

Study Gym

This tip sheet is designed to help you to: be your own “personal trainer”, boost your confidence as a student, overcome any exam or presentation anxiety, manage your time, avoid procrastination, and improve concentration and memory for effective exam revision.

Step 1 Brain and body power. Feed, exercise and rest your brain and body.

- Boost memory with B group vitamins and folate – vegemite, peanut butter, leafy greens.
- Fuel the brain with glucose from low GI complex carbs – wholegrain foods, oats, peas.
- Exercise your insides with high fibre foods – beans, vegies, nuts, salads, wholegrains.
- Repair your body with protein and fatty acids – eggs, fish, dairy, nuts, meat, poultry.
- Relax body and mind – peppermint tea, tryptophan amino acid in seeds and nuts for good sleep/mood.
- Sleep between 6 and 9 hours a day. Have a wind-down ritual before bed.
- Stay alert with good ventilation, lighting, and slow music for alpha brain waves.
- Run, swim, walk, stretch, meditate, breathe, get some sun, cycle, dance and more.

Step 2 Get motivated. Appeal to your “inner coach”. Use Positive Psychology.

- Know if and why you WANT to study. Whatever the reasons, you need to want it.
- Have “can do” language. “I am”, “I choose to” and “I will” rather than “I’ll try” or “I might”. Prime yourself to study with these positive messages.
- Visualise doing and succeeding.
- Focus on your strengths – on what you know you do well – organisation, punctuality, listening, writing, logic, practicals, research....
- Be in the driving seat of your study journey – not the passenger seat.
- Set study goals for the day, week, month, trimester, year, graduation and beyond.
- Identify what works and fix what doesn’t work. Review your study “game plan” & goals.
- Do “interval” training for study – short, concentrated bursts of study.

Step 3 Study with all your senses.

- Engage all your senses in your learning. See it, hear it, say it, do it.
- See it via reading, drawing, note-taking, flow-charts, mind maps, visualisation, highlighting key words/concepts, graphs or charts, multi-media, post-it notes, posters.
- Hear it via lectures, podcasts, reading out loud, talking or sounding out to others, teaching someone else, interviewing yourself, recording your voice, making a song/story/rhyme/acronym.
- Do it via model making/diagrams, walking and talking, listening to podcasts while doing the dishes, standing, chewing, short blocks of study with breaks, stretches, reminders to study (on phone, calendar, computer, kitchen timer).

Step 4 Kick start your memory

- Use lots of repetition, memory or flash cards, post-it notes, divided page with concepts and ideas on one side and review answers on the other, summaries of your summaries.
- Link new ideas to old. Remember a list of ideas by pegging each one onto a familiar object in a familiar room – see the room in your mind. Find meaning in what you are learning.
- Relate it to something vivid, colourful, emotional, practical, funny, and outrageous.
- Remember the context in which you learnt facts – recall the room, tutorial, laboratory, on-line lecture, page of the text book, smells, sounds and colours.
- Create a story or flow-chart or study tree, chunk information into groups or sets – as you do with phone numbers. Use key words. Use made up or actual words to remember a list – eg ROYGBIV captures all the colours of the rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.
- Teach a friend. Explain difficult concepts out loud. Write about and draw them.

Step 5 Do study warm-ups. Get into the study zone.

- Dress up for alert study – replace PJs and lying on the bed with smart casual clothes and a good desk chair. Replace slumping while studying with adopting an erect, confident posture.
- Plan to study. “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail” – Benjamin Franklin.
- Choose to study rather than drift into it. Know when you will study, what you need to study, where you will study, and how long for.

- Look over past notes, a prac. report, essay question, or discussion posts on Moodle if you are not in the study zone – your version of a pre-match stretch. Look at learning goals or topics in your Unit for prompts.
- Be a “mindful” student – allow sounds and distractions to flow over you and gently anchor your focus to being: in the present, on the job and in the zone.
- Imagine a mini-you, your trainer or coach, sitting on your shoulder, catching you out if your mind drifts, bringing you back, checking understanding and any gaps in your knowledge.
- Imagine you’re a detective with lots of questions and that you are looking for the clues.
- Think of questions your unit coordinator would ask – to help identify what you need to know and study next.

Step 6 Get your timing right.

- Know your body rhythm – do complex study when you’re most alert.
- Aim for balance – allow for exercise, family, social, work, personal, domestic time. Map out how to use your 168 hours per week. Allow “just in case” time for flexibility.
- Step 2 encouraged short bursts of study. If you work for longer, make sure you’re on a roll, and not just going through the motions of studying.
- Notice if you are over-working things. Could this be procrastination?
- Re-activate your brain and body by sleeping on things, having time to reflect.

Step 7 Aim for your PB – personal best.

- Aim for realistic study goals to be *your* best - not be *the* best.
- Start with small, reachable goals. Get some “runs on the board” and then make slightly bigger goals.
- Allow yourself to be on a learning curve. Expect and welcome mistakes – these are opportunities for discovery and further learning.
- Do regular study to keep up your study fitness – you can maximise doing your best at that next exam, essay or lab report with good daily training – ie background research, reading, practice problems, practice exams, revision.

Step 8 Get pumped! Aim for good stress.

- Having some adrenaline in the system before an exam or presentation is a good thing. It means you’re sharp, focussed, able to think quickly and ready for action. This is good stress.
- Rein in excess stress or anxiety. Too much stress lowers performance. Manage this by slowing your breathing, visualising success, using positive rehearsal, pacing yourself.
- If you’re looking for the adrenaline, panic rush for motivation, think again. Bad stress drags down performance. Good stress allows planning, strategy, and enjoyment.
- Plan for relaxation and cool down time. Know when you are in study mode and when you are not. Have a clear on and off switch.

Step 9 Think flexibly. Communicate clearly.

- Stress leads to rigid, black and white thinking, indecision, assumptions, unrealistic goals, fixation on the negative, discounting of positive things, and catastrophic, gloom and doom thinking. Try and be flexible in your thinking and know ahead of time how to best de-escalate your stress levels.
- Get perspective. Talk to others. Take time-out to worry, problem-solve and prioritise.
- Communicate study needs clearly. Be assertive - not aggressive or passive. Be clear, honest, direct, and respectful. Learn to say no to people. Seek clarification. Seek time for important decisions. Ask for help.

Step 10 Enjoy the ride.

- Enjoy the process of learning, and discovering how you best learn.
- Make time to reflect - identify what’s working and what isn’t.
- Ask for help along the way – engage in appropriate help-seeking.
- Reward yourself for a job done. Celebrate the wins.
- Know you can get off the ride if you need a break, and can get back on later.
- Revisit what you want and desire from study. Make study YOUR goal.

For further study gym tips, contact UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) .

Phone 02 6773 2897 for a Study Gym session.

www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/student-support/counselling

The support you need to succeed