

Strategies for Studying Individually

To study more efficiently and productively, it is important to develop your metacognition. Metacognition includes both an awareness of what you know about how you learn and the ability to regulate your thinking. When you develop and follow plans to achieve your learning goals, you enhance your metacognition about your learning. For more information about metacognition, see our Metacognition handout.

To help you add a dimension of metacognitive reflection to your studying, we recommend applying a structured plan to your study sessions.

1. Set a study goal:

- What do I want to accomplish in the next forty minutes?
- What learning skills/strategies can I use to accomplish my goals?
 - Time: 2 minutes

A helpful first step for each study session is goal setting. By setting goals for yourself, you will be able to monitor your progress through larger tasks, such as writing a lengthy term paper or working through several chapters in your text. In addition, setting a goal at the start of each study session can act as a motivator, as you should be able to see yourself working steadily toward an end result, instead of working at a seemingly never-ending project.

2. Study:

- Time: 40 minutes

3. Review/Recite:

- What did I learn in the past forty minutes?
- Where do I think the course will go from here?
 - Time: 5 minutes

Although it may seem unnecessary to engage in the review portion of your study session, completing this step is helpful in consolidating the information you've just taken the time to learn. A brief review can help you to see what information you are having difficulty understanding, allowing you to return to the material well before the exam.

4. Reflect:

- Did I accomplish my set goals? Why or why not?
- What suggestions do I have for myself for next time?
 - Time: 3 minutes

As you reflect on your study session, assess whether you were able to accomplish the goals that you set out for yourself at the start of the session. If you are not tracking your goals they may become less useful to you. If you have not accomplished the goal that you set out at the start of the session, take some time to determine why that might be — did you not allow yourself enough time? By reflecting on your goals and the factors contributing to your success in completing them you will be able to ensure that your future study sessions are planned better. You can even write down some suggestions for your next study session.

5. Break:

- Time: 10 minutes.

As with all the other portions of your study session it is important that you allow yourself to take a break at the end of the session. Even a short break will leave you feeling more refreshed and better able to take on the next project. Try taking your breaks away from the space where you are studying — go for a short walk, or get a snack. It may be helpful to get away from your study environment during your break.