

The following section has been prepared by Trish Biggs from the University of Calgary based on relevant research. While most of the information is meant for older students who can study independently or may need only minimal support, there are many good tips for parents of younger students as well. Please read all of the tips first before deciding what will work best for you.

### **Study Tips for Students**

1. **Snack:** Have a healthy snack or sit down dinner. Food can affect memory and thought processes. Choline is an important chemical for brain function and is found in fish, meats, egg yolks, soy, oatmeal, rice, peanuts and pecans; it makes you more alert.
2. **Time:** Set aside a certain time every night for studying after you have eaten and have had some “time off”. It is important to make this time a habit, so if you have no homework, use the time for review or readings. Do not skip this time as it will break up the routine you are trying to establish.
3. **Place:** Find a specific place where you can spread out and have all your materials (pens, pencils, pencil sharpener, highlighters, glue stick, stapler, tape, markers, dictionary, thesaurus, etc.) ready in a storage bin. The study place should be large enough to have room for all your materials and still be uncluttered. It should be flat, have a good chair, be well lit and a comfortable temperature (too hot/cold impedes effective studying).

A large notice board is helpful to put timetables, “find outs” and “must do’s” on.

Studying is more effective when the place is similar to where you’ll be tested and is used only for studying. Therefore, do not study on the floor or on the bed; study at a table or a desk. A study environment analysis can be found at:

<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/studydis.html>.

4. **Prepare:** You need to concentrate. Ensure EVERYONE knows you are studying and is relatively quiet. Do not answer phone calls, listen to music, watch T.V. etc. Any younger children should also participate in a “quiet time” activity.
5. **Organize:** Make a list of what you need to study and check off each assignment as you complete it. Chunk work into do-able portions. For example, group similar types of material together for ease of studying. Write down the estimated time you’ll finish each goal. Keep these records to study your efficiency and try to increase your goals slightly each time.
6. **Focus:** Start with the assignment that makes you most comfortable – some students like to start with the easiest work and others like to get the hardest work over with first. Some like to use a study symbol (special hat, toy...)- it lets others know you’re studying and provides a ritual that helps you focus.

7. **Study Cards:** Create a comprehensive set of note cards to study. Typically people can memorize 7 things at one time so carry seven cards with you. The act of creating the notes, selecting relevant information and reviewing improves recall of the material. Use this system: every time you take a card and get the information correct, place a check on the card. After three checks, retire the card from your pile and add a new one. If you get the answer wrong, put an “x” on it. After two x’s, retire the card. When you have reached the end of your pile of cards, you should have two stacks – cards which you know very well and cards which you will need to concentrate more on. Continue until all cards have three consecutive checks on them.

8. **Study Times & Breaks:** You recall the most information learned at the *beginning and end* of a study session – so, studying hard for 20 minutes with a 5-minute break three times is more effective than a solid 1 hour of studying. Be sure to take **SHORT** breaks while studying. This enables learning to happen – the best peak connections of unknown-to-known material in your brain occurs when you are not “inputting” more information. Don’t do anything extremely interesting in your break; it will be too difficult to return to studying and you should save those fun activities to “reward” yourself when you’re finished. After your break, study a different subject.

9. **Support:** Have someone available to contact if you get stuck!

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