

EFFECTIVE LEARNING

STRATEGIES

Everyone's different. Different things work for different people. Tried and tested study methods have proved successful over time. A study method is a step-by-step process you follow each time you study. Each time you repeat a process, that process gets easier. Your brain learns. A good study method trains the brain to absorb, store and access information.

While study methods are different, they do all use common techniques. You need to divide your time between reading your books and study material, making notes, revising your work, memorising your work and testing yourself.

Here's one study method you could try, involving 3 stages:

STAGE 1: EXPLORATION

STAGE 2: FIXATION

STAGE 3: TESTING

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STAGE 1 Exploration

READ MATERIAL AND MAKE NOTES

Making notes helps to summarise the material you've read, and helps you integrate and organise information into logical sections. Simply reading your material is not enough. Notes are a record of your time spent on a particular section. They link studying, reading, doing assignments, memorising and writing exams. Making notes is the best way to understand and recall information.

Two main note-making methods:

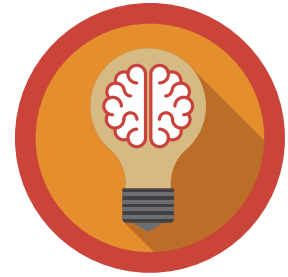
- Visual note-making: using mind maps, spider grams, branching notes, cluster grams, tables, flow charts and organograms
- Narrative note-making: *Cornell system, lists, timeline notes, keywords, paragraphs, questions, segmenting and labelling

Which note-making method should you use?

You will need to experiment with which method works best for you and the module you are busy with. For example, you could try using mind maps to map the outline for a specific module, and then the Cornell method for making detailed notes related to your learning objectives.

Read more about making effective notes here: <http://bit.ly/2yqwMUR>

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STAGE 2 Fixation

REVISE

Revision helps you to fix the information in your brain. It should take 20% of your time. Revision is one of the most powerful memory techniques you can use. Revise your work within 24 hours of studying it. You will have forgotten up to 25% of the facts, but this is normal. Then revise the work again, before continuing with memorising new material. The revision process is where you bring all your knowledge together and start fixing the content in your memory. By the time you revise again you should be familiar with the content of the module.

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MEMORISE

While you may understand the information you study, there'll always be material that needs to be memorised. This is the last stage of studying and preparing for exams, and can only be done effectively once you understand the material.

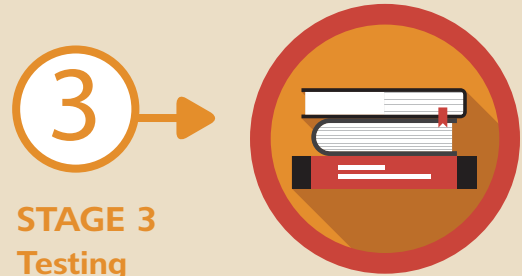
It should take up to 15% of your time. While you'll need to argue points of view, form opinions and analyse texts, you'll also need to memorise facts, ideas and keywords. Memorising is the second part of "fixation". By memorising information, you develop reasoning skills based on a sound factual foundation. Like everything worthwhile, memorising can be difficult.

Read more about memory strategies
here: <http://bit.ly/2xiHzjB>

EVALUATE

Evaluating your performance against existing goals helps to set more realistic goals in the future, prepares you for exams and gives you an idea of the volume of work required. Evaluate your progress at the end of each study week by asking these questions:

- Did I commit to the time I wrote down and did I use my study time effectively? If not, what do I have to do differently this week to manage my study time more effectively?
- Am I coping with the content or do I need help to understand it? Who must I ask for support?
- Are there additional commitments I need to schedule for next week?



STAGE 3 Testing

REVISE

Work through old exam papers and discuss the material (with lecturers and fellow students) using language appropriate to your subject matter. Reference the facts you've memorised and note areas that still need work or memorising.

Testing yourself is also part of this stage. It involves using your notes to test yourself, answering old exam papers (available on myUnisa), and discussing your material with lecturers and fellow students. It should take 10% of your time.