per week gives you more free time than you may have ever seen in your life. The trap many freshman fall into is that they do not realize how much time they really need to study. During a regular day in college, instead of going to class, hanging out, eating, hanging out again, then going to another class, try managing your time and studying in between classes. This will keep you out of the all night syndrome, and ensure success.

To learn more visit *Time Management Tips* by Brittany Danial on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/XsWaFFi1RHw> Also you can visit Joi's YouTube video to learn how to organize your time with Google Calendar. <https://youtu.be/6MoL3uCepPg>

Tip 4: Find Your Steady Study Environment

Find or create a place where you can go that the environment is conducive for you to maintain a steady, focused study routine. This may be in your college's library. But be careful, a lot of students go to the library not to study, but to socialize. Some students lock themselves in their rooms and put headphones on to block out the noise of the other freshmen caught in the "all night syndrome." If you choose to study in your room, you may choose to play repetitive, non-distracting music that will drown out the noise in the halls. In finding your steady, study environment remember you can be creative.

Tip 5: Study a Lot

How many hours per week should you study in college to be successful? Many faculty and experts suggest that you should study two to three hours for every credit hour. In case you are unsure, credit hours are the registration units and hours you spend in a class per week. A full time student takes on average 16 credit hours per semester, which means you will be in class for 16 hours during any given week. If you spend two to three hours studying for every credit hour that means you will be studying 32 to 48 hours per week ($16 \times 2\text{hr} = 32\text{hr}$). Though you are able to budget the rest of your time however you choose, be mindful that there is a lot of work to do.

For many freshmen it is inconceivable to study 32 to 48 hours per week. The higher you go in school the more you are required to understand and apply what you have learned. Many times your courses will require more than just memorizing facts and answering multiple guess (or choice) questions. It requires time to study and learn material at a level in which you can use your knowledge base to apply and evaluate.

Tip 6: Learn How to Take Notes

Effective note taking is very much like studying, it is a skill that can be learned and perfected, and different people employ different styles. For example, many students like to take as many notes as humanly possible in class. If this is your style, which I personally recommend, then after class rewrite your notes in an outline form. In your outline, each line should consist of a short phrase of no more than three to five words. Each of these short phrases should capture the essence of a concept or fact in the lecture. Be sure to capture all important points of the lecture in your outline. Education research has documented that if you study outlined notes written in very short phrases, the mind can memorize facts much faster. Some studies suggest that you can decrease your memorization time by as much as 30%. This technique of writing short phrases can also be used when you are reading your text book.

Another common practice in note taking is to prepare for class before class (see Tip 7 below). In doing so you will be familiar with what is being lectured and may be able to spend more time trying to understand what is being taught. In this situation, your notes should still effectively capture what has been covered in the class.

One of the most important skills you will develop in college is effective note taking. This one skill could make the difference between a very successful student and a moderately successful student. There are many websites that give instructions on how to take notes. I strongly recommend that you find them in Google, visit them, learn how to take notes, and master the skill of note taking. Here is just one interesting video that can serve as a starting point. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AffuwYJZTQQ>

Tip 7: Prepare for Class

Highly successful students often prepare for class, before the class. If your instructor posts PowerPoints online before class, read them before class and you will be able to follow the lecture better, as well as have a better idea of when and how to take notes. Another tip is read the text before the class. Everyone has heard this tip, but how many actually do it? If you find your schedule is too busy to do this on a regular basis, then try doing it as often as possible. You might find out you like it. Scan over the chapter, if you do not have time to read it in entirety. Make note of any and all highlighted or bold words. Pay attention to charts and graphs, and be sure to remember any side notes and illustrations.

Tip 8: Learn in Teams

Here is an interesting bit of information that I bet you did not know. There is a research study that suggests that studying in groups is the single best predictor of success in college. This is because different individuals in groups may have unique and different learning styles. Members in your study group can also teach confusing concepts they understand to other group members. Study groups are particularly effective for completing projects, developing presentations and preparing for exams. However, when you form a study group, it is imperative that each member of the group come prepared. If this is not the foundation rule of your study group, you and your team will waste time.

Your assignment is to open the following link and view the exciting video that Clarissa made in which she shares her number one tip for creating an amazing study group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxZ4a80hbCc> Viewing this video is required for successful completion of this Scientific Literacy Course. Also visit this next site to discover other tips on how to develop highly effective study teams. <http://www.educationcorner.com/studying-groups.html>

Your next assignment is to form a regularly meeting study group for your math course with several other students who are taking this online Scientific Literacy course. If you cannot identify Scientific Literacy students in your math course, then form this study group with other students. If you are not taking a math course this semester, then form a study group for one of your STEM courses.

Tip 9: Escape the Tech Temptation Addiction

Research shows students send and or receive on average 300 text messages a day. When you are studying TURN YOUR CELL PHONE OFF. This might make some people feel real uneasy, but you cannot create a “Steady Study Environment” when the notification of the text is constantly tempting you to take a “tech break.” Along with this, don’t get tempted to surf the web while studying. It seems like a harmless break, but sometimes it can eat hours of your time. Besides if you can’t turn the phone off or stay off of the internet, then you may be addicted to technology.

Tip 10: Seek Out Help

Do not be a stranger to your instructor during their designated office hours, or requested appointment times. Asking your instructors for help (after you have tried yourself) is the best way to get to know them. Knowing your professors will also be useful when you need letters of recommendation.

If your class has tutors, use them. I will always remember talking to a junior chemistry major with a 4.0 GPA. She said she uses a tutor every week. By the way in high school a 4.0 GPA is often seen, but in college, a STEM major with a 4.0 is rarely seen. So stay focused by asking for help!

Tip 11: Be Balanced

Don’t let stress get the best of you. Find productive ways that are good for you to get rid of stress. This might involve exercising, meditating, praying, going to church and/or getting involved in a social group. Just don’t get so involved in social life that you forget why you are in college. It is good to be part of a fraternity, sorority, step team or club, if that is your thing. But do not let these social organizations cause you to lose focus of your life mission to be a successful college graduate. An interesting fact is that for many college students, the lowest GPA of their entire college career happens in the second semester of their freshman year. This is because second semester freshman have been in college long enough to find out about all of the fun social things they can do on campus, and they do it. Don’t fall into this trap.

Tip 12: Have Fun

College is fun, never forget this, have a good time. Many people reminisce by saying college was one of the best times of my life. So enjoy the ride.