

# SparkCharts' Study Tactics

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## 1 Focusing

Make sure your mind is attentive, active and focusing on the task at hand.

### 1.1 Environment

- Turn off distractions
- Set up rules about study time
- Find a place without distractions
  - Better find a specific study area.
  - Or just go to library

### 1.2 Procrastination

Try the following when you start to procrastinate:

- Break the task into smaller parts.
- Tell other people what you're working on.
- Do first whatever portion of the work you are most reluctant to do.
- Rewards yourself.

## 2 Planning

Planning a.k.a. budgeting your time a.k.a. a key to being a successful student.

### 2.1 Observe yourself

Record your time usage for a week at a measure of 30min

- Keep the record on a handy pad or notebook.
- Be honest.
- Analyze the result.
- Put the result to use, plan the upcoming week

## 2.2 Budgeting time

Look at your needs and obligations for the week and budget your necessary study time across the days. Remember you need a little downtime. Study time could be adjusted after a little trial and error.

- Decide how many hours you need to spend studying.
  - The amount could change from week to week, but there is a baseline.
  - Before weeks of important exams, papers/projects due, you should budget more time.
- Every Sunday, take 15 mins to map out your week, scheduling in study time around your obligations.
- Know when you're at your most alert and use that time to study.
  - This consciousness needs experiment.
- **Prioritize** based on the **importance** and **urgency**. *maybe use the 4-quadrant method?*
- Sleep time is extremely important.

**Dead-time:** Spacing out/Waiting for people/Riding a bus o.s. Develop study aids for these times.

- Maybe store some regular softcore stuff on your phone to check out instantly.
- a.l.l. make use of your waiting time.

**Down-time:** Have a level of studying that could be sustained, or you'll just wear yourself down. *e.g.*

- w/ friends.
- Listening to music/General entertainment.
- Any relaxation activity.

## 2.3 Calendars

You'll need several Calendars. I use org-mode so this part ill just practice with org-agenda.

- A calendar with just your classes and standing obligations. (*the where-you-have-to-be calendar*)
- A calendar with just the due dates. Display this prominently in your work area to indicate the big picture of the **whole semester**.
- A calendar of planner that you add to and refer to daily. Incorporate long-term ddls and weekly assignments w/ due dates.
- A quick to-do list in the morning or before go to bed. Refer to the weekly calendar. Work it like any to-do lists.

### 2.3.1 Use the schedules.

For unforeseen events:

- Stick to the schedule as firm as you can.
- Adjust when you have to.
- Be aware of the priorities.
- Refer to the semester calendar and syllabus. Anticipate the demands on the time several weeks in advance.

## 3 Remembering Information

The best way is always to understand them. But for more unrelated/fragmented bullet points:

- Mnemonic devices and methods.
- Acronyms.
- Acrostics.
- Linking information to physical locations.
- Word association.
- Reviewing.

## 4 Taking Notes

Huge differences exist in taking class notes and taking material notes.

The general method for all kinds of notes:

- Review the notes w/i 24 hrs.
- Make your notes organizable (The original article says: ”’ *Use a three-ring binder and write on one side only (so you can move pages around later)*. ”’ In case you need it bc you still use the traditional way.)
- Refer back to notes as the course progresses. And ask yourself what still seems important and what seems trivial.
- Periodically **combine** the reading notes and lecture notes into **a single set of notes**.

### 4.1 Notes from class

When the instructors speak, they do a lot of the work for you. They select what they feel is important and give the material an organized structure. This could fail sometimes bc the lecturer has no idea what he/she’s talking about and hasn’t done any research on the feedback from previous students. Change your focus when you feel something is fucked up hard. And some of the times the lecture doesn’t organize on traditional outline format. For this kind of case you should keep the record of all bullets and organize them after class based on reading material. As a note-taker, you should get down as much as you can. Decide what really needs to focus later.

#### 4.1.1 Be prepared.

- Skim the notes from previous class. There gotta be some continuity from lectures to lectures.
- Do the reading. Lectures and discussions coincide with some specific reading assignments. After the reading the following would be easier.
- Get to class on time. Avoid getting settled after the class begins. Avoid missing the Admin-istrivia
- Bring all you need at class. Textbooks, class notes, reading assignments. Things that the lecturer might refer to during class.

#### 4.1.2 Make friends.

- Make a regular habit of exchanging notes with a friend.
- Your classmates can be your biggest resource.

#### 4.1.3 Lecture courses.

To avoid losing the lecturer:

- **Listen for a synopsis** either at the beginning or **summary** at the end.
- **Use abbreviations** or soem form of shorthand.
- **Listen for clues.**
- Analyze the **ideosyncrasies** of the instructor.
- Don't ignore your **critical abilities** entirely. Make a note (or a drawer C-c C-x d ) to return to later.
- Pay attention to the handouts.

#### 4.1.4 Discussion courses.

Differences occur between noting a lecture course and a discussion course.

- Less factual material, More deelpy into the reading.
- You can stop the speaker and ask her to clarigy or repeat a point.

In case of missing something of can't understand:

- Make a mark in notes, search and present it when you can ask.
- Leave a blank space for things couldn't be able to write down. (If you're using the traditional method.)
- **If appropriate**, raise your hand and ask for clarification or repetition.

This will be much nice to leave it after class to avoid interrupting the lecturer's flow.

## 4.2 Notes From Reading

Taking reading notes requires **more active intelligence and constant questioning**. Think critically. Interrogate what you read. Ask questions.

Before starting reading;

- Why you're reading this assignment.
- Figure out the main point.
- Make a list of important terms and concepts.
- Get a sense of what you're reading before reading it.
- Write down the questions in the reading.

As you read:

- Anticipate in the author's next move.
  - Pros n' Cons.
  - Continuity n' change.
  - Rules and exceptions.
  - Causes and effects.
  - Lists and descriptions.
- Think critically about the information.
- Analyze the important information.

## 4.3 Organize the Information

- Diagrams
- Tables
- Network

## 5 In-class discussion

- **Do the reading**, at least the general idea of it.
- Review the lecture notes.

### 5.1 Etiquette

- Prepare one thing to say for each class. *Try never to let an entire class go by w/o making some contribution*
- Don't feel like you have to comment on every subject.
- Keep your comments relevant.

- Listen attentively.
- Respect other people's opinions.

If you didn't do the reading; Make a general comment or ask a general question early in the class. Or ask one of classmates to elaborate on what he/she just said.

Bullshittery Detection

- "I didn't get to read the book, but it seems to me that..."
  - Better tattoo it on your forehead instead of announcing to the instructor that you didn't do the work.
  - Rhetorically weakening whatever you're about to say.
- "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard."
- Talking about random bullshittery Please. Please conserve oxygen.

## 6 Exam Preparation

### 6.1 Strategizing

- Find out what kind of material is being tested.
- What kind of test it will be.
- Copies of old tests.
- Know your teacher's opinions on the issues in the course.

### 6.2 Reviewing

- Attend review sessions. Prepare w/ a list of questions.
- Get a hold on the generalized idea of the course.

### 6.3 Condensing

Condense your notes to the essential. Get everything you absolutely need to know onto **one sheet**, and as bare minimum to **own** that sheet.

### 6.4 Study groups

Depends on personal preference.

### 6.5 The night before:

- Review before you go to bed.
- Get a normal night's sleep.
- Review casually in the morning.

## 6.6 Cramming

- What's the professor likely to focus on?
- Pick the important ones.
- Recite.
- Do the best you can.

## 7 Taking tests.

### 7.1 General Tips

- Approach the test calmly no matter how you feel.
- Scan the test.
- Read the general directions and directions for each question.
- Don't spend too much time on questions you know the least about.
- Check the time.
- Show your work and procedure on the test paper.
- For STEM tests, make a logical estimation of the answer before starting the work.

### 7.2 If you're stuck

- Rephrase a question in your own words.
- **If acceptable**, ask for clarification.
- Get something down on paper.
- Sensibly leave some questions blank.

### 7.3 Tips for different types of questions

#### 7.3.1 Essays

- Read the directions carefully.
- Take a moment to outline your essay.
- Make distinct paragraphs.
- Begin strongly, End strongly. Deliver the verdict starkly, then back it up with subtleties.
- Make the essay easier for the grader to read.

USE L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X WHENEVER YOU CAN



### 7.3.2 Multiple-choice questions.

- Read the question **VERY** carefully.
- Try to answer the question on your own.
- Read all the choices.
- Process of elimination. If you still don't know what to do, eliminate the **extreme** answers.
- Skip if you need.
- Don't panic. Don't overthink.
- Don't trust extremely simple ones.