

Study Smarter, Not Harder

Mount 101 Resource

This isn't your first time studying. But have you ever thought about what you're doing when you're studying and how effective it is? There are different ways to study and you'll develop an approach that works for you. As you continue at MSVU, think about ways that you can study smarter, not harder!

Try One Thing!

Instead of trying to develop a brand-new system, try implementing one change at a time. Trying one thing makes things manageable, especially when there are so many options and demands on your time. Trying one new thing at a time can also help you evaluate what is working (and what's not) so that you can develop an approach to studying that works for you.

Change Your Venue. Be Inconsistent!

In the 1970s, three psychologists discovered that a change in venue improved students' memory by 40% (Carey, 2014). So, mix it up! When you're studying, change rooms, seats, and coffee shops!

Speaking of Mixing it Up. Alternate Your Practice!

Avoid practicing the same thing over and over again. Mix up the types of problems and activities while you are studying. Try another set of activities and go back to the initial one later! This is called interleaving (Brown, Roediger III, and McDaniel, 2014).

Slow Things Down

We have two kinds of thinking: Fast (System 1) and Slow (System 2).

System 1 (Fast):

- Automatic thinking.
- Triggered by our senses.
- Details are often overlooked.

System 2 (Slow):

- Controlled thinking.
- Reasoning/analyzing.
- Decision-making.

When you are studying, make sure to turn your system 2 brain on. Don't just skim over the material once and think that you understand it. Take your time and carefully read and make sense of it!

(Brown, Roediger III, and McDaniel, 2014).

Self-Testing

Self-testing is one of the most effective ways to prepare for a midterm or exam. According to Roediger and Karpicke (2006), students who self-test end up **recalling and recognizing information more successfully**. Self-testing also helps you retain the information in your long-term memory.



Self-testing strategies

- Convert textbook headings and sub-headings into questions.
- Answer the practice questions in your textbook.
- Predict the questions you think will be asked.
- Use cue cards with the question located on the front side and the answer on the back.

Ineffective Strategies

1. Reading texts like a novel and memorizing what you're reading.
2. Copying class notes word-for-word and not looking for key ideas.
3. Highlighting passively as you read without writing notes in your own words.
4. Copying notes or text from a textbook onto a cue card or new page.
5. Sitting for hours trying to memorize content without linking it to the learning outcomes or course expectations.

These strategies are ineffective because your brain is in passive mode. You're not fully thinking of what you're reading and writing and you're not engaging your long-term memory. In doing so, you're studying harder, not smarter. When you're learning material and studying, try to stop periodically to:

- Check whether you understand the material
- Try to apply what you've learned
- Analyze larger ideas
- Elaborate key ideas from class

Source:

Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Carey, B. (2014). *How we learn: The surprising truth about when, where, and why it happens*. New York, NY: Random House.

Roediger, H.L. & Karpicke, J.D. (2006). Test-Enhanced Learning: Taking Memory Tests Improves Long-Term Retention. *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.