



1. Create a game plan.

- Develop a realistic study schedule that defines what, when, and where you intend to study.
- Identify available study times after adding class times, meetings, and review sessions to your calendar.
- Don't forget to schedule sleep, meals, time to exercise and down time.

2. Space learning out over time.

- Learning curves show that spaced learning produces better retention and recall rates than typical crammed learning.
- Review information multiple times over an extended period of time
- Whenever possible, don't cram. Studies show that cramming can lead to higher stress and lower success.

3. Define WHAT to study.

- **Think like a professor.** Try to grasp your professor's objectives and pay attention to concepts the professor focused on in class or in homework, quizzes, problem sets, and other assignments.
- **Predict exam questions.** Start by going through your lecture notes, problem sets, headlines and sub-headlines of readings. Also, formulate questions that ask how various concepts relate to each other.
- **Set priorities.** Consider your current class standing. Is there a class you should be putting more effort in? Is there an exam that will be more difficult than others? Give yourself more time to study for your toughest classes. Study material in this order: 1. *definitely* on the exam, 2. *probably* on the exam, 3. *might be* on the exam.

4. Choose HOW to study.

Study aids for memorizing information. Some courses (e.g. language classes) can require you to memorize large amounts of information. Consider the following study aids:

- Make **flash cards** to help you memorize vocabulary, dates and equations, etc. (Quizlet)
- Come up with a **mnemonic device** to help you memorize facts by using a phrase or acronym you'll definitely remember. For example, HOMES for the Great Lakes.
- **Link information** you are trying to memorize to something that you already know.

Study aids for understanding information. While there are times you will need to remember lists and terms, the core of learning is understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating concepts and ideas (see [Bloom's taxonomy](#)). Consider the following study aids:

- **Reorganize your notes** into important concepts, formulas, dates and definitions.
- **Rewrite charts** of theorems, mechanisms, or principles in your own words.
- **Color code** material that's going to be on the exam by what's most important, less important, etc. This will help you prioritize the material.
- **Ask yourself questions** like "What does that mean?", "How does it work?", "How is this connected to other things?" "Why is this important?"
- **Create concept maps or diagrams** to organize details and to identify hierarchical and functional relationships. This is especially beneficial when learning concepts that build upon the understanding of one another.

5. Review your last test.

Reviewing and analyzing a test can be a valuable tool for learning. Identify the problems you had with the exam. How did you study? Did you prepare effectively? Did you mis-read questions? For more guidance on how to analyze what went wrong, download the hand-out [Error Analysis: Self-reflection](#).

6. Quiz and test yourself repeatedly.

- **Repeated** testing enhances learning more than repeated reading or reviewing your notes. Consider online tools like [Quizlet](#).
- Work under test-like conditions whenever possible. (Time, place, open or closed notes, etc.)
- Take practice exams provided by your professor, use questions at the end of a book chapter or create one yourself based on old exams (see *think like a professor*). Review your answers and focus on filling your gaps.
- For essay exams, practice producing your response or outlines instead of merely reviewing the material over and over again.

7. Form a study group or work with a study partner.

Not only can it be more fun to study with friends, learning by asking and answering questions is also a really effective method. Explain difficult material to a study partner or in study groups. By talking through the facts and formulas with a study partner, you're thinking about the material more deeply, which means you'll remember it better later. Reading periods and remote learning in particular can be isolating, the shared human experience of working together can be vital.

8. Ask for help.

Take advantage of office hours or review sessions to ask questions about the material. Your professors, TA's, and study group leaders are there to help! Ask questions regarding the material as soon as you get stuck. It can be a time saver to receive a quick answer instead of struggling for hours.

9. Get enough sleep.

Make sure you are well-rested so that you can be fully focused during your exams. Getting enough sleep (about 8 hours per night) the weeks leading up to your finals is also important as you will be able to concentrate better and retain information [longer](#).

10. Take breaks.

Ensure that you reward learning with break times to recharge and relax. Apply the [pomodoro technique](#) and use a timer (ideally shaped like a tomato) to break down your study sessions into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short 5 minutes breaks. You can also work for 50 minutes and then take a 10 minutes break. After four short pomodoros (~25 min. each) take a longer break.