Chapter 0: How to Learn Well

Whether you're a first-semester freshman or a seasoned upper-classman, we can all get better at becoming reflective learners. Let's review some strategies that can serve you well in STAT 212 this semester. These strategies are largely sourced from the article, "Optimizing Learning in College: **Tips from Cognitive Psychology**."

Get Organized!

- **Have a to do list** (physical copy or online tool) that you can use to budget your time and/or identify goals for each day.
- **Schedule a weekly check-in** (perhaps on Sundays) to review what's due and identify what days/times you will dedicate to which classes and assignments.
- Figure out **where you will go between classes** to be productive. You'd be surprised what you can get done in 30 minutes, or even just 15 minutes!

Preparing for Class

- **Look ahead before class.** Taking just 5-10 minutes to preview the notes or slides for the next class can make your class experience *remarkably* more productive.
- **Answer (or ask yourself) comprehension questions** as you do this preview. In our class, you might find the reflection questions as a good place to start when previewing what's ahead!

During Class

- **Go to class. Seriously, do it!** There are many good reasons, but here are three. 1) Most students report focusing and engaging more than they do when only watching a recording. 2) It helps you create routine and avoid falling behind. 3) Social routines like class attendance are linked to better mental health.
- **Engage in class.** Don't just be a passive listener. Consciously think, write things down, and interact with others during think-pair-share or activity times. Put your phone in your bag or put it on do not disturb.

After Class

- **Review last class's notes** before the next class. Read (perhaps out loud) and star the difficult pieces you may want to review again before the exam.
- **Teach it.** Think about how you would summarize what you learned to someone else. In our class, try answering the reflection questions out loud to yourself or with a friend after we complete each chapter!
- **Try the homework questions as we proceed** and read the feedback provided!

Prepare for Exams Well

- **Try the Pomodoro technique.** Focus for 25 minutes, then break for 5 minutes. During those 25 minutes of focus, put your phone away or put it on do not disturb.
- **Treat the Practice Exam like a closed-book quiz**. Study before taking it. Put your notes away and set a timer. Sit up at your desk, or perhaps go to a café or library to mimic the testing center environment.
- **Office hours are the ultimate college hack.** Organize your questions and come talk through your questions with us. Alternatively, make a study buddy and talk things out with each other!

On my end-of-semester survey in Fall 2024, I asked students **what advice they would go back and tell themselves at the beginning of the semester**. Here are some of their responses!

I think to continue to keep up with going to lecture. It is easy to skip and watch the video later, but **there is just something to be said about the depth I learn in real time lecture** actively listening then on a recording.

Stay up to date with the lectures and **start studying sooner for the exams**

Don't stop going to class, go to office hours more often even when you don't need it, and don't go into the testing center overconfident of your abilities. Aside from that, I would say **enjoy the class a little more and have more fun with the labs by doing them with other people.**

Ask for support quicker

Don't be afraid to **ask questions in class** to clarify a few things

It would be to **try harder in the lecture**; I felt as if I got my notes and left. Then, I would leave myself to go through the notes later, which was harder to do.

Don't give yourself the option to turn in labs late, or you're never gonna get them done. And **feedback on labs does in fact exist**, so look at that.

Office hours are really helpful for understanding labs

Start assignments (especially coding) earlier than you might expect. **Your computer likes to throw random issues in last minute**

Not to listen to previous opinions of others who took the class that said the exams were very easy. **I had too much confidence coming into the first exam** and could have prepared better.

Take each homework seriously, so cramming for the exam won't be as difficult

Really **do the reflection questions after every lecture** to keep the information fresh

I would tell myself to **start the labs sooner** because they can take longer than expected

Go to office hours more frequently

I would tell myself to study for the first exam by **making quizlets** of all of the concepts and the vocab. Then I would review until I understood. Then I would proceed to the **reflection questions**, **additional end of practice questions**, and then **the homework again**. Then after I feel like I am ready to sit for the exam, I would **take the practice exam and see how I do.**

Go to lecture, and **use the homework and practice exams as a real exam**, and then review!

To see the full list of comments, check out the Chapter 0 module on Canvas! I also have a ChatGPT summary to consolidate the themes.

Chapter 0 Reflection Questions

Make some commitments to yourself this semester. Don't just answer these in your head—write your answers down! Check in with yourself after the first week or two and consider if you want to make any changes.

0.1: How will I keep a to do list for myself this semester? (Calendar, whiteboard, word document, …) When will I check-in with myself each week?

0.2: Which spots do I want to try out between classes to get work done?

0.3: What percentage of classes do I want to aim to attend in person?

0.4: Am I easily distracted by my devices during class or while I study? Should I proactively try to reduce distractions during these times? Do I want to try the Pomodoro Technique? (https://pomofocus.io/)

0.5: Do I want to try to find a partner to study with or work on assignments with? What do I need to do if I want to make that happen?

0.6: When are office hours, and which of those could I potentially attend? *See canvas home page!*