

5 Research-Backed Studying Techniques

Avoid ineffective studying habits in favor of ones that will increase their learning outcomes.

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Too often people imagine that long hours of studying are the best path to being a model, straight-A student. Yet [research shows](#) that highly successful students actually spend less time studying than their peers do—they just study more effectively.

any distractions from email, social media, etc. Their studying is more effective and leads to greater achievement gains.

INEFFECTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Many students use learning techniques that are time consuming and give the illusion of mastery. They become familiar with ideas and information in preparation for a test, but forget it a week later because their learning techniques never led to long-term learning.

Ineffective techniques include:

- Studying for long periods of time
- Studying a single subject for a long period of time and repeating phrases over and over to memorize them (known as massed practice)
- Reviewing one topic repeatedly before moving onto another topic (blocked practice)
- Reading and rereading a text
- Highlighting or underlining important concepts in a text and then reviewing

spaced practice can feel difficult due to an initial forgetting of knowledge—reacquiring that knowledge takes effort.

Creating flash cards that can be used for spaced practice and self-quizzing is effective. Students should create different piles when reviewing the flash cards. The cards they're able to answer immediately should be placed in a pile to review three days later; those answered with some difficulty should be reviewed two days later; and those that they answered incorrectly should be reviewed the next day.

3. Self-quizzing: Testing has a negative connotation in this era of standardized testing, but it is a form of active retrieval practice. Encourage students to make test questions for themselves as they learn a new concept, thinking about the types of questions you might ask on a quiz or test. They should incorporate these quizzes into their study sessions, answering every question, even those they believe they know well.

4. Interleaving practice: Students may rely on blocked practice, studying a set of problems—such as multiplication problems—as a group until they feel mastery. A more effective method of studying is to work on a set of problems that are related but not all of the same kind—for example, a set of math word problems that call for addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. The