

You've heard the old saying, "work smarter, not harder." Applying this concept to studying will make you a more productive student. To do this, you must develop effective study skills and learning strategies. Here are ten ways to study smarter, not harder.

1. Get organized.
 - a. Get a notebook and folder for every class
 - b. Have all your materials at hand when studying
 - c. Keep track of long- and short-term projects in a planner, on a schedule, whiteboard, or to-do list
2. Don't miss class.
 - a. Find your motivation – why are you in college? Going to class is a big predictor of success¹
 - b. Set an alarm – reminders to go to class and for waking up.
 - c. Know yourself – what causes you to skip class? Hanging out with friends? Sleeping in? Address that problem head-on and adjust your priorities
3. Review your notes quickly and often.
 - a. After a lecture class, take 10 minutes to review your notes while it's fresh
 - b. Review again later that same day, then again the following day
 - c. See the *Spaced Practice* handout for a better understanding
4. Read to learn, learn to read.
 - a. Scan the headings first
 - b. Then read the intro section and the last paragraph or so (or summary if one exists)
 - c. Highlight keywords and definitions
 - d. Turn the headings into questions and look for the answer as you read
 - e. Turn the questions and answers into notes or a summary
5. Summarize lectures and readings in your own words.
 - a. Memorization can be good for concrete information – formulas, vocabulary, dates, etc.
 - b. True understanding requires you to be able to phrase information for yourself
 - c. By summarizing lectures and readings in your own words, you take the first step in understanding
6. Create study tools.
 - a. Take your new knowledge and create study tools:
 - i. Outlines, timelines, mind maps, concept maps
 - ii. Flash cards, self-made study guides
 - iii. See *Study Skills* handouts for more ideas and how-tos
7. Test yourself.
 - a. Use the study tools you've created
 - b. At the end of a study session (30-60 mins), write down what you can remember (see *Retrieval Practice* handout for more information)
 - c. Create your own study guide (see *How to Create Your Own Study Guide* handout)



¹ U.S. News and World Report. 2022. Review of *How to Get Good Grades in College*. Edited by Cole Claybourn. November 3, 2022. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-to-get-good-grades-in-college>.

8. Participate in study groups.
 - a. Start one if there isn't one already
 - i. Ask 3 or 4 classmates around you (should not be more than 5)
 - ii. Set a date, time, and location
 - iii. Come to the meeting with a bit of an agenda and start by setting goals
 - iv. Figure out the logistics of meeting again
 - b. By "teaching" each other, you have to rephrase the information which requires understanding
 - c. It's a way for you and your peers to help each other fill-in gaps in knowledge²
9. Put your phone down.
 - a. We all know that smartphones can be distracting – what you might not know is that your proximity to your phone can matter
 - b. A 2017 study by the University of Texas showed that having your phone in your pocket/bag or on your desk/table (even facedown) can negatively impact your working memory and functional fluid intelligence
 - c. The study suggests silencing your phone (including turning off the vibration feature) and putting it in a different room³
 - d. Use study breaks to check your device before you refocus
10. Practice true self care.
 - a. Good brain food includes fish, nuts, blueberries, and yogurt
 - b. 7 hours of sleep is the bare minimum humans need
 - i. Shorting yourself on sleep can reduce your performance physically and mentally by up to 30%
 - ii. Reaching R.E.M. sleep helps with learning – your brain replays new information and processes rapidly during R.E.M. sleep, which increases retention
 - iii. Things like drugs and alcohol inhibit R.E.M. sleep; avoid them⁴
 - c. Oxygen helps your memory and concentration; if you're stuck, go outside for a short walk
 - d. Take care of your mental health – exercise, sleep, seek support if needed

² "Tips for Starting a Successful Study Group." 2016. Science.ubc.ca. July 21, 2016. <https://science.ubc.ca/students/blog/study-groups>.

³ Ward, Adrian, Kristen Duke, Ayelet Gneezy, and Maarten Bos. 2017. Review of *Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity*. *The Consumer in a Connected World* 2 (2): 140–54. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/691462>.

⁴ Walker, Matthew. 2018. Review of *Joe Rogan Experience #1109 - Matthew Walker Interview by Joe Rogan*. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwaWiIO_Pig.

