

Study smart—Get it right the first time using the 3 Rs

To study effectively remember the **3Rs**: **reading** or looking at charts, maps, web sites, etc; **recording** or taking notes to help you remember what you have read; and **reviewing**, or going over your notes so you will remember the information you have learned. First, however, get yourself into the study zone.

Get in the study zone

Cut out the distractors: One of the main misconceptions about studying is that you can multi-task: read, listen to music or TV, text-message your friends, talk on the phone....**Wrong!** Research shows that the parts of your brain that control reading are confused by other words (song lyrics, text messaging, etc.). The interference set up means you can't really absorb written materials or concentrate effectively while trying to do something else. (If you must to listen to music, it should not have words. Listening to Mozart or Bach actually improves brain function, if you like classical music.) This interference problem may explain why you need to read something several times to remember the information—or why you forget what you read last night when you take a quiz on it the next day. Do it right the first time: study smart, not just hard.

Location, location, location: You wouldn't practice volleyball in your bath tub or shoot baskets in your car. Find a place that will help you get in the zone to read, record, and review. Get comfortable—but not too comfortable. Bed may be a good place to read a novel or magazine, but not the best place to read a textbook. Sit in a comfortable chair, with a table or desk at the right height, and have plenty of light. You also need to eliminate distractions. That's right: turn off the MP3, TV, or anything that makes noise, put your phone on silent mode (AND DON'T LOOK AT IT FOR INCOMING MESSAGES unless you are waiting for an organ transplant). And absolutely no Face Book or My Space while you are studying.

Then **read, record, and review**. Try to read and record one whole section of a textbook or chapter of a novel before you get up, check your phone, or get a snack. Concentration takes practice, and you'll get better at it and be able to work for longer periods as your develop these new intellectual muscles.

Reading

Preview the chapter and each section to find out what the chapter is about.

1. What is the title of the chapter? Section?
2. Read the focus questions to find out what you are supposed to learn.
3. Check to see if there are vocabulary words or key terms you need to know. Look up ones you are not sure of. Sometimes the new vocabulary is listed at the beginning of a section and sometimes new words are bold-face or a different color in the text.
4. Look at the charts, maps, pictures, or other graphics in the section (make sure to read the captions!).
5. Decide what kind of notes you will take depending on what is the type of information in the section: cause-effect or sequencing; comparison; information presented by categories; main idea and supporting details; lots of new concepts, important people, or vocabulary, etc.

6. Begin reading and note-taking. It's fine to switch between types of notes in the same section depending on the type of material you are reading. It is even okay to use pictures if that helps you remember things better. Remember, the purpose of note-taking is to help you organize and remember new information.

Recording

The main reasons to take good notes are to help you:

- understand what you are reading,
- learn organizational skills,
- see connections and relationships between things you read, and
- study efficiently for tests.

Some types of notes are good for reading textbooks and other printed materials, others work well for taking notes from lectures or films. First let's take a look at notes designed to help you remember information in text books.

Type of material in the section	Type of notes
New concepts, vocabulary, or people; also good for characters in fiction	2-column notes; flash cards
Identification of events or people	6 Ws: Who, What, Where, When, Why or How, and Why should we care (Why is this important? What other things or people does this affect? How has it affected)
Sequencing	Flow-chart
Chronology	Timeline
Cause-effect	Flow chart, timeline, cause-effect chart (best choice for more than one cause)
Two or three things to be compared (and contrasted)	Venn diagram, T-chart
Lots of data to be organized	Table
Main idea with supporting details	Concept web or outline
Ideas and details presented hierarchically (some things are more important than others)	Outline
Narrative or new information or explanations	Sections summaries

Reviewing

Review is the process of going over your notes or other materials in order to remember what you have just read. Studies show that reviewing new material several different times of 10-20 minutes helps you retain the new information better than if you spent two hours studying before an exam. New studies also show that if you review material, and then get a good night's sleep, you will be 20% more likely to retain or remember the information the next day. Sleep—7-8 hours a night—seems to be absolutely essential to learning and to brain health. You may not notice the effects of lack of sleep, but it can be tested and documented in a lab.

One of the best ways to do a major review for a test is to have a regular study group or study buddy. Choose your group with care: people who can help you stretch your abilities and who are serious about learning—not necessarily the bff you like to hang out with or text-message sixteen times a day. Study groups are the key to success in college and in HTWM next year.

Type of notes	How to use them for review
2-column notes; flash cards	Cover up one side of notes and quiz yourself; flash cards—go from name or vocabulary word on one side and quiz yourself
Flow-chart	Cover up one part of the sequence and see if you can fill it in
Timeline	Shuffle the dates and see if you can put them back in order
Flow chart, timeline, cause-effect chart (best choice for more than one cause)	Go from effects to causes, and then from causes to effects
Venn diagram, T-chart	Cover one section of the chart, see if you can recreate it from memory.
Table	Review data vertically, then horizontally
Concept web or outline	Cover the central area and see if you can recall the main points, then reverse the process and cover the details and see if you can remember them with the main ideas as a cue
Outline	Cover the supporting details for each main idea and see if you can remember them
Section Summaries	Re-read the summaries and see if you can recall important details.