

Tips for Making the Most of Study Time

More than 70% of today's first-year students and 65% of seniors spend fifteen or fewer hours per week doing homework, studying, or engaging in other types of academic activities, which is well below the standard recommendation (NSSE, 2005). Many students simply don't know how they should spend their study time when they are not working on specific assignments. Here are some tips that can help students make the most of the time they devote to your course outside of class. (Note: Before sharing this list with your students, consider customizing it by adding relevant resources and contact information and removing items that may not apply to your course.)

Reflect and Review

- Read the course materials (textbook, written lectures, etc.) several times.
 - ✓ The first time through, just try to get an overview of the material—don't worry about details, specific definitions or concepts. Then read the material a second time and take notes. When writing your notes, highlight or circle key concepts, add your own thoughts about what these things mean, and write questions that you may have (you may find it helpful to jot your notes and questions in the margins of the original text rather than writing them out in a separate document). After taking notes, read the course material at least one more time. This time read the text as a review and focus specifically on the concepts you find most challenging.
- Review your notes on the lecture or readings.
 - ✓ Read your notes carefully. On a separate piece of paper outline the main concepts in the chapter or lecture. Add definitions and any questions you may want to ask your instructor or other students. Try to write your definitions in your own words.
- Keep a study journal.
 - ✓ Consider questions like: What have you learned thus far about the material? Do you have any questions that still need to be answered? What aspects of the material do you find particularly interesting? How does this material relate to other courses you have taken? Are there any real-world experiences that relate to the material? Your journal doesn't need to be long, but be as detailed as you can in your reflections.

Study with Others

- Find someone to talk with you about what you are learning.
 - ✓ Teaching someone else is one of the best ways to truly learn a concept or idea. Talk about what you are learning with classmates, friends, family, or co-workers. Use this as a way to practice using your own words to describe what you have learned. This may also help you to develop additional questions.
- Study with someone else.
 - ✓ Use the chat room in Oncourse, Oncourse mail, IM, the phone or meet in person. Talk with your classmates about what is being covered in the course. What you find easy may be challenging for someone else and vice versa.

Use All Available Resources

- Use the quizzes to extend your learning.
 - ✓ If your course has online quizzes that can be taken more than once, complete the quizzes several times: the first time you read the material, the third time you read, and then again the night before you will take a quiz or test. Or give the quizzes to friends or family and explain what they mean or why a particular answer is the right answer.
- Create study tools.
 - ✓ Some students find it helpful to develop flashcards with key terms on note cards. Other students might write definitions on post-it notes and post these around their house, car, office or apartment. Pair up with another student in the class and write quizzes for one another. Another tool that works for some students is to rewrite their notes or prepare a loose outline from their notes and the readings. It is best if you see the material at least three times.
- Consult other sources.
 - ✓ If a concept or idea just doesn't make sense to you, consult other textbooks or a credible source about this same topic. The word credible is important—don't use Google to locate sources unless you are willing to take the time to verify that they are reliable. Some of the best resources for the topics covered in this course are [list a few for your course with links]. Another option is to just go to the library and browse the stacks. Books with call numbers in the range xx-xx [list the appropriate call numbers for your subject area] cover material similar to what is being covered in this course.
- Consult your instructor.
 - ✓ If you have questions or are having difficulty grasping a concept, visit your professor during office hours. Email and telephone are also ways to reach your instructor but talking one on one is typically the most effective way to get your questions answered. And, you may learn a few more things along the way!

References

- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). *Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education*. AAHE Bulletin, 39 (7), 3-7.
- National Survey of Student Engagement (2005). *2005 Annual survey results: Exploring different dimensions of student engagement*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning.