How to Create Study Plans

Whether you're a university student or simply learning something new on your own, study time is crucial if you want to do well in your classes. With a study plan, the time you need simply becomes a part of your day so you don't have to worry about an exam or deadline sneaking up on you. The process can seem daunting if you haven't made your own study plan before, but never fear! We've compiled all the most useful tips for you to get the most out of your study time. We'll start with advice on how to work studying into your schedule, then give you some bonus tips on how to structure each study session to max out your productivity.

Carve out time to study every day.

Set aside at least a couple of hours as dedicated study time. If you have a full day of classes and work, you might not have more than an hour or two each day to study. Use the weekend to catch up! If your schedule doesn't leave open a full 2-hour block on any particular day, look for spots where you can sneak in smaller 20-30 minute blocks.[[1]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-1)

For example, you might study for an hour in the morning, a half-hour at lunchtime, and another half-hour in the afternoon before work.

If you're working while going to school, include your study plan on your school schedule and let your manager know that you're not available for work during those times.

Schedule backward from exams and deadlines.]

Put your exams and deadlines on your calendar when you get your syllabus. If you're taking several classes, you can easily see if you have several exams on the same day or projects due at the same time. Then, plan your study time backward from those dates to make sure you have enough time to get everything ready.[[2]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-2)

Plan on getting papers and other assignments done early so you have time to edit and polish them before you turn them in. This also helps you avoid the stress of trying to do the entire thing at the last minute.

Include enough study time each week for each class.

The general rule is to study for 3 hours for every credit hour of the class. Use this rule to create your study plan before classes start. As you get into your classes, you might find that some of them require more study time while others require less.[[3]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-3)

For example, if you're taking a Spanish class for 3 credit hours, schedule 9 hours of study for that class each week.

If a subject comes easily to you or you're taking a class that's mostly a review of stuff you already know, you can probably get away with less time studying.

Study at around the same time every day.

Your brain will be more focused if you commit to a regular schedule. After a week or two, you'll get in the habit of studying at that time, the same as you get used to having classes at a certain time. If you're going to school full-time, think of your school day as a workday and schedule study time in between classes to get the most out of your day.[[4]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-4)

If you have seasonal activities, plan your study schedule around those activities even when they're not going on. For example, suppose you play intramural soccer during the spring, with practice on Mondays and games on Thursdays. Schedule your study time so it doesn't conflict, then you won't have to change your study plan when soccer starts.

Use your syllabus to plan each study session.

Set specific tasks to do each study session using action words. Think of your syllabus as a roadmap to guide your study sessions until the end of the course. Note when lectures are and what you're supposed to do to prepare, then add in time to review your lecture notes before you prepare for the next class session.[[5]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-5)

For example, suppose you have a history class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Your instructor assigns reading to prepare for the class. Your study plan might be to read for 1 hour on Monday, review lecture notes for 15 minutes on Tuesday, read for 1 hour on Wednesday, then review lecture notes for 15 minutes on Thursday.

Break up larger assignments.

Do smaller parts of larger assignments over a longer period. Working backward from the due date, plan out blocks when you'll work on specific segments of a larger assignment. Use the week of the due date to bring those parts together and do the final polishing of your assignment so it's ready to turn in.[[6]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-6)

For example, if you have a research paper due in 3 weeks, you might research the first week, write the first draft the second week, then edit and proofread the week the paper's due.

Study the most difficult things first.

Do more challenging things when your mind is fresh. When you sit down to study a subject, start with whatever part is giving you the most trouble. Dedicate as much of your time to that thing as you feel like you need to before moving on.[[7]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-7)

If you manage to conquer something that was giving you trouble before, you'll feel more motivated to tackle easier parts of the material.

While you don't want to completely neglect material you feel confident about, a quick review is usually all you'll need to keep it fresh if you feel like you already know it well.

Plan for regular breaks to maintain focus.

Study for 25 minutes then take a 5-minute break. This tactic is known as the Pomodoro Technique and helps you maintain peak focus. When you take your break, though, remember to actually take a real break for the entire 5 minutes. Get up and walk around, do jumping jacks, get a snack, text friends, or watch cat videos on YouTube—whatever you need to give your brain a rest![[8]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-8)

This isn't just goofing off—without regular breaks, your brain will internalize less of what you study. Taking frequent breaks helps you get the most out of your study sessions.

Keeping your study blocks short also helps you stay on task because you know a break is coming up soon. It's easy for your mind to wander if you've been sitting and staring at the same material for an hour.

Review as soon after class as possible.

Go over what you covered in class as soon as possible to cement it in your brain. Look over your lecture notes, then try writing a brief summary of what you talked about in class. Think about what you would say if someone asked you what you talked about in class today. Usually, about 15 minutes is sufficient for a review.[[9]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-9)

For example, if you have 2 classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, you might plan a half-hour study session on those evenings to go over what you covered in each class that day.

Go through your notes and fill in any areas that might be hard to understand or difficult to read. For example, if you were writing really fast, your notes might be illegible if you don't go back to them for several weeks.

Reviewing soon after class can also help you identify concepts you don't understand or questions you might have for your instructor. That way, you can send them an email or take advantage of their office hours to get an answer immediately, rather than waiting until right before the exam.

Add a cumulative review every week.

Read through your notes for each class at least once a week. It's easy to forget what you've learned when you're constantly learning new things each week. Creating an outline for your class is a good way to do a cumulative review. Then, all you have to do is go over your outline each week.[[10]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-10)

For example, if you're taking 4 classes, you might schedule a 2-hour study block on Saturdays in which you spend 30 minutes doing a cumulative review for each class.

Cumulative review also helps you understand how the later things you learn build on the earlier things you learned. You'll likely notice new connections between parts of the class that you wouldn't have noticed otherwise.

This is especially important for classes that have a cumulative final exam. If you've done a cumulative review every week, you'll have a lot less work to do to get ready for that big final.

Include extra study sessions before exams.

Look for blank spaces in your regular schedule that can be used for exam study. In addition to your regular study time, you might want to study more in the week or so before an exam. Instead of taking away from study time for other classes, add more study blocks that you can dedicate to exam preparation.[[11]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-11)

For example, suppose you have a chemistry exam coming up. You normally study chemistry for an hour on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, then for 2 hours on Saturday. If you have free time on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you might add an hour of study on those days the week before the exam.

Evaluate your plan regularly and tweak it if necessary.

Increase or decrease study time based on your grades and class performance. If you start to feel like you're really struggling in one class, figure out where you can make more time to study for that class. You might also want to try different study methods if what you're doing isn't working, such as joining a study group or going to the professor's office hours.[[12]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-12)

If you had an exam for a class that you thought was easy and you did really well on, you probably don't have to study as much for that one. Take some study time from the easy class and use it for one you find more challenging.

Use group study sessions to prepare for exams.

Work with classmates as it gets closer to exam time. If you're weak in one area, chances are there's someone else in the class who's strong in that same area and can help you understand it. If you've got something down, teaching it to someone who doesn't helps you understand it even better.[[13]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-13)

In classes where problem-solving and thinking are important, working in groups is an asset because you can learn different ways of thinking and approaching problems that you might not have thought of on your own.

Even if you don't think you work well in groups, give a study group a chance—especially if it's your first year in university—just to see if you get anything out of it. You can always drop the group if you don't feel like you're getting any benefit from it.

Set up a dedicated study area.

Choose a well-lit, comfortable spot where you can focus and concentrate. It's usually better if you always study in the same place and have all of your materials handy so you don't waste any of your precious study time hunting for something. If your study area is outside your own home, you might want to pack up a separate backpack with all of your study tools so you know you'll always have them with you.[[14]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-14)

Think about your own needs—everyone's ideal study environment will be different! If you need absolute quiet with no distractions, you might find it best to study in a carrel in the library. But if you need a certain level of ambient noise and movement in the background, a café might be a better choice.[[15]](https://www.wikihow.com/Create-Study-Plans#_note-15)