Revised from www.thebestcolleges.org

HOW TO STUDY BETTER

1. TWHART THE FORGETTING CURVE BY REVIEWING. The first time you hear a lecture or study something new, you can make sure to retain at least 80% of what you learned by reviewing your notes/the material **within 24 hours** of first learning it. Review it a few more times for five minutes within the first week of learning it to retain 100% of the info.

2. DITCH CRAMMING AND REPLACE IT WITH INTERVAL STUDYING. Scientists have found that it is more effective to study the materials closer to the day you learned it than closer to the day of the test. They put the optimal time at 10% of the time between learning and testing. So, if you learn something on Monday and the quiz is the following Monday, study no later than Wednesday.

3. USE ACTIVE RECALL. In 2009, a professor of psychology advised students against simply rereading their textbooks – simply rereading causes students to think they know the materials better than they do because everything is right in front of them. The professor advised that students should instead use **active recall**: closing the book and reciting and writing everything you can remember to cement long-term memory.

4. USE THE LEITNER SYSTEM. Flashcards are an example of active recall, and the Leitner System is the best way to use flashcards. Named for scientist Sebastian Leitner, the system involves moving the cards with correctly answered questions further down a line of boxes (or just to the bottom of your pile) and incorrectly answered cards to the first box (or just a few cards in from the top of your pile). The cards in the first box (or nearest to the top) are studied most frequently and the cards in the boxes further down the row (or the pile) are studied less frequently. This forces you to review the material you know least well over and over until you learn it.

5. DON'T OVERLEARN. Once you have been able to cycle through all your flashcards without making a single mistake, continuing to study is known as "overlearning." Traditional thinking held that if a little studying is good, then a lot of studying must be even better. However, researchers from top colleges found that there is a sharp onset of diminishing returns that quickly sets in during overlearning. Since you have a limited amount of time to study for each class, to their word for it that you're better served moving on to something else. (Also, over studying can result in test anxiety.)

6. LISTEN TO MUSIC. And no, we don't mean Jay Z. According to researchers at Stanford's School of Medicine, if you listen to classical music while you study you will engage the parts of your brain that help you pay attention and make predictions. Listening to music can also put you in a better mood about studying and could even change your perception of studying.

7. STOP MULTITASKING. You may think you are killing two birds with one stone by texting or SnapChatting while studying, but really you're just killing your studying efficiency. An Indiana University study recently showed multitasking inhibits studying by interrupting the absorption and processing of information

8. RELAX. Here is another reason not to wait until the last minute to study: stress hinders learning. UC Irvine researchers found that even stress that lasts as briefly as a couple of hours can engage corticotropin-releasing hormones that disrupt the process of creating and storing memories. So, taking regular (not too long) study breaks to exercise or take a few deep breaths will help your studying if they lower your stress.

9. GET SOME REST. All-nighters are no-nos. The best way to recall information is to sleep after learning it. At the University of Notre Dame, students were split into two groups: those who studied at 9:00am and then went about their day, and those who studied at 9:00pm then went to sleep. Both at 12 hours and 24 hours later, when both groups had had a full night's sleep, the ones who slept shortly after studying scored higher when tested.

10. TAKE THE PRACTICE TESTS. Some teachers provide their students practice tests. While the benefit of a preview of your instructor's testing style is obvious, a recent study showed students who tested themselves after learning something retained an amazing 50% more of the materials a week later than their peers who did not take a test. When taking a practice test, try and simulate your testing environment as much as possible – don't look at your notes, textbooks, etc. Even if your teacher doesn't provide you with practice tests, you can still find o make your own.

11. MAKE CONNECTIONS. Studies say that the difference between slow learners and quick learners is (in large part) the way that they study: instead of memorizing, quick learners make connections between ideas. Known as "contextual learning," the process entails an individual student putting information into a form that makes sense to him or her. Try putting all of the information you are trying to learn onto one sheet of paper to get a full picture and then try and make connections.

12. THINK ABOUT YOUR THINKING. An important way to improve your learning is to employ metacognition, or thinking about your thinking. It may sound silly, but numerous studies have shown its effectiveness. Students need to be able to assess their level of learning and skills in order to determine whether they need to continue studying and to gauge their emotions and their ability to learn and prevent negative thoughts from creeping in.

13. EXERCISE FIRST. Your brain benefits from exercise. You can also give your studying a boost by breaking a sweat shortly before you study. Exercise gets blood flowing to your brain more evenly and makes you more alert and able to learn.