How to study in 2025

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How to study in 2025

Learn how to learn

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READ IN APP ↗

In addition to this newsletter, I recommend some other great ones. All free. <u>Check them out here</u>.

Friends,

A step away from tech this week - and no, not a <u>2025 forecast report</u> in sight! But a prediction about <u>TikTok</u> might [or might not] be coming true.

This week I wanted to cover studying and learning. You should always be learning new skills. especially in this AI age.

We annually commit to our growth, by learning something new. The intention is good, but sometimes the process gets in the way. I don't think I was ever taught *how* to learn, so in order to get really efficient on things I'm trying to learn this year, I've broken down the approaches and hacks that might help me, you and your kids if you have them. I started applying this to what I'm doing on some of the deeper dives I'm doing on specific skills I'm building up on AI and other areas - and the process works. The approach is simple but ones that many students vouch for in different degrees.

So, this is my **Ultimate Guide to Studying Well** *(A must-read for school kids, university students, and lifelong learners alike!)* These techniques are tried and tested and I put this together at the request of an education institution for their internal magazine.

Some of these themes that I have simplified have come from an excellent book on learning called "<u>How We Learn</u>" by Benedict Carey - which I recommend wholeheartedly to anyone who wants to reframe their learning. It was recommended to me, and I recommend it to you. In this book and those like it, we find authors dismantling traditional views of rote learning, showing how forgetting, distraction, and even procrastination can enhance long-term retention when leveraged strategically. And so, if you want to go deep into these areas, you will find the benefits of retrieval practice, spacing, and interleaving, debunking myths like the effectiveness of passive re-reading or highlighting. (yes, highlighting doesn't work) The biology behind learning emphasises that the brain's reward systems, active engagement, and error correction are fundamental to mastering new skills. Study habits should embrace the cognitive struggle and harness the science of learning for deeper, lasting mastery. (if that's what you want!)

If you know anyone in learning mode, forward them this email!

Whether you're at school learning algebra, a university student balancing multiple courses, or an adult trying to master new job skills, effective studying is key to success. But "study tips" can often sound dull or obvious. This guide is different. I'm trying to focus on proven techniques that spark curiosity, make

learning stick, and can even be fun. Parents, feel free to share these hacks with your kids because improving study habits can raise the game for everyone. Here are my 10 hacks for learning:

1. Start Smart: Scope Out Your Learning Roadmap

> Know Your 'Big Picture'

The most common mistake when studying is jumping right into the details, reading the same chapter repeatedly without a strategy. Instead, think of your subject as a map. For example, if you're studying biology, list out *all* the subtopics (cells, DNA, ecology, etc.) in a single overview. By "scoping" the subject first, you'll know exactly what you need to cover, and you'll see how topics fit together.

Hack: Create a quick "subject outline" or mind map using a tool like <u>Figma</u>. This helps you see how one topic connects to another. Print it and stick it above your desk so that you always see the full roadmap. You can even build out a structure using Chat-GPT or Claude.

2. Active Recall: The Secret Ingredient

> Why Testing Yourself Works

If you read a chapter five times, you might *feel* prepared, but passively rereading can fool your brain into thinking it "knows" material. Instead, *test yourself.* This technique, called *active recall,* is backed by lots of research: challenging your brain to pull up facts or ideas without looking at notes or books cements them in your memory.

How to do it:

• **Closed-Book Summaries:** After reading a section, close the book and write or say out loud what you remember. Some call this blurting - where you blurt out everything you can remember on the subject.

• **Flashcards:** Make (or use an app [such as <u>Quizlet</u> or <u>Brainscape</u> for] Q&A-style cards. Shuffle them often, or let an app track which ones you struggle with.

• **Teach a Friend (or a Parent! or a Child!):** Explaining a concept to someone else might be the best test of all. If you get stuck, that's where you

need to revisit your notes.

3. Spaced Repetition: Forget Cramming, Embrace Spacing

> Build Memory Over Time

Cramming the night before an exam is nerve-wracking. It rarely works well for long-term memory. Instead, review the content at spaced intervals. Set yourself up with an app like remnote. This method builds durable knowledge, the kind you can recall long after test day.

Easy approach:

• On Day 1, learn a topic.

• Day 2, quickly quiz yourself on it.

• Day 4 or 5, quiz yourself again.

• Next week, quiz yourself one more time.

Each cycle is short but incredibly powerful.

4. Understand Before You Memorise

> The Feynman Technique

Ever find yourself mindlessly memorizing definitions you don't really get? Fix that by striving for genuine understanding first. The simplest way is the Feynman Technique, named after Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman. Pretend you're teaching a ten-year-old: use simple language, draw diagrams, and fill knowledge gaps as soon as you spot them.

Pro tip: If you find yourself using too many complicated words, break the concept down further. Once you can explain it in plain language, you'll probably get it for real.

5. Turn Note-Taking into a Superpower

> Stop Just Copying; Ask Questions

Traditional note-taking can lead to pages of scribbles that you never look at again. Instead, as you read or listen in class, jot down *questions* that come to

mind and write short bullet answers in your own words. This triggers deeper thinking and sets you up perfectly for that "active recall" test later.

Try a <u>Cornell Layout</u>:

Divide your page into two columns: on the left, write potential questions or keywords; on the right, write your summary or answers. At the bottom, add a brief "bottom line" summary you can review at a glance.

If that doesn't work for you, use an app like <u>Notion</u> to get your notes down and get organised.

6. Mix Up (Interleave) Your Subjects

> Variety Boosts Your Brain

While "block studying" (spending a whole day on just math, for instance) can feel organized, *interleaving* is often more effective. That means mixing subjects. Study maths for an hour, then do 45 minutes of history, then test yourself on maths again. By switching gears, you force your mind to work a little harder when coming back to each subject, which strengthens memory and understanding.

Where to start:

• Plan 1-2 hours max per subject, then switch.

• Revisit older topics in between brand-new topics.

7. Set the Stage: Distraction-Free Zone

> Banish Mindless Scrolling

We've all grabbed our phone to "check something quickly" and then lost 30 minutes on doomscrolling. So, make your study area as distraction-proof as possible. Put your phone in another room (or use an app that temporarily blocks notifications). Turn off Netflix and push away the game console. It might feel tough at first, but a quiet (or calm) environment keeps your brain in the zone.

Little changes that help:

• Turn off phone notifications, or place your phone facedown in "Do Not Disturb" mode. Or use an app like Forest to gamify your focus.

• Keep only the relevant textbook or tabs open on your laptop.

• Let friends/family know you're in "study mode" for a set time so they won't interrupt.

8. The Power of Productive Breaks

> Try the Pomodoro Method

Studying effectively doesn't mean marathon sessions. In fact, short bursts can be far more productive. The Pomodoro Technique suggests working for 25 minutes and then taking a 5-minute break. Repeat a few times before a longer 15–20 minute break. These breaks refresh your mind and make it easier to maintain focus.

Break ideas:

• Quick stretches or a short walk / sit-ups

• Grabbing a healthy snack (fruit, nuts)

• Doing a mini-meditation / breathwork

• Listening to a favorite song / Power nap

9. Reward Yourself and Track Your Wins

> Motivation That Lasts

Studying consistently can feel tough without small rewards. For younger students, parents can help set up a reward system (like a fun activity after a successful study session). For adults, treat yourself to something you enjoy, reading a chapter of a novel or 10 minutes of a YouTube Binge. Celebrate milestones and keep track of your progress (like a simple grid or checklist you fill in each time you finish a session).

Fun twist: Write down your "win of the day" in a journal. Maybe you finally understood a tricky AI concept or finished reading a long chapter. This positive reflection can really keep you going.

10. Teach It Forward

> Helping Others Helps You

Sharing knowledge not only feels good, but it also cements the material in your mind. Offer to study with classmates, explain challenging concepts to a friend, or record yourself giving a mini-lesson on your phone. Parents, encourage your kids to "teach" you a summary of what they learned in school. It helps them learn while building confidence! And, equally, share with a friend or partner the highlights of what you have learned in a clear and succint way.

And that's it! That's how you study!

If all of this sounds like a lot, remember: *every little bit helps.* Even choosing one or two new study tips can make a huge difference in learning and exam performance. Over time, building these methods into a daily or weekly routine will let you spend *less* time studying while learning more and feeling more confident.

Above all, studying effectively means focusing on genuine understanding, regularly quizzing yourself, and giving your brain time to rest and review. Master this, and you'll find that not only do grades improve, but studying feels more exciting. Parents, these principles hold true whether your child is 10 or 20; and adult learners, you can absolutely apply them too - like I am now doing.

Here's to stronger learning, better memory, and actually enjoying the process. Happy studying! Remember - learning is lifelong.

Stay Curious - and don't forget to be amazing,

Rahim

PS. Is drinking alcohol ever good for you? Dry January, anyone?

Here are my recommendations for this week:

One of the best tools to provide excellent reading and articles for your week is Refind. It's a great tool for **keeping ahead with "brain food"** relevant to you and providing serendipity for some excellent articles that you may have missed. You can dip in and sign up for weekly, daily or something in between

-what's guaranteed is that the algorithm sends you only the best articles in your chosen area. It's also free. Highly recommended **Sign up**.

Now

1. 'Now Is the Time of Monsters' - We are entering a new and unsettling era, as described in this op-ed. From Donald Trump's second presidency to rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, decreasing global fertility rates, and the escalating climate crisis, our beliefs about stability and progress are being challenged. Political institutions have weakened, with billionaires and corporations increasingly aligning with Trump's administration, a shift that would have been unimaginable during his first term. The pace of AI development surpasses our understanding and ability to regulate, raising concerns about our readiness to manage its expanding role in infrastructure, decision-making, and warfare. Meanwhile, the energy demands of AI could worsen an already critical climate situation, pushing humanity further away from its environmental goals. Compounding these disruptions is a demographic change, as birth rates decline globally, leading to decreasing populations and societal instability. Countries face escalating challenges as ageing populations hinder economic growth, political unity, and social stability. Instead of pursuing solutions like immigration or technological adaptation, societies are becoming more insular, heightening divisions and fears of decline. The warning is that these intertwined crises of technological, demographic, and environmental threats herald the collapse of the old world without a clear path to the new. Echoing Antonio Gramsci, he notes the seriousness of our current situation: "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: Now is the time of monsters." Challenging times lie ahead. Must read!

2. AI Brad Pitt dupes French woman out of €830,000 - A French woman who was conned out of €830,000 (£700,000; $850,000) by scammers posing as actor Brad Pitt has faced a huge wave of mockery, leading French broadcaster TF1 to withdraw a programme about her. [Note to remind myself that I'm in a real marriage with my wife]

3. Eight Words to Say to a Friend. Just read this.

4. Thrilling debuts to big-name authors: 40 of the most exciting books to read in 2025. Not my usual non-fiction list. But one for the bookworms

out there. Chimamanda has a new book! Also [Show up to your next book club meeting with these 12 reading recommendations](#)

5. [The truth behind your $12 dress:](#) Inside the Chinese factories fuelling Shein's success: Shein's meteoric rise as a global fast fashion giant is powered by the relentless labour of factory workers in Guangzhou's "Shein village," where 75-hour workweeks and minimal wages are common despite violating Chinese labour laws. The company's success lies in its ability to produce trendy, low-cost clothing rapidly through a vast supply chain of 5,000 factories, relying on China's unique infrastructure to fulfil algorithm-driven orders. While Shein faces criticism for exploitative labour practices, forced labour allegations, and opaque supply chain practices, it is simultaneously praised for its reliability in paying suppliers. As Shein eyes a public listing on the London Stock Exchange (big surprise), its reputation is under scrutiny, with calls for greater transparency and accountability to address the ethical concerns surrounding its operations.
Next

1. [A Euphoric Tech Industry Is Ready to Celebrate Trump and Itself](#) - The elite of Silicon Valley are set to revel in their new clout during a long weekend of inaugural parties as President-elect Donald J. Trump is set to resume power. These include a black-tie party at Peter Thiel's mansion, a "Crypto Ball" showcasing the industry's support for Trump as the "first crypto president," and gatherings by tech giants like Spotify, Uber, and Meta. As traditional Republican donor networks also host events, the festivities highlight the growing influence of tech leaders in Trump's second administration, with big-money donors gaining exclusive access to key figures and events, further intertwining the interests of Silicon Valley and politics.

2. [The 'Crazy Guy' Who Bet Billions on the iPhone - 3 Years Before It Existed](#)
How SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son convinced Steve Jobs to make the deal of the century.

3. [Inside the Black Box of Predictive Travel Surveillance](#) - Behind the scenes, companies and governments are feeding a trove of data about international travelers into opaque AI tools that aim to predict who's safe —and who's a threat.

4. [The State of Video Gaming in 2025](#) - 200 slides from Matthew Ball

5. She Is in Love With ChatGPT - A 28-year-old woman with a busy social life spends hours on end talking to her A.I. boyfriend for advice and consolation.

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