

Preparing to Study: Find a good location

You need a good study place to be prepared to study. You should be able to answer YES to all of the following questions:

1. Is my Study location available to me all of the time?

Your Study location does you little good if you cannot use it when you need it. If you are using a Study location that you must share with others for any reason, work out a schedule so that you know when you can use it.

2. Is my Study area free from interruptions?

It is important to have uninterrupted study time. You may have to hang a DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door or take the phone off the hook.

3. Is my Study area free from distractions?

Most students study best in a quiet environment. If you find that playing a stereo or TV improves your mood, keep the volume low.

4. Does my Study area contain all the study materials I need?

Be sure your Study Place includes **reference sources** and supplies such as pens and pencils, paper, ruler, calculator, and whatever else you might need. If you use a computer for your schoolwork, it should be in your Study Place.

5. Does my Study area contain a large enough desk or table?

While working on an assignment or studying for a test, use a desk or table that is large enough to hold everything you need. Allow enough room for writing and try to avoid clutter.

6. Does my Study area have enough storage space?

You need enough room to store your study materials. Be sure you have enough storage space to allow you to keep your desktop or other work surface clear of unnecessary materials that can get in the way.

7. Does my Study area have a comfortable chair?

A chair that is not comfortable can cause discomfort or pain that will interfere with your studying. A chair that is too comfortable might make you sleepy. Select a chair in which you can sit for long periods while maintaining your attention.

8. Does my Study area have enough light?

The amount of light you need depends on what you are doing. The important thing is that you can clearly see what you need to see without any strain or discomfort.

9. Does my Study area have a comfortable temperature?

If your Study Place is too warm, you might become sleepy. If it is too cold, your thinking may slow down and become unclear. Select a temperature at which your mind and body function best.

Taking Notes in Class

Your teachers will talk about topics that you are studying. The information they provide will be important for you to know when you take tests. You must be able to take good written notes from what your teachers say.

Taking good notes is a three-stage process in which there are certain things you should do **before** class, **during** class, and **after** class. Here are the three stages of note taking and what you should do during each stage.

1. Get Ready to Take Notes (Before Class)

- Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and get you ready to understand new information your teacher provides.
- Complete all assigned readings before you come to class. Your teacher will expect that you have done this and will use and build upon this information.

Bring all note taking materials with you to class. Have several pens and pencils as well as your notebook.

2. Take Notes (During Class)

- Keep your attention focused on what your teacher is saying. Listen for “signal statements” that tell you that what your teacher is about to say is important to write in your notes. Examples of signal

statements are “The most important point...” and “Remember that . . .
“Be sure to include in your notes information that your teacher repeats or writes on the chalkboard.

- Write quickly so that you can include all the important information in your notes. Do this by writing abbreviated words such as med for medicine, using symbols such as % for percent, and writing short sentences.

Place a ? next to information you write in your notes, but about whose meaning you are not sure.

3. Rewrite Your Notes (After Class)

- Rewrite your notes to make them more complete by changing abbreviated words into whole words, symbols into words, and shortened sentences into longer sentences.
- Make your notes more accurate by answering any questions you had when writing your notes in class. Use your **textbook** and **reference sources** to obtain the information you need to answer your questions. If necessary, ask your teacher or other students for help.
- Check with other students to be sure you did not leave out important information.

Learning Styles

A learning style is a way of learning. Your learning style is the way in which you learn best. Three learning styles that are often identified in students are:

- the **Auditory Learning Style**
- the **Visual Learning Style**
- the **Tactile/Kinesthetic Learning Style**.

Read about each of these learning styles to identify YOUR preferred learning style.

Are you an Auditory Learner?

Auditory Learners learn best when information is presented in an auditory language format. Do you seem to learn best in classes that emphasize teacher lectures and class discussions? Does listening to audio tapes help you learn better? Do you find yourself reading aloud or talking things out to gain better understanding? If YES, you are probably an Auditory Learner.



► Are you a Visual Learner?

Visual Learners learn best when information is presented in a written language format or in another visual format such as pictures or diagrams. Do you do best in classes in which teachers do a lot of writing at the chalkboard, provide clear handouts, and make extensive use of an overhead projector? Do you try to remember information by creating pictures in your mind? Do you take detailed written notes from your textbooks and in class? If YES, you are probably a Visual Learner.

► Are you a Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner?

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners learn best in hands-on learning settings in which they can physically manipulate something in order to learn about it. Do you learn best when you can move about and handle things? Do you do well in classes in which there is a lab component? Do you learn better when you have an actual object in your hands rather than a picture of the object or a verbal or written description of it? If YES, you are probably a Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner.

Your learning style is your strength. Go with it whenever you can. When you can choose a class, try to choose one that draws heaviest on your learning style. When you can choose a teacher, try to choose one who's teaching method best matches your learning style. When you choose a major and future career, keep your learning style firmly in mind.

Good Listening In Class

It is important to be a good listener in class. Much of what you will have to learn will be presented verbally by your teachers. Just hearing what your teachers say is not the same as listening to what they say. Listening is a cognitive act that requires you to pay attention and think about and mentally process what you hear.

Here are some things you should do to be a good listener in class.

► Be Cognitively Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.

Make sure you complete all assigned work and readings. Review your notes from previous class sessions. Think about what you know about the topic that will be covered in class that day.

► Be Emotionally Ready to Listen When You Come to Class.

Your attitude is important. Make a conscious choice to find the topic useful and interesting. Be committed to learning all that you can.

- ▶ **Listen with a Purpose.** Identify what you expect and hope to learn from the class session. Listen for these things as your teacher talks.
- ▶ **Listen with an Open Mind.** Be receptive to what your teacher says. It is good to question what is said as long as you remain open to points of view other than your own.
- ▶ **Be Attentive.** Focus on what your teacher is saying. Try not to daydream and let your mind wander to other things. It helps to sit in the front and center of the class, and to maintain eye contact with your teacher.
- ▶ **Be an Active Listener.** You can think faster than your teacher can speak. Use this to your advantage by evaluating what is being said and trying to anticipate what will be said next. Take good written notes about what your teacher says. While you can think faster than your teacher can speak, you cannot write faster than your teacher can speak. Taking notes requires you to make decisions about what to write, and you have to be an active listener to do this.
- ▶ **Meet the Challenge.** Don't give up and stop listening when you find the information being presented difficult to understand. Listen even more carefully at these times and work hard to understand what is being said. Don't be reluctant to ask questions.

- ▶ **Triumph Over the Environment.** The classroom may too noisy, too hot, too cold, too bright, or too dark. Don't give in to these inconveniences. Stay focused on the big picture - **LEARNING**.



The DETER Strategy for Taking Tests

To do well on a test, you must have good knowledge of the information that is being tested. But you must also have a strategy for taking the test that allows you to show what you know. The DETER strategy can help you do your best on any test. Each letter in DETER reminds you what to do.

D = Directions

- ▶ Read the test directions very carefully.
- ▶ Ask your teacher to explain anything about the test directions you do not understand.
- ▶ Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the test.

▶ If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.

E = Examine

- ▶ Examine the entire test to see how much you have to do.
- ▶ Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.

T = Time

- ▶ Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.
- ▶ If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
- ▶ Planning your time is especially important for essay tests where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other test items.

E = Easiest

- ▶ The second E in DETER reminds you to answer the items you find easiest first.
- ▶ If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that test things you know.

R = Review

- ▶ If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- ▶ Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Using the DETER strategy will help you do better on tests and get better grades.

Acronyms to Remember

Forming an acronym is a good strategy to use to remember information in any order that can be remembered. An acronym is a word that is formed from the first letter of each fact to be remembered. It can be a real word or a nonsense word you are able to pronounce.

Here is how to form an acronym.

- ▶ Write the facts you need to remember.
- ▶ Underline the first letter of each fact. If there is more than one word in

a fact, underline the first letter of only the first word in the fact.

▶ Arrange the underlined letters to form an acronym that is a real word or a nonsense word you can pronounce.

“HOMES” is an example of an acronym that is a real word you can use to remember the names of the five Great Lakes: Michigan, Erie, Superior, Ontario, Huron: In HOMES, H is the first letter of Huron and helps you remember that name; O is the first letter of Ontario, and so on.

“Telk” is an acronym that can be used to remember the following animals: tiger, lion, elephant, kangaroo. “Telk” is not a real word, but you can easily pronounce it. You could also have used “kelt” as an acronym. Notice that in this example, you cannot form a real word using the first letter of each fact to be remembered.

Managing Study Time

There are only so many hours in a day and week. You cannot change the number of hours, but you can decide how to best use them. To be successful in school, you must carefully manage your study time. Here is a strategy for doing this.

At the beginning of a term, prepare a Calendar. Update it as the term goes on. Here is what to do to prepare a Calendar.

▶ Record your school assignments with their due dates and your scheduled tests.

▶ Record your planned school activities.

▶ Record your known out-of-school activities.

Each Sunday before a school week, prepare a Weekly Schedule. Update it as the week goes on. Here is what to do to prepare a Weekly Schedule.

▶ Record your daily classes.

▶ Enter things to be done for the coming week from your Term Calendar.

▶ Review your class notes from the previous week to see if you need to add any school activities.

▶ Add any out-of-school activities in which you will be involved during the week.

▶ Be sure to include times for completing assignments, working on projects, and studying for tests. These times may be during the school day, right after school, evenings, and weekends.

Each evening before a school day, prepare a Daily Organizer for the next day. Place a ✓ next to each thing to do as you accomplish it. Here is what to do to prepare a Daily Organizer.

▶ Enter the things to do for the coming day from your Weekly Schedule.

- ▶ Enter the things that still need to be accomplished from your Daily Organizer from the previous day.
- ▶ Review your class notes for the day just completed to see if you need to add any school activities.
- ▶ Add any out-of-school activities in which you will be involved the next day.

Your Weekly Schedule should have more detail than your Term Calendar. Your Daily Organizer should have more detail than your Weekly Schedule. Using a Term Calendar, a Weekly Schedule, and a Daily Organizer will help you make the best use of your time.