

# 10 Habits of Highly Effective Students

*by Becton Loveless*

The key to becoming an effective student is learning how to study smarter, not harder. This becomes more and more true as you advance in your education. An hour or two of studying a day is usually sufficient to make it through high school with satisfactory grades, but when college arrives, there aren't enough hours in the day to get all your studying in if you don't know how to study smarter.

While some students are able to breeze through school with minimal effort, this is the exception. The vast majority of successful students achieve their success by developing and applying effective study habits. The following are the top 10 study habits employed by highly successful students. So if you want to become a successful student, don't get discouraged, don't give up, just work to develop each of the study habits below and you'll see your grades go up, your knowledge increase, and your ability to learn and assimilate information improve.

## 1. Don't attempt to cram all your studying into one session.

Ever find yourself up late at night expending more energy trying to keep your eyelids open than you are studying? If so, it's time for a change. Successful students typically space their work out over shorter periods of time and rarely try to cram all of their studying into just one or two sessions. If you want to become a successful student then you need to learn to be consistent in your studies and to have regular, yet shorter, study periods.

## 2. Plan when you're going to study.

Successful students schedule specific times throughout the week when they are going to study -- and then they stick with their schedule. Students who study sporadically and whimsically typically do not perform as well as students who have a set study schedule. Even if you're all caught up with your studies, creating a weekly routine, where you set aside a period of time a few days a week, to review your courses will ensure you develop habits that will enable you to succeed in your education long term.

## 3. Study at the same time.

Not only is it important that you plan when you're going to study, it's important you create a consistent, daily study routine. When you study at the same time each day and each week, you're studying will become a regular part of your life. You'll be mentally and emotionally more prepared for each study session and each study session will become more productive. If you have to change your schedule from time to time due to unexpected events, that's okay, but get back on your routine as soon as the event has passed.

## 4. Each study time should have a specific goal.

Simply studying without direction is not effective. You need to know exactly what you need to accomplish during each study session. Before you start studying, set a study session goal that supports your overall

academic goal (i.e. memorize 30 vocabulary words in order to ace the vocabulary section on an upcoming Spanish test.)

#### 5. Never procrastinate your planned study session.

It's very easy, and common, to put off your study session because of lack of interest in the subject, because you have other things you need to get done, or just because the assignment is hard. Successful students DO NOT procrastinate studying. If you procrastinate your study session, your studying will become much less effective and you may not get everything accomplished that you need to. Procrastination also leads to rushing, and rushing is the number one cause of errors.

#### 6. Start with the most difficult subject first.

As your most difficult assignment or subject will require the most effort and mental energy, you should start with it first. Once you've completed the most difficult work, it will be much easier to complete the rest of your work. Believe it or not, starting with the most difficult subject will greatly improve the effectiveness of your study sessions, and your academic performance.

#### 7. Always review your notes before starting an assignment.

Obviously, before you can review your notes you must first have notes to review. Always make sure to take good notes in class. Before you start each study session, and before you start a particular assignment, review your notes thoroughly to make sure you know how to complete the assignment correctly. Reviewing your notes before each study session will help you remember important subject matter learned during the day, and make sure your studying is targeted and effective.

#### 8. Make sure you're not distracted while you're studying.

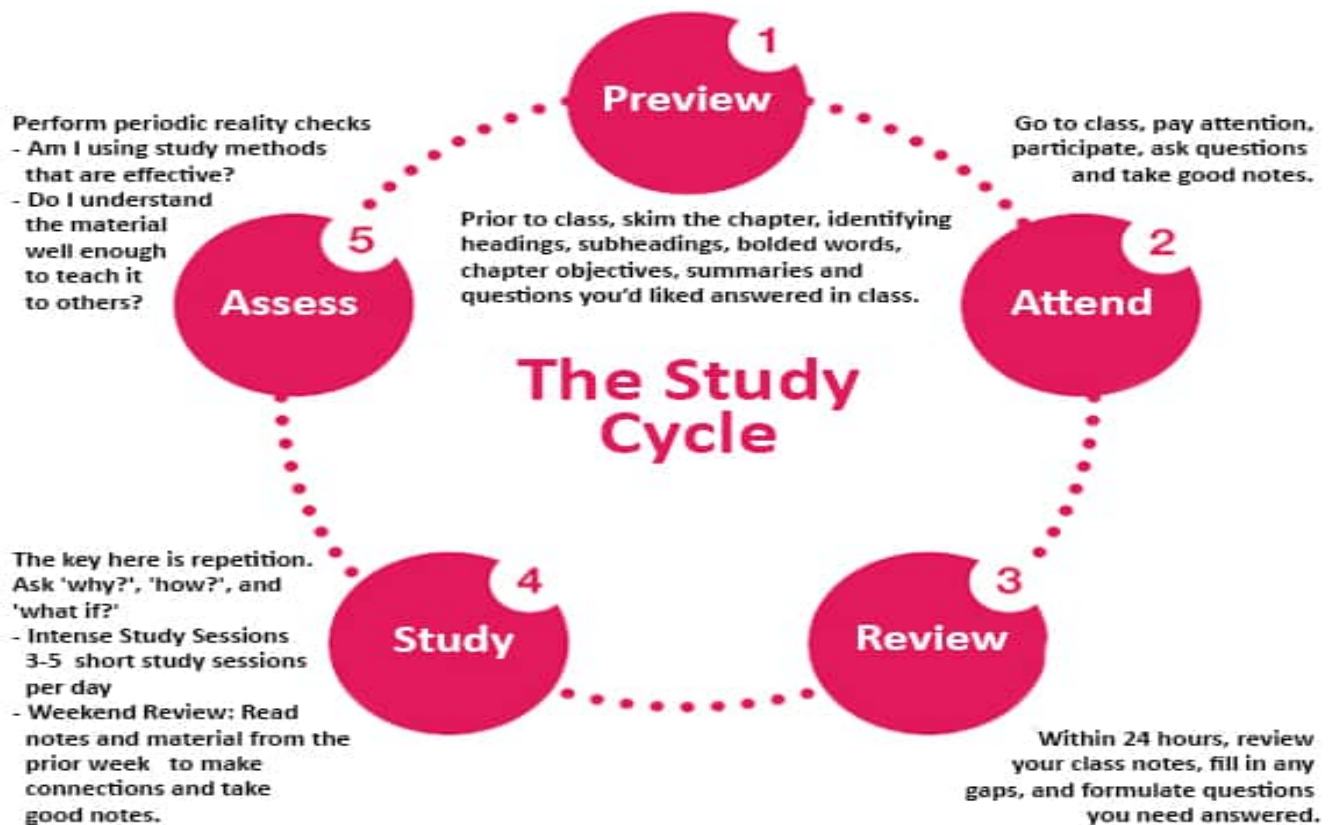
Everyone gets distracted by something. Maybe it's the TV. Or maybe it's your family. Or maybe it's just too quiet. Some people actually study better with a little background noise. When you're distracted while studying you (1) lose your train of thought and (2) are unable to focus -- both of which will lead to very ineffective studying. Before you start studying find a place where you won't be disturbed or distracted. For some people this is a quiet cubical in the recesses of the library. For others is in a common area where there is a little background noise.

#### 9. Use study groups effectively.

Ever heard the phrase "two heads are better than one?" Well this can be especially true when it comes to studying. Working in groups enables you to (1) get help from others when you're struggling to understand a concept, (2) complete assignments more quickly, and (3) teach others, whereby helping both the other students and yourself to internalize the subject matter. However, study groups can become very ineffective if they're not structured and if groups members come unprepared. Effective students use study groups effectively.

# The Study Cycle

The study cycle is a 5-step approach to learning designed to help students become more efficient learners. It works the way your brain learns best. It reinforces new content and builds confidence. The study cycle can be easily adapted to any coursework. The five steps of the study cycle are:



## Intense Study Sessions

Set a goal	1-2 min	Decide what you want to accomplish in your study session.
Study with focus	30-50 min	Interact with material - organize, summarize, concept map, process, re-read, fill-in notes, reflect, etc.
Reward yourself	10-15 min	Take a break - go for a walk, get a snack, relax
Review	5 min	Go over, summarize, and wrap-up what you just studied

## Step 1 - Preview

Preview your text and other study materials before class to develop a big picture of what you'll be covering. Skim through the chapter, noting all headings, subheadings, bold words, graphs, pictures and summaries. Once you've developed a big picture, it will be much easier to remember and learn the detail.

## Step 2 - Attend

Attending class should be an obvious step, but some students don't take it seriously enough. Missing even a few classes can be detrimental to your studies and the learning process, especially in subjects such as math. Combined with previewing, attending class will allow you to get more from lectures and take better, more concise notes.

## Step 3 - Review

Preferably right after class, but at least sometime during the day, take about 10 minutes to review your class notes. This process of review transfers the information you learned during class from your short-term to your long-term memory. It also reinforces new concepts and increases confidence.

## Step 4 - Study

To reinforce the new material you learned during class, and to make sure you thoroughly understand the subject matter being taught, take about 30-50 minutes to review your notes, read your text book, work problems, make concept maps, or form a study group. As you study, ask yourself 'how', 'why' and 'what if' questions. Don't forget, repetition is the key.

## Step 5 - Assess

Reflect and evaluate your mastery and understanding of the material you learned and studied. Ask yourself, "Is the information I'm studying making sense?", "Am I confident with the new material?", "Do I understand the material well enough that I can teach it to someone else?" Assessing your studying from time to time is an essential aspect of learning.