
Types of Studying

There are *five types of studying* necessary for academic success. Using the 5 types has the advantage of keeping studying time to a minimum while maximizing the chances of earning high grades. The five types of studying are most effective when used regularly from the day of the first assignment or lecture in each class.

1. Studying to Gather Information

Purpose: To formulate a complete and accurate set of textbook and lecture notes. Some ways to determine if notes are complete and accurate are:

- a. Identify the information to be learned in classes and textbooks using the clues to main ideas and details that are given in lectures and textbooks.
- b. Organize, condense, and record information in a format that promotes learning such as using note cards or outlines.
- c. Verify the completeness and accuracy of your notes. Simply thinking, assuming, feeling, or believing notes are complete and accurate doesn't make them so.

2. Studying to Learn Information

Purpose: Move information from short-term memory into long-term memory. This requires a means for repeated recitation of material to be learned. Some ways to do this are:

- a. Make times in your schedule to do repeated recitations of your notes.
- b. Look at a main idea with the details hidden from view.
- c. Recite aloud all the details you can remember without looking.
- d. Look at the details to check for accuracy and completeness of your recall.
- e. If your recitation was incorrect or incomplete, read the details aloud to yourself and repeat steps a - d until you can recite the details correctly from memory. Once you can recite the details completely and accurately from memory, place that card in the "not yet learned" pile and move on to the next note card. If you recited completely and accurately on the first try, put that card in the "I know this" pile and review these cards two or three times per week to prevent forgetting.
- f. Recite material in the "not yet learned" pile at least every other day until details can be recalled completely and accurately on the first try.

3. Studying to Check for Learning

Purpose: To identify what has and has not yet been learned before you take your test. This requires a means for self-testing. One way to self-test is to recite two to three times weekly – on your own or in a study group. Go over material you believe has been learned as follows:

- a. Look only at a main point and cover the details.
- b. Recite *aloud* the relevant details without looking.
- c. Look at the details to check for accuracy and completeness of the recitation.
- d. If all the details are recited correctly on the first try, you know immediately that the material has been learned.
- e. If the details are recited incorrectly or incompletely on the first try, you know immediately that the material has *not* been learned. In this case, go to step “e” in *Studying to Learn Information*.

4. Studying to Refresh

Purpose: To prevent forgetting. This requires a means for regular recitation of material already learned. Two ways to do this are:

1. Make regular times in your schedule to review material already learned. This combats the *fading effect*. Fading occurs when knowledge is not used or is not repeated often enough to prevent normal deterioration of the memory.
2. Regularly review material already learned, individually or in a study group.

5. Studying to Improve Learning Skills

This is the most neglected and overlooked type of studying. **Purpose:** To identify learning skills that worked so they can be repeated and identify learning skills that didn't work well so that they can be modified or replaced. This requires analysis of returned tests. Unless this analysis is done, grade-raising studying skills may remain a mystery and grade-limiting studying skills will likely be repeated. Four ways to improve learning skills are:

1. Use each quiz and test as feedback on your learning skills. Grades are feedback on how effective the learning skills you used for a particular quiz or test were.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of your learning skills by identifying: (1) answers that were totally or mostly correct and determine which learning skills were used to learn this information and (2) answers that were totally incorrect or for which you lost points and determine which learning skills or lack of them led to a loss of points.
3. Modify/replace learning skills that resulted in lost points.
4. Use the resources that improve learning skills, such as:
 - find an "A" learner and do what s/he does,
 - consult learning skills books,
 - attend learning skills classes and workshops, and
 - get advice from instructors and learning skills counselors.