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Weekly Digest #8: Study Tips For Students

May 1, 2016

We thought that with final exams coming up, today's digest should be devoted to some helpful tips for successful studying, reviewing, and *gasp* cramming.



Getting ready to study. Source: Pixabay.com

Overall, if you are going to study effectively and not waste any precious time, you should **try these 5 strategies**:

- 1) **Space out your studying.** If you still have a couple days/weeks before finals, start studying now and study a little bit every day. You will remember more than if you do a marathon study session. If you wait until the night before, you should still space out your study: Take a break to get a snack or have a nap!
- 2) **Mix up your studying.** If you have three finals in, say, English, Math, and Psychology, it's best if you study English for 30 min, then Math for 30 min, then Psychology for 30 min and then cycle through again rather than studying each one for a long time before switching.
- 3) **Stop rereading and highlighting.** While reviewing your notes might be worthwhile if you haven't looked at the material in a while, the two strategies below will provide far greater benefits than

simply going over your notes or book over and over again. For more information, see our guide on [how to study a textbook!](#)

4) **Put the material in your own words and connect it to what you know.** See if you can translate your notes or book into words that you understand, and then try to think of examples from your own life or from other classes that fit this new concept.

5) **Practice retrieving the information.** You don't want to get to the test and find out then that you can't actually pull any of that studied material out of your memory. If you practice retrieving the information now by asking yourself quiz questions, quizzing with a friend, or using flashcards, you will be able to review those areas that you have trouble recalling. See our handy guide on [how to study with flashcards!](#)

If you want more information, here are some student-friendly resources, which further explain the above and offer some additional tips as well:

1) [Spaced repetition: a hack to make your brain store information](#) by James Gupta, [@gupta_james](#)



This brief article explains a little bit of the brain science behind why spacing is so much better than cramming.

Photo taken
from
https://twitter.com/gupta_james

2) [Retrievalpractice.org](#) by Pooja Agarwal, [@poojaagarwal](#)

This site provides lots of resources and recommendations for how to use retrieval practice effectively.



3) [The lesson you never got taught in school: How to learn!](#) by Simon Oxenham, [@neurobonkers](#)

Technique	Utility
Elaborative interrogation	Moderate
Self-explanation	Moderate
Summarization	Low
Highlighting	Low
The keyword mnemonic	Low
Imagery use for text learning	Low
Rereading	Low
Practice testing	High
Distributed practice	High
Interleaved practice	Moderate

This is a short summary of a recent article, which describes both good techniques AND bad ones (e.g. rereading and highlighting are poor learning strategies).

4) [Good study habits: Learn, don't just perform!](#) by Regan Gurung, [@ReganARGurung](#)



Photo taken
from
<https://twitter.com/ReganARGurung>

This brief article is about the importance of "knowing what you know," which cognitive psychologists call "metacognition" as well as believing that you can learn, called a "growth mindset."

5) [7 memory skills that will make you smarter](#) by Drake Baer, [@drake_baer](#)

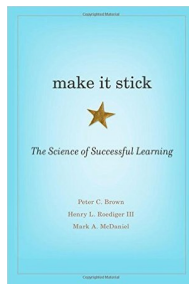


Photo taken
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<http://www.amazon.com/Make-It-Stick-Successful-Learning/dp/0674729013>

This article briefly summarizes the book, "Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning" and includes many of the above recommendations as well as a few new ones (e.g. generation and use of mnemonics).

So, to summarize, for the best kind of study... stop re-reading and instead spread out your study activities (or at least mix up the materials that you need to study); explain confusing topics to yourself to make sure you understand them; and quiz yourself or ask a friend to quiz you.

Finally, if you're going to cram, you can still have a cramming session with frequent breaks, lots of quizzing, and thinking of examples of material instead of just re-reading.

We hope that this helps! Happy studying, and please come back to let us know if any of these tips helped!

Every Sunday, we pick a theme and provide a curated list of links. If you have a theme suggestion, please don't hesitate to contact us! Our 5 most recent digests can be found here:

[Weekly Digest #3: How Teachers Implement Interleaving In Their Curriculum](#)

[Weekly Digest #4: How To Write Good Multiple-Choice Questions](#)

[Weekly Digest #5: Assigning Quality Homework](#)

[Weekly Digest #6: An Introduction To Retrieval Practice](#)

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