

active study strategies

memory

Make IT Happen:

time management
 concentration
 reading
 listening
memory
 taking tests
 writing papers
 self-regulation
 learning styles
 motivation

To comprehend and retain new information, it is important to use active study strategies. When you choose to study by only reading or listening, you are likely to remember only a small percentage of what you see and hear. However, you can significantly increase the amount you remember if you review the material more actively.

What is an active study strategy?

An active study strategy asks you to manipulate words, symbols and ideas so that you better understand and remember new information. Below are examples of passive strategies that students often choose and active strategies that are more effective for learning new information.

| material to study | passive study strategy | active study strategy |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| lecture notes | re-read notes | identify main points and explain in your own words |
| assigned texts and articles | read | change chapter headings into questions and look for answers as you read |
| assigned problems and exercises | try to solve while looking at class examples | try to solve on your own first and then look at class examples |
| power point slides | print out and read | print out, write possible test questions in margin, and quiz yourself on slide info. |
| lab reports | re-read answers | go to lab and quiz yourself while looking at models/materials |

Why are active study strategies more effective?

Passive study strategies may take less time and feel easier. But active strategies are more effective and efficient because they help you move information into your long term memory more quickly. Research shows that students with higher performance scores may not study longer than their counterparts, but they are likely to study differently by using active review and rehearsal.

Concerned you don't have time to use active study strategies? Look for time management resources on the Center for Learning website.

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Choosing effective study strategies for a class

So, how can you choose effective study strategies for a specific class? **First**, identify the information and/or skills you want to learn to be successful in this class. To do this you can review the class learning objectives, note what is on study guides, and identify main topics from texts and lectures. **Second**, choose study strategies that force you to manipulate this information actively. Find ways to put information into your own words, find relationships between ideas, and illustrate concepts with examples. **Third**, whenever possible, choose strategies that make you practice what you need to do in upcoming assignments. For example, to study for essay exams, brainstorm possible questions and practice outlining your answers.

What active study strategies will you try?

Using the chart below, brainstorm how you could study more actively for one of your classes. Circle strategies that you want to try and add in your own ideas in the space provided.

| What I need to learn | How I could study actively |
|---------------------------------|--|
| lecture notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ create charts and diagrams that chunk related information ➤ identify important information from notes and have a study partner quiz me ➤ |
| assigned texts and articles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ before reading, think about what I want to learn from this text and underline key information as I find it ➤ after reading a few pages, stop and summarize what I learned in three sentences ➤ |
| assigned problems and exercises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ try to complete problems on my own and then meet with a classmate to work challenging problems together ➤ |
| power point slides | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ print slides before class (3 per page) and take notes on slide handout ➤ create flash cards from key terms on slides ➤ |
| lab reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recreate diagrams (leaving out labels and terms) and then practice filling in the information ➤ |

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