

# A Collection of Study Tips\*

By Theresa Grove

\*If you have a study technique that works for you and it is not included here, send it to [tjgrove@valdosta.edu](mailto:tjgrove@valdosta.edu)

## 1. Organize and Plan

- Make a weekly schedule (a blank weekly schedule can be found at the end of this document to get you started)
- Block out the already scheduled things like classes, labs, work, meetings, date night, dinner with friends, dinner with family, dentist appointment, etc. Color code makes it easy to visualize what is what.
- Once you block out classes, work, etc, you will know when you actually have time to study.
- Start blocking in study time. You need to carve out time in your schedule EVERY day and stick to your schedule. And, this includes blocking time off on Saturday and Sunday for studying.
- As the week progresses, put a check next to each thing you do that is on your schedule. Then at the end of the week look at the schedule. Did you do what you scheduled for yourself? Or did you skip class, not study, not exercise?
- Make notes as you go along in your calendar as to how you studied (this will be useful when you analyze why you earned the grades you get) or if you were too tired or unfocused. You may find that you are much more focused in the morning and not so focused in the afternoon.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7 AM							
8 AM							
9 AM							
10 AM							
11 AM							
Noon							
1 PM	Blue: Meals						
2 PM							
3 PM	Red: Classes						
4 PM							
5 PM		Purple: Exercise					
6 PM							
7 PM							
8 PM	Library Monday - Thursday						
9 PM							
10 PM							
11 PM							

From [howtostudyincollege.com](http://howtostudyincollege.com). By the way, this website has other awesome tips and is currently free for students. The green arrows indicate “extra” time. You can use this time to study, grab a snack, go to a professor’s office hours, etc. **Don’t forget to block time off on the weekend!**

## 2. College is a full-time job

- Depending on intelligence and if you already know how to study and learn (yes, life isn’t fair) you should plan on studying **~2-3 hours for every hour you are in class.**
- Mathematically this means **~30-45 hours** each week if you are taking 15 hours.
- Then think about this: if you wait until Saturday afternoon, say 1:00p.m. to start studying, this means you would have to study until 10:00a.m. Monday morning with NO BREAKS to get in the study time. And, if you tried doing this, you’d be unsuccessful, because your brain doesn’t work this way.

- Marathon study sessions with no breaks DO NOT WORK! Shorter blocks of intense study are far more effective than long periods that include drifting off. 40-50 minute blocks of intense and effective study time with short 5-10 minute breaks in between works for many people. You may have to figure out how you learn best,
- If you have to work 30 hours a week (or 20 hours, etc), there may not be enough hours in the week available for you to earn the grades you are capable of earning. If this is the case, take fewer hours. If you attempt 15 hours every semester, but you have to repeat 1 class each semester because you did not pass, how is this better than taking 12 hours and passing all your classes? Repeating classes is expensive and it kills your GPA. Honestly look at what you can do and adjust accordingly. GPAs matter!

### 3. When should you study?

- Every single day. Think about people who are playing sports or learning a musical instrument... to be successful, do they only practice on the weekends? NO!

### 4. What you should do in class

- The #1 thing you should do in class is **BE THERE!** Except for illness and unfortunate accidents, you should not miss class. Your professor does not have to give you their notes if you miss/skip class, which means you are relying on another student for their notes. How much do you trust that student to have taken as careful of notes as you? Do you want to chance it? Besides, being in class and taking notes, puts you one step ahead of not showing up. Listening to your professor gives you the opportunity to see, hear, and think about the content. Maybe your professor also provides hints as to important concepts that will be on the exam. You are missing out if you aren't there, and you paid for it.
- **Take notes!** (see below for "how to take notes") Don't just sit back and listen to your professor without taking notes. Most people cannot learn this way. Taking notes is a much more active process because not only are you listening to the professor, you are writing down what the professor says. Then as you are taking notes if something was super confusing, put a star by that topic so that you will remember to look at that topic immediately after class or go see the professor to clarify the content.
- Turn your phone off or silence it; usually, there is no reason that you should be texting or checking email during class.
- If you are using your computer to take notes, turn off automatic notifications for email, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
- Pay attention and focus. You may have to force yourself, but simply being physically, but not mentally, present in class is the same as not going.

### 5. What you should do after class

- The **SAME DAY** as the lecture, you should go over notes (they may need to be re-written) and clarify anything that doesn't make sense. To clarify information go to book, and if it still doesn't make sense make a list to either ask during the next lecture or go see professor during office hours.
- The **SAME DAY** an assignment is given you should at least start it, **AND** add it into your calendar. You can keep your weekly calendars two weeks out or a month, or a semester. Whatever works best for you to keep track of deadlines.
- Start studying because in a couple of days the amount of information you have to learn will about double when you attend another class.

### 6. How do you take notes?

- **Write down what the professor says.** Taking notes is NOT a walk in the park. You should not only be writing what the professor has on powerpoint slides or board, but also what they are saying. Potentially anything the professor says is fair game for an exam, and if you are only writing what is on the slides, which in many cases is not much, you are missing a significant amount of material. Learn to abbreviate, don't write "the", "an", etc. Create your own short-hand.
- If your professor posts powerpoint slides print them out and bring them with you to class. This is useful if there are figures on the slides that the professor adds comments, marks, arrows, etc.
- It's ok to type notes (if this works for you). But, it's impossible to use powerpoint to make any illustrations during class, so you should also bring a pen and paper with you to every class.
- If something doesn't make sense, stop the professor and ask a question. Chances are you aren't the only one who has a question.
- If something doesn't make sense and you are the type of person who doesn't like to ask questions, make a note of it and then see the professor after lecture to ask the question, or ask

the professor if you can make an appointment with them, or go see the professor at their next office hours.

- If something doesn't make sense, and professors scare you, after class try to clarify the information yourself from your textbook. However, if you are unable to clear things up, **GO SEE YOUR PROFESSOR** as soon as possible!!!!

## **7. Study Techniques**

- Flash cards (or cut sheets of paper into 6 rectangles work great for definitions, but not complex topics or processes. When you go through cards say the definition in your head before you flip the card; do not read the word and immediately flip card and to read definition. You won't learn that way and will only learn for recognition. As you go through cards put them in piles: "definitely know", "kind of know", "have no idea". After you go through cards 1x then shuffle up the "kind of know" and "have no idea" piles and go through them again. Then repeat by shuffling up the "kind of know" and "have no idea". Once all cards are in the "definitely know" pile go through entire pile one more time. Then the next day repeat. After each lecture make more flashcards, but keep going through all the cards, don't assume that you won't forget the information.
- Develop essay questions to explain topics and try to answer them without using notes. When you get stuck go to your notes and figure out what you forgot, then begin again answering the essay question (not from where you got stuck, but from the beginning). Repeat until you get the answer correct. The next day start again. Make new questions after each lecture, but keep reviewing the "old" questions.
- Go through your notes and develop test questions based on what was discussed. These could be "Explain X", or "Define Y", or "Put the following in order", or "Label this picture", or "What are the 5 characteristics of Z". Your professor writes exams based on the material that was presented, so if you have taken "good" notes, then **YOU HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS TO THE EXAM!**
- Start with hardest concepts first; they will take the longest to learn. If you start with all the "easy" stuff you may run out of time before the next exam because you did not give yourself time to learn the "hard" stuff.
- If you can explain a concept to someone without looking at your notes you'll be able to answer questions on a test. Alternatively, if you can't explain something to someone without notes, you won't be able to answer questions on a test.
- The only way to learn how to do problems is to do problems.
- Draw concept maps that link content.

## **8. Where should you study?**

- Somewhere quiet. Your dorm, apartment, or home may not be ideal unless you can block out distractions (tv, roommate, family, pet, etc.)
- The library is a fabulous place: it's quiet, computers and printers are available
- If you need background noise use headphones (not all people can study with background noise)

## **9. What NOT to do:**

- Don't read over notes over and over and over again. You'll drift off, and not pay attention to what you are reading.
- Don't wait until the week before the exam before you start studying.
- Don't study in a place where you are being interrupted frequently (by technology, people, sounds, smells, sights, etc)
- Don't do marathon study sessions without taking breaks. But, taking a break doesn't mean checking Facebook every 5 minutes or getting up for a drink of water every 15 minutes.
- Don't wait until the night before to do assignments.
- Don't expect printers to be in working order 5, 10, or even 30 minutes before something is due.
- Don't show up to campus without a notebook (or paper) and pen
- Don't be afraid to seek out help from your professor, Academic Support Center, embedded tutor, etc.
- Don't wait until the end of the semester to discuss issues with your professor. It's too late (usually) at this point.

## **10. What TO do:**

- Plan ahead
- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise
- Eat

- Show up to class
- Take notes
- Pay attention
- Honestly evaluate what you are doing and what you are capable of
- Ask questions
- Go see your professor or tutor for help
- Find a major that you enjoy
- Take advantage of opportunities while you are at VSU
- Make friends
- Take the opportunity to branch out and try new subjects and classes
- Recognize the importance of all subjects
- Take class seriously

## 11. Determine what is working

Use your exams to determine if your methods of studying are working for you. This may mean going to spend time with your exam during your professor's office hours if they don't let you keep your exams.

When you get an exam back, go through the questions you missed and ask yourself:

- o Did you make a careless mistake?
- o Did you not understand the information or question?
- o Did you not study the topic?
  - If you didn't study the topic was it because you didn't think it was important or was it missing from your notes?
  - If it was missing from your notes, was it because you skipped class, were sick, drifted off, or your notes were not complete (ie you need to learn better note-taking skills)
  - If you didn't think it was important, why not?
- o Do you remember studying the topic, but you couldn't either "pick out" the right answer or if it's an essay question could you just not really remember how to explain something? If you couldn't pick out the answer because all the answers seemed "familiar" then you are studying for recognition. Which means if you hear someone talking about the topic, you would nod your head and think "yeah, that's right, I learned about that in class", which means you recognize it when it's stated in a matter of fact manner and in the correct context. However, if you can't answer a question about that topic or explain that topic without looking at your notes, then you do not truly know the information. Most beginning students study for recognition; they don't learn the material. Learning how to learn takes practice.
- o Now go through and see "why" you missed the questions. You may find trends. If most of your mistakes are careless, slow-down when taking the exam, write on the exam, make drawings, etc. If most of your mistakes were because you didn't study topics because you didn't think it was important enough information, but you had that information in your notes, then study more topics. If most of your mistakes were because your notes were incomplete then attend class, take better notes, and then study the notes. If you missed questions because you didn't understand the question or the information to answer the question, but the information was in your notes, this is an indication that you did not learn the material or you studied for recognition and you may need to try new study techniques.

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
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