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Study Groups

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The Academia

At this point, we have all heard about the benefits of study groups, but for some of us, study groups never seem to work right. Hopefully this article contains some points that will allow you to get the most out of your study groups.

First things first, you need to make sure the group actually meets. The time and place must work well for all the members of your group. Like a class, your study group should meet regularly. Having a weekly meeting at a chosen time and place will help make the study group part of everyone's routine. In choosing a place, make sure it is reasonably close to everyone. How willing are you to walk from north side to south side, at night, in the winter time? Also, make sure the meeting place is a good study environment. This sounds obvious, but try to eliminate potential distractions. A dorm room is probably not the best place to meet as there are many distractions around (phone, instant messages, friends), especially for the person who lives there. The library is perhaps the ideal place, as it is midway between north side and south side, there are plenty of computers if needed, and the ESS tutoring center is there should you need additional assistance.

Now that your study group is regularly meeting, you need to make sure you are getting stuff done while there. We have all been to group meetings where one person has read all the material and done most of the homework problems, and another person has not even opened the book. The meeting is then either spent trying to catch the one person up or leaving them behind. Either way it is not a useful meeting for everyone. To avoid this situation set some expectations for the group. Should everyone try the homework problems before you meet? Should they at least look at the assignment? Should they read the material in the book? Should they at least attend lecture? This is all for your study group to decide, and make sure everyone is clear on the decision.

Last but not least, care about your study group members. If someone is struggling, help them out. If someone does well on a test, congratulate them. A little show of support can go a long way. Also, if someone does seem to need additional assistance, a supportive group member can kindly push them towards help, perhaps in the form of ESS.

Effective Note Taking

By Nicole Veitinger, Alpha Phi

While it is a feat in itself to make it to each class each day, it is also important to take good notes while you are there. Most note-taking tips are already ingrained in our heads: abbreviate, write clearly, use the lecturer's own words, and so on. Here are a few tips you may want to include into your own note-taking style to make the most out of each class.

An easy starting point is to write the date on all pages of notes taken for that lecture. It can and will save you confusion later on when organizing and studying your notes. This may seem stupid, but how many times have you found a random page of notes and

have no clue where they belong? Exactly.

A great technique for most students is simply skipping one to three lines after notes for each PowerPoint slide have been taken or when there is a change of topic in the lecture. This allows for supplemental notes from the text, which can be added in another color of ink to separate them from your class notes. The order of the lecture will also be made clear this way.

Whatever your style of note-taking, the key is having notes that will enable you to succeed in the class. Hopefully these tips will help to achieve this goal. Good luck in the rest of the semester.

Study Tips to get you through the rest of the semester!

It can be very difficult for some people to settle in for an extended reading session. Knowing what body positions are comfortable for you is critical to concentrating on a text. So it's important to know whether you like having your feet up or not. If you prefer to sit upright or lay on a bed, etc. Also, once you're in your comfortable position you shouldn't have to leave it for any reason until you take a study break. Make sure that all pens, paper, highlighters, and even the phone are within your reach. The last thing that you want to have to do is get up or change positions to answer the phone while studying.

The proper way to read a text is to take reading breaks. Studies have shown that a student reading a text book retains the most content at the beginning and end of their reading session. For this reason it is often more productive to read for 25 minutes, take a five minute break, read for another 25 minutes, take a five minute break, then to read for 50 minutes, and take a ten minute break.

In addition to the length of time that a student reads, there are things that a student can do while reading to increase their content retention rate as well. Highlighting is a great way to focus on the key points of a text. When a student uses a highlighter during their reading they have a constant task of searching for key points. This searching in turn increases the focus of the brain on the text and in turn increases your retention rate. Also, your highlighting can be a great aid for students who don't take notes from their reading when reviewing for tests and quizzes.

The great thing about highlighting is it does increase your content retention rate, but the bad thing is that it also doesn't require a lot of mental work. You still need to do more to retain a lot of information effectively. Note taking, in addition to highlighting, during or after a reading is extremely important. For the most part when you take notes you should reword what the book says. By rewording what you've read you will be thinking critically about the meaning of the material and make broader connections. It is a rare case that rewording material will change it's meaning, and so only in this case you should copy out of the book. However, make sure to put such passages in quotes, with page numbers, and you should still try to reword the material yourself. You can either take notes as you read, in which case you should read two paragraphs or so, and jot a few things down, or highlight first, and take notes after reading.

Counting Sheep Also Helps You Count When You're Awake

By Chris Bowley

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As our assignments get tougher and to-do lists grow, we frequently put off sleep in lieu of other activities. Whether it's studying or just having fun, sleep is no longer our priority.

Research shows that the average college student gets around 6 hours of sleep a night. Even this figure sounds like a lot, but it's still 3 hours short. Adults are supposed to get around 9.25 hours of sleep a night.

This amount allows you to wake up refreshed and energetic, giving you what you need to make it through the day. Not only that, but it lets your brain absorb what you're learning. If you get the right amount of sleep, you'll remember information better and your problem solving skills will sharpen up.

What can you do the night before the test when you've got to cram? Study until you feel tired, then go to bed. Try to get a three hour cycle of sleep in if you can. Going to bed early and waking up early works for some people, however studies have shown that it can lead to decreased awareness during the day.

Staying up all night can kill your mental capacity for that big test the next day. If you go to bed, you may not have studied everything, but you will be able to remember what you did study and be able to figure out what you didn't, versus not remembering anything.

Get a nap the next day if you can, but make it a 30 minute power nap. Anything longer will interfere with your sleep the coming night, and will mess up your sleeping patterns. It's important to keep those regular – try to hit the hay and wake up at the same time everyday.

Messing with these patterns will not only decrease your test grades the next day, but can lead to sickness and even depression. So get some beauty sleep, it'll help your grades out too.