



Making the Grade Is Easier Than You Think

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We learn all the time, and it is probably most consuming during the student years when tests are inevitable and grades are the results of what you learned.

In addition, what you learn can greatly impact your relationships, education career and income. Putting some planned and conscious effort to improving your study skills and learning ability will give you ongoing rewards for the rest of your life the first being good grades.

The following are some recommendations for learning, improving your memory and making better grades:

***Be rested and alert.** Many teenagers stay awake till the wee hours of the morning watching television, chatting on their computer or talking on the phone and parents are not always able to prevent that from happening. Students in College along with their newfound freedom, away from home and managing their own time, often go days with little sleep. Today, students have very busy schedules with school activities, sports and extra curricular activities that the only time left for studying is late at night or they end up cramming for tests and finals at the last minute.

Lack of sleep is detrimental to learning and interferes with concentration and memory. It also weakens the immune system, can lead to higher occurrences of health problems and cause accidents. If sleeplessness is a problem, then learn to take 10 to 15 minute power naps or meditations in order to energize yourself and keep you going for another hour or two. Take frequent breaks while studying to accommodate your power naps and meditations. Use your meditation time to program yourself to have better concentration and recall

abilities. Overcoming sleeplessness will help you focus better and learn more effectively.

***Stay on top of the game and do not lag behind on your reading and assignments.** If necessary, force yourself to be punctual with doing your studies and assignments. Whenever you feel like slacking off, make yourself go through a mental “future-pace” in order to experience the consequences of not keeping up with reading assignments or turning your work in on time. Future Pacing is the process of mentally rehearsing yourself through some future situation in order to observe possible consequences or help ensure that a new desired behavior will occur naturally and automatically.

To “future pace” a scenario of not doing your assignments on time, simply close your eyes and imagine yourself going through time and as you do, notice how difficult you have made your life just for not doing your assignments on time. Notice how your test scores are poor when they could have just as easily been very good. Notice how you feel a sense of personal failure by not having done your assignments promptly. Recognize how it could have been so different and better had you done your assignments and how it was all your doing since you are in control of all of your outcomes good and bad.

You can also do a “future pace” to experience the benefits gained by doing your work on time. Imagine yourself doing your assignments, studying and achieving good test scores. Allow yourself to experience the wonderful feeling of achievement. Make sure you lock in to the wonderful feeling of achievement by stepping into the image of the “accomplished you” fully and completely and then open your book and study.

“Future pacing” is a good technique that can help motivate you to keep up with your assignments and make studying less burdensome.

***Discover whether you are a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner.** Knowing how you best

process information is extremely helpful for learning and can easily cut learning time considerably. To find this out, get a piece of paper and across the top of the page write Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic. Under each category you write as many adjectives as you can think of that pertain to that category. The longest list will give you an idea of your preferred learning and processing mode.

Visual - A visual person would benefit by underlining, highlighting, using colored markers, making colorful mind maps, drawing pictures, symbols or graphs. If you are visual, then get into the habit of engaging your visual mode for learning by using imagery as you study. Make mental pictures of what you are studying whenever possible and project them onto an imaginary Mental Movie Screen. Make your mental pictures colorful, humorous, exaggerated and full of action. This will make stronger impressions of the information by involving more brain cells, making the information easier to recall. During your tests, look at your Mental Movie Screen and recall the mental pictures, graphs or drawings, doing this will help lead you to the necessary information. If all fails, then imagine your professor on your Mental Movie Screen and ask your professor for the answer. In most tests, it is best to write something for an answer than nothing at all. Get into the habit of using your Mental Movie Screen to impress any visual information you need to remember.

Auditory – If you are auditory, then learn to engage your auditory mode for learning by attending all your lectures, discussing what you learned, including any visuals used, with others during study sessions. You can also record your lessons and listen to them during your meditations. Get into the practice of explaining what you have learned to an imaginary audience of children out loud. This will allow you to hear the information and evaluate your understanding of it. Don't get caught up in the listening and remind yourself to take notes. During your test, read the test question, listen to your inner voice giving you the answer and write the answers down. You can also talk quietly to yourself to solicit the answer. If all else fails, ask your professor for the answer and hear him give you the answer, then write it down.

Kinesthetic – If you are kinesthetic, then engage your senses and be as hands on as you can. Incorporate your kinesthetic mode of learning by

imagining how something feels, being in the experience whenever possible, using your imaginary sense of touch, engaging the emotions and/or by doing some kind of rhythmic action as you learn such as pacing or tapping your fingers lightly. Explain what you have learned to an imaginary audience as if you were actually there in front of the audience doing the presentation.

The best results are achieved when you learn to engage all three learning modes.

***Be organized when you study and create an effective system for studying.**

First - Before you begin studying, take a few moments to close your eyes and take a deep breath. After exhaling, identify, categorize or sort the information you are going to study. Title the material and name the author if necessary. This will help you create a mental file, prepare you for the information, make stronger impressions of the information and track it down easier when you need to recall it. By consciously identifying, categorizing or sorting your information you are organizing and adding meaning to the material before learning it instead of just cramming it in semi-unconsciously. Doing this will help you be more focused, learn the material better and recall it easier. Then open your eyes and begin to study.

Having high recall ability is vital for achieving high scores in tests. Studying is similar to typing information into a computer and saving it. Once the information is part of the computer's memory it is always there. Such is the case with studying information. Once you have impressed the information into your brain's memory it is always there. The problem with retrieving information from your computer or brain lies in how and where it was saved. If you cannot remember the name of the document and where the document was saved, then finding the document will be difficult and time consuming. Likewise, if you cannot retrieve the information learned from your own memory because it was not filed away properly or impressed strongly, then recalling the information will be difficult.

Identifying, categorizing or sorting information will help file learned information effectively for easier retrieval.

Second - As you study, train yourself to section your material in big chunks first. Do an overview of the material or chapter in order to create a sort of outline or mental map of the material. Use headings as guidelines; write them down on a sheet of paper and then flesh out each heading with what you learned in your own words. Then write in the specific details such as dates, locations and names. On the side of each segment and/or category write the main idea. At the end of your notes write your own summary of the lesson and review your summary frequently.

Third - Write a question(s) pertaining to the subject matter on a separate sheet of paper so as to formulate your quiz. Make a list of questions as you study and give yourself short quizzes. Form effective study groups and use your quizzes in your study groups. Ask to be quizzed, quiz others in your group and/or quiz yourself frequently when alone. Encourage those in your study group to create their own quizzes and bring them to the study sessions. This will help you learn from a different perspective, merge the quizzes to create a more thorough quiz and have a deeper understanding of the material. As you study, go back to previous topics and quiz yourself.

Fourth - Remember to use colorful mind maps of the information learned, and review your notes after class. Review those topics that seem most confusing. Confusing topics often become clearer shortly after class. This helps make stronger impressions of the information. Funny drawings or doodles also help reinforce information since they engage the emotions.

Fifth – Also, imagine yourself explaining what you learned to a young child. This will help simplify the concepts in your own mind.

Go over the information, your notes and key points daily and frequently and get the reading done. There is no skipping the reading.

Other Helpful Tips:

*Continue with the same study schedule you have in junior high, and high school in college as well. Although it may seem like a drag, the 7am to 4pm study schedule is probably the most effective, and one you are already used to.

*Sit in front of the classroom. This will not only help keep you awake, it will also help to engage you in the learning process.

*Remember your Goal Setting Strategy. Write down your goals and manifest them. Be congruent with how you think, believe and behave in relation to making good grades, meaning, do what it takes to pass, STUDY.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know what it takes to make a passing grade or better. The choices are yours and the outcome you end up with is your creation. You are totally responsible in this venture. Get help whenever you need help and don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions. Good luck. You are going to do just fine.