

## Timeline for Effective Study

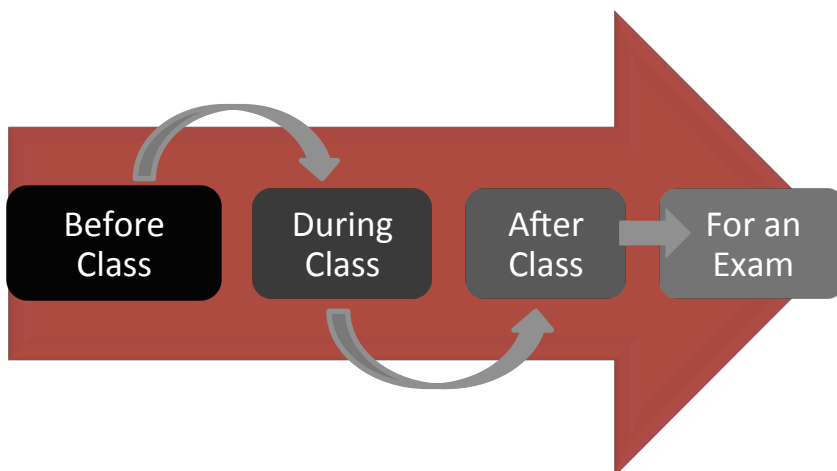
You've been studying since Kindergarten, so you should know how, right?

The University environment is unlike anything you experienced in grade school or high school. Don't make the mistake of assuming that what you have done in the past will serve you well now. Break out a new "tool chest" and use these tools to help make your studying time and energy more effective.

**W**hen all you own is a hammer, every problem starts looking like a nail.

Abraham Maslow

Think of studying as a multi-step project with different requirements for each step that will take four months to finish. The reward for this project is your grade. The better you do on each step, the better your reward. Let's look at the four different steps in your studying project:



Each of the steps is interlocked into a total learning process.

The more time spent in the early steps (before class and during class), the less time you will need to spend in the later steps (after class and for an exam).







Generic tips apply to all four steps.

### Step One: Before Class

- ↪ Read and outline the assigned chapter before class. If it is the first week of the term, read the first chapter. This allows you to create an outline which you can use in class to take notes without having to write down everything the professor is saying.
- ↪ Make notes in the margins of your textbooks with:
  - Questions you have.
  - Personal experiences that relate (remember, it is easier to remember something that relates to something you already know).
  - Create and use your own color coding scheme to help you remember important information. (i.e. important dates ... important people ... important concepts/themes/theories.)


- ↪ Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and relate to new material.
- ↪ Identify a supportive study group which meets before class to discuss your notes, your textbook readings, and any questions you may have.
- 💡 Study in short blocks (1 hour or less). More and you will have difficulty in retaining what you studied.

## Step Two: During Class


- ↪ Even if you are bored, take notes! These are the building blocks you need to study for the exam and to understand future, more difficult material.
- ↪ Consider using the Cornell Note-Taking method to help you study, organize and analyze your notes after class. (See *Resources* at [elc.uark.edu](http://elc.uark.edu) for a quick overview of the Cornell system.)
- ↪ Sit in the same seat in each class everyday (especially when you are taking a test). Your mind will associate this location with learning and your concentration will improve.
- ↪ Use your color coding scheme to help you remember important information.
- 💡 If the professor talks faster than you can write, ask for permission to tape the lecture. Then you can listen again later and fill in any missing information you may have missed.
- ↪ Listen for signals of important things to remember (i.e. “the most important point” . . . and “remember that” . . . “this is the basis for all” . . . and things that are repeated or written on the board.
- ↪ Develop and use your own abbreviations for each class (i.e. “%” instead of percent, “med” instead of medical, “cl” for class, “cat” for category, “GR” for Germany, etc.) and symbols for important points (i.e.  ,  ,  ,  ).
- ↪ Place a “?” next to information you don’t understand or are confused about its placement in your notes. Talk with your professor or classmates after class to clarify the details.
- 💡 Break big jobs down into smaller steps. Tackle short, easy to accomplish tasks first and mark them off of your ‘To-Learn List’.
- ↪ Keep a small spiral bound Planner or Calendar divided into sections for each of your classes. Write down any assignment or test dates given to you in class. Add any others that you receive in the syllabus or over Blackboard.

## Step Three: After Class


- ↪ Review your notes each day (right after class is best) to move the information into long-term memory and to identify those areas about which you have questions or need additional information.

- ↪ Add illustrations to your notes. For example, use:
  - a timeline for a series of historical dates,
  - a diagram of a scientific class system,
  - Quick caricatures of important figures to identify when their information is given in your notes, and
  - Graphs of statistical information.
  
- ↪ Schedule your study times, if possible, in the same place and time each day. Remember the 1 hour rule. Give yourself time for breaks and those other activities which are important to you.
  
- ↪ Be aware of your best time of the day and study then!
  
- ↪ Turn off your cell phone, iPod, radio, or TV during scheduled study times to reduce distractions which inhibit your learning.
  
-  Identify a “study space” where the bulk of your studying will occur. After several days of studying in this place, your brain will associate this space with studying and help you stay focused.
  
- ↪ Take consistent breaks during your studying: If you take 5 minutes between every 50 minute segment of studying, it will help you stay fresh and your brain more receptive to learning. Get up and move around, get something to drink or eat, stretch, check your messages and then go back to concentrated study for another 50 minutes.
  
- ↪ Keep a notebook or tablet handy in which to write down any distracting thoughts. That way you won’t stop to resolve the distracting thought or pull your attention away from studying by worrying whether or not you will forget that thought.
  
- ↪ Each night, type or rewrite your notes from that day’s class. Add reinforcing key concepts from previous lectures, write potential exam questions, note real life examples which illustrate your notes, and find the answers to any questions you might have had in class. Not only is this a great way to make sure your notes are accurate but it will also help you move this material into long-term memory.
  
- ↪ Depending on the content, make and use flash cards, memory lists, mnemonic lists, etc. These can be reviewed during short breaks for weeks ahead of the exam.

## Step Four: For an Exam

- ↪ Develop a realistic study schedule with time for breaks and all of the other things you need or want to do. Start early enough so that you can follow the one-hour rule in multiple studying sessions.
  
-  When you are scheduled to study, make sure you have everything you need:
  - Your assignment notebook or tablet
  - Good lighting
  - Comfortable seating
  - A solid surface upon which you can write

- Text books and other written materials such as your notes
- Your text book's interactive CD or web site, if available
- A clock to help you manage your time.
- Pens, pencils, markers, ruler, stapler, paperclips, pencil sharpener, post-it notes, index cards, paper, scissors, calculator, computer, etc.

- ↪ If you use the Cornell Note-Taking Method, identify questions that could be on the exam.
  - ↪ Your textbook CD or web site (study guides and sample test questions)
  - ↪ Develop your timeline(s) for each class.
  - ↪ Start with your hardest or most disliked class.
  - ↪ Make lists of topics you need to know for each class.
  - ↪ Make room for meals and sleep. Both your body and your brain need these "fuels" to maximize your ability to learn.
  - ↪ In addition to your scheduled study times, use waiting time (5 minutes waiting for the bus, 20 minutes waiting at the doctor's office, 10 minutes waiting for your roommate, etc.). Waiting time adds up and contributes to your overall learning. Flash Cards or Memory Lists are easy to bring out for these brief study periods.
  - ↪ After you have studied, study with your Study Group.
  - ↪ During your last study session before the test, make a one-page study guide/plan with important information for the test. Review it just before the test to refresh your memory and give you a head start on the exam.
-  Don't plan on cramming everything into the night before the exam. If you have consistently used steps 1 through 3 you won't need to. And, in the long run, cramming only provides you with sketchy, short-term learning at best. So, you'll have to do this all over again for the final or, in the case of prerequisite courses, for the next course.