

Study Skills

Before, During, and After Class Preparation



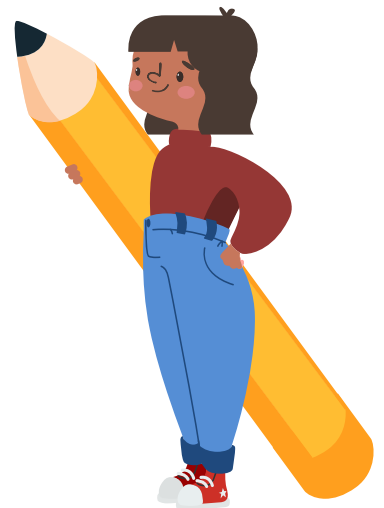
Studying can include a lot of different things and should be incorporated into your daily routine. Some things you only need to do once at the beginning of the semester while other things should be incorporated into your daily or weekly routine.

It may seem like everyone else instinctually knows what they should be focusing on to do well in class. And, you may feel overwhelmed or otherwise struggle to figure out how succeed in your academics. You are not alone. Everyone encounters challenges at university, even if it may not seem like it on the surface.

Check out the lists below for explicit steps you can include to improve your study habits before, during, and after class.

At the Beginning of the Semester

- Try to find at least one person to swap contact information with.** That way, if you need to miss a class, you can ask your classmate what you missed and to share their notes. If you become more familiar with your classmate, it might be useful to arrange study sessions with them. *This is a good way to meet and get to know your fellow peers.*
- Write down due dates, tasks, and assignments etc.** in a daily planner, or on your phone, etc. *Having all of your important dates in one place is the best way to plan ahead for busy weeks and avoid forgetting something important.*
- Have a separate notebook for each course** or clearly defined sections for each. This will make it easier to organize your notes and review.



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Before Class Checklist

- Read the assigned reading(s)**
- Make annotations and notes**
 - Highlight and/or underline key passages.
*If you struggle to remember or comprehend information, underlining or **highlighting** significant words and ideas will help you remember what to refer back to*
 - Mark a star (*) or question mark (?) beside areas you find confusing so you know what to look up later or focus on during a second read of the text
- Summarize the essential/key points** to remind you of the main areas of significance. *This will help your reading comprehension skills.*

You can structure your key points by attempting to answer the **5 Ws & 1H**.

What: What is/are the main argument(s)? or What is the main point of the text?

Who: Who is this written for (audience)? or Who is writing about this topic?

Why: Why is this relevant/significant?

When: When was this written?

Where: Where was this written?

How: How does the main argument apply to what I am studying/the overall course? How does this argument or subject matter relate to another area of study?

The more questions that you can answer the more likely it is that you understand the material. However, articles vary and it may not be possible to answer everything. If you are struggling, focus on the *What, Why, and How*.

- Respond to Reading Prompts.** If your professor provides questions to think about while reading, try to answer those questions instead of the 5Ws & 1H. After attempting to answer each question, physically check each it off as though it were an item in a list.

This will help you to stay motivated and signify that you are making progress.

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- Re-read your text.** The first read is for absorbing whatever you can, for the second time focus on the notes/marks you made to better understand the material.
- Write down questions to ask your professor** if you find certain areas of the material to be confusing or if you want clarification/elaboration.
- Review class material from previous lesson** (before next class)

Not enough time? Review the notes *you made* after the lecture instead of the lecture notes. Those notes will already be in your own words and will likely be easier to understand/recall than the lecture notes.

During Class Checklist

- Write due dates, tasks, assignments** etc. in a daily planner, or on your phone, etc. *If you write these in with the rest of your class notes make sure you can find them easily to transfer to your master task list and/or schedule (colour code, highlight etc).*
- Take Notes.** You can write your notes down on paper, type them on a laptop or other device, and/or request permission from your professor to audio record the lecture to refer to after class. *If you want to write your own notes but you feel you might miss key information there are various assistive technologies designed to help.*

Instead of attempting to capture each word the professor says, focus on:



- The main points the professor is making.
- Words, phrases, or questions the professor repeats.
- Anything they explicitly say will be on the exam.
- Questions that other students ask that you were also been curious about.
Document the question(s) and the professor's response.

- Remember to ask questions!** If the professor mentions something that you do not understand raise your hand and ask them to clarify OR if you are more comfortable, mark a star (*) or a question mark (?) symbol on your notes so you remember what you need to ask them to clarify after class or during office hours.



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Post-Class Checklist

- Review lecture notes** the same day you took them (or at least the same week).
- Make a set of your own notes** from the lecture notes. Include your questions, observations, and ideas.
- Reflect on the material** and try to relate it to another area of life (personal, social, cultural, etc.) Try to make meaning of the material through more than one lens/theme.
- Attend Office Hours.** Set a goal to attend your professor's office hours at least every two weeks to follow up with any questions. If you are uncomfortable with going to see your professor in person, try to email them on a regular bi-weekly basis with your questions, etc.

Even if it may seem daunting, going in person is advantageous because your professor can associate your name with your face and become familiar with your learning style. Furthermore, sometimes it can be difficult to interpret a professor's message in an email and it can be helpful to see them in person to try and clarify any areas of confusion.

Tip: When meeting with your professor make sure you come prepared.

- Have specific questions prepared.** The more specific you can be, the more likely your professor can assist you.
- Bring your notes.** Ensure you have clearly identified what you found confusing or otherwise need elaboration or clarification on.

Struggling to stay on top of your assignments etc?

Share a list of your self-assigned tasks/goals with someone. Sometimes just knowing that you have someone else who is aware of your goals can help motivate you to achieve them. *Having someone else check in to ask about your progress may help you to stay focused on completing the tasks you have assigned yourself.*

You CAN succeed. Just take one step at a time.

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