The Study Cycle

How you study should match with how your brain learns best. Hence, using short preview, review, and intense increment study sessions are more powerful for memory and retention than you think. Try the following system of studying for each of your classes to maximize your learning.

**Preview Materials**
- Before class, spend 10-15 minutes skimming the materials to be discussed
- Look over chapter introduction, headings, summary, keywords, diagrams, etc.
- Develop questions you have on the material

**Test Yourself**
- Check your understanding by trying to answer questions, work problems, and/or summarizing without notes
- Test your knowledge by recalling material out loud, “pretend teach,” while using a “need to know” list
- Apply the knowledge to problem-solving or real world situations

**Go to Class!**
- Listen actively and take good notes
- Practice critical thinking, ask questions, and participate in class discussions
- Synthesize lectures and reading materials

**Intense Study**
- Organize materials: create outlines, charts/tables/concept maps to illustrate relationships (e.g. similarities/differences, chronology, cause/effect)
- Use “Intense Study Session” daily (see below)
- Use repetition and mnemonic techniques to boost memory

**Time for Review**
- Review notes within 24 hours to...
  - Identify gaps or misunderstandings
  - Develop questions that need answering
- Fill in gaps/answer questions using resources such as text, instructor, TA, tutor, classmates, etc.
- Identify main ideas and put them in your own words

**Intense Study Session**
1. **Set a Goal (1-2 min)** Decide what to accomplish in your session: focus on small tasks for each section
2. **Study with Focus (20-30 min)** Active learning: organize materials (e.g., concept map, notecards, mnemonics), summarize processes, fill-in notes, practice problems, recite lectures/notes/readings, etc.
3. **Break (5-10 min)** Walk around, get a snack, and relax. Do NOT browse social media/internet—causes distraction
4. **Review/Test Yourself (10 minutes)** Review and quiz your understanding/memorization of material just studied. Move on to next study goal only once you’ve mastered the current material.

Adapted from The Center of Academic Success, Louisiana State University and UT Learning Center, University of Texas at Austin

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