How to Be a
Successful
Student

A unique time and task management system for **ANY** student to achieve exceptional results.

Build your future, today!

Contents

What's In It For You?

Our hope with this guide is that you accomplish these four things:

1. Get better grades in every class.
2. Have fun and fully enjoy your college experience.
3. Eliminate the stress and anxiety that is too often part of college life.
4. Never have to give up on the dream that motivated you to go to college.

Possible? We think so. All it requires is a little time and effort to create a study plan.

Chances are you have no experience doing a plan of any kind. Your study habits during high school were just a normal part of your family life. Your parents were setting the plan. You didn't have to think about it.

The newfound freedom of college can be a disruption of the study discipline you had before. It's now up to you to manage your time and studies on your own. You need to have a plan.

Look up from this book and scan the world around you. The buildings you study in, your digital devices, your clothing, or anything else you see. Every single object was designed, created, managed, and measured by a plan. Nothing gets done without one.

The people who did those plans cared little about the time and effort needed to create them. What they cared about was making sure they completed their project successfully and as efficiently as possible.

That is our goal for you as well.

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You are going to create a study plan that will guide your own project, one of the most important of your life. Your grades matter more than ever.

It won't be difficult and it won't take long. It only requires some careful thought and understanding of your time, your workload, and a handful of proven study habits and methods.

You'll create your plan just once each term. When you follow it, your stress and anxiety will fade away as you realize you are in better control of your academic and social life. Your study plan will become part of your normal routine because it just works.

You will get better grades, with less stress, have more time for friends, and you will never, ever, give up on your dreams.

That's our promise to you.

Jim and Petr

Why Listen To Me

I was a horrible student in high school. I had to stay an extra semester to graduate. I was pumping gas and wondering what I was going to do with my life when my aunt and uncle called and suggested that I try going to college. It's amazing how a single phone call can completely change your life. It saved mine and now I'm paying it forward.

The first semester of college was tough for me. I had no idea what I was doing. I spent a lot of time finding everything I could about the best ways to study.

Much of the advice was endlessly long and complicated — memory methods, speed reading, lots of pep talk, feel-good motivation and other things that just didn't click for me. I just wanted simple and practical advice to get the best results for the time I put in. It took me a while to figure out what worked, but I finally did.

I started doing certain things to block out the distractions around me. I set up a very tight schedule and didn't let anything interrupt it.

I got myself organized and had a set routine each day of the week. I knew exactly what I needed to do next and when and where I was going to do it. I knew how much time I had available and I estimated how much of it I needed for each task.

I adopted very specific study methods that gave me the best results for the time and effort I put in. I took notes and read my textbooks in ways that made it easy for me to review them later. When exam time came, I was ready.

I never had to cram.

I always had an awareness of time and a sense of urgency to go with it. I always tried to have time in reserve for the things that I really wanted to do later or for when unexpected things came up.

My attitude was a complete reversal of what it was in high school. I sincerely loved college and every class I took there. I loved learning new things that I had never heard of before. I wouldn't miss a class for anything.

The best part was that I still had plenty of time for fun. In fact, I had more.

Long story short, I had turned myself completely around from what I was in high school. I got near-perfect grades in college and went on to law school from there.

Fast forward to today and now I'm the father of three college graduates. While my kids did well, I saw far too many great high school students struggle in college. Many of whom I never would have expected to have problems.

Their stories are all too common. They arrive expecting to study just like they did in high school. They find out quickly that there's much more to do, it's a whole lot harder, and requires a lot of self-discipline. It's no surprise that many students find themselves struggling to keep up.

Pretty soon they change majors, transfer to a different school, or just plod on accepting bad grades thinking they can't do anything about it. Some even drop out and move back home. No one wants their college experience to end like that.

I hate to say it, but nowhere else on earth is more opportunity squandered in less time than on college campuses around the country. So many great students with the smarts and motivation to achieve big things suddenly give up on their dreams. Usually for all the wrong reasons.

In most cases, it really isn't their fault. They may be working hard, but they aren't working smart.

How This Got Started

I never expected to be giving study advice to anyone until one day my brother asked me to give some to his kids.

I wrote a series of emails explaining the things I had done. I decided to put them up on a website to make the advice easier to share. HowToStudyIn-College.com was born.

Soon the site was getting millions of page views from students from almost every country in the world. Pretty soon I was responding to comments, emails, and even phone calls.

I wanted to make sure that I was giving good advice. I started buying books, visiting websites and watching YouTube videos about studying, learning, organizing, planning, and anything else I could find about college success. As you can imagine, there is a lot of it.
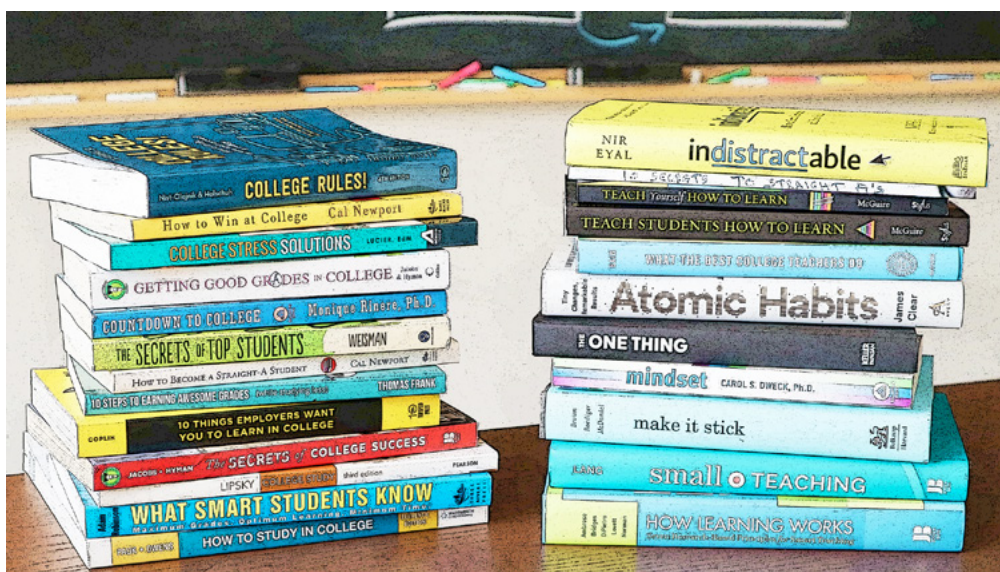
It turned out that my advice was sound, but that there was more of it out there than I imagined. I realized that it might be useful to narrow it down as much as possible.

That's why my goal here is to keep it as simple as I can, just like I did when I was in college. This guide is the Pareto Principle for college study - the 80/20 Rule.

It's the idea that 20% of the study advice gives 80% of the results. This is that 20 percent. It focuses on the most common causes of the problems that plague most students.

Am I missing some things? No doubt, but just start with these and decide if you need more.

Most of the things you'll learn here are simple and concrete. You either do them or you don't. Doing any one of them will help you improve, but doing them all will get you the best results.

It doesn't matter if you are struggling or doing perfectly well. You can always do even better. There is nothing more motivating than success, and you will soon start having a lot of it.

Why your grades matter

I'm Petr Placek and I enjoy working with Jim because I get to help students avoid the mistakes that I made as a student-athlete at Harvard. When I graduated with bad grades, I experienced how unforgiving the job market could be, even with a Harvard degree.

So before you dive into learning HOW to study, I want you to first understand WHY your grades matter.

This will be a very pragmatic explanation with the most serious consequences.

Consider a company like Google which is constantly hiring new talent. And lucky for you, they like hiring students straight out of college.

Making a bad hiring decision costs Google a lot of time and money so the company needs to make sure that the people hired are the very best.

The problem is that Google is a great place to work and gets millions of applicants every year. It would be impossible to consider them all.

So what does Google do? They set certain parameters at the beginning of the hiring process to filter out any unwanted applicants. And the most frequently used filter is GPA.

Think about it. Even if Google filtered for the top 20 colleges, they would still have thousands of applicants for any one job.

So they set a standard and say, for example, if you don't have a 3.6 GPA, we will not accept your resume. You will not even be able to get an interview with us. That's how strict we have to be so that we don't waste our time and resources.

Completely fair.

The best companies want to hire the best people. But they don't need to spend a fortune finding the diamonds in the rough. They let the best schools find the shiny diamonds for them and all they have to do is pick the ones they like the best.

The bottom line is, unless you have good grades, you can't apply for good jobs at many companies. You're out of the race before it even begins!

I went through it myself. There were so many cool jobs I wanted to apply for, but couldn't because my GPA was a little bit too low. And for every 100 jobs I was able to apply for, I got interviews for only six of them. That's not unusual. The competition is fierce.

Don't miss the opportunity for better opportunities

Your GPA can completely change the course of your life.

Think about the 3.6 GPA threshold that the best companies and graduate schools use. On paper, it's only one-tenth of a point higher than a 3.5 GPA, so you may think that it's not a big deal. But you couldn't be more wrong.

That tiny numerical difference is a monstrous gap in terms of opportunity. Opportunity for better opportunities.

Because of that small numerical difference, your first job will not be that great and unfortunately for you, the quality of your first job dictates the quality of your second job and so forth. If you start at a good company, in a good position, and a good salary, what comes after will be even better.

Depending on how you start out, one day you'll either get your chance to be the CEO or be stuck like Michael Scott!

I see it around me already. My friends who started at the best companies only five years ago are now in their next jobs and are making more money than most of those around them.

Don't forget, your GPA is cumulative!

How well you do matters every semester because your GPA is cumulative. If you have only one bad semester, you'll have to work extremely hard to make up for it. Don't put yourself in that position. Your GPA matters and it matters now!

Strive to get the very best grade that you possibly can in every single class. Your opportunities depend on it.

Creating a Real Study Plan
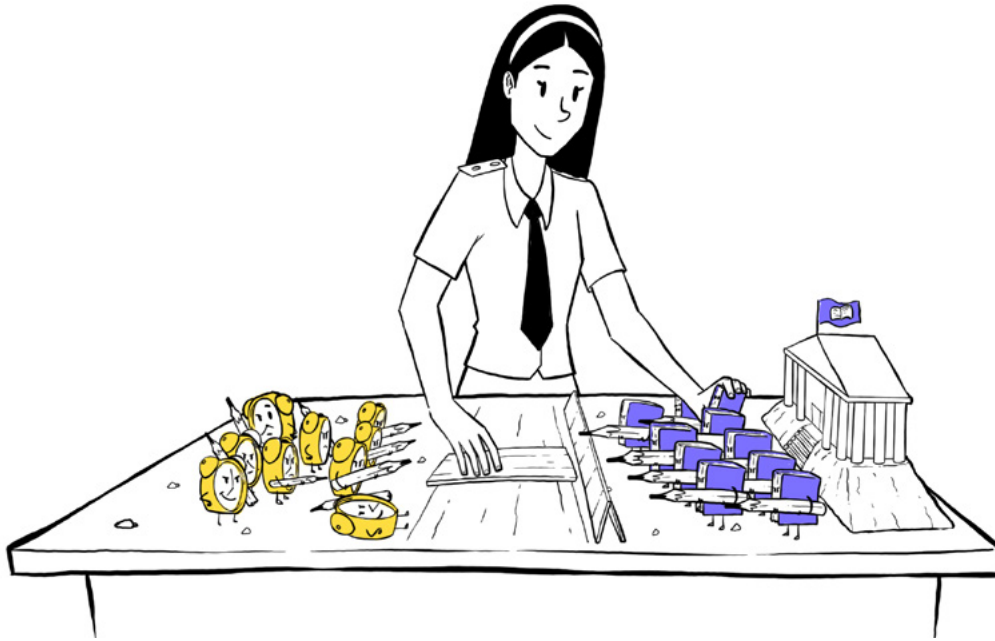
"Make time for planning: Wars are won in the general's tent."

— DR. STEPHEN R. COVEY

Good organizations don't start projects without a plan. They plan what they need to do, how long it's going to take, and how they are going to get it done. They aren't always right, but plan they do. Doing otherwise invites chaos.

College is the biggest project of your life right now. You too need a plan and a process for getting things done, or chaos will follow you as well.

Most students do get through college without a plan, but usually at the cost of high stress, lower grades, and less time for friends. If only they'd known better.

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For most students, a study plan consists of opening each syllabus to see what they have to do next. Then they try to manage things using some combination of iCal or Google calendar, a paper planner, or one of a handful of college study apps.

The problem with all of these is that they are little more than simple to-do lists and calendars. They are NOT a study plan.

This guide takes a more comprehensive approach. To have a real study plan, you also need to know the 'when, where, why, and how' of getting things done.

Think about making a plan for anything in your business or personal life, whether it's creating a new product or planning a party. Every plan has a goal to be completed between a start date and a deadline. Consciously or subconsciously, you're going to be considering the following:

How much time do I have?
What do I have to get done?
How long is it going to take?
Can I get it done on time?
When am I going to do it?
Where am I going to do it?
How am I going to do it?

There are certainly many others, but these create the big picture. The details will be filled in as you begin to create the plan.

Sadly most students don't consider any of these.

The questions I ask in this guide are the same ones that I would have asked my own kids or any other student who is struggling in school. They serve two purposes:

First, they identify the specific areas that may be causing problems.

Second, they will guide a student in creating a comprehensive study plan.

Students often tell me that they don't have the time to build a study plan. My response is always the same: you're already doing one. The problem is that you're doing it in your head, and you're doing it a dozen times each day.

You open your syllabus and see what's next. You think about the six other things you also have to do. You try to decide what you should do first. You try to figure out when you need to get started and how and where you're going to do it. That stress you feel is from wondering if you'll get any of it done in time. You never really know, because you are only guessing, and guessing is not a good plan.

And you do this day in, day out, week after week because you think you don't have time to do a study plan. Actually, you don't have time to NOT do a study plan. You're wasting multiples of the time you think you are saving.

You are going to be spending hundreds of hours studying each semester. Do yourself a favor, slow down and make a plan. A real plan.

I'm going to explain how.

I just need to ask you some questions.

Do you have the right mindset?
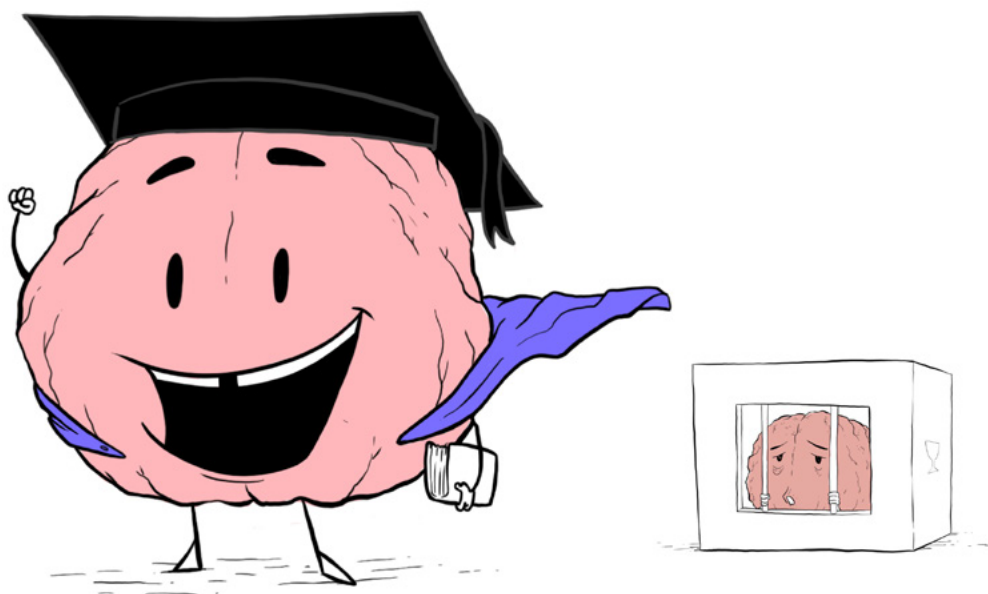
*"There are two types of people in this world. Those who think they
can and those who think they can't. They are both right."*

— HENRY FORD

Before I get into building a study plan, I want to cover one thing. I often
say that the biggest cause of failure in college is lack of time management,
but I want to back that up just one step. Actually, the biggest cause of poor
performance in college is you, and by that, I mean your mindset.

It's pretty easy to identify most other problems that may be holding you back. What isn't always visible is what's going on in your head. If you don't start your semester with a good attitude, nothing else you learn here will matter.

College is going to be hard. It's supposed to be. New and challenging assignments are going to be a part of life, and they should be.

Are you confident that you can tackle the challenges ahead of you? You can either embrace them as an opportunity, or you can worry and complain about them endlessly, and use them as excuses when you give up.

When it comes to doing well in college, having confidence in your own abilities will set the stage for everything that follows. No amount of intelligence, organization, or good study habits will help you succeed unless you first believe that you can.

That starts with the right mindset.

In several of the books that I've been reading, the authors share the view that students have one of two types of mindsets - Fixed or Growth.

It's important for you to identify which of those is your own as it will make a big difference in how you approach difficult classes.

Fixed Mindset

Students with a fixed mindset believe that they have a certain innate level of intelligence and ability. It's fixed and they really can't do anything about it.

Students with a fixed mindset say things like this:
"I don't test well."
"I'm not a good writer."
"I was never good at math."

A fixed mindset is indicated by anything that you think or say that is self-limiting.

Sadly, far too many students have a fixed mindset.

When students with a fixed mindset encounter difficulties, they tend to give up too easily. It's often the cause of dropping hard classes, changing majors, and even dropping out of college.

"It's too hard for me. I'm just not cut out for college. I decided I didn't want to be an engineer." Things got tough and they gave up.

Why bother trying to do better because you won't be able to. It's not your fault. You're just hardwired that way. You aren't smart enough. You just can't. You'll never know how.

Growth Mindset

The opposite of a Fixed mindset is Growth.

Students with a growth mindset believe that effort determines the outcome. If you're not good at something, it's only because you don't yet have the foundation or experience to be good at it.

Students with a growth mindset view difficulties as challenges. "I've never seen this, it looks hard, but no problem, I just need to figure it out."

Be Self-Aware Of Your Own Mindset

So which mindset do you have? Be honest with yourself.

The advantage you have from this moment on is that you are now aware of the distinction. Awareness of a fixed mindset is the first step to reversing it,

or avoiding getting pulled into it. Far too many students have a fixed mindset so ingrained that they don't consciously realize that it's causing a problem.

Whenever you think or say something self-limiting - call yourself out on it. When you are talking to your friends, do the same for them.

Get all of the negative comments completely out of your mind and your vocabulary. Whenever you hear negative, self-limiting comments, kill them quickly. Mock yourself for even thinking them.

Having a growth mindset will help you develop a passion for learning. You won't fear difficult classes and majors. You will seek them out and embrace them. If your classes and your major aren't challenging you to the edge of your ability, find others that will.

The world needs people who are willing to do the hard things that others can't or won't do. From now on, that's going to be you!

With the right mindset, you can accomplish anything in college... if you only have enough time!

2

How do you use your time?
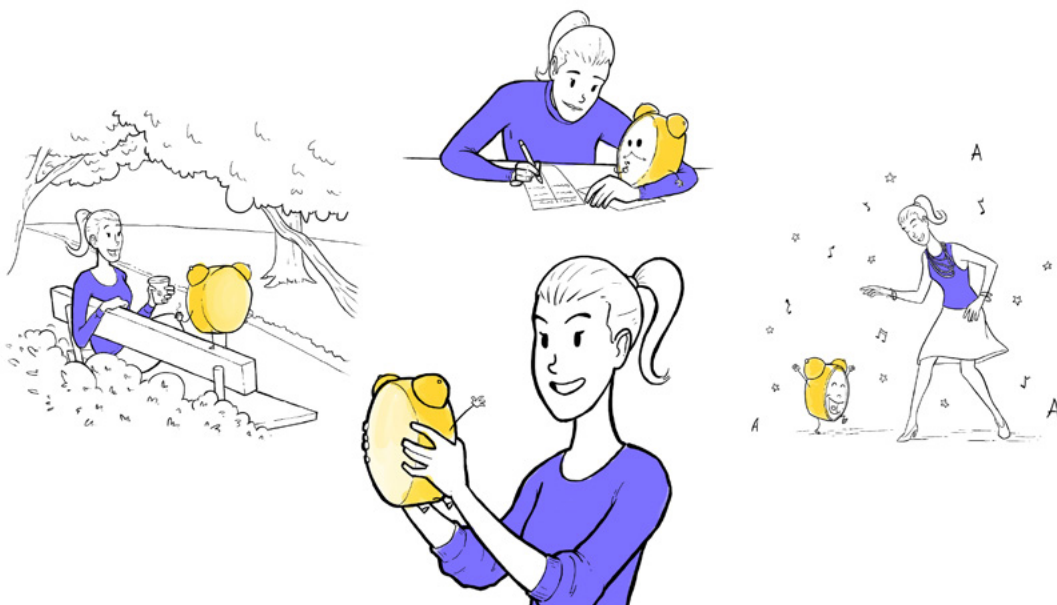
Ask professors why students struggle and they usually say the same thing—time. That's it. All of those other excuses you tell yourself and your parents are a distant second.

You can get perfect grades and do everything else you want to do - if you only have enough time. Most students do, but they waste too much of it.

No matter what, the very first step to creating a plan is having an understanding of your time limitations.

So, let me ask you a question:

Do you have time for college?

I don't mean generally, I mean literally. Do you?

Do you know exactly how much time you have and how you use it? On Monday? Tuesday? Every day? To the minute?

It's the easiest thing to figure out and you are going to do just that.

Every student starts with the same amount of time. But how much each student has for studying is a whole different story. Students participate in endless school activities. They also have daily commitments like a morning routine, commuting, meals, workouts, jobs, errands, appointments, and other things they just can't change.

Then there are the parties. Lots and lots of parties.

Know Every Minute

The exercise is simple - just create a schedule in Shovel. If you don't have it, you can do it on a day planner, a blank Google Calendar page, or just a piece of paper.

Start with Monday and think about how you use every minute, from the time you get up until the time you go to bed.

The goal of this exercise is ultimately for you to **find all of the available study time that you are willing to *commit* to using**.

That starts with the big picture.

Your Awake Time

You can only do things when you're awake so start with that. Sleep schedules vary in college but after the first week or so you will settle into a daily routine. Weekends may vary. For now, just make a guess based on your classes and normal sleep habits and class schedule. You can adjust it later. Just be honest with yourself about what you think you will really do.

When do you get up and when do you go to bed? In Shovel, you can also set your awake time using simple sliders that also set the boundaries of all possible study time.
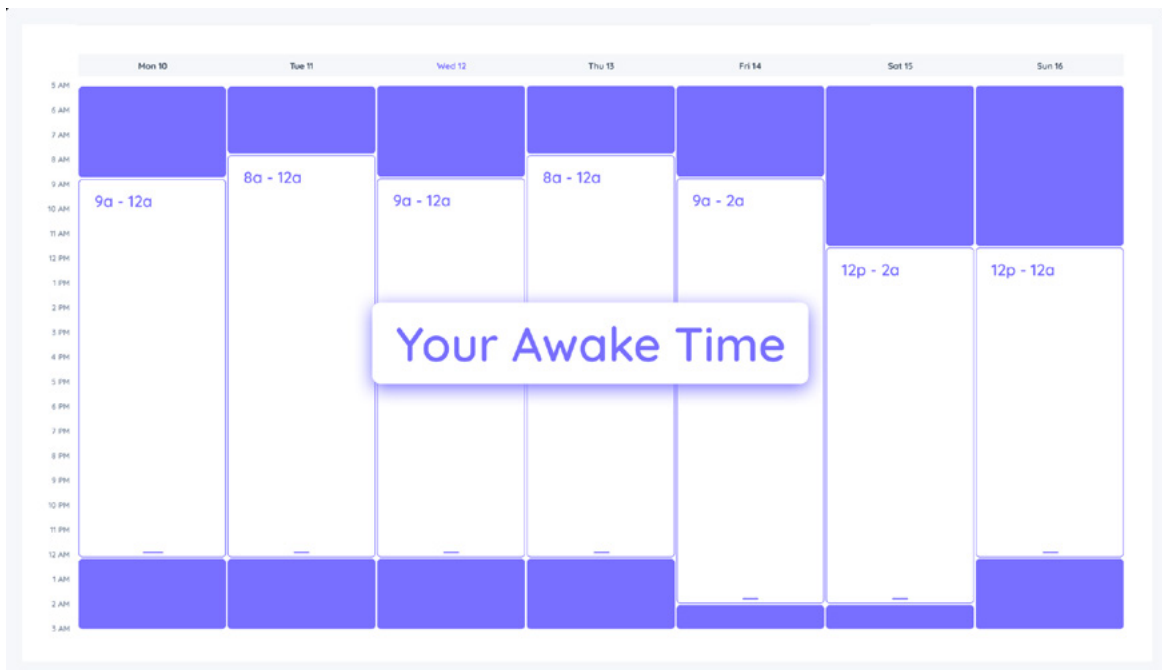
Getting 8 hours of sleep per night will leave you 112 hours of awake time each week, but you won't be using all of that for studying.

What Takes Your Time?

Think of all of the things that already take up your time before you can do anything else, let alone study. Things like classes, practices, meals, errands,

and personal stuff. Whatever you do on a regular basis that you really can't skip.

Go minute by minute through each day, the more detailed the better.

In Shovel, you can also add 'Commute Time'. No, this isn't driving to school. It is actually the walking time before and after specific classes and activities. It matters.

Students often tell me 'I have two hours between these classes'. No, you don't. Not after the time it takes you to walk across campus and stop and talk to your friends. Remember, your goal is to find all of your available study time. 'Study time' means in your spot, book open, head down. That's what you're trying to find. To the minute!

Me Time

Once you know the things you HAVE to do, you also need to think about the time you need for things you WANT to do.

We call that Me Time. This is your personal and social time. You don't necessarily know what you're going to be doing, but you know you won't be studying.

Think Friday and Saturday evenings, Saturday and Sunday mornings. Me Time is important, so make sure you plan it.

In Shovel, just drag Me Time into your schedule and it removes those times from your study time.

The nice thing is that Me Time is flexible. The goal is to never have to use it for studying, but if you need it, delete it from your calendar and it will be

converted into study time. It's your reserve if you get behind or need to study for exams.

Do you ever know exactly where you will use Me Time? Of course not. For now, put in your best estimate. You can always adjust it later when you know how much time you really need for studying.

Extra Time

Minutes matter in college and you need to make sure you consider them all.

As you fill in all of your commitments and look at your schedule, there will be a lot of empty time blocks between all of those things you have to do. That's all of your available study time. You have it, but you may not use it.

Some of those blocks can be too small for studying. From a practical standpoint, you need a certain minimum amount of time to really be able to focus on getting your tasks done.

Shovel can automatically identify all the small time blocks that you can't use for studying and will exclude them from your total study time. Again, this helps make sure that your plan is as accurate as it can be, to the minute.

As you look at your schedule, try to see if there is any activity that can be moved so you can combine any wasted small time blocks into a larger usable study block.

When you are through, you should have a very accurate picture of exactly how you use your time. This is what it looks like in Shovel:
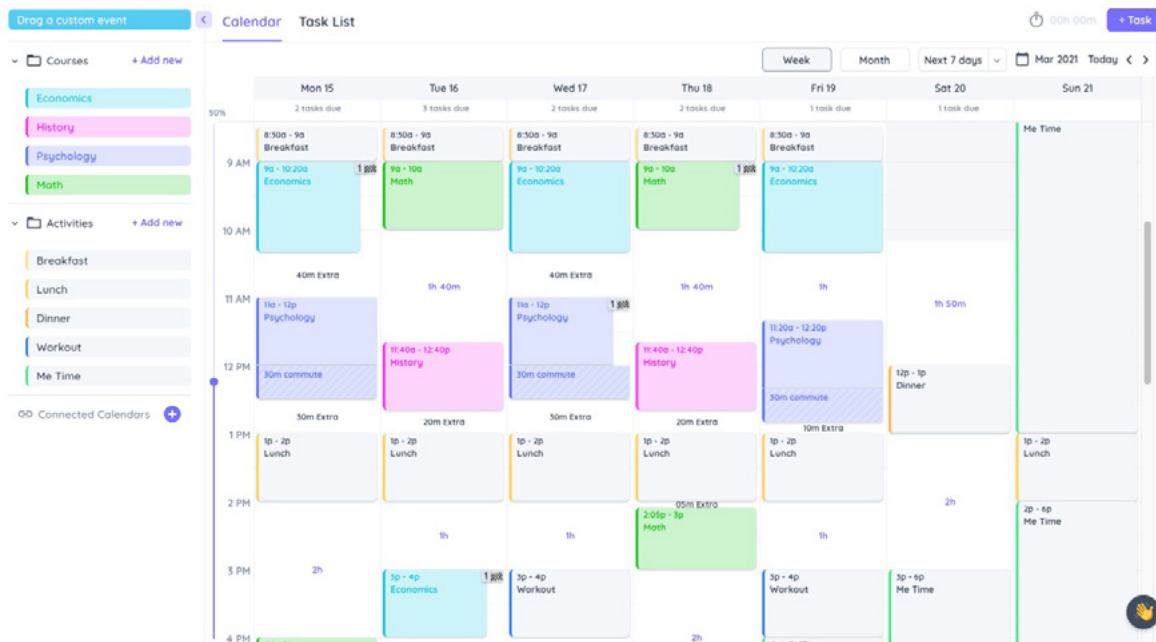
Do you have enough time left for studying? It's time to find out.

How much study time do you have?
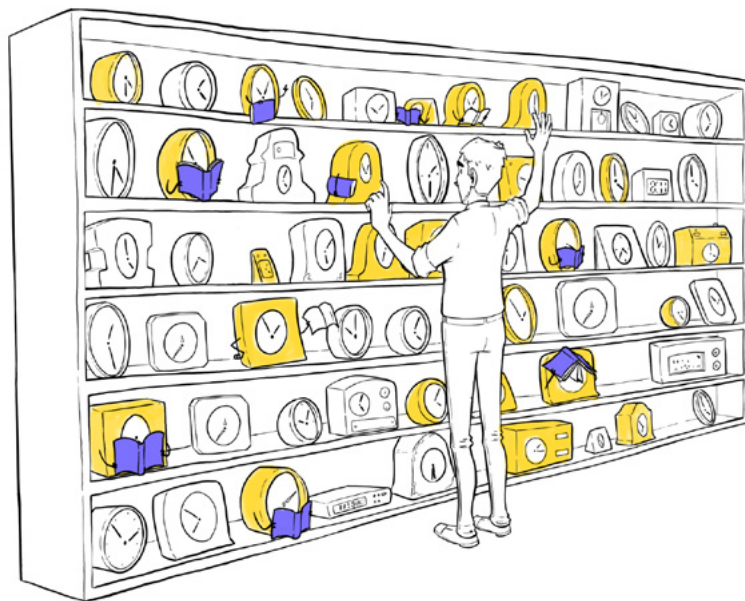
Remember that the real objective of doing a schedule is to figure out how much time you have left for studying.

Also remember that 'study time' starts when you arrive at your study spot, have your book open, head down, and ready to go.

Always consider the time it takes you to walk to and from your various classes and activities. If you are trying to create a truly accurate time plan, those minutes matter. A lot.

In Shovel, we show you exactly when and how much study time you have available between everything else you have to do.

1 PM	1p - 2p Lunch	1p - 2p Lunch	1p - 2p Lunch	1p - 2p Lunch
2 PM				05m Extra 2:05p - 3p Math
	1h	1h		
3 PM	2h	3p - 4p Economics 1	3p - 4p Workout	
4 PM	4p - 5p Math			2h
5 PM		2h		5p - 6p Workout
	1h			
6 PM	6p - 7p Dinner	6p - 7p Dinner	4h	6p - 7p Dinner
7 PM				
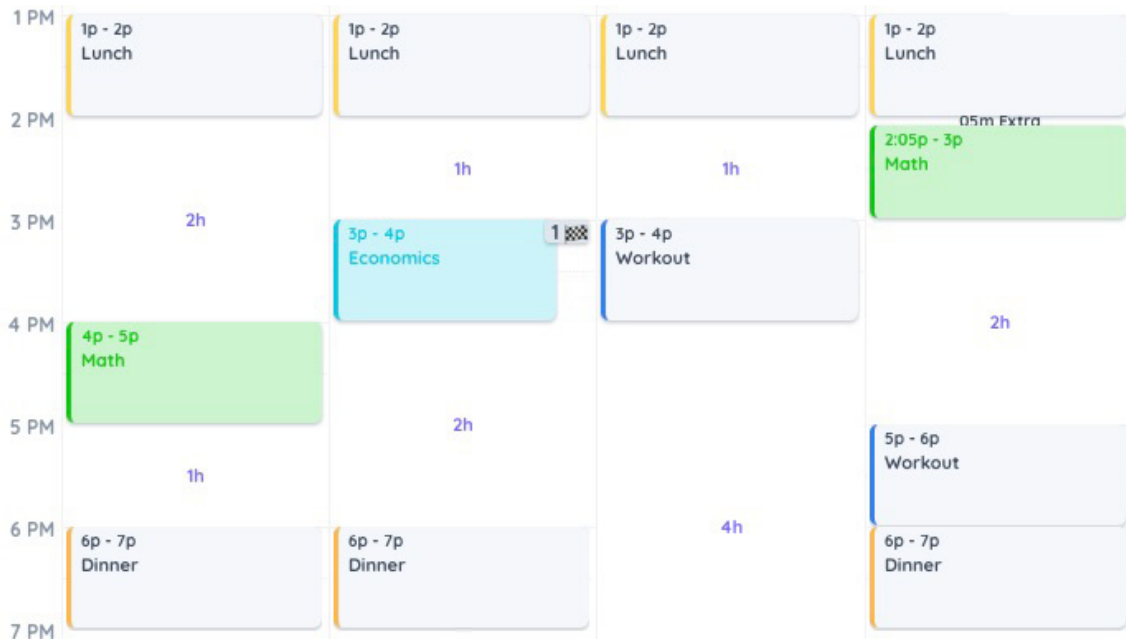
Create Larger Time Blocks

Lots of small study blocks mean more time wasted walking to and from, getting set up, stopping, and starting again. Maximize your efficiency by finding all of the smaller time blocks and trying to combine them into one where it makes sense.

For example, one day your schedule might be free from 1:00 to 5:00, but you go to the gym from 3:00 to 4:00. Moving your gym time ahead one hour would combine the two small study time blocks into one big one.

Minimize Commute Time

Creating more study time is also about being efficient about where you get it done. Your favorite study spot may be the library, but if it takes too long to get there, use an alternate spot that saves time.

Commit To Study Times

You may have noticed that I've been using the term 'available' study time. What's more important is how much of that you are actually going to use.

It's up to you, but when you do decide on study times, commit to them.

The only way you can make a truly accurate study plan is to know when you are going to study and stick to your plan as best you can.

Don't Worry, You Can Be Flexible.

Your schedule may change at any time during the semester. You may decide you can't or don't want to use some study blocks. That's ok. Just review your time on a weekly basis, make adjustments, and commit to the new weekly schedule.

If you aren't going to use a study time block, just get rid of it by adding in some Me Time.

The point is that you should always try to keep your study time as accurate as you can. With Shovel, any change will be instantly reflected across the whole app. Once you have found every minute of committed study time that you can, I'm going to ask you this again:

Do You Have Time For College?

And the answer is . . . you don't know.

You now know how much time you HAVE, but you still don't know how much time you NEED. It's time to look at your workload.

What do you need to get done?
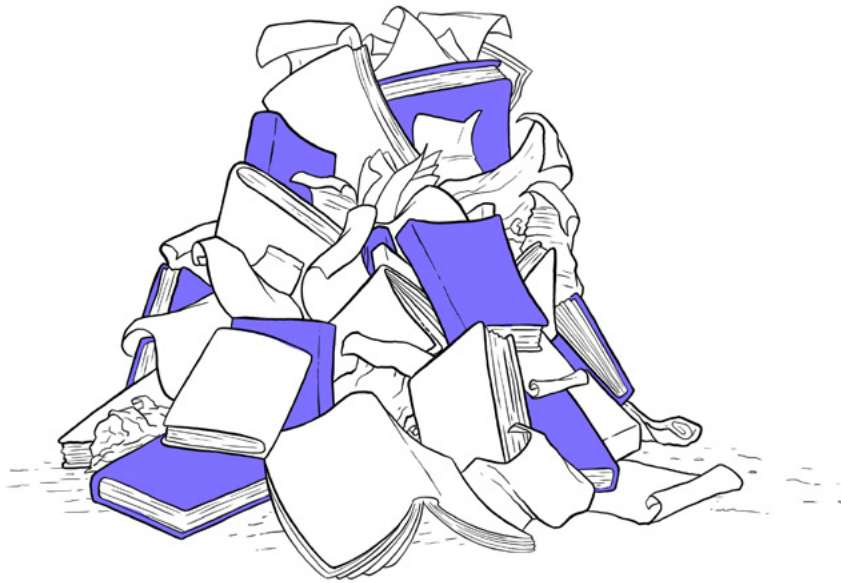
"Did you read the syllabus? It's in the syllabus."

— EVERY PROFESSOR EVER

Once you know your committed study time, you need to know what you have to get done within that time. Lucky you, it's in the syllabus for each class.

Every syllabus has information about class times, contact info, grading and other things that are very important. Take the time to really study your syllabi and know the details. There is nothing that annoys a professor more than asking a question that's answered clearly in the syllabus.

For our purposes here, we are mainly concerned about the specific tasks

that you need to do. Those are usually found on the last pages of the syllabus or in the online portal used by your college.

Every class is different in terms of the mix of things that will ultimately determine your grade. It may be as simple as reading your textbook, going to class lectures, and taking a few exams.

However, some classes include all kinds of other tasks—lab reports, problem sets, workbooks, other reading materials, research, weekly quizzes, writing papers, or attending events. The possibilities are endless.

Categories of Tasks

Categories just help you organise tasks into logical groups. You can do that in any way that makes sense. Here are some common categories:

Readings
These can be textbook chapters, novels, articles, online readings, etc. Basically any and all readings that the professor expects you to read before each class. Readings usually make up the majority of your study time. They are the foundation for every class lecture and will be a major source of questions on all of your exams.

Assignments
These are things like papers and projects. They may also be periodic tasks like problem sets, which may be due at the beginning of every class. Each of those could be a separate category. Name them whatever makes sense.

Tests
These are weekly quizzes, midterms, or final exams. Remember that this isn't just about the time for the actual test. You also need to consider all of the time that you will need to study for it. More on that later.

Other Types

These could be any other thing that affects your study time. You could categories for things like doing practice problems, reviewing your notes after lectures, creating a study guide, watching videos, or studying for an exam.

You have a lot of work ahead of you. You may need to do dozens or even hundreds of these individual tasks for each class. Take the time to organize and quantify those tasks to really understand exactly what each of them represents in terms of time and effort.

This is the area where students create a lot of unnecessary stress for themselves. Don't wait until the day before and open your syllabus to see what's next. Know that as far in advance as you can.

How Many Pages Do You Have To Read?

Readings are unique in that they have specific pages to be read. That makes it easier to estimate the time needed, but the first step is to know how many pages each reading requires.

A syllabus typically tells you what chapters you need to read before each class, but what exactly does "Chapter 3" mean in terms of the number of pages?

Is it 10 pages? 30? 100? It might be nice to know. Most students don't find out until they sit down and open their textbook.

When I was a student, I did a quick and easy exercise at the beginning of the semester. I looked at the table of contents and wrote down the page ranges for each of the readings listed in the syllabus.

Here is a clip with 4 days of class lectures from an Economics syllabus:

				Pages		
Tues	Sept 4	Introduction and Budget Constraints	Chapters 1, 2	1–18	20–31	
Thurs	Sept 6	Preferences and Utility	Chapters 3, 4	34–52	57–69	
Tues	Sept 11	Choice, Demand, Revealed Preference	Chapters 5, 6, 7	73–89	96–114	119–135
Thurs	Sept 13	Income and Substitution Effects	Chapter 8	137 – 156		

For example, if the syllabus says 'Read Chapter 8,' I opened the table of contents in the Econ textbook and saw that Chapter 8 started on page 137 and ended on page 156. I wrote that page range down in my syllabus, or just the total number of pages.

This exercise might take you about 20 minutes for each syllabus but it's well worth the time, as you will soon see.

With that, you can move to the next step, which is estimating how long it's all going to take.

5

How long will it take?
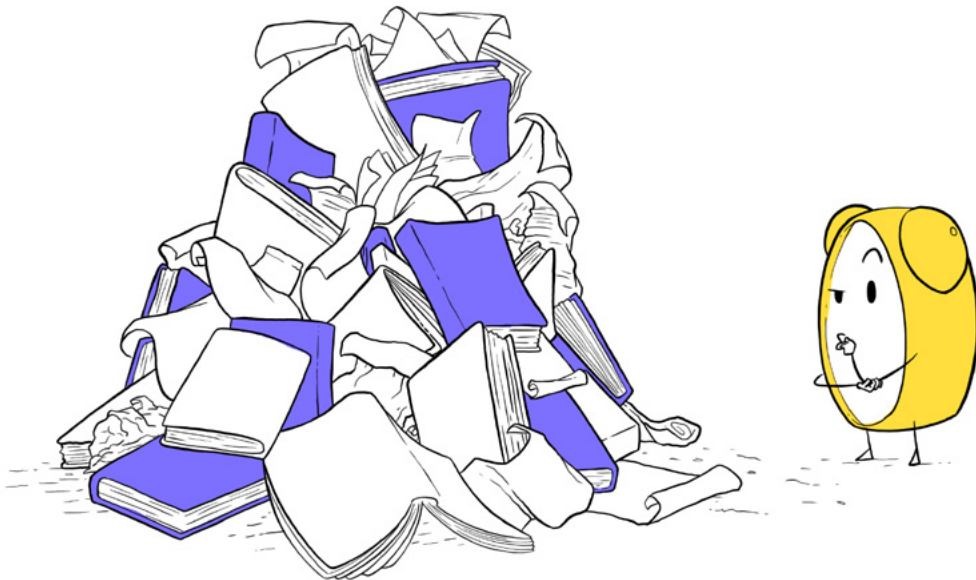
When Petr graduated from Harvard, he finally landed a job working as an assistant project manager on a 1.3 billion dollar construction project in the heart of New York City. (The world's most slender skyscraper — 111 West 57th St - Steinway Tower if you want to look it up).

During his time there, he was always amazed at how well his team could manage the people and plan the work so that it was almost always done right on schedule.

Comparing that to his time at college, he noticed that there is one very big difference between a project manager and a student. While they may both know exactly what they need to get done, only the project manager puts effort into *estimating how long it's going to take*.

How did they manage to estimate thousands of tasks so accurately on such a huge project?

Do project managers pull an estimated time of completion out of thin air? Of course not! They know from experience. They've done this before, many times.

That's not to say they're always right, because sometimes they aren't. But they learn each time and adjust their estimates accordingly, which builds their experience.

They also do some simple math - if fixing one square foot of a facade takes one worker 2 minutes, they can easily figure out how many hours the whole facade will take. All they need to know is the total square footage that needs to be repaired.

The same principle applies to your studies. If you want to create an accurate plan, you have to estimate the time it takes to get things done.

You Can Estimate Time

In almost everything you do in your college life, you know exactly how long things are going to take. Breakfast is from 8:00 to 8:30, a class is from 9:00 to 10:00, soccer practice is from 3:00 to 6:00. You always start and end at specific times. The clock decides. It's easy to plan around those.

Now think about these:

"Read chapters 3 and 4."
"Write a 20-page paper."
"Study for the midterm exam."

How long do those take?

They start when they start and they're done when they're done. The clock doesn't decide. It's all new material with different lengths and difficulty. It might take an hour or it might take ten.

Isn't it kind of ironic? These are the most important things you have to do and you have no clue about how long any of them are going to take. Really, you don't. And worse yet, you have hundreds of these tasks in multiple classes—readings, papers, projects, problem sets, lab reports, quizzes, and exams.

How can you possibly plan around that? Most students don't even try. The result is a continuous state of being stressed. But it doesn't have to be that way.

You can estimate the time it takes to get things done with a reasonable level of accuracy, and you'll get even better as you gain more experience. Shovel will help you do it.

Estimating The Time You Need For Each Task

As you'll recall, we grouped your college tasks into categories.

Reading Sources
Each syllabus lists the textbooks, novels, or other types of books that you'll be using in the class. There may also be a wide variety of articles and studies usually in the form of printable PDFs. We call these reading sources.

Your goal is to get a rough idea of how long one page of each of those might take to read so that you can figure out how much time you'll need for each individual reading task.

Each has a certain type of formatting and level of difficulty and will read at a different rate. Novels will read faster than Physics textbooks. Economics will read slower than History. One page of a Single-Spaced PDF will read

slower than one page of a Double-Spaced PDF. Something written in the sixteenth century will take longer than something written in the twenty-first.

In Shovel, you can create whatever reading sources you want. For example, Econ textbook or Harry Potter, whatever the book is.
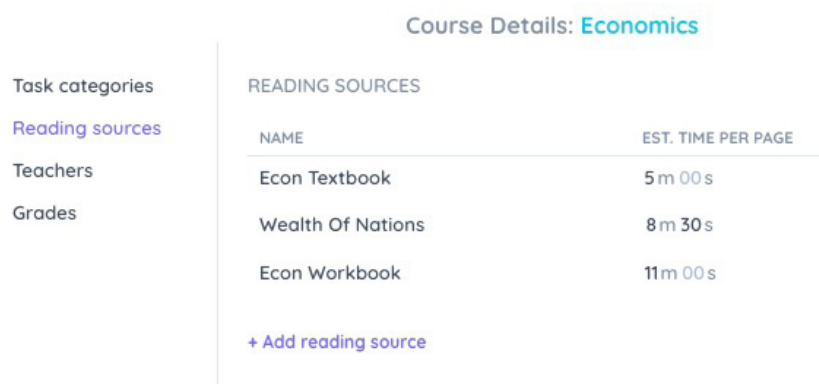
A reading source may also be a PDF. Think of these in two main formats: Single Spaced and Double Spaced. A single-spaced format usually will take twice as much time to read because it has twice as much content.

I've seen syllabi with over 50 article readings, but each one of those readings typically fits into one of those 2 formats.

If yours doesn't, you can create your own custom reading source for article type, for example, 'Difficult PDF' or whatever fits. The point is to just create some consistent types that you can use to estimate time.

This is also one of the reasons you should print out and/or save every article at the beginning of the semester. You want to get an idea of both the formatting and level of difficulty of each before you sit down to read them. No surprises.

In Shovel, your reading sources will look something like this:

So how do you estimate the time each of these might take? Just read it!

Average Time Per Page

Simply read one page from each reading source and record how long it took you. Just use that as a starting estimate, or just use anything and figure it out later when you read your first chapter.

So, how long will each reading take?

Once you enter your tasks (coming up later), Shovel will show you how long each reading will take. The math is simple: Time Per Page x Total Pages = Time Needed.

Here are a few readings from a Task List. In the right column, you can see how long they will take to do. No guessing. Now you can plan when you'll do each of them and know if you can get them done.

NAME	COURSE	DUE	PAGES	STILL NEED
Chapter 8	Economics	Mar 12, 9:00 AM	30	2h 30m
Chapter 9	Economics	Mar 15, 9:00 AM	26	2h 10m
Chapter 10	Economics	Mar 22, 9:00 AM	42	3h 30m

Econ Textbook (5 tasks)

Other Tasks

Readings are easy to time and make very accurate estimates, but what about estimating time for things like problem sets, projects, or papers?

These kinds of things are harder to estimate but just learn from experience. Time yourself when you work on your first problem set or lab report. After the first few you'll start to get a general idea of how long they take.

For large assignments, break them down into component parts and estimate the time for each of those parts.

When you start working on a paper, you can get an idea of how long it takes you to research, make an outline, write the first draft, do the final edit, etc. Put a timer on everything. Use it for future reference. Next time you do a paper, you'll have a pretty good idea.

Ask your professors about how much time they think you should dedicate to each task. They'll appreciate your interest and you may get a good estimate.

Estimating Time Needed To Study For Tests

Studying for weekly quizzes may only take an hour or two. A midterm might require 8 hours. A final 20 hours. Each class will be different, but you'll learn as you go. Studying for exams isn't something you do all at once. Doing well on an exam requires that you self-test in small amounts periodically over time.

We'll cover how to do that later, but for now, just try to do an initial estimate of the total time you think it might take. Don't worry if it turns out to be wrong. As you start studying you'll get an idea of how long it's taking.

Update Your Estimates

As you do each task, time yourself and then update your initial estimates if you need to. Everything changes. The time you need to do readings may be longer as the material gets harder. Learn as you go and adapt.

If you need to change an estimate, Shovel can do it with one click so you have accurate estimates of the time you'll need for every reading going forward. No more surprises, no more getting behind.

I know as a college student you might be thinking that this is crazy, but just try it.

When you graduate, I can assure you that no matter where you go to work you'll be doing things based on some kind of a plan. One of the most common questions you're going to be asked by your boss or your clients is 'when are you going to have that done?'

Just try it. You'll be amazed at how it helps you bring order to chaos.

How do you organize your work?

A plan, by definition, implies some kind of orderly way of doing things.

You've got all of your time well organized by creating your schedule. Now it's time to do the same with your work.

One thing is for sure, you don't want to be continually opening 5 different syllabi every day to know what you need to do next.

The first step is to get all of the tasks from every syllabus into one central place, ideally during the first week of the semester. Getting your tasks organized will give you a true understanding of your work, the time it will take, and give you the ability to plan around it.

Most syllabi have only 50-100 tasks, most of which are repeated on a regular interval so they are fast and easy to enter.

If classes have already started, you may be too busy to organize everything in advance. At least try to input two or three weeks' worth of tasks and keep adding more as you have time.

Most students are only working on things that are a week or two ahead anyway so this will at least give you a minimum view of your schedule and enough warning if you may be short of time.

In Shovel, all of your tasks can be quickly added, replicated, and then filtered and displayed by week, category.

Once you have the tasks in Shovel, you'll know what the task is, when it's due, when to get started, how much time you need, and if you'll have time to get it done.

Try that just using a syllabus.

7

Do you have time to get it done?
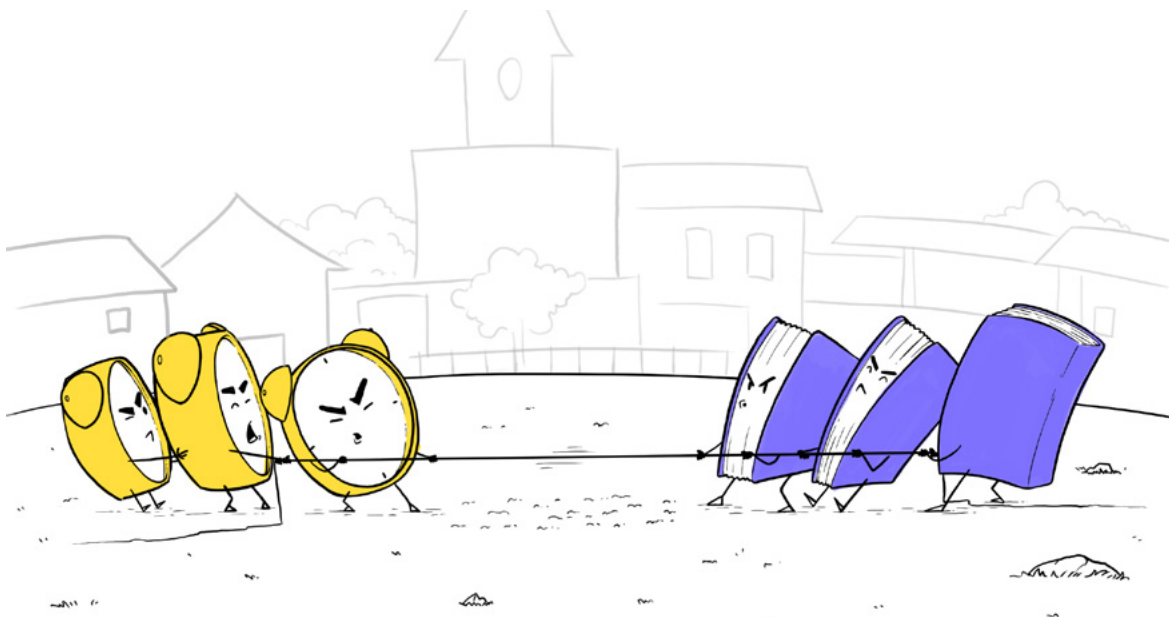
One of the biggest causes of stress for students is not knowing whether they have enough time to get things done. They tend to overestimate the study time they have available and underestimate the time they need. They start late, don't finish on time, and chaos ensues.

Imagine if you knew for sure that you could get every task done on time. Then imagine that you knew how long you could wait to get started and still get it done. A good study plan would allow you to do just that, and now it does.

Shovel is different from any other planner. It's a sophisticated algorithm that knows exactly how much study time you have available to get each task done, at this current moment, taking tasks that are due before it into account.

Here's an example of how it works:

Shovel knows the current time and the due time of every task. It calculates the total amount of study time you have available between now and a particular task's due date and time. It then considers the time needed for that task and for any other tasks that you need to get done first. It then shows you if you have enough time to get each task done on time in the form of a number that we call the 'cushion'. It's simply the difference between the time you have and the time you need. It's either positive - you have enough, or negative, you don't have enough!

Even better, it will only consider the amount of study time during the time you plan to get started on each task. For example, if you plan to study for a quiz, but only want to start studying two days before, it will only consider the study time available within the two days before the quiz! No surprises thinking you have more time than you really do.

If all of that sounds a bit confusing, we decided to make it simple by displaying it in a graph.

The Cushion Graph

It's called the Cushion Graph. Every point on the graph represents a task ordered by its due date. You can hover over each point to see what the task is. The scale on the left is the cushion time - the excess or lack of study time you have for each task. You can look days or weeks ahead and see if you may run out of time and take steps to fix it now.

Knowledge is power. No more unpleasant surprises.

If you've gotten this far you are already ahead of every other student at your school. None of them have as much control over their time and workload as you do.

You've built the first part of your plan.

Now it's time to start getting things done. Plan your work, work your plan, and your plan will work.

Do you plan each task for a specific time?
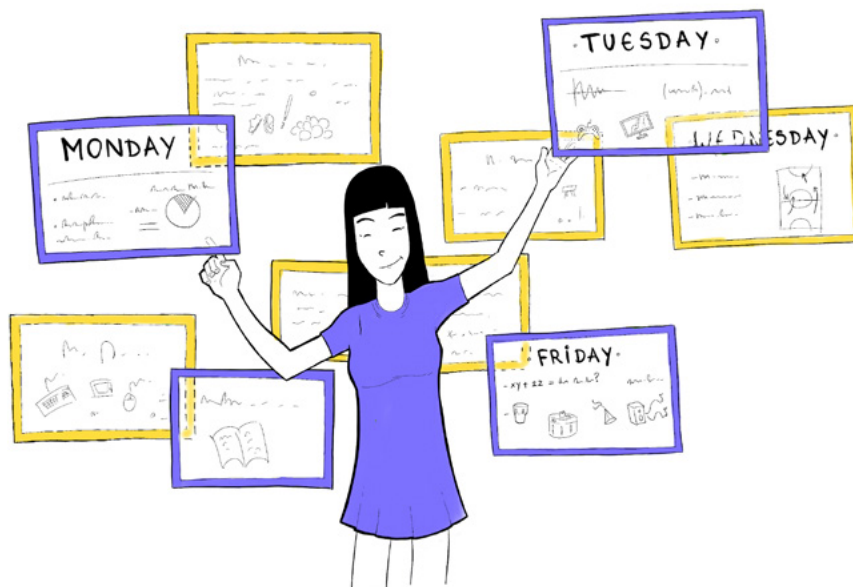
A To-Do List Is Not Enough

You now have a big list of things to do. You know what's next, when it's due, and how much time you think it's going to take. So... when exactly are you going to do it?

In the book *15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management*, Kevin Kruse writes, "To-do lists are where important tasks go to die." If a task is not planned for a specific time in your calendar, it's safe to assume it's not going to get done on time.

Timeboxing

The best way to make sure that you actually complete your tasks on time is to plan each one of them into a specific study time block. In business, this technique is known as 'Timeboxing' or 'Time Blocking' and many successful people such as Elon Musk and Bill Gates (arguably the two busiest and most successful people on the planet) use it to organize their day.

A task in your calendar is no longer a 'To-Do', it's a **'When-Do'**. You've committed to getting it done at a specific date and time. That's how you get things done.

Timeboxing in Shovel is easy. Pick an 'unplanned' task from 'The Pile' and drag it over the calendar. All of your available study blocks will highlight and you can drop the task into whichever one you like.
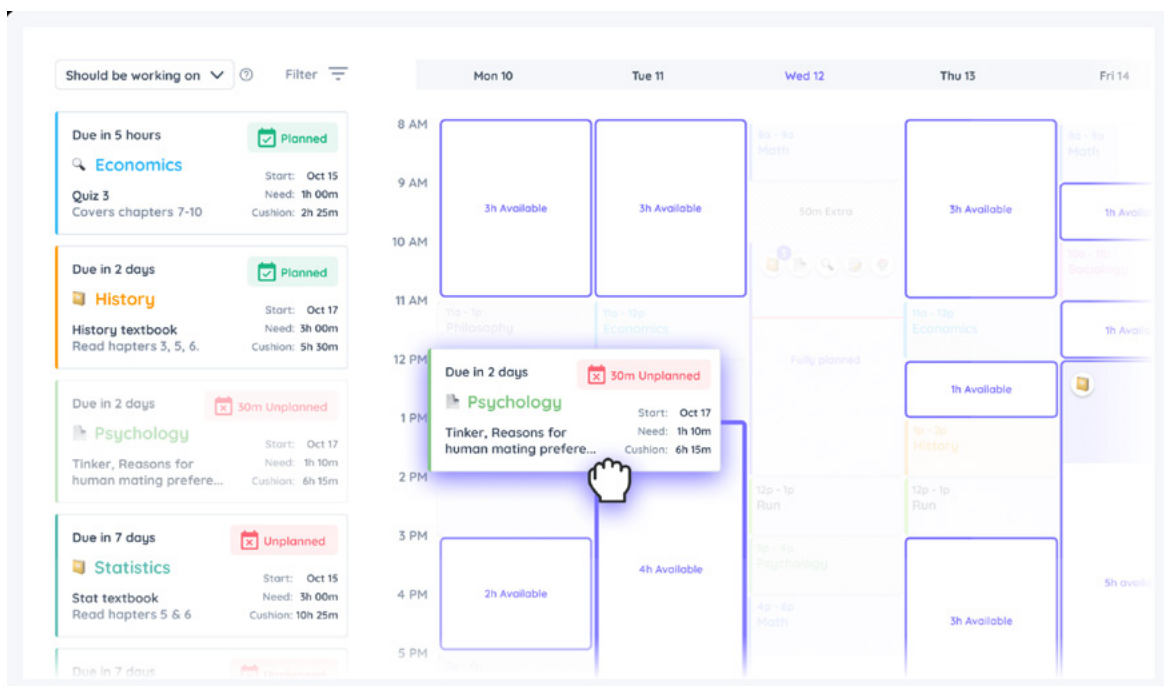
Shovel will automatically set the amount of time you need for that task as planned time in the given study block, or you can set whatever time you want. Once you plan a task into a study time, the available time in the study block will decrease by the time you plan to spend on the task you just put in.

You can add tasks to the Planner in any order you want and even add one task to multiple time blocks. Once you fully plan a task, its status switches from 'Unplanned' to 'Planned'. If a task is completely planned, you always know you have time to get it done.

Everything you have planned will show in your calendar. You will know what you're going to be doing every minute of your day.

Clear your mind, follow your plan, and get things done.

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Are you improving your plan?
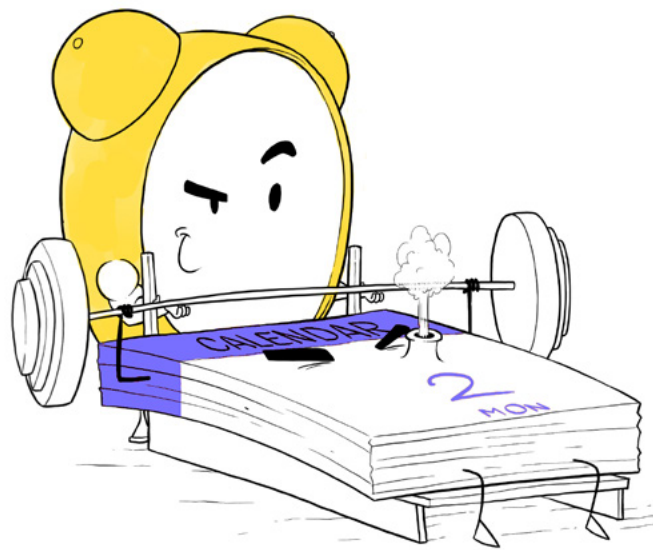
Keep Looking Ahead

One thing about college is that everything changes. Look ahead at your schedule on a regular basis.

A study plan is never perfect. This is especially true at the beginning of the semester when you have to make assumptions about the time you'll need to get things done.

As the days and weeks go by, you'll start to settle into a routine and your schedule will be more consistent. Adjust your plan accordingly.

Every Sunday night is a good time to do a quick review. This should only take a few minutes. Look at each day of the week and ask yourself what might be different next week. What's coming up that isn't a part of your normal schedule?

Maybe it's basketball season and there's a home game. Is your friend's party this Thursday? Did you remember the job fair on Tuesday?

Look at your workload. Does anything stand out? A tougher problem set? A paper? A long reading?

Analyze your previous work. Did you feel stressed out last week? Are you getting started on things early enough?

Are you actually using your study blocks that you planned to use? Are you trying to do too many things?

Take a look at everything and ask yourself if there is any reason to adjust anything. Challenge yourself to continuously make your study plan as accurate as possible.

Always feel like you are in control and have plenty of time ahead of you.

Time Yourself

One of the most important things you need to do is review the time you estimated it would take to complete various tasks. For example, you might have estimated you needed three hours to study for your weekly quiz and you've learned that you really only need an hour. Or maybe you need five!

The point is that the estimates you made at the beginning of the semester may not be remotely close to what they actually are when you start doing your work. This can dramatically affect the accuracy of a study plan.

Don't worry, there is a simple way to continually improve the time estimates in your study plan. Just time yourself. When I was in college I just wrote down the time when I started a task and then again when I finished. Just that simple. I knew the average time per page for anything I was reading.

Every time you sit down to work on a task, time yourself. Compare it to the time you estimated it would take. If you have Shovel, there is a timer that's built into every task and automatically saves the time on each task.

Every time you complete a reading task in Shovel, it will calculate your average time per page. If you decide you want to use that time going forward, you can apply it to all future readings with a single click. Shovel will instantly show how it affects your available time for every other task going forward - all in real-time.

I know this may sound OCD to a lot of people, but it is really one of the easiest and most beneficial things you can do. Underestimating time and getting behind is one of the biggest causes of stress and poor outcomes for students. It takes but a few extra seconds to avoid that by continually learning how long things take. Businesses do it every day. You can too.

Your plan is ever-changing and it's important to review it frequently to make sure it is as accurate as it can be.

Wrap Up Each Week

A big part of keeping your plan up to date is to make sure you don't leave any loose ends. Don't start the new week with unfinished work from the week before.

Did you finish every reading you were supposed to? Did you understand everything completely? Are all of your notes clear? Are they prepped for

review? Ditto your textbooks? Have you scheduled time for self-testing? Do you need to see the Professor?

Never bring work from one week to the next because it will snowball and you won't be able to catch up.

Now it's time to actually start getting things done. It would be a shame if you wasted all of that time and effort by doing things the wrong way.

A good study plan is more than knowing when you'll do your tasks. It shoul also include the when, where, why, and how of getting them done. First i'll cover the common sense behaviors which will help you use your time efficiently.

Later on, I will cover some study methods that will help you get better results for the time and effort you put in.

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When will you study?

You may notice that this guide has one overriding theme, which is to always have as much extra time ahead of you as possible. No matter how much study time you have, you're always going to need more.

It's worth repeating again - students like to think they have time to get everything done, but far too often they are wrong. They *over*estimate the study time they have and *under*estimate the time they need.

On top of that, there will always be the unknown and unexpected. No matter how well you plan your study time, you'll have emergencies, appointments, and social activities that just pop up.

None of that should be a surprise. It should be expected, and shouldn't be a problem as long as you have time in reserve.

Use your time efficiently so you have more of it later when you need it and want it the most.

Keep time ahead of you.

Establish a Consistent Routine

College gives you a lot of freedom that you didn't have when you were in high school. That may cause you to have wildly different daily routines.

Try to establish a consistent routine around your activities, including your study time. Treat every study time block the same, no matter how big or how small it is. Your study time should be set every bit as precisely as any other firm commitment you have. Don't be late. Ever.

A consistent routine includes your sleep schedule as well. An inconsistent sleep pattern creates a roller coaster of sleep deprivation and poor time management. Even worse, it dysregulates your circadian rhythm which regulates your mood and if you don't fix it, it can lead to depression.

Just get up at the same time every weekday, no matter when you have your first class. Just try it. You'll feel better and you'll get more done.

Go have fun on the weekends but come Monday, get back to your routine. No excuses.

Big Time Blocks

Once you set up your time in Shovel, some big blocks are going to stand out.

Weekday evenings. This is easy. Get to the library immediately after dinner. Treat the big blocks just like class time. Never, ever fail to use them.

This is your serious, dedicated time for getting things done. You need to have at least two and a half to three solid, focused hours of study. It's your job.

Small Time Blocks

While the big blocks of time are important, the small ones even more so! One of the worst habits that a student can have is wasting small blocks of time.

Your success and your stress in college are determined by how efficiently you use small blocks of time during the day.

When you finish your time setup in Shovel, look at all of the small blocks of time between everything that you have to do. An hour here, forty minutes there. Add them up and see what they are. It can be a surprising amount of time. Try to use as many as you can!

Every minute you can get something done during the day is a minute you don't have to spend studying at night.

Weekends. Get a Little Bit Done.

Definitely get your rest when you need it, but you can also view Saturday and Sunday as bonus time for getting things done. Consider doing some of your easier work on the weekend. Try to use even just a couple of hours on Saturday morning.

Just a little bit will pay a big dividend down the road. The same applies to holidays. You can use some of that time to get way ahead if you want to.

Get Your 'A' in "NO" time

Friends will try to pull you out of your routine. Everyone has different schedules, and they will try to make their schedule yours. Don't go there. Stick to your plan.

When you set your study times, commit. If anyone tries to divert you to something else, just say 'NO!' and make no exceptions.

Sooner Is Better Than Later

Get things done as far in advance as you can, days, even weeks, there is no limit. Some people say don't get too far ahead or you'll forget things. I disagree. Your self-testing will give you all of the review you need to keep things fresh in your mind.

Doing things sooner puts more time ahead of you for dealing with problems and preparing for exams.

Keep getting ahead every chance you get. The more you get done now, the more fun you can have later.

Day is Better Than Night

A lot of students like to study late and some studies support it. I still think doing things during the day is better than doing them at night, or at least late at night. You are just fresher and your motivation is better.

Trust me when I tell you that doing a hard reading at 10:00 a.m. is much easier than tackling the same reading at 10:00 p.m.

Keep nights open for what you want to do, not have to do.

If in doubt, do whatever gives you the most time ahead. Once time is gone, you can't get it back. With time ahead, you'll have options. With time behind, all you'll have is regrets.

Hard First, Easy Last

Everyone has that one brutal class every semester where they put off tasks for as long as they can.

Use your energy efficiently and tackle your hardest subjects as early as you can.

Doing the hard things first has the same benefits as doing them early. It's when you are at your freshest and your brain is clear. If you have problems, you'll have time to visit the professor. They have day hours too.

Most importantly, there is nothing that gives you a better sense of accomplishment and confidence than knocking off the hardest tasks. It will make the rest of the day a breeze by comparison.

The harder the work is, the earlier you want to do it—both on the calendar and on the clock. There is nothing worse than starting the assignment you hate the most at the time you least want to do it. Get it done. Save the 'easier' stuff for when you're tired.

Take Small Bites

There is nothing that says you have to do an entire task in one sitting. Take small bites whenever and wherever you can. Pick the next thing in your pile and dig in. It's a good cure for procrastination.

A chapter, a page, or even a paragraph. The smaller you make it, the easier

it is to get started. You can start and stop in the middle of any of them. It adds up quickly and saves time later when you need it for other things.

Take Periodic Breaks

I am a big believer in taking frequent breaks during study sessions.

One common system to force periodic breaks is called the Pomodoro Technique. Basically this breaks your study into 25-minute work sessions followed by 3-5 minute breaks with a longer break after a couple of hours.

I love the concept, but I'm not a big fan of set time breaks. From a practical standpoint, you just aren't going to stop right in the middle of whatever you're doing when a timer goes off. That would be annoying to me.

Instead of using a set time, use a task goal instead. Reward accomplishment.

A timer doesn't measure that. It's too easy to allow yourself to get distracted by other things and still be taking breaks.

Take a break at the end of a chapter, after reading a certain number of pages, or some other logical stopping point based on actually getting something done.

The length and time of breaks should depend on the type of work and how you feel. Sometimes you'll be in a groove and you'll want to keep cruising. Other times you may need more frequent breaks. It can be whatever amount of time you want, but make it about accomplishment, not time.

Yes, there will be times where you just need to get up and walk away from a hard task. That's fine too, but just get back into it and keep your focus on getting things done.

Have A Sense Of Urgency

Urgency is usually associated with stress, but I prefer to think of it as something that can help keep you calm. Urgency for you should be a feeling of awareness of what you have to do, what's coming up, how much time you have, and how much time you need to get it done.

It's that little voice in your head that tells you to keep moving forward. It actually removes stress because it ensures that you always stay ahead. Never let your sense of urgency rest. Having a solid time plan gives your urgency a sense of control, not chaos.

"The One Thing"

I've been reading a book called *The One Thing,* by Gary Keller. It opens with a Russian proverb that says 'If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one.'

The point is that you should identify that one thing that you need to do right now that will best move you forward and just focus on getting that done.

When class is coming to a close, when you're walking across campus, when you're finishing lunch, ask yourself, "What is the next One Thing?"

"Clean up these class notes."
"Read Chapter 3 after the next class."
"Write up sample test questions right after breakfast."

Don't wing it. Know what is the most important task, and why, and when you're going get it done. Focus on one thing and one thing only. Look at the Planner, identify it and do it!

Not Enough Time?

With a good plan, most students will find that they have more than enough time to get all of their tasks done on time. Some students may not have that luxury and may need to improvise.

Student-athletes or those with jobs are good examples. The time commitments can be overwhelming and it's even more important to make a good study plan. Knowledge is power. Once you know your time limits there are some things you can do.

Talk To Your Professors

Be honest and tell them at the beginning of the semester that you're going to be in a time jam and you need to be as efficient as you can. What do they suggest? They'll appreciate that you care and that you're thinking it through. Many professors are happy to give you tips on what you have to focus on to prepare for exams. Just ask.

Use Tutoring Resources

Every college has some kind of an academic help-center. See what resources are available at your school and be prepared to use them if you have to.

You can also use on-demand video resources like Khan Academy, YouTube, and others. Know in advance what those are and be ready to use them if needed.

Team Up With Others

If you have a time problem, your classmates, teammates, and friends probably do too. Find others in your class and see if you can work together to get through it.

Split up your readings, have everyone do one of them and write up summaries.

Set a time to come together in a study group. Teaching others is often the

best way to learn something yourself. If each person is responsible for a specific reading and has to explain it to others, they'll do a better job of making sure they know it.

Self-test. Ask each other possible test questions and make sure everyone can give the answers verbally.

Take charge and keep it on track. A good study group should be very focused and intense.

Where will you study?
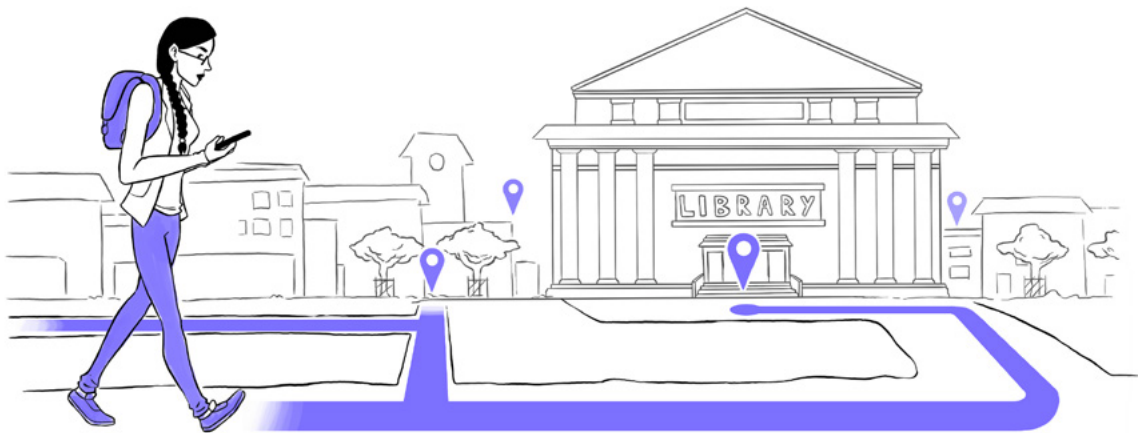
Nothing will destroy your study time faster than picking the wrong place to do it.

The choice is first and foremost about eliminating distractions by creating a physical and mental separation between work and play.

It's also about maintaining your sanity. You're going to be spending a lot of time with your nose in the books. You need to find study spots that are private but that aren't lonely and depressing.

That spot is going to be different for everyone. It might change with your mood and what you're working on. Lucky for you, there are a hundred options on every campus, so if it doesn't feel right, move on until you find a set of study areas that fit your mood.

I know one place that I consider the very best place to study, but first, let's talk about where NOT to study.

NEVER Study In Your Room

Do NOT study in your room. Seriously, just don't do it.

You will muddle on social media, watch TV Shows, go down a YouTube rabbit hole, and have friends pull you away. Your bed will be calling your name.

I know that those fancy new residence halls can be beautiful, but just get out of there. Leaving should be your first priority in the morning. Take everything you need for the day. Coming back should be your last priority in the evening.

Regardless of where you live, completely separate your study life from where you reside. Go elsewhere.

I Love Dorms

Don't get me wrong. I think campus housing is a blast. Some of the best memories and best friends you will ever have will be made there. Savor every minute of every year living in one. That's my point.

Your dorm should be a social place. It's home, not work. It is your refuge from a hard day of class and studying. It should be a place to relax, rest, and enjoy. Books closed, done for the day.

Go ahead—scroll through Insta, binge watch Netflix, and distract people who study in their rooms. Just don't be one of them. Ever.

The Best Place To Study—The Library

Libraries are absolutely the best places to study. You can flip that switch between work and play. The library creates a complete separation between your personal life and your academic life.

Libraries bring focus to your study time. Quiet, efficient, get it done, sink it in deep—uninterrupted and highly effective study. The kind that gets you A's and lots of them.

Libraries are one of the few remaining places on the planet where even the most obnoxious people will respect quiet.

They are among the most unique or distinct buildings on campus with multiple floors, a hundred windows, and endless views to choose from. You can vary all of them based on your mood and what's convenient.

A library keeps you contained and focused, but you can still take a break. You can get up, walk around, read a magazine or newspaper. Many have coffee shops right there.

Libraries are where the stuff is—the books, the magazines, the journals. And they're full of librarians just waiting to answer questions. Everything you are going to need for your A—all right there.

If you can't tell by now, I love libraries.

Getting into a library needs to be a part of your plan. Go there for all of your big blocks of time. Use them for your small blocks of time whenever they are convenient.

Go to the library.

Other Study Spots

I love libraries, but it doesn't always make sense to go there. For example, you may have a small study time block and you don't want to waste that time walking across campus to get to the library.

Find as many spots as you can where you can quickly take advantage of small study time blocks and still avoid interruptions. Think of them as your study hideaways.

The Classroom

If it's not being used, one of the easiest spots for a quick study session is right in a classroom. You're either going into one or leaving one several times each day. You might as well arrive early and use the time to get something done. You'll never waste a minute since you can study literally right up until the class starts, and it pretty much guarantees you'll get the best seat in the room.

If you just finished class, stay right there and get something done. Why waste time walking somewhere else?

Do your after-class things like review and clarify your notes and prep them for review by writing test questions. You'll know they are done if you don't leave the room until they are.

Hidden Places On Campus

There are dozens of great places to study on every campus. Make a point of finding them.

The places I'm talking about are everywhere. Small groups of tables in some obscure building. An outside patio when the season and the weather are right. They're worth finding, and you should actively seek them out. They give you the variety that you'll need to stay sane.

These are the places where you make the best use of those small blocks of time. When you need to clean up your notes after class, get 10 pages of reading done, do a quick review for a quiz.

At the beginning of the semester, walk around. Go into buildings and search out all of those hidden spots.

Plan Where

When you are assigning tasks to a specific study time block, also think about exactly where you're going to do that task. Be thinking about the logistics and don't waste time walking to a study spot if you can find closer alternatives.

How do you avoid distractions?
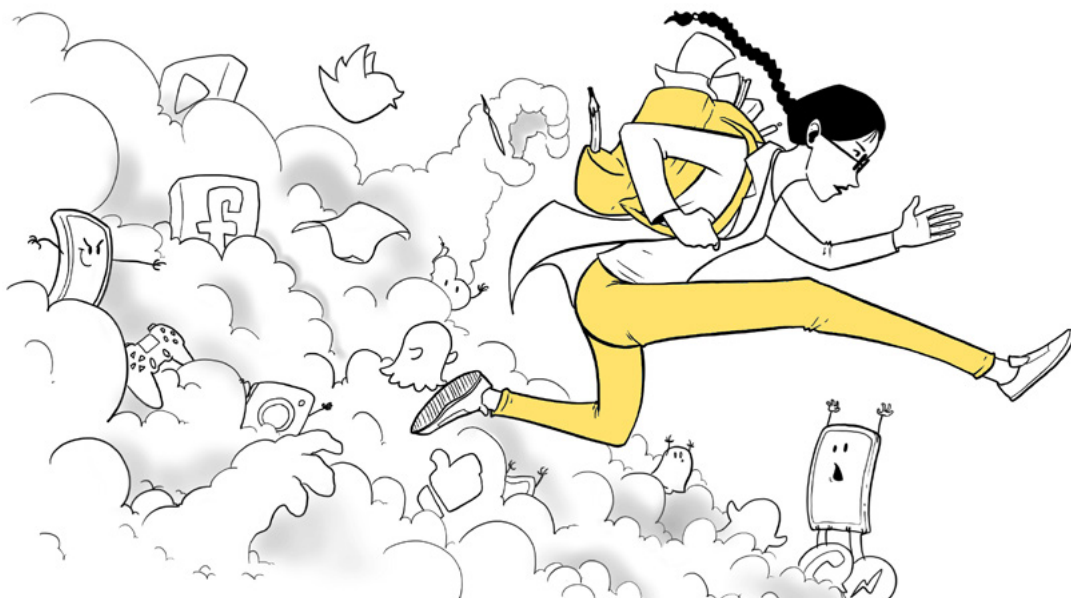
The biggest reason for leaving your dorm and studying elsewhere is to avoid distractions caused by your surroundings. You ruin the whole point if you bring the distractions with you.

I do a lot of reading and one of the most relevant and impactful books in my library isn't about studying. It's about distractions. If I could recommend only one book to a student before they go to college, it's called *'Indistractable',* by Nir Eyal.

It's about the distractions of our digital world, primarily social media, which is the single biggest distraction for students in all of history. It wastes more minutes than anything else on campus.

Don't worry. I'm not going to tell you to stop doing it, because you won't. I only ask that you seriously consider how it affects your study time.

Do this exercise for your own curiosity

Depending on your phone, go to...

iPhone: Settings > Screen Time
Android One: Settings > Digital Wellbeing
Android: Install app > Usage Time

See how many hours and minutes you are using your phone.

You can see it by the week or day and by specific app or by categories and more. You can see how many times you picked up the phone and what you looked at the most when you did.

You can see where your notifications are coming from and how many you get each day and your averages for each day of the week.

Now do the same on your computer. See the time you spend there too.

What do you think? Is it too much or too little? You decide.

If you are getting perfect grades, fine. If you aren't, this may be part of the reason.

How much time you spend on social media really isn't as important as when you are on it. That is, are you using it when you planned to do something else?

If you are using it during meals, walking to classes, or at bedtime, no problem.

If you're using it during class, study time blocks, or when you should be sleeping, that's a problem. Do you allow notifications to interrupt every other thing you are doing?

Ultimately it's about being honest with yourself and setting priorities. Only you know how much it affects your ability to get things done and if it is standing in the way of what you want to achieve in your life.

Decide whether looking at photos of other people living their own lives is more important than creating your own. You need to ruthlessly separate social media life from your academic life.

There are apps that can block certain things at certain times on your phone and even on your computer.

Use Airplane Mode or turn your device OFF if you don't need it for the task at hand.

Find whatever works for you, but be ruthless about eliminating distractions. You'll get better grades and actually have more time for real people instead of just pictures of them.

What is your study method?

If you've made it this far, you are in complete control of your time and your workload and you're way better organized than the students around you.

Now it's time to get to work. What exactly are you going to do and why are you going to do it that way?

It is important to know because none of the planning you've done so far will matter if you don't do things the right way. That means having the right study habits and methods to get the very best results you can for the time and effort you put in.

To know what those are, you should start with the end in mind, and for most of you that is your exams.

This isn't about the *way* you actually study for an exam. I'll cover that later. It's about *why* you prepare for an exam in a specific way. That is, what is the best way to do things now, so that studying for an exam is easier later.

Why do you study in the way you do?

Students always ask me a lot of 'how' questions. How do I take notes? How do I highlight? How do I study for an exam?

Students are often quick to adopt some recommended way of studying without asking why they are doing it that way. They don't always have the end in mind. As a result, they spend a lot of time and energy that is misdirected.

In almost every class you take, the end is some kind of exam. If you look at a typical syllabus, there is some combination of quizzes, mid-term and final exams.

Everything you do should be directed toward preparing for those exams.

What students should be asking is '*why* is this the best way to prepare for an exam?' Then you can decide on *how* to do your specific tasks so you arrive at the exam in the most efficient way possible.

Learn How To Learn

What I'm really talking about here is learning how to learn. That is, what are the best ways to retain new material so that you can quickly recall it or apply it to your exam later?

I've been reading some books about *how* to learn. Here they are in no particular order:

- *Make it Stick*, Peter C. Brown
- *How Learning Works*, Susan Ambrose
- *Small Teaching*, James M. Lang
- *Teach Students How To Learn*, Saundra Yancy McGuire

I highly recommend that you read one or more of them first, before you start committing to specific study methods. Understand what works first.

The Wrong Way To Study For Exams

Before I explain what you should do, let's talk about what you *shouldn't* do.

There are several ways that students typically study for an exam. One of the worst ways is cramming, or what the authors refer to as 'massed practice'. That is, waiting until the last possible moment and then re-reading and reviewing the material in one or more very intense long blocks of time right before the exam is given.

Cramming can work to some extent to get you through the exam, but the stress is high and the risks are great.

Another method that is less stressful is what most students do. They open their class notes or textbook and start paging through. They are skimming and re-reading, looking at the headlines, highlighted areas, illustrations, summaries, and other parts of the page. If they think they know it, they keep moving on.

What they are also doing is looking for things that they think they don't know. Then they'll stop, read and re-read those more intensely until they feel comfortable that they know them.

This re-read study method presents two problems for the students who follow it.

First of all, they waste a lot of time focusing on what they already know. They should be focusing most of their time on what they don't know, but they don't know what that is.

Secondly, and worst of all, simply reading and re-reading is not an effective way to commit knowledge to long term memory or effectively apply that knowledge to complex scenarios that typically appear on exams.

The re-read method gives students a false sense of security that may prove illusory when they take the exam.

Practice Practice Practice

While I do use the word 'study' a lot in this guide, I never really liked the phrase 'study for an exam'. I view studying as an acquisition of knowledge. That is, when you are first exposed to it and work to understand it.

To actually recall it and apply it, you don't study, you practice! It's the difference between seeing and doing. It's why all sports have 'practice' and not 'study.' A football player may study the playbook, but they practice to perfect doing what's in it.

To best prepare for your college exam, you also need to 'do' it, whether that means quizzing yourself, working problem sets, or thinking through different ways of applying the material you need to learn.

Think about anyone you know that is really good at something. How did they get that way? Did they just watch a lecture or read a book about it and then expect to do it perfectly? You know how they did it - practice. Lots of it. They know that's the only way to be good at anything.

Is it any surprise that if you also want to be good at your college exam, you have to practice it. Then practice it again. And again. Then again.

Yet students routinely listen to a lecture, read a textbook, then try to cram it all in a week before the exam, and are shocked and frustrated when they get a poor grade.

Practice will help you make your knowledge more permanent and give you the ability to apply it more intuitively and creatively.

The best way to 'practice' for an exam is this:
1. Self-Testing
2. Spaced Repetition
3. Mix Things Up

Self-Testing

In the book *Make it Stick,* the authors refer to self-testing as 'retrieval'. That is, doing self-quizzing so that you are consciously forcing yourself to recall the information and not simply re-reading it.

You do that by setting up your notes and textbooks in a way that lets you do self-testing as effectively as possible.

I cover this later, but here's the quick overview:

First, make sure you take all class notes using the Cornell Note Method. This is simply dividing each notebook or tablet page into 2 areas by drawing a line down the side of the page about two-thirds of the way over.

Take your notes on the wider side and then leave the narrow side open to write test questions.

The same with your textbooks. I recommend highlighting textbooks, not as a way to come back and do a mindless review, but rather as a way to identify the most likely testable concepts. Once you've done that, you can formulate questions and create your own self-testing routine. Highlighting allows you to do a very quick review if you can't recall the answer to a question.

If your textbook has wide enough margins, write your test questions there. If not, then use a notebook or loose-leaf paper. If using a tablet, you have a variety of options depending on your layout.

I'll be going into more detail on how to take notes and set up your textbooks later on. For now, just know that from now on everything you do to prepare yourself for exams involves asking yourself questions and explaining to yourself the material you'll be tested on.

As you review your class notes or read a textbook, just be thinking 'What in these notes or on this textbook page is likely to be on the exam?' and then, write it the way it might appear on your exam.

- What is the theory of...
- Explain the principle of... and compare it to...
- What are the 5 factors that influenced the...

You can self-test in a variety of ways. Simply answering the questions mentally is good, but actually speaking them out loud is even better. Recite it. Make complete answers that add supporting material and explanation. Say it as if you are teaching it to someone else.

Writing it out is another way. That works even better! Varying retrieval methods will help long term retention. Use flashcards, do problem sets. Whatever the class material to be tested dictates.

If your classes are math, chemistry or physics where you may be doing a lot of problems, the same principle applies. What will those problems be?

Whatever form the test question will take, you have to practice it early and often.

Benefits of Self-Testing

Self-testing helps you spot the things you don't know early on and it's highly effective at helping you retain information longer. You can take small bites and focus on just one set of class notes or one chapter rather than trying to do it all at once. Best of all, you can skip over the topics you are sure you know and give more attention to those that you don't know.

Spaced Repetition

As you can imagine, you can't self-test just once. That would be cramming. Nor can you self-test every question every time you do a review.

It is most effective when you do a little bit in multiple sessions over time. Spaced Repetition. Self-test on a regular basis continually from the time you learn the very first material and do it all the way up to the exam.

It's easy to take small bites often. It's hard to eat a giant cake in one bite, which is what most students try to do.

You really can't start too early. Starting the day after your first class is both acceptable and beneficial. Research shows that just 10 minutes of review for every hour of lecture, done within 24 hours of class, dramatically improves recall.

Do a little bit of self-testing every few days if the exam is a ways off. Get a feel for how much you are retaining. As you get closer, switch to every other day. Your instincts will tell you how often.

Remember, you don't have to try to do weeks of material at once. Focus on one chapter or one set of notes. Quiz yourself on those concepts and see how you do.

Mix It Up

In *Make it Stick* the authors speak of how most people think they will do better if they do things with a 'single-minded focus.' That is, they think that if they just practice one thing with great intensity and duration, they'll master it faster. Studies show just the opposite.

Success is actually greater using what is referred to as 'interleaving,' which is simply mixing up your practice so you don't do too much of one thing for long periods of time.

One example is a tennis player who hits 100 forehands first and then 100 backhands, or a golfer hitting 100 shots to the exact same distance.

One might think that doing 100 of one thing first and 100 of something different next would be better. Not so. Mixing each of them up continuously throughout the practice actually makes the player better at both. More importantly, it gives the player a better ability to actually apply the skills in a real game when she has to react instantly and instinctively.

This has also been proven especially useful in math! Students who practice different types of problems in random order are better at solving problems during an exam than students who practice one type of a problem multiple times.

Mixing things up is more effective and it will keep you from getting bored as well. Pounding the same thing over and over just gets monotonous and you'll quit before you get the practice done.

About that Cramming

One last thing. Cramming may not be the best, but it can work in a pinch. If you do need to cram for an exam, don't just scan and re-read the material.

Try to self-test yourself when cramming too. Formulate questions out of the material and ask them out loud. Then say the answers out loud as well. Reciting and trying to remember by heart will be far more effective at committing the concepts to memory than just silently reading them.

Better yet, next time avoid cramming for an exam altogether. Start self-testing early and often. When you do, the actual exam will be the easy part.

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How will you study?

If you made it this far, you should now be in good control of the things you have to do. You know your time, your workload, and how long things are going to take. You have everything organized in one place and you know if you can get it done. You know the what, when, where, and why of your study plan.

You're ready to get to work. My question now is, how are you going to do that work? You need to make sure that you study in a way that gets you the best results for every minute you put in.

Remember, everything you do should start with the end in mind and that is the exam.

These are the main areas of college that students have to deal with most:

The Classroom and Taking Notes

You're going to spend a lot of time in the classroom. Don't let it go to waste. I'll cover how to take notes the right way because it is important to how you are going to study for exams.

Readings

Usually, that means a textbook, but it will also include PDFs or other outside readings. I'll make sure you only have to read it once and that you prepare it for easy review.

Exams

That's where it all comes together. If you've been doing everything the right way throughout the semester, exams will take care of themselves. Instead of being the most stressful part of your academic life, they'll quickly become the least stressful.

Yes, you also have papers, lab reports, projects, and all kinds of other requirements depending on the classes you're taking—but for now, let's start with these major categories.

Your lectures and readings are your foundation and it needs to be rock solid. Everything else will be built on top of it.

Papers

We won't cover writing papers as that can be a book in itself. Here we will cover how to break down your writing projects into steps and planning them so you never are caught by surprise.

Were you in class?

When it's time for class, you need to be present, both physically *and* mentally! Your classes are among the most important times of your entire academic life. Give them the attention and respect they deserve.

Show Up

Most professors can predict which students will not do well in their class, simply by looking at who shows up and who doesn't.

Every study habit in this guide is connected to the others. Missing just one class starts a cascade of problems that multiply. You can't take good notes if you don't show up. You can't ask questions if you're not there. You won't hear the questions that others ask. You won't be able to prepare for review or self-test.

There are also subtleties that you can only pick up in class. Hints about what's most important to know, what might be on the exam or unique ways of approaching a problem.

Class is where professors introduce new approaches and explain things in ways you won't see in your textbook, and then, yep, put them on the exam. Exam questions may come more out of class lectures than they do your textbook.

I realize that some students can't always make it to class. Student-athletes are a good example. If you know you have to miss some classes, make sure you find someone who takes good notes and see if they'll share them with you.

The First Rule of College: What you skip WILL be on the exam.

Never, ever, miss a class for any reason.

Be Prepared

Professors like to say that there's no such thing as a stupid question. Not true. A stupid question is the one where the answer is in the textbook that you should have read before class.

Some of the books I've read suggest that it isn't necessary to read your textbook before you show up in class. I can't imagine ever doing such a thing. If the professor assigned it, respect their time and your money and do the reading.

The more prepared you are when you show up, the easier the class will be. You'll understand everything, take better notes, have fewer and better questions, and you'll be able to actively participate, which is often a part of your final grade.

Know the reading task for every class. Set it up in Shovel. Know that you have time to get it done and assign it to a specific study block. Get it done before you get there—the earlier the better.

Sit Front and Center

This is the low hanging fruit for any student. It requires absolutely zero effort but the payoff is huge. Sit in the front row of every single class you go to in college. Every time.

The further back you go, the less prepared the students are, and the more time is being wasted. You've seen it yourself. The further back you go, the more people browse the internet and the less focused they are. Simply put: the greater the distance from the professor, the worse the grade.

Here are just a few benefits of sitting in the front row:

- Zero digital or people distractions.
- Total focus on the professor.
- The very best place to see and hear.
- Easy to ask questions.
- First to the professor after class.
- The professor knows you're there and you care.

When I was in college, I sat at the center of the front row every single time. Do the same. It doesn't matter if there are three empty rows behind you – and there probably will be. Go to the front.

If your best friends sit in the back, don't let their stupidity become yours. Bring them with you instead. They'll appreciate your lead.

Seriously, this gives the greatest benefit for the least effort. Take advantage of it.

Eliminate Distractions

This is where I would tell you to turn off your phone, close your browsers, and otherwise eliminate all distractions. Since you are going to be sitting in the front row, I don't need to do that.

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How do you take notes in class?

Taking good notes in class is one of the most important things you can do to prepare for the exam, but you need to take them the right way.

Every class is different. A professor may use slides and provide students with a link to download them in advance. They might provide a printout, a downloadable PDF, or a Word outline. Some write key terms on a white-board. Some just talk.

Really think about how you're going to be taking notes for each class in advance. Understand how your professors conduct their lectures and what materials they use. The syllabus should tell you a lot, but if in doubt, ask the professor as soon as you can. Do what works best for the way each particular

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class is conducted and do things the same way every time.

Will you print off slides? Will you use a notebook? A tablet or a laptop? Will you take notes one way and do something different with slides?

The list of possibilities and technologies you'll use will vary.

Get a tablet

Everything in this guide is intended to apply to any note-taking tool you use. I took all of my notes on paper and you can too, but the future belongs to the iPad and other types of tablets.

There were no tablets when I was a student so I have no experience using one in a classroom, but I'm still a big believer.

Taking notes in class is a very dynamic process. There are so many variables and you need a tool that provides you with the greatest flexibility. That is the tablet. It makes it so easy to edit, create space and add content, rearrange, and add questions for later self-testing.

There are a handful of excellent note-taking apps like, Notability, GoodNotes, OneNote, and others that can do more than you can possibly imagine. Yes, there is a learning curve, but it is well worth the time and effort. Master one of them.

The ability to have textbooks, class slides, PDFs, and class notes all in one device is just too good to pass up. The technology will only get better and better.

Get a tablet, pick an app, and watch as many tutorial videos you can to learn how to use it effectively for taking notes.

The Cornell Note Taking Method
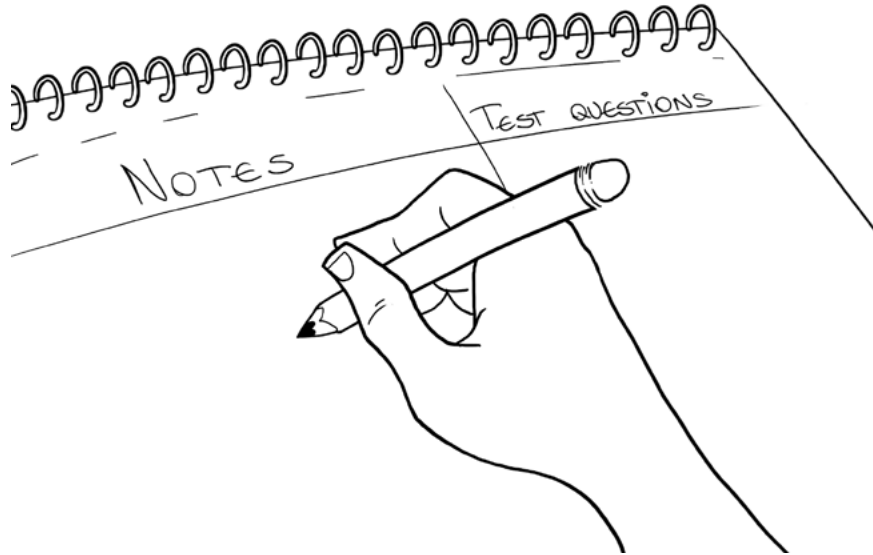
If you do a search for note-taking methods, you'll find a variety of formats. I'm not going to cover any of them because only one really matters.

Remember when I said that everything you do in college should be done with the exam in mind? That includes how you take notes.

Notes should be taken in a way that allows you to easily review and self-test every concept you learned periodically up to the date of the exam.

The best layout to accomplish that is the Cornell Note Taking Method.

I have seen a variety of different page layouts for this method, but I'll keep it simple and cover just one.

Let's assume you're taking notes on a typical notebook or a tablet page.

Draw a line down each of the pages about two-thirds of the way over. Use a ruler or just draw a sloppy line with your pen. That's it. The point is to separate the page into two sections, just like the illustration above.

The concept is simple. You'll be taking notes on the left side and writing test questions on the right. If you are left-handed, do it the opposite way.

This is the opposite of how the method is usually shown, but I think it is better because if you are right-handed, having the blank space on the right side means that your hand never slides off the side of the notebook or tablet when taking notes.

Experiment with what works best for you.

Some layouts add references at the top, like the main topic title, the date, or reference the chapters or page numbers in your textbook. Add whatever information you want.
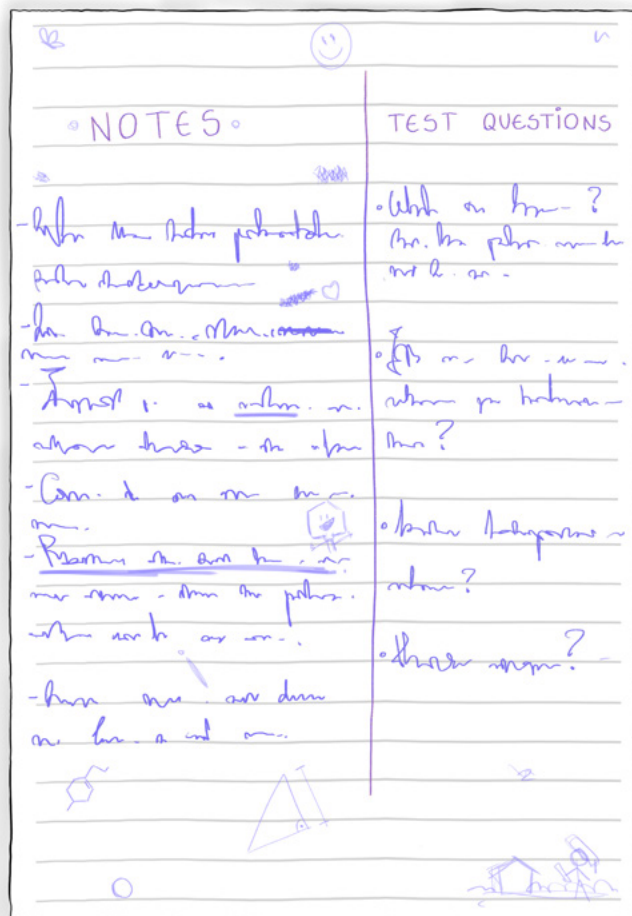
The key is to make sure you take all of your notes on the left side of the line, and the space to the right is kept blank. That's where you will write those test questions.

Capture Everything

There are different kinds of note-takers. There are those who only take a few and those who try to catch every single word. I was among the latter.

I'm a big believer in writing down everything, fast and furiously. Sometimes

it's a waste of time, but usually it is not. This forces you to really focus on what's being said.

You might think you can skip taking notes if you know you just read it in your textbook. Do it anyway. Doing it twice will help you remember it even better. Besides, what you see in the textbook may not always be what you get in class. Good professors will come at a concept in different ways. Don't assume that anything will be the same. Take notes on everything you hear.

And don't forget the First Rule of College: what you skip WILL be on the exam.

Students are often tempted to record the lecture or some lectures might be recorded by the school for later viewing. You can use that, but it's really just a temptation to take poor notes or no notes at all.

Don't let audio be a substitute for good note-taking. It's fine to catch things you might have missed, but it isn't useful for preparing for review. For that, you need good notes. Just do it the right way the first time.

By Hand

I always preferred a pen for taking notes and now the digital pencils for tablets are amazing. I'm sure I can type much faster than I can write, but writing by hand is much more flexible. Not many lectures involve just writing words—you might also diagram, graph, or draw things. Paper gives you flexibility and a tablet gives you even more.

Things will be moving so fast you actually may not be able to keep up when typing. You may need to use your own form of shorthand and abbreviate when you find yourself getting behind. You can come back and fill it in later.

More importantly, writing helps you remember the material. Studies have shown that students who take notes by hand perform significantly better on recall tests.

It's fast, it's furious, it's focused. That's why it's my preference over a computer. When you get that iPad or other tablet, get a digital pencil of your choice and start writing.

Using a Laptop

If you do decide to use a laptop to take notes, at least give yourself enough margin on the page to come back and write test questions or add additional notes.

I like Google Docs for a lot of reasons. It's easy to set up a two-column layout using tables.

You can also use a template. Create your own or find one online. Search Cornell Notes Google Doc Template. Find the one you like and use it.

Type your notes on one side and leave the other side open to type in your test questions later.

Understand Everything

Problems arise when students walk out of class without understanding the lecture. They don't want to interrupt, or they think they'll look stupid if they ask questions.

One thing I never did was leave a classroom without understanding everything we'd covered. I never said, "I'll figure it out later." As soon as class was over, I'd be on that professor asking questions. Another good reason to sit in the front row.

If you don't understand something, clear it up right then and there. You might assume that if you just keep listening, things will become clear—and

sometimes, in fact, they will. Usually, they don't. The confusion just grows.

If it isn't the right time to ask a question, make a note in the margin and do it right after class or as soon as you can.

After Class

Students are usually halfway out the door before class is even over. Slow down and make sure you close up any loose ends before you move on to something else. Stay right there in that empty classroom if you can. Don't waste time walking somewhere else.

Review Notes Right Away

The time to review notes is immediately after you've taken them while they are still fresh in your mind. You were writing frantically. Lots of abbreviations and shorthand. Scan through your notes.

Stop and fill in areas that may not be clear. Make sure you don't have any open questions. Do you need to see the professor during office hours?

If you can't do it right away, find some time within 24 hours of the class to review your notes. The sooner you do it, the better your recall.

Write the Test Questions

When you used the Cornell templates, you wrote your notes on one side. That empty area on the other side is where you're going to write test questions.

I'll say it again - the single most effective way to prepare for exams is self-testing. The material from your class notes and slides is what will most likely

make up the test questions you'll see on the exam.

Nothing is more important than preparing your class notes for self-testing. Do it immediately while everything is still fresh in your mind.

That's what that narrow side of your divided page is for. Look at the notes and ask yourself, "What questions are likely to be asked about that material? What form might they take on the exam?"

You may already know that from your syllabus or from asking the professor. Write questions. It's that simple.

Some examples of using the Cornell method use 'trigger words' and not test questions. Personally, I like to write specific test questions, because it is closest to the exam format.

Exams can be given in all kinds of formats: multiple-choice, fill in the blank, problem/solution, identification terms, or essays.

The best way to write a test question is to keep it open-ended. Write it in a way that makes you explain it as if you were talking to someone else. If you can do that, any type of exam will be easier for you.

- Define the meaning of...
- What are the three things that...?
- Explain the concept of...
- What are the five components of...?
- Which is most important? Why?

If your exam will be a bunch of small essays, write out possible essay questions.

For classes that have a lot of identification terms, using flashcards is a good form of self-testing and class or topic decks are usually readily available.

Remember that professors often give questions designed to come at the topic from a different direction. Look at the content and think about the ways you could be tested on it. Look at past exams and ask other people. Ask the professor what type of exam it will be. Get as much information as you can about what to expect.

Make sure to write your test questions as soon as possible after the class is over when the material is still fresh in your mind. Don't wait until you start studying for the exam. And definitely don't assume something may not show up on the exam.

Write a test question for every single concept in your notes.

Writing your own questions forces you to complete and clarify your notes right away. It forces you to start thinking about the material in ways that will likely appear on the exam. It improves retention.

You will retain so much more if you create the questions and answer them out loud than if you just read and re-read the material. Again, when you can answer a question by heart, it won't matter how it appears on the exam—you'll know the answer.

Back It Up

If you've been writing in a notebook, you're putting a lot of time and effort into taking great notes and preparing them for easy review. How would you feel if you lost them all?

The danger of using a spiral notebook is the risk of theft or loss. Just like the rest of your digital life, you have to back it up. Take pictures of your notes after every class. You have a phone that makes it easy.

Use iCloud, Google Drive, Dropbox, or one of the many other services out there to automate your backup. Google Photos offers automatic and unlimited storage. Don't have a disaster at exam time. If you can't afford to lose it, then back it all up.

Wrap It Up

A class isn't complete until you package it all up and make it exam-ready. No loose ends. Are your notes complete? Do you understand everything? Have you written the test questions while the material is fresh in your mind? Everything should be ready for you to start reviewing any time you want. Wrap it up and the sooner the better. Never start a new day still confused or disorganized from a previous day.

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How do you do your readings?

Your readings are the foundation of your class. Every lecture, every paper, every exam will use those readings. Students usually have one or more textbooks, but may also have PDFs or online readings.

Print Out PDFs Day One

First things first. I know I'm repeating myself here, but it's very important that you print out all your PDFs and other outside readings. I liked to print mine on paper but you can also do a Print > Save as PDF and save them on your tablet as well.

There are two reasons for this. The first is for planning. You have to actually look at them to know the page count, line spacing, and level of difficulty so you can make a reasonable estimate of how long they might take. No surprises. Know how big each of these are.

Secondly, you want to have them ready when you need them. Don't be searching for a working printer or waste time logging in and finding them. Have every assigned reading ready to go, organized in a folder so you have it when you need it.

Read EVERY Word

Reading everything sounds ridiculously obvious, but it's amazing how many students don't read everything they are assigned.

Some of the 'how to study' books I've read even suggest that students shouldn't bother to read their textbooks. That's bad advice.

I read every single word that was ever assigned to me in college and law school. Literally. Every single word.

Your professor assigned it for a reason. Showing up in class unprepared makes you look bad. Open the book and read it all. Cutting corners is putting your grade at risk. Just take it one page at a time and get it done.

I understand that there are some professors who assign so much reading that it's often impossible to read it all. But in that case, they usually point out the most important readings and the ones that you should skim to at least understand the main arguments. Even then, try to read as much of it as you can and never completely skip a reading!

Why You Should Always Highlight

No matter what you have to read in college, there is one thing for certain—something on that page is going to be on the exam.

There are a lot of contrary opinions on highlighting. Some think it's a waste of time and that it really isn't effective. I couldn't disagree more. It's important to do for several reasons.

Concentration

It's often hard to read new and complicated material. Highlighting forces you to really concentrate. You can't just breeze through it daydreaming. You have to have an intense focus and read with a purpose. You are constantly looking for the most important points and the best ways to abbreviate them. You will always be asking yourself after every sentence if this content is likely to appear on the exam and how it might be presented.

You are already preparing for the exam as you read.

Repetition

When highlighting, you're forced to read the material twice. Don't worry, you'll do it quickly. Often on your first pass, you'll read the paragraph entirely so you're clear about what is important. You then go back and highlight only those words that qualify as triggers for what you need to remember. You're making it stick.

Review

The most important reason to highlight your books is to speed review. This is where hours are saved. If you don't highlight and isolate the important concepts in your textbook, how do you know what to review for your exam?

The test question you write is going to be related to the content you high-lighted. That makes it easy to find and review it when doing self-testing.

This goes for writing papers as well. Underline or highlight the most important, relevant concepts and it will make finding material for your papers a breeze.

Highlighting by definition will key you in on only those points that need to be reviewed the most. You'll automatically ignore the rest.

How to Highlight

Highlighting doesn't necessarily mean a yellow highlighter. You can use a pen, an Apple pencil on your iPad, or whatever your system allows.

You have to be diligent about clearly identifying the most relevant content in each paragraph. This is the tough part.

I see highlighted books where entire paragraphs are yellow. That defeats the purpose. It's important to try to eliminate the filler from the critical concepts and do it in a way that still makes it readable.

Everything may be important, but you're looking for the triggers—those words and phrases that provide the meat of the concept and help you remember the rest when you need to.

Always ask: What might be on the exam?

Sometimes it seems like you have to highlight the whole thing, but you can usually pick out the key words and phrases and highlight them to understand and remember the concept.

With practice, you'll craft whole sentences that make perfect sense using words or even parts of words spread across one or many paragraphs. It's never a perfect process, but the more you do it, the better and faster you'll become.

Remember that the goal is to create a test question out of this material and be able to look at it if you need to quickly refresh your memory.

Do your best to highlight as concisely as possible.

Understand Everything

I know this may be stating the obvious, but I am always amazed by how many students read past things they don't really understand. They think they'll figure it out later, get it during class, or just hope it won't be on the exam. You need to understand everything you read in college. Never move ahead until the content is clear or mark it to ask your professor.

The main reason students skip over something they don't understand is lack of time. When you have a good time plan, you won't have that problem. Reading is the one thing that you can always get ahead, and stay ahead of.

Write Test Questions

Just like with your class notes, it's time to write some test questions.

Immediately after you finish each reading, go back over each page of your textbook and look at every highlighted section. If you've done a good job of highlighting, the questions should jump right out at you.

How and where you write the test questions is going to depend on the reading source. Some books leave wide margins for writing.

If you don't have room, keep a notebook nearby as you read or open a fresh page on your tablet or laptop note app. Write a test question and reference the page of the book or the PDF.

Just plan ahead and know how and where you will do it. Look at your reading sources and think about how and where you write your test questions. Have the technology and the plan in place before classes begin. Make sure it is going to work for you.

Use Voice Dictation

When I say 'write' test questions, I certainly don't mean you have to hand write them. Use dictation wherever you can. It's fast and easy to create a set of test questions for an entire chapter. Just page through, look at your highlighted materials and then dictate the appropriate question. Every device and app supports voice recognition and the dictation is fast and highly accurate. Use it to your advantage.

Wrap It Up

As with everything else you do, make sure you treat each session with your textbook as a single unit that should be completed before you move on.

- Read it
- Understand it
- Highlight it
- Write test questions

See What's Ahead

When you've finished reading, take a quick scan of the pages ahead. Is this new and complicated material? Will it take even more time than you estimated in your plan?

Your instincts will tell you right away if you can expect problems. Individual

chapters can be radically different in terms of their difficulty, especially as the weeks go by. Don't get caught by surprise. Look ahead and know what's coming so you can plan accordingly and easily adjust your estimates in Shovel.

How do you study for exams?

You might be thinking this is where you need to put in a lot of work, but you're wrong. If you've been doing everything from the previous chapters, you've been preparing for the exam all along. The final review should be easy.

In chapter 10, I covered why you should study a certain way, with the exam in mind, here I'll explain how to do it.

Practice Exams

Ideally, the best practice would be to take an exam in the exact format and content that you expect to see on the day of the exam.

If you can get your hands on previous exams, try to mimic the actual exam as closely as you can. Do one a couple of weeks before and then another a week before.

Set a date and time to take it again a few days before the real exam. Do some review each of several days before. Find a quiet spot with no distractions and take the exam within the same timeframe that you'll be allowed on the real one.

Use the practice exam as a guide to help you determine what you need to understand better. Give yourself enough time to nail down the concepts you missed.

Self-Testing

You can ask your professor about the test format on the first day of class, but it really won't matter to you what form it takes. You'll be ready for anything.

The beauty of self-testing is that it enables you to explain any of the class concepts by heart. Ultimately, that's the best way to make sure you can ace any exam, regardless of the form it takes. Studies show that if you can explain it, you are more likely to retain it.

How to Self-Test
When testing from your notes, first cover the notes side of your notebook with a piece of paper. Now ask yourself the test question you've written down.

Now say the answer as a complete sentence. Remember, no shortcuts here. Say the answer as if you're explaining this to someone who doesn't have any idea about the subject.

Slow it down, think about it, say it out loud. Talk to a chair, a mirror, or anything else you have available. Answer the question and explain as much as

you can about everything supporting it. The more knowledge you can pull from your memory, the better you will retain it.

There are going to be lots of times where the answer is just on the tip of your tongue but you just need a quick peek. Take a look at your notes and try to trigger your memory with as little reading as possible. Then get right back into your explanation.

Start from the beginning and do it again. Try to go all the way through without having to look at your notes.

My explanation to this point has been about questions that require textual answers but the principle applies if you are dealing with formulas or anything else. It's practice. Whatever it is that you expect to be on the exam, self-test it. Whether it is math, statistics, chemistry or physics, ask questions, do problems, or whatever the format of the test will be. Self-test it early and repeatedly leading up to the exam.
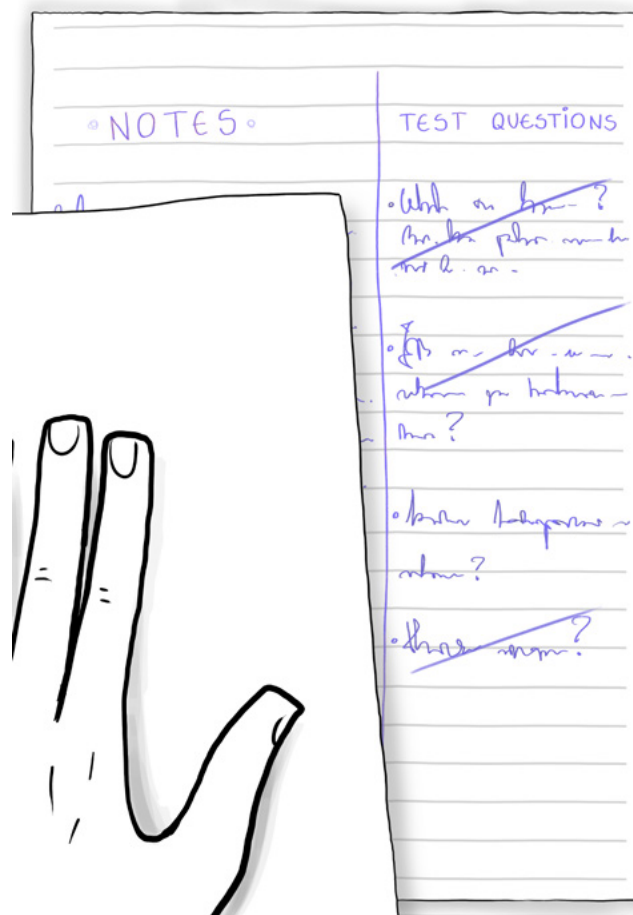
Spaced Repetition

Imagine if a football coach called his players into a room and said: "Did you guys study all of the plays? You understand them, right? Great! See you at the game on Saturday!"

Do you think that ever happens? Not hardly. If you hope to be ready, you have to start practicing now and keep practicing until game time.

Getting ready for an exam is no different. Yet far too many students wait until right before the exam and then start cramming.

If you want to do well on an exam, you have to start studying early and often leading up to the exam. Don't wait. You can and should start studying as soon as you finish your very first class or textbook chapter. Test yourself on whatever material you have done already.

After each class or chapter, do the same again and again. How much material and how often is up to you. There are studies that say letting yourself forget a little is actually helpful. Don't overthink it. If in doubt, do more. Just fit it in wherever you can. The key is to do it and keep doing it.

Schedule it in your planner in Shovel. Assign self-testing to specific study blocks. Know when and where you are going to do it. Self-testing is perfect for using small study blocks. It takes almost no time at all to ask yourself even just a few questions and the benefit compounds steadily.

Practice early. Practice often.

Focus On What You DON'T Know

The biggest benefit of self-testing is that you won't waste time studying things you already know.

Have you ever watched someone study for an exam? They look at each page of their class notes and textbooks, scanning the material they need to know for the exam. They scan one page and then turn to the next and the next and the next wondering if they know what's on there.

Actual conversation:

"What are you doing?"
"I'm studying for the exam." (Paging through textbook)
"Really? Do you know all of that stuff?"
"I think so."
"Then why do you keep looking at it?"

That's the problem. Most students spend endless hours looking at the material they already know, or... that they don't know. They aren't really sure.

You've probably been there yourself. You tell yourself, "Okay, I know that concept. Yep, I know those. Uh, that one I better re-read. Should be okay with that one." And on and on it goes.

Why do students do this?

It's because they have never separated the material that they DO know from what they DON'T know. They keep paging through the same material until they notice something that they think they don't know. They spend some time on that and start looking again. Page after page after page. Then they repeat it again the next day, constantly looking at pages that don't matter.

First of all, just re-reading it is a poor way to remember it. Secondly, continually looking at things you already know is a monstrous waste of time and effort. Why not focus your complete attention on only the things you DON'T know?

Check Off The Questions You Know

When you're absolutely sure you know the answer to a question, just mark it with a checkmark. I used to put a thin line diagonally through the middle of it.

As you scan down the question side of your notes just skip right by all of those that you checked off. You won't waste any time continually looking at the material you already know. Focus only on what you don't know.

This is the method commonly used by flashcard apps. They'll space the frequency of repetition of the card based on how well you say you know it and stop showing a question at all when you do.

When all of the questions are crossed off, it's like you took the test and you got an A!

Don't be in too much of a hurry to check things off when you first start your reviews. The danger is that you may forget some of the early material. Only check off questions during the last week before the exam when you're absolutely sure you will retain the material come exam time.

Don't OVER-Study

The beauty of doing it this way is that you won't over study. Many students actually study too much. They get so worried about missing something that they keep going over things again and again.

Sooner or later you will reach a point of diminishing returns. When you know the answer to any question by heart, you know you're done.

Trust your instincts. Don't waste even more time continually looking at things you already know. Use that time to start reviewing for a different exam or getting ahead on your other assignments.

Final Review

The night before your exam, take a quick glance down the test questions

and review the few remaining difficult concepts. Then call it a night. You'll never need to cram.

I don't remember ever studying for any exam past 8:30 p.m. the night before. And you won't either. My goal for that night was to be completely confident that I knew everything days before. My ritual the night before an exam was to go out somewhere. I didn't even think about the exam. I was ready and I knew it.

When I walked down the hall late at night, I'd notice lights on under many of the doors. Everyone was up cramming, probably on the wrong things, and not really learning it anyway. Crazy. Inefficient. Ineffective.

As a side note, I ran every day of my college career and I competed in races every weekend. I also worked at a cafeteria several days a week and went out with my friends a lot. I didn't spend all of my time buried in books. I just did things the right way so I had time for other things. You can do the same.

Post-Exam Review

No matter how well you did on your exam, take the time to reflect on it. Is there anything you learned from it that will give you an advantage on the next one? Was the form of the exam as you expected? Did the material come mainly from your textbook or class notes? Did the hints your professor dropped during class or office hours show up on the exam?

If you did miss some questions, ask yourself why. Go back and find the material in your notes or your book and understand why you missed it. Did you not think it was important? Did you fail to highlight it? Was it part of a self-test question?

Understand exactly where and why you didn't get it right because there is no reason not to know the answer.

Read what your professor wrote on that exam—and this goes for papers, too. Your professor is telling you exactly what you need to do differently next time, and most students never even look.

Remember, anything less than perfect is an opportunity to improve.

When I took the written exam for my private pilot license, I got a 90% and I was really happy about it. When I told my instructor, he gave me a very stern look and replied, "Which 10% of flying an airplane do you not want to know?" That will stick with me forever.

Don't accept anything less than perfect. Use everything you missed as a learning opportunity.

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How do you plan your writing projects?
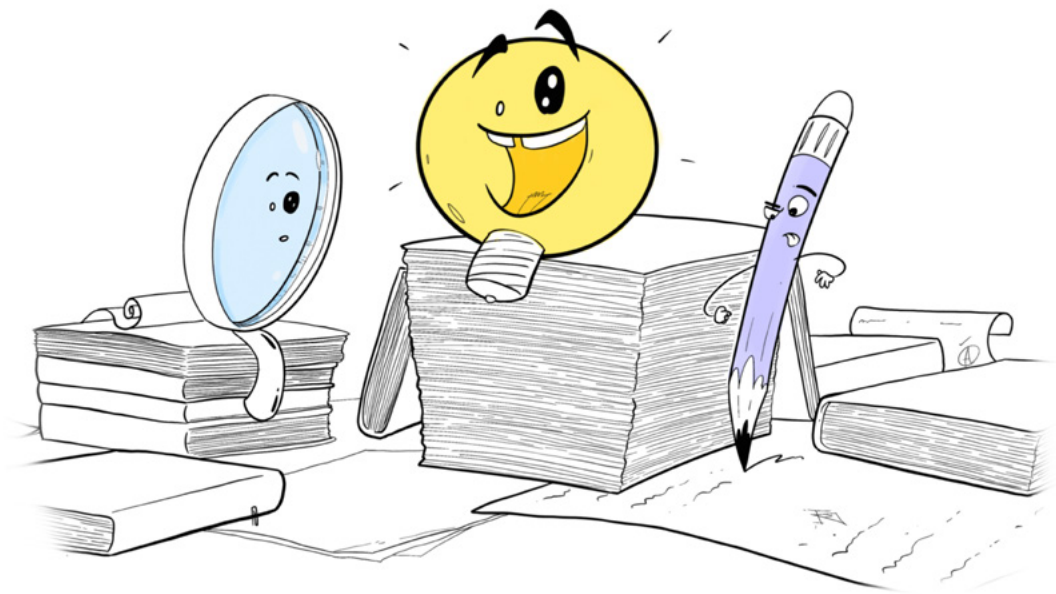
There are typically two types of writing projects: essays and research papers. We're not going to cover how to write those, but we'll refer you to resources that will.

The purpose of this guide is to help you create a study plan, not to cover in detail the best way to write a paper. That can be a book in itself.

Our goal here is to make sure that each stage of your writing project is planned and managed just like anything else you need to get done.

The problem is that tasks associated with writing projects are not always clearly defined. It's up to you to break them down into logical steps. For

example, a paper may include doing research, deciding on a topic, coming up with a thesis, doing an outline, writing the first draft, doing edits, and writing the final version.

Take the time to really think through the steps that you'll need to do from start to finish and write them all down.

Once you know what those tasks are, you can then think about how much time you'll need to do each of them. I realize that can be very subjective.

You can ask your professor or just go with your instincts. Don't worry if you are off. Just start with something, learn as you go, and adjust your time accordingly.

The goal is to make sure that every task is part of your plan.

Planning Writing Tasks In Shovel Study Planner

Let's assume that you have an assignment called Research Paper in your syllabus. You could just create a single task with that name and estimate the total time needed to do it. However, that doesn't really make sense. You want to break it down into the various components as I mentioned above.

The best way to do that in Shovel is to first create the main task as an assignment called Research Paper with the date it is due. Then just give it a small time estimate, say one hour.

Next you will create a series of Ungraded Tasks for each part of the paper (Research, Thesis, Outline, First Draft). Then you can set a due date and estimated time for each of them spread out over a couple of weeks before the paper is due. Make sure you start early.

Writing any kind of paper can be a big project in itself. Break it down as

small as you can into logical steps. It will be much easier to accurately plan and manage those steps individually.

If you are looking for advice on how to structure an essay, start with this *Essay Writing Guide* template by Jordan Peterson which you can download here or search for it online.

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What do you do when you have problems?

If you are confused and frustrated in any of your classes, good for you. You're taking difficult and challenging courses. That's what college is for. I realize that at times those difficulties may become overwhelming and you are going to need some help. Don't wait until that happens and then try to figure out where to get help. Know it in advance.

When you are building your study plan for each class, ask yourself this question: "When (not if) I have problems understanding this, where, and how am I getting help?"

See Your Professor

Nobody knows what you need to do to get an A better than your professors. Go see them early and often, whether you need help or not. The best strategy is to avoid problems by getting information in advance. Ask about test formats, papers, and projects. Talking to the professors will often give you hints about what is important and what isn't.

Develop a strong academic, professional, and personal relationship with every professor you can. They are an extremely valuable resource. They are experts in their field. They can help you in their class, steer you in the right direction professionally, and they can write invaluable recommendations for when you apply to graduate school. Don't be shy. Get to know every professor you can.

Know Your Campus Resources

Browse the school website and identify everything that might be of help to you when you need it. Know where to find advisors, tutors, learning services, health services, and mental health services before you need them. Know what's available to you now so you can take advantage of it when you need it.

Use Outside Resources

There is a virtually unlimited supply to anything you want to learn online. Search a topic on YouTube and the options will be endless. Khan Academy is an online learning portal that has thousands of structured lessons on almost anything you want to learn. If you think you may have problems in any particular class, see what is available as far in advance as you can.

Avoid Problems Before They Arise

One of the biggest benefits of creating a good study plan is that it helps you identify where you may have problems well in advance. As you set up your time and workload in Shovel, you'll be looking at the work you need to do - all your tasks in your syllabus, your textbooks, the table of contents, how many pages you need to cover, and the estimated time things will take.

As you set up your plan, look for warning signs and always ask yourself, "Is this material new to me? Does it look complicated? Am I likely to need some help on this?"

Don't wait until it's the next thing you have to get done before finding out that you don't understand it. Act on what your intuition tells you. Know what's coming as far in advance as you can and be ready.

A good plan, by definition, does just that.

Here's where you are so far:

You have the right mindset
- You believe that you can do anything you want to do.

You've done the analysis.
- You know your time to the minute.
- You know every study time block you have and are committed to using.
- You know the tasks for every class and how long each will take.

You're organized.
- You have a daily schedule of everything you do.
- You have every task for every class in one central place.
- You've planned every task into specific study times.

You're efficient

- You know the proven way to learn and retain new information.
- You've mastered the use of time so you can get the most from every minute.
- You know where to study so you focus on getting things done.
- You learn from experience and continually improve your plan.

You Know How To Study

- You take notes and read textbooks in a way to increase retention and speed review.
- You study for exams by self-testing early and often leading up to the exams.
- You know the resources you are going to use if you have problems.

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Can you make it a habit?

Advice is good, but execution is better.

We are all guilty of reading How-To books with good intentions, but far too often we don't follow through. Developing new habits requires dedication. It's difficult to change when you've been doing things the same way your whole life.

Reading this guide is a small start, but you have to follow through.

Will you invest the time to create a study plan every semester?

Will you have a specific set of study habits and methods that you do the same way every day?

None of this is going to matter unless you actually do it, and make it a habit. A habit, by definition, is something that you do without even thinking about it. To make a new way automatic, you'll need a lot of repetition.

I've read that it takes, on average, 66 days to create a habit. If that is true, your new way of doing things will become a habit by the end of a single semester. Afterward, you'll cruise through the rest of college with flying colors.

Keep It Simple

No matter how much I tell you a new habit will help, I also know that you won't do it unless it's simple.

That's why I focus on the most simple study habits and techniques that deliver the best results for the time you put into them. It's easy for you to turn these tips into habits.

Just pick one or two and start doing them. Better yet, do them all. They really are that simple. The hardest part is just setting things up at the beginning of the semester. Once you do that, following your plan from there is pretty easy.

See Results Quickly

The earlier you can see that something new is working, the faster it will become a habit. I don't mean just seeing better grades on all of your exams.

It's knowing that you are in better control of your time and workload. It's seeing that your notes are complete, well organized, and ready for review.

It will be the confidence you feel self-testing and knowing that you are prepared for an upcoming exam long before you have to take it.

One of the most important benefits will be less stress. That continous anxiety that comes from uncertainty will melt away as you get control of your time and workload.

The benefits of good habits don't always jump out at you. A good habit is one that you don't even realize is working. Good things just happen and you don't even realize why. You're just doing things a certain way and getting a predictable result.

About Procrastination

There is one bad habit that often stands in the way of creating good ones and that is procrastination.

It's a common problem among students and a very frustrating one for me. I have read a lot about it and sometimes I feel like I need to have a degree in psychology to decipher it.

I realize that it's a serious issue for a lot of people, but I am not going to spend a lot of time on it. I'll leave it up to you to do your research and find your 'solution,' but I'll give you my quick summary.

The biggest reason for procrastination is avoiding pain. In the case of college students, it's 'brain pain' - the fear of facing an overwhelming pile of unknown and difficult tasks.

Here's my solution to procrastination: just compare the pain of doing your schoolwork with the consequences of not doing it. Which is going to hurt more?

You aren't going to like every class you have to take. I'll say it again - college is hard, and it's supposed to be. Embrace it as both a challenge and an opportunity to learn something new. Develop a passion for learning new things, no matter what they are. If you can't, that's too bad.

You probably aren't going to want to hear this, but ultimately your success in college is going to be determined by your own self-discipline. Every week, in class and in life, you are going to have times when you aren't motivated to do something. Your professors don't care. Your employer won't care. You need to.

Stephen Covey liked to say that "Only the disciplined are truly free. The undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites, and passions."

Your procrastination is fickle and uncertain. It's dependent on your feelings and whims. Discipline is concrete. It doesn't about your feelings. It only cares that you get things done. Discipline blows right by procrastination. It is the only thing that will make you get things done whether you like them or not.

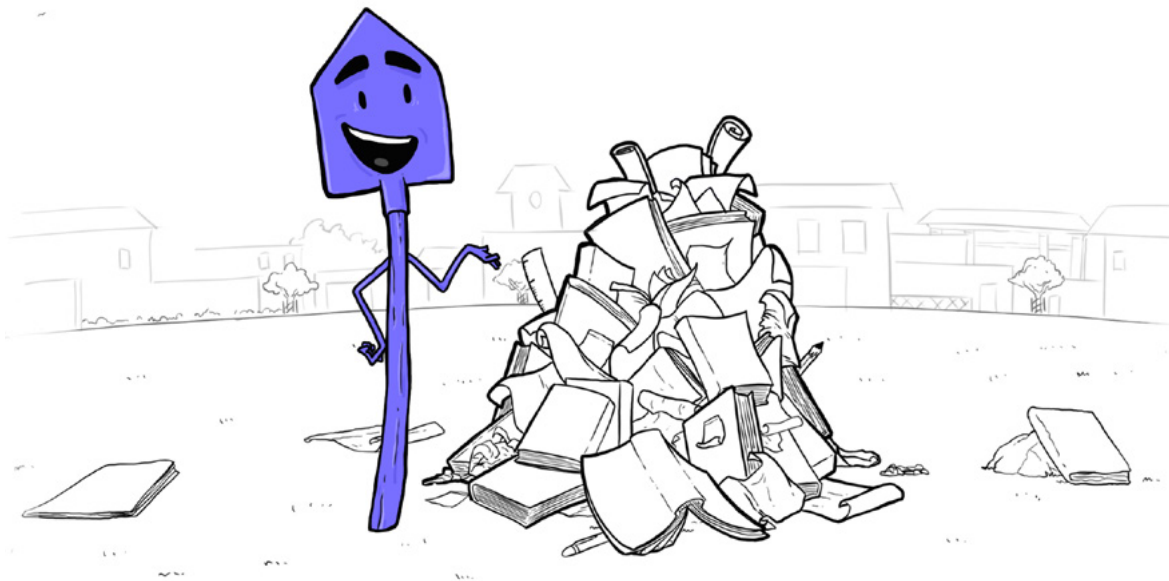Discipline starts with a study plan.

Do these things:

1. Schedule every task at a specific time.
2. When the time arrives, get started on it.

Read one sentence, one paragraph, one page.

As the Nike ad reads: Just Do It.

You'll find out that it really isn't as bad as you think.

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What's stopping you now?

So are you ready to get started? If not, why not?

Commit to making a change.

I can say with confidence that if you are struggling, there's a 99 percent chance that you can fix your problems by asking the questions in this guide. I've seen it too many times.

Learning how to be a good student isn't that hard. It's first and foremost about managing time and really understanding your workload. Then follow a few simple commonsense behaviors, and study methods that get results.

Bingo! Success.

The Shovel Promise

You will be in complete control of your time and workload.

You will get better grades.

You will have less stress.

You will have more time to enjoy your college experience.

Keep Digging!

If you have any questions or comments, we'd love to hear from you. You can use the chat on our website.

To learn more about Shovel Study Planner, please visit:

https://howtostudyincollege.com/shovel-study-planner/

The Shovel Study Plan Checklist

Ask yourself the following questions. Answer them honestly and consider the suggested actions.

1. Do I have the right mindset?

Goal: To become self-aware of your own mindset because having the right mindset is the first step to achieving success in college.

- ☐ Do you have a Growth Mindset?

2. How do I use your time?

Goal: To know exactly how much time you really have to the minute. This will help you see if you are doing too many things and quantify how much time you have.

Create a daily schedule of all of your commitments for each day of the week, including:

- ☐ Classes
- ☐ Recurring activities (Meals, clubs, practices, gym, jobs, etc.)
- ☐ Custom events (Appointments, games, meetings, etc.)
- ☐ Consider the time it takes to walk to and from each. 'Study Time' means in your study spot, head down, book open.
- ☐ 'Me-Time' - time when you know you won't study. (Weekend nights/ mornings).
- ☐ Look at all small time blocks between your classes and activities. Can you move anything around to combine them or otherwise use them? Minutes matter.

3. How much study time do I have?

Goal: Know your study time blocks to make an accurate plan and be able to assign tasks to specific times.

- ☐ Total how much study time is **available** for study each day.
- ☐ Identify how much you will really **commit** to using for study.

4. What do I need to get done?

Goal: Know the **volume** of work you need to get done so you avoid surprises. (e.g. is your textbook reading 10 pages or 100? Know in advance).

- ☐ Print your syllabi for each class. Slowly and carefully read each of them in detail.
- ☐ Know the number of tasks that need to be completed - every reading, problem set, project, paper, quiz, and exam. **Quantify** everything you'll need to do.

Readings will take the majority of your study time. It is important for you to know **volume** of reading you will need to do. How many pages are there in each?

- ☐ Have all books required for class.
- ☐ For each reading task in your syllabus, look in the table of contents and know exactly how many pages you will read. Write that next to each reading in your syllabus.
- ☐ For other readings like PDFs, print or save them to your tablet. Write the number of pages for them as well.

5. How long is it going to take?

Readings

Goal: Estimate how long each task may take to make an accurate plan.

Different books read at different speeds. (Chemistry vs novel). Know how long it will take you to read the assigned number of pages from any particular book.

- ☐ Read a page or two from each class textbook or other book (reading source) and find an initial average time per page for each reading source.
- ☐ Read a page or two from different types of PDF's (single or double spaced) and find an average time per page.

Other Tasks

- ☐ Make initial estimates for other types of assignments - problem sets, projects, papers, and studying for quizzes and exams. Time yourself to see how long they really take and adjust your estimates.
- ☐ Break large projects like papers into smaller pieces and make estimates for each. (Research, outline, draft, edit, etc.). Time each and learn as you go.

6. How do I organize your work?

Goal: Use a digital tool to organize your tasks so you aren't managing in your head.

- ☐ Get every task from every class into one central place - Shovel Study Planner.
- ☐ Enter every task at the start of each semester as soon as you have your syllabi.
- ☐ If time is limited, enter at least the next two weeks of tasks.

7. Do I have time to get it done?

Goal: Always know that you have time to get any task done on time.

- ☐ Compare the study time you have with the time you need for the tasks that need to be done. Always know that you have enough time.

8. Do I plan each task for a specific time?

Goal: Always know exactly when you plan to do each task.

☐ 'Timebox' every task. This is assigning each task to a specific study time block and commit to doing it without exception.

9. Am I improving my plan?

Goal: Make sure your study plan is as accurate as possible every day by reviewing and adjusting where needed.

☐ Review your study plan at least once a week. Sunday night is ideal.
☐ Have the date or times of any of your recurring activities changed?
☐ Are there any upcoming events that will affect your study time?
☐ Are you actually using the study time blocks you committed to?
☐ Are you completing your tasks within the times you estimated or should you adjust any of them?
☐ Do you have any upcoming tasks you haven't considered? Studying for exams? A big paper or project?
☐ Make adjustments and look ahead to see how these changes affect the time you have or need for other tasks.

11. When will I study?

Goal: Maximize the efficiency of study time in every way you can.

☐ Establish a consistent routine.
☐ Make use of every small block of time.
☐ Doing tasks sooner is better than later.
☐ Day is better than night.
☐ Hard first, easy last.
☐ Take small bites whenever you can.
☐ Take breaks but based on accomplishment, not time.
☐ Have a sense of urgency to get things done.

☐ Know the next one thing that is most important to get done.

12. Where will I study?

Goal: Find the best study spots that will eliminate distractions and make the most efficient use of your time.

☐ Never study in your room.
☐ Study in the library whenever you can.
☐ Have several other study spots when the library isn't practical.
☐ Plan where you will study just like you plan when you will study.

13. How do I avoid distractions?

Goal: Be aware of how social media affects your study time and focus.

☐ Check your device screen time to see time spent on each app.
☐ Be ruthless about separating social media from study time.
☐ Find apps that will disable or shut off notifications during study times.

10. What is my study method?

Goal: Know the best way to learn so you study in ways that get you the best results for the time and effort you put in.

☐ Avoid studying for exams by simply reading and re-reading your notes and textbooks.
☐ Use self-testing to study for exams. Create actual test questions from your class notes and textbook concepts and be able to answer them by heart and out loud.
☐ Do spaced repetition. Self-test in small amounts periodically over time leading up to the exam.
☐ Mix It Up. Don't study one topic or class continuously. Do a little bit of

a lot of different things at different times and in different orders. That is known as 'interleaving'.

☐ Do you self test all of your subjects periodically leading up to your exam?

14. How will I study?

Goal: To become aware of the study methods you use and understand why they work.

☐ Whenever you are doing a task, ask yourself if the way you do it is the most effective.

15. Was I in every class?

Goal: To make sure you are both mentally and physically present in every class.

☐ Always be there. Never miss a single class.
☐ Be prepared. Have any assigned readings or other tasks done before you arrive.
☐ Always sit in the center of the front row.
☐ Eliminate digital distractions in class.

16. How do I take notes in class?

Goal: Take notes in a way that will best prepare you to study for your exam.

☐ Use a tablet instead of paper for everything if you can.
☐ Write all notes by hand instead of by typing.
☐ Use the Cornell Note Taking Method.
☐ Write down everything. Don't guess what is important or not.
☐ Understand everything. Never leave a class confused about the lecture.
☐ Review notes immediately after class for clarity and completeness.
☐ Write test questions for later review and self-testing.

☐ Make sure notes are backed up.

17. How do I do my readings?

Goal: To make your readings more focused and well prepared for later review.

☐ Print or Save As all outside readings so they are ready when you are.
☐ Read every word that is assigned to you if you have the time.
☐ Always highlight for focus and to summarize important points.
☐ Clarify anything you don't understand as soon as you can.
☐ Write test questions for later review and self-testing.
☐ Back it up. If your book disappears, how will it affect you?

18. How do I study for exams?

Goal: Create a schedule of periodic self-testing of your class materials so you are ready when exam time arrives.

☐ Use previous exams to self-test.
☐ Self-test from both your notes and your textbook questions.
☐ Self-test small amounts periodically over time.
☐ Start self-testing as soon as you have done your first lectures or readings.
☐ Check off questions you know and focus your time on those you don't.
☐ Don't over study. Use your instincts to know when enough is enough.
☐ Do one final review the day before your exam.
☐ Go to bed early and be fresh. Don't cram late into the night.
☐ Do a post-exam review to see where you can improve.

19. How do I plan my writing projects?

Goal: Break down your writing projects into small segments so you can plan and manage each one separately.

☐ Break each writing project into logical segments such as research,

outline, first draft, etc.
- ☐ Create ungraded tasks for each segment, estimate time needed, and plan each of them to specific time blocks.

20. What do I do when I have problems?

Goal: Know where you're getting help before you need it.

- ☐ Assume you'll need help. It's not if, it's when.
- ☐ Search your school catalog for every possible support resource.
- ☐ Know every professor and teaching assistant and how and when to reach them.
- ☐ Identify outside resources for each subject. (YouTube, Khan Academy, etc.)
- ☐ Anticipate difficult material and get help before, not after, that material begins.

21. Can I make it a habit?

Goal: Create a study plan and a consistent system of behaviors and study methods that work so well, you don't even have to think about them.

- ☐ Strive to do each item on this checklist until they become part of your routine.
- ☐ Beat procrastination with action.

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https://howtostudyincollege.com/shovel-study-planner/

If you have any questions please use the chat on our website