EFFECTIVE STUDYING

IF YOU CLOSELY FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES, YOUR GRADES WILL IMPROVE.

Effective studying produces better grades, but usually is not taught in schools.
Fortunately, reliable data on how to study does exist. Following are twelve proven steps you can take to improve your study habits. We guarantee that if you really apply them, your grades will go up.

1. USE BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION ON YOURSELF

   It works! If you study the same subject at the same time in the same place each day, you will soon find that when you get to that time and place you’re automatically in the “subject groove.” Not only will you save the time and emotional energy to psych yourself up but the experts say you’ll also remember more of what you’re studying.

2. DON’T SPEND MORE THAN AN HOUR AT A TIME ON ONE SUBJECT

   If you’re doing straight memorization don’t spend more than twenty to thirty minutes. When you’re memorizing, you’re doing much more real learning more quickly than when you’re reading a text or an essay.

   First, when you’re under an imposed time restriction, you use the time more efficiently.

   Second, psychologists have confirmed that you best in short takes. Studies have shown that as much is learned in four one-hour sessions distributed over four days as in one marathon six-hour session, because between study times your mind subconsciously works on absorbing what you’ve learned. So it counts as study time, too.

3. KEEP ALERT BY TAKING FREQUENT REST BREAKS.

   The specialists say you’ll study most effectively if you take a ten minute break between subjects. Dr. Walter Pauk, director of the Reading and Study Center at Cornell University, suggests you take a short break whenever you need one, so you don’t flutter your time away anticipating a break.

   Another technique for keeping your mind from wandering is to study your most boring or hardest subject first and work toward the easiest or the best-liked one.
4. **STUDY SIMILAR SUBJECTS AT SEPARATE TIMES**

   Brain waves (like radio waves) interfere if there isn’t enough space between inputs. The more similar the kinds of learning taking place, the more interference. So, separate your study periods for courses with similar subject matter.

5. **AVOID STUDYING DURING YOUR SLEEPY TIMES**

   Schedule some physical activity for sleepy times, such as recreation, instrument practice, sorting notes, or clearing desk.

6. **STUDY AT THE MOST PRODUCTIVE TIME FOR YOUR COURSE**

   For a lecture course, do your studying soon after class; for a course in which students are called on to recite or answer questions, study before class. Question-posing is a good technique for helping the material sink in and for pinpointing areas in which you need more work.

7. **LEARN THE NOTE-TAKING SYSTEM THE EXPERTS RECOMMEND**

   Quite a bit of research has been done on note-taking, and the following system has emerged as the best.

   Use 8 ½-by-11 inch loose-leaf paper and write on just one side. Put a topic heading on each page.

   When lecture and text are closely related, use the 2-3-3-2 technique. Make columns of two inches down the left-hand side for recall clues, three inches in the middle for lecture notes and three inches on the right side for text notes, and leave a two-inch space across the bottom of the page for your own observations and conclusions.

   When lectures and the reading are not closely related, use separate pages for class notes and reading notes, follow the 2-5-1 technique: two inches at left for clues, five in the middle for notes and an inch at the right for observations.

   Write your regular notes in the center section or sections using your own shorthand system, for such words as govt. for government and evap. for evaporation.

   The clue (left-hand) column is the key to higher marks. At the earliest opportunity read your notes (not studying them) for omissions and corrections; make necessary changes. In clue column write clue words to the topics in your notes. Clue words should only designate or label the information in your notes, similar to clues on crib sheets. To study for tests: Take out your loose-leaf pages, cover the notes portion, leave just the clues
visible, and see if you can recall the notes that go with the clues. When you get a page right, set it aside.

The beauty of the clue word note-taking method is that it provides a painless way of remembering what you’ve learned by actively thinking about your notes and making logical sense of them.

8. MEMORIZE ACTIVELY, NOT PASSIVELY

Simply reading something over and over again is the worst way to memorize. Instead use as many of your senses as possible: Visualize in concrete terms to get a picture in your head. Use sound by saying the words out loud and listening to yourself. Associate by relating the fact to be learned to something significant or find a logical tie-in. Use mnemonics and acronyms, such as, ROY G. BIV for the colors of the rainbow.

9. TAKE MORE TIME FOR READING

Take the time to follow the six steps given below:

O. Overview: Read the title, the introduction and summarizing paragraphs and all the headings included in the reading material to get a general idea of what topics to be discussed.

K. Key Ideas: Go back and skim the text for the key ideas (usually found in the first sentence of each paragraph). Also read the italics and bold type, bulleted sections, itemizations, pictures and tables.

R1. Read your assignment from beginning to end. You can do it quickly, because you already know where the author is going and what he is trying to prove.

R2. Recall: Immediately after reading the text, say or write in a few key words or sentences, the major points of what you’ve read. One minute spent in immediate recall is said to nearly double retention of that piece of data!
R3. Reflect: To remember it forever, relate it to other knowledge. Find relationships and significance for what you’ve read.
R4. Review: For the next short quiz, and then again for later tests throughout the term. Several reviews will make that knowledge indelibly yours.

10. **DEVISE A COLOR AND SIGN SYSTEM**
Mark your personal books using red for main ideas, blue for dates and numbers, and yellow for supporting facts. Circles, boxes, stars, and checks in the margins can also be utilized to make reviewing easy.

11. **CLUE YOUR LECTURE NOTES TOO**
Underline, star or otherwise mark the ideas that your teacher says are important, thoughts that he says you’ll be coming back to later, and items that he says are common mistakes. Words such as therefore and in essence tell you he is summarizing. Always record his examples.

Pay closest attention in your note-taking to the last few minutes of class time. He may jam up to a half-hour’s content into the last five or ten minutes of his lecture. Get down that packed few minutes’ worth. If necessary, stay on after the bell to get it all down.

12. **BEWARE OF THE UNDERLINED TEXTBOOK**
Underline sparingly. The best underlining is not as productive as the worst note-taking.

Only the key words in a paragraph should be underlined and only after the “OK” part of your OK4R readings. Never use ink!

Never buy a used book that has already been underlined.
Remember, it’s not how much time you study that counts but how well. Use your study time wisely, and you will do well.

For more information on studying, consult the following book: How To Study In College, sixth edition, by Walter Pauk is available in the SAIL LAB. Other study aids are also available. Feel free to ask for help.