

Study Skills & Simple Strategies Suggested by Successful Students

Successful students aren't just "smart," they employ a variety of strategies to gather, organize, synthesize and internalize new information. The list below provides strategies to help you succeed in this course. You will probably not need to use all of these strategies, but choose the ones that are best suited to your learning style.

1. **Attend class regularly.** A large amount of class time is spent viewing digital media, including photos, diagrams, and animations. There will be demonstrations, activities, discussion, and practice quizzes. Borrowing notes from a classmate cannot possibly take the place of being in class.
2. **Prepare for each class meeting.** If you come to class without preparation you will spend much of your time in a fog. **Bring your textbook and printouts of lecture outlines** to each class meeting, as I will refer to many figures in the text. Also, bring a few **colored pencils** for drawing diagrams in your notes and a **highlighter** for your text. Understanding the lecture often depends on an understanding of previous material, so **re-read the notes from the previous class meeting**. The better you prepare, the more time you can spend listening.
3. **Stay focused--don't get distracted.** In these days of electronic media, it is easy to lose focus on the task at hand. Turn off any device and put it away so that you do not become distracted, or become a distraction to others.
4. **Take detailed notes.** This does not mean just copying what I write on the board or present on a Power Point! You should note references to text material, diagrams or additional sources; write down key words so you can go back to your text and fill in details. Take notes on videos.
5. **Read the textbook.** But do not read it like a novel!! Read it a section at a time, take notes on the section, re-read it, then go on. Use your reading to supplement/clarify your notes from class. Highlight key phrases/passages so you can review the text quickly; don't highlight the whole text!
6. **Use the companion website.** The Companion Website has animations, links to key information, and quizzes to test your knowledge (several of which end up on the exam).
7. **Do all assignments.** Assignments are not busy-work! Some assignments contain information on special topics that may be briefly mentioned or not included in your text. Other assignments are designed to help you organize and synthesize new information. Information from assignments will be included on exams, so make them part of your notes.
8. **Allow ample time to study.** Avoid cramming--there is a tremendous amount of information and you can't expect your brain to absorb it in a few hours before a test. **Allow three hours of study time for each hour of class.** Depending on your general preparation, you may need to spend more time.
9. **Recopy your notes.** This is most effective if done within 24 hours of the class meeting. There are several advantages to this: you reinforce learning from class, you find concepts you are confused about and can ask questions, and you can make your notes more legible/organized so they are easier to review. Copy important diagrams from your text into your notes; use color to distinguish key features.
10. **Make flash cards.** List a key word on the front of an index card and the definition, process, or concept on the back. You can take them anywhere, or hand them to a friend and have them give you a quiz.
11. **Join a study group.** Many educational studies document the effectiveness of study groups for most people. They work because you have to explain concepts to someone else. Simply, if you don't know it, you can't explain it. Meet once a week to go over notes and to quiz each other. Take turns bringing the pizza!