

Not all studying is
created equal!

Steps to Smarter Studying

Do You Use Active or Passive Studying?



Active studying: You do something with the material while you study.

This takes mental effort and results in better learning!

Examples: Self-testing & elaborative learning

Passive studying: Absorb the material with little mental effort.

This can take a lot of time, but does not result in a lot of learning.

Examples: Memorizing definitions, highlighting, rereading & copying notes

Active Studying

What is self-testing?

- You can develop your own practice test questions.
- Test yourself while reading.
- Use questions provided by your teacher or textbook.

What are the benefits of self-testing?

- Testing allows you to know what you know
 - If you can't answer the question, you study more!
 - When it is time for the test, you can be confident that you know the information.
- Testing improves memory.
 - Self-testing is a memory tool!
 - Your brain has to work harder, so you remember it better.
 - It is so helpful, you can study for less time than others and still do better!

*****HELPFUL HINT:** Even if you spend the exact same amount of time studying, but you space it out over a few days, your brain remembers it better because it has to work harder. ***

How to develop your own practice test questions

- You should create the types of questions your professor uses.
 - This lets your brain get used to thinking this way!
 - Challenge yourself with the questions.
 - Avoid straight definition questions!
 - Questions that require you to apply the information are most helpful.
- Create an answer key.
 - State where in the book or notes the answer is found.
 - Get a classmate to create questions, and you can swap tests.

How to test yourself while reading

- You can do this when you read for the first time, and when you study later.
- Turn over the page and summarize what you just read (out loud or written).
 - Note important people, concepts & details.
 - Discuss how this information relates to other information.
- Keep it short.
- As you study, try increasing the delay between reading and testing.

****All these suggestions are based on research with students****

Active Studying

What is elaborative learning?

- You think about the meaning.
 - Don't just repeat definitions over and over again! This requires little thinking.
- Create examples
 - You will think about the meaning more when you create an example.
 - Relate the example to yourself.
 - People are vain – we remember examples that relate to ourselves. 😊
 - Your example should apply the information.
- Relate concepts to other concepts
 - You can do this by focusing on connections.
 - You can do this by comparing and contrasting.
 - If you focus on connections while you study, more information will come to mind during the test!

What are some avenues for using elaborative learning?

- Elaborate notecards
- Elaborate outlines
- The key is to focus on meaning and connections!

What is an elaborative notecard?

- The concept on front (not always a bold term).
- The definition or information is on the back.
- Include your own example on each notecard.
- Include how this concept relates to other concepts.
- Make your own practice test question for the notecard.

What are the benefits of an elaborative notecard?

- Benefits
 - It allows for self-testing.
 - It encourages focus on meaning.
- Drawback
 - It is easier to lose how information connects.

What is an elaborative outline?

- It summarizes a lecture and chapter into main bullet points.
 - Use section headings from notes/PowerPoint/textbook slides to help you organize.
- Make subdivisions of smaller concepts
 - This should include key concepts and theories
 - Provide an example of each concept. Remember to think about meaning!
- Emphasize connections

What are the benefits of an elaborative outline?

- Benefits
 - It takes a lot of information and organizes it into something simple and compact.
 - It allows you to focus on the meaning of information and how concepts relate.
- Drawback
 - If you don't add examples it is easy to simply recopy your notes.
 - More difficult to use self-testing.

Here are some tips for creating your outline

- There is no need to start from scratch. Use the organization provided in your notes/textbook.
- Do NOT write down everything.
 - Use bullet points & only include key information.
- You will still need to refer to notes/textbook for extra details while studying.
- Ask your professor to see if you are leaving out key points or have information organized incorrectly.
- Include your own test questions in the outline.

*** HELPFUL HINT: Don't start the night before the test. Making the outline or notecards is not enough. You need time to study them.***