

Estimate Study Hours

“HOW MANY HOURS DO I NEED TO STUDY?”

First-year college students are often academically successful in high school without spending much time studying outside of class. In fact, spending time in academic pursuits is frequently viewed within high school peer groups as “nerdy” or only for the “unintelligent.” Consequently, there can be a good deal of pressure to **not** study and you may hold a similar paradigm. It is helpful to realize that you came by this view honestly, as it is the framework under which high school often operates – a framework that is the foundation of your academic learning process (Balduf 2009).



However, now that you are in college you should understand that the rules of the game have changed. You may have heard that for every hour spent in a college class, you need or are expected to spend two hours outside of class studying. But have you taken the time to figure out exactly how many study hours this totals for you personally in a given week? Is it possible you are unaware of the time and effort necessary to succeed in college, regardless of how easy it appears for others? You may be surprised to find that although you feel like you study “all the time,” your disappointing grade on a particular exam is due to underestimating the time and study strategies it takes to learn college-level material.

According to the article, “Underachievement Among College Students,” in the Journal of Advanced Academics, a research study of college freshman on academic probation, but who were successful in high school, summarized (Balduf 2009):

Participants attributed their high school successes to minor efforts. Not needing to do much to earn the success they wanted, these students were never taught, nor ever taught themselves, how to work *through* challenging issues. When these participants encountered challenging coursework in college, they were unprepared to deal with it. Additionally, several other aspects of participants’ experiences contributed to their college underachievement: *inadequate study skills, poor time management*, and internal versus external motivation. (Italics added for emphasis.)

Estimating Study Hours Based On Course Difficulty

Rather than focusing on the arbitrary two hours of study for every hour in class method for determining your needed study hours per week, the Estimating Study Hours worksheet will help you determine study time based on course difficulty as well. In other words, you may have more background knowledge (experience) in English than you do in math. In classes that are more difficult for you, it is not unusual to spend three to four hours a day in study and fewer in the classes with which you are more familiar.

Complete the Estimating My Weekly Study Hours Worksheet (see reverse side)

Column 1 – Enter each of your semester course names

Column 2 – Determine the difficulty (for you) of each course

- High Difficulty = 3 hours of study
- Medium Difficulty = 2 hours of study
- Low Difficulty = 1 hour of study

Column 3 – Enter the number of hours per week you attend each class

Column 4 – Enter the number of hours study hours associated with high, medium, or low difficulty

Column 5 – Multiply the number of hours in class (Column 3) by the number of predicted study hours (Column 4)

Then, add all the study hours in Column 5 for the approximate total hours you need to study per week.

Estimating My Weekly Study Hours Worksheet

Predict Course Difficulty

High Difficulty Course
Medium Difficulty Course
Low Difficulty Course

*Study Hours Based on Course Difficulty

3 hours
2 hours
1 hour

Example		Multiply		
1 Your Semester Courses	2 Difficulty Level (High, Medium, or Low)	3 Hours in Class Each Week	4 Study Hours Based on Difficulty (*see Study Hours... above)	5 Needed Study Hours Per Week
Biology 1010	High	3	x 3	= 9
Math 1010	High	3	x 3	= 9
PSY 1730	Medium	3	x 2	= 6
ENGL 1010	Medium	3	x 2	= 6
PE 1605 (Skiing)	NA	2	x 0	= 0
			x	=
			x	=
Total Study Hours per Week				30

Complete Your Form				
1 Your Semester Courses	2 Difficulty Level (High, Medium, or Low)	3 Hours in Class Each Week	4 Study Hours Based on Difficulty (*see Study Hours above)	5 Needed Study Hours Per Week
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
			x	=
Total Study Hours per Week				

My Study Hours Improvement Plan

Total Number of Hours I Typically Study Each Week	Needed Study Hours Per Week (based on worksheet above)	Column A (–) Column B	
A _____	B _____	_____	← Number of Hours I Need to Add to My Weekly Study Schedule

Final Thoughts: There's no need to get discouraged or perfectionistic about a new study plan. Instead, the goal is to become aware how much time it takes to succeed in college. If it seems overwhelming or unrealistic to add this many hours to your study schedule, you have some options:

- Consider taking fewer credits – believe it or not, college is not a race. It's better to go a little slower and get better grades.
- Try to keep your work hours less than 20-25 hours per week.
- Try adding one more hour of study per day to begin with. This will increase your weekly total by 5 to 7 hours!