

IMPROVING STUDY SKILLS

Individuals with ADHD often have difficulty adjusting to the demands of college, where grades are often based on a limited number of factors, such as a few tests, lengthy papers, or some other project. Waiting until the last minute and then cramming for the test or writing a paper in a frenzied all-night panic might work in some basic courses but are likely to fall flat in more demanding and advanced classes. Here are some tips to improve your study skills.

Get Off to a Good Start:

1. Begin with the basics. Eat, sleep and exercise to be healthy. Bring your “best self” to class.
2. Before class starts, find out what the book is and get it. Read the syllabus before class starts if its available.



3. Attend every lecture. Sit in the front. Turn off your cell phone. Take notes. Ask questions.
4. Write assignments for the semester in your planner, along with a study schedule.
5. Be prepared for class. Read your syllabus weekly and complete the homework or readings.

6. You can't be studying if you're partying. Make time every week to study, rather than waiting until the last minute to study or complete assignments.

Suggestions for Studying:

1. Make sure you understand the assignment before you start so you can plan your time efficiently.
2. Pick a good place to study – one where you're less likely to be distracted. Turn off the TV. Some people study best with music playing in the background to drown out noise. If music helps you focus, play it.
3. Sit in a comfortable chair at a desk or table. This helps to teach your brain that “chair” means “study” and “bed” means “sleep”.
4. Break study time into short chunks – 20 to 50 minutes, followed by a 5 – 10 minute break. Longer study periods are likely to be counter-productive.



For more tips to help the ADHD brain, contact us at (512) 496-5947 or sgordon@CALMpsychologist.com.

5. Discover your ideal time to study. Is it early in the morning or late at night? Figure out your peak times and use them.
6. Start with the hard stuff. Then, when you get tired or bored, you can reward yourself by switching to something easier.
7. Reward yourself. Try small rewards (a snack) after studying for 30 minutes and larger rewards (trip to the mall) for staying on task for a week or completing a project.
8. Get in the habit of doing something every day. Even a half-hour of productive work each day yields six hours of quality time. Study early and often.



Note-Taking

Studying your notes from class is an important way of learning the material. To take notes most effectively, the Cornell Method suggests the following steps:

1. **Get organized.** Have a system for organizing your notes, ie, separate notebooks per class or separate sections of a larger notebook. Draw a vertical line down each page resulting in twice as much size on one side compared with the other.
2. **In class/ meetings:** Take your notes on the larger section. Write key words and phrases, rather than complete sentences. Use symbols or abbreviations.
3. **Review** your notes immediately after class or as soon as is feasible. Fill in any gaps. Underline anything you may want to ask the instructor or colleagues about. On the right side of the paper, write study questions that are based on your notes.
4. **Study.** Cover the notes side of your paper. Read your questions and answer them. Do so out loud if you can. This helps to transfer the information into long-term memory.
5. **Reflect.** Make the material meaningful. Ask yourself: What's the significance of these facts? How do they fit into what you already know? Can I relate them to my own life?
6. **Weekly:** Spend 10 minutes reviewing all your previous notes.

Notes:	Questions:
Popular system – Cornell method	<i>What's the name of a popular note-taking system?</i>
Organize – draw line	
Class – use short-hand	
Review – fill in, write questions (ask teacher how long short-term memory lasts)	
Study – cover one side	
Weekly – 10 min old notes	<i>How long should you study old notes each week?</i>

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