

Tips to help students Prepare for Studying!

1. Take control of your calendar

Controlling your schedule and your distractions will help you to accomplish your goals.

If you are in control of your calendar, you will be able to complete your study and homework and stay on top of your coursework.

The following are steps to getting control of your study timetable and ensure you are effectively using the time you have available:

1. On the same day each week, (perhaps Sunday nights or Saturday mornings) plan out your schedule for the week.
2. Go through each class and write down what you'd like to get completed for each class that week.
3. Look at your study planner and determine how many hours you have to complete your work.
4. Determine whether your list can be completed in the amount of time that you have available. (You may want to put the amount of time expected to complete each assignment.) Make adjustments as needed.
5. Before going to bed each night, make your plan for the next day. Waking up with a plan will make you more productive. Think about what you need to learn in each of your classes, based on your developmental rubrics.

Create a plan where you:

- Set a **timeline** at the start of your study session
- Create a **detailed to-do-list**, (keep a close eye on what is really important)
- **Set alarms / reminders** – Set alarms / reminders to remind you about your study plans. A regular reminder keeps you honest and your plans on track.
- **Use a wall planner** – Stick a calendar or wall planner up so you can see it whenever you're studying. Mark it up with important dates, like exams and assignment due dates. Use it to block out your regular study timetable too.
- **Make to-do lists** – Lists break tasks down into manageable chunks. At the start of the week, make a list of the things that you need to have done by the end of the week. Make a to-do list at the start of each study session too, so that you're clear about what you need to be doing with your time.
- **Set time limits** – Before you start your study session, have a look at your to-do list and give yourself a set time to spend on each task. If you don't get something done in the set time, consider whether it's the best use of your time to keep going with it, or to start working on something else.

2. Pick a place and time

Everyone has their own idea about the best place and time to study. Whether it's your bedroom at night or the library after school, find a study space and a regular study time that works for you and stick with it.

- **Set up your study space** – Your study space should be quiet, comfortable, and distraction-free. It should make you feel happy and inspired. Decorate it with your favourite pictures or objects. If you want to listen to music or burn incense, pick a space that lets you do that.
- **Find your best time** – Some people work better in the morning. Others work better at night. Work out which time suits you and plan to study then. Don't study much later than your usual bedtime – pushing yourself late at night can make you too tired to study properly.

3. Stay motivated

When you're studying it helps to keep in mind your reasons for doing all this hard work, like a course or career you're working towards. It can help to have something in your study space to remind you of your goals. You could also decorate your study space with inspirational quotes or photos of people you admire and family members you want to make proud of you. What are your goals?

4. Have a positive and growth mindset when it comes to study and learning

When you study, give 110%. Do it in a focused and proper way, avoid any kinds of distractions and use the time you have to the maximum!

Too many people look at studying as a necessary task, not an opportunity to learn. That's fine, but researchers have found that how you approach something matters, almost as much as what you do.

Being in the right mindset is important in order to study smarter. Sometimes you can't "force" yourself to be in the right mindset, and it is during such times you should simply avoid studying. Come back to it when you're focused!

- Aim to think positively when you study, and remind yourself of your skills and abilities
- Avoid catastrophic thinking. Instead of thinking, "I'm a mess, I'll never have enough time to study for this exam," look at it like, "I may be a little late to study as much as I'd like, but since I'm doing it now, I'll get most of it done."
- Avoid absolute thinking. Instead of thinking "I always mess things up," the more objective view is, "I didn't do so well that time, what can I do to improve?"
- Avoid comparing yourself with others, because you usually just end up feeling bad about yourself. Your skills and abilities are unique to you, and you alone.

5. Choose study techniques that actually work

Doing all-nighters some days before SACs and Exams will not only exhaust you but will also force you to rush through the material. Instead of opting for all-nighters, try spending the first half hour of your study time

reviewing your day's work at school, make summaries or do an exercise and quiz yourself on what was covered – do you understand it? How could you use it in an exam?

Based on decades of learning science research, the two most effective methods known to date are:

- Distributed practice
- Retrieval Practice (practice testing)

6. Metacognition

A key difference between average students and successful ones is their ability to exercise metacognition. Reflective thinking about what they know and don't know, and about how they learn, are much more effective learners. Metacognition is simply thinking about our own thinking. More precisely, exercising metacognition is when we intentionally plan, observe, and assess our processes and performance.

Research shows that the ability to critically analyse how we think influences how we approach tasks and what strategies we use to problem solve. It helps us to identify our own strengths and weaknesses, and make amendments to our approach accordingly. Metacognition also affects our ability to apply knowledge beyond the immediate context in which it is learnt, which is the ultimate goal of learning.

We can improve our metacognition by being reflective and self-aware during all stages of learning and studying. Try asking yourself questions such as:

- "What am I trying to achieve?"
- "Am I on the right track?"
- "How can I improve my approach?"
- "What is working for me?"
- "What support do I need?"

You will notice that by reflecting on your progress, you will be more motivated to achieve your study goals, more aware of your performance and be more confident in your learning.

Remember that studying effectively is not a matter of chance. It is only through intentional engagement with content, bringing that information to mind regularly over short, interspaced sessions and reflecting on our thinking, that we learn to study effectively. Taking a scientific approach to studying really is a no-brainer.

7. Ask for help

Don't feel bad if you need to ask for help. If you're stuck on something, or something just doesn't seem to make sense, you can always ask for help. Talk to your teachers about the things you don't understand. Talk to your friends and fellow students too. People you can talk to about study and your learning include:

- Teachers through Microsoft teams / email
- Family members
- Friends and fellow students also via Teams.

8. Identify and overcome procrastination (as discussed previously)

Procrastination is the intentional delay of an activity or task and is a common coping mechanism amongst students. Procrastination can manifest in many ways. You might find yourself procrastinating by cleaning, browsing social media or by spending too much time formatting a document. Be aware of how you procrastinate and identifying strategies to overcome it, like going for a walk to clear your head or turning off your phone. It is important for you to stay focused during periods of learning and study. Use your time wisely!

9. Complete one thing at a time

Trying to accomplish multiple tasks at the same time increases stress. Concentrate on one task at a time and avoid / eliminate ALL distractions in your home learning environment.

10. Study every day

If you study a little bit every day you'll be continually reviewing things in your mind. This helps you understand things. It also helps you avoid the stress of last-minute cramming. If you're finding it hard to find time to study, cut back on some (but not all!) of your other activities. Prioritising study might mean spending less time online, or it might mean cutting back on shifts at work.

11. Relax and don't forget to take breaks

Not all studying is equal. You will accomplish more if you study intensively. Intensive study sessions are short and will allow you to get work done with minimal wasted effort. Shorter, intensive study times are more effective than drawn out studying.

It's important to take breaks while you're studying, especially if you're feeling tired or frustrated. Working too long on a task can actually decrease your performance. When you take a break, make sure you get away from your desk or study space. A bit of physical – even just a walk around the block – can sometimes help you to look at a problem in a different way and could even help you to solve it.

Before you sit down to study for two hours, stare at a blank wall for two minutes and meditate. Research suggests that meditation can reduce anxiety and boost attention span, and just a few short minutes of meditation can improve focus and performance. Take it one step further by practicing yoga before each study session.

Give yourself some time to relax each day. It's important to take breaks while you're studying and learning, especially if you're feeling tired or frustrated. Working too long on a task can actually decrease your performance. When you take a break, make sure you get away from your desk or study space. A bit of physical – even just a walk around the block – can sometimes help you to look at a problem in a different way and could even help you to solve it. Listen to some music, read a book, do some exercise, even undertake some mindfulness activities!



12. Eat well

A nutritious diet is important for your energy levels. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and avoid lots of sweet and fatty food. Don't forget to drink lots of water!

13. Sleep

A good sleep routine is essential! If you have difficulty falling asleep, do something calm and relaxing before you go to bed like listening to music or reading. Don't look at your phone / laptop. You should be aiming for at least 7-8hrs a night.

14. Enjoy your life

It's important to make time to have some fun and to get a balance in your life. So, prioritise accordingly and stay connected to friends and family.