

HOW TO... Develop your Study/Revision Skills

This guide provides tips and suggestions for revision and study - especially important prior to exams. Try out these in advance to see what works best for you, then stick with it. This will enable you to improve your study skills prior to the exam period and give you confidence in your study techniques before you start to feel the pressure of exam time.

When to Study

There is no point in getting up at 6.00 a.m. to start writing that essay if you are not a morning person. You need to think about your best available time for study. Here are some tips:

- ❖ You need to organise yourself and be realistic in planning your time. Don't allocate 5 hours of study all at once – you'll never have that due to other commitments
- ❖ Plan at least 8 hours of study over 7 days – best to spread it out to reinforce your learning
- ❖ Study time of less than 10 minutes is not much use – allocate at least 30 minutes
- ❖ How much time you revise is a personal choice. It depends on your time available (personal commitments such as family and part-time work), your style of revision (either short intensive study sessions, or longer more sustained periods). Try to study for up to 40 minutes then have a quick 5 minute break – even if it's a walk around your room, cup of tea, or relaxation technique. This helps you digest what you've learned in preparation for the next "chunk" of learning
- ❖ After class when you are enthusiastic and already in study mode, head for one of the Learning Centres for an hour
- ❖ Use half of your lunch break to do a little course work
- ❖ Use 'dead time' e.g. commuting, at the gym or even in the loo to read over your notes (avoid flushing!)
- ❖ Don't study just after a large meal – the blood will rush to your stomach and you will feel sleepy
- ❖ When you study is a personal choice and depends on your commitments but try to organise your study time to suit your preferences – if you are a morning person, try not to study late at night and vice versa. If you choose to work late at night have a strict curfew – working all through the night is pointless if you are going to sleep through all your classes the next day.

Where to Study

Everyone will have their preferred working area. Here are some things to consider:

- ❖ Ideally you should have a proper desk and chair where you are not cramped or strained. There should be adequate ventilation and a cool, possibly quiet environment
- ❖ Make sure your study area is tidy, comfortable, and well lit. You won't spend time getting it ready to sit down and study if it is already tidy – no distractions!
- ❖ The Learning Centres have spaces for private study and tables for group work are available. There are computer workstations for internet research, use of online resources, or for writing essays and reports.

How to Study

Getting Organised

- ❖ If you have lots of notes everywhere, the first thing to do is get them organised, in a folder perhaps, then identify any gaps you have in your notes - get copies from your tutor, fellow students, or Moodle
- ❖ Note things you **must** do, then list those that you would like to do – then prioritise the list and allocate time to each item. Limit your list to 5 things at a time so that you can achieve them. Setting targets is important; you can see yourself progressing when you achieve them
- ❖ Have a plan/timetable and try to stick to it – but don't worry if you slip a little! It's just as important to relax a little
- ❖ Review your plan and "to do" list at regular intervals – this will identify what you have and have not achieved and may help plan ways of improving your planning in the future.

Study techniques - tips

- ❖ Try to do a little bit of study regularly e.g. going over 2 pages of each set of notes per night. This will not take very long but will encourage good study habits
- ❖ Do not be tempted to overload on a subject. It is always good to finish on a high, then you are sure to return to it
- ❖ Build up study patterns slowly but steadily – aim for 1 hour blocks
- ❖ If you are easily distracted, set small tasks in your plan so you can achieve them and not become disheartened
- ❖ Take regular 5 minute breaks, but be strict with them
- ❖ During breaks try to get up and move around
- ❖ Set yourself goals for each study period

- ❖ Try to be an active learner by paying attention when you are listening or reading
- ❖ Experiment with different note taking techniques to find one that suits you
- ❖ Practice your reading skills to make effective use of your time
- ❖ Try to work with other people. Having a good discussion is a refreshing and stimulating approach to study
- ❖ Write down any problems you can't solve and ask your lecturer to explain them in your next class session
- ❖ Take a few minutes to review your study session – was it successful or did you lose focus? If the latter, try to identify where you went off course
- ❖ Decide what your next session will include and plan any resources you may need e.g. library book, electronic resource, journal
- ❖ Remember the 3 Ps – **plan** ahead, **pace** yourself, **prioritise**.

Further Help

The Library Service provides lots of help sheets to guide you through the basics of study skills e.g. essay writing, time management, presentations, memory skills, note taking, reading skills, etc. The guides can be accessed in paper format in the Learning Centres, or in PDF format on the Library Services Guides & Forms page on the College intranet:

<https://intranet.glasgowkelvin.ac.uk/sites/GKC/Pages/libUserGuides.aspx>

Useful websites

Exam guidance and study skills advice from Reading University.

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice/lib-sa-guides.aspx>

How to Study.com website provides top tips on how to study for individual subjects.

<http://www.how-to-study.com>

Dr. Bob Kizlik's webpage with hints and tips (scroll down to see the page content).

<http://www.adprima.com/studyout.htm>

An online tutorial from Glasgow University to improve your study skills.

<http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/Training/tilt/studyskills.shtml>