30 TOP TIPS FOR STUDY & REVISION

1. Set achievable targets and personal challenges; work steadily towards them.
   - Make timetables
     - **Realistic:** (long and short term), e.g. don’t put a 9.00 am start, when in reality it will be at least 10.00 am before you get out of bed.
     - **Flexible:** expect timetables to change and plan for this.
     - **Achievable:** knowing how much you can actually get done rather than imagine you can do in a study session.
     - Have a variety of tasks and study strategies planned to keep you motivated and the brain engaged. State your study/revision goals for every block of time.
   - Keep 2 or 3 blocks of time (1-2 hours) throughout the week free as catch up zones, in case something takes longer that you planned.
   - Build relaxation, breaks and rewards into the timetables. Have a good balance between work and rest/relaxation and fun (sports, friends etc.)

2. Create structured study/revision sessions.
   - Decide what you are going to do in the session beforehand.
   - Have 2 or 3 options of activities prepared so if you finish early or find it difficult to concentrate on the first one, you have alternatives ready.

3. Do not try to study for too long at once!
   - Several **short** sessions, focussed on one or two specific things, doing **little** bits and doing this **often** are usually better than one long session.
   - Try doing different study activities and include several breaks. This can be better than spending several hours on one activity with no break.
   - The quality of your study strategy is as important, if not more, than the quantity of time spent.

4. Vary the time and location of revising.
   - Find the best time of day for you to work and concentrate: are you a morning, late-morning, afternoon or evening person?
   - You may remember a topic better because you studied somewhere different to usual e.g. the library, a different room, in a coffee shop.
   - Try going for a walk while reviewing a topic or after study: there is a strong link between exercise and memory (see tip 29).
5. Trying to study when you are tired is usually not effective so use your ‘slump’ time of day to do a more mechanical task e.g. the washing, looking at a magazine, having a coffee with friends.

6. Begin with small achievable targets e.g. 10 minutes of brainstorming, getting an overview of a topic, reading or revising a topic and build up. This can help if you are finding it difficult to get into study mode.

7. Divide your work into small chunks, especially topics you find more challenging.

8. Begin with an easy topic or technique if you find it difficult to get started.

9. Break up harder topics with easier ones e.g. begin with a topic you enjoy and work on that for 30 minutes then do a short session on a more challenging area, and then return to the first topic.

10. Try the ‘Active Reading and Study Cycle’ (see separate sheets)

11. Create ‘study triggers’ to encourage yourself to get started. Develop a routine that leads to study.

12. Create the right environment for you to study. This could be:
   - Having folders/ boxes to store materials not currently needed but easily accessible and moveable to another room.
   - Making a chair more comfortable.
   - Getting a linen basket!
   - Don’t study in bed, it can affect the quality of both your studying and your sleep.

13. If you like working to music, play something that makes you feel good/is uplifting. Some people prefer music without vocals/words.

14. Use active learning techniques. These make the brain work with the information and help develop memory and understanding. Here is a list with some ideas, but there are plenty of others:
   - Writing a series of index cards/flash cards with key points.
   - Writing a summary.
   - Condensing notes into key points.
   - Comparing ideas in a table.
   - Making posters: make them interactive with questions, images and links to other resources.
   - Reading something new.
   - Annotating notes on existing lecture notes/texts.
   - Reading out loud.
   - Doing past papers.
   - Looking for different angles on the material.
   - Taking sides on an issue.
   - Putting it to music.
   - Inventing questions and practice answering them.
• Finding links.
• Record yourself answering questions: listening to your own voice may help memory.
• Creating mind maps/spider diagrams.
• Creating mnemonics.
• Trying out a new technique.

15. Be organised: make sure you can find your notes and materials easily. In addition to handwritten notes, there are lots of Apps and ways to have notes and links to online materials all in one place e.g. ‘One Note’ in Microsoft Office package.

16. Prioritise what to study/revise. Identify gaps and key areas that need deeper knowledge: you may not need to go over everything. It is very useful to know exactly what you know and don’t know.

17. Check which questions come up regularly on exams, but do not rely on them! Try to think about similar questions that might be asked.

18. When practising exam questions from past papers, critique your answers or ask a trusted ‘critical friend’ to critique it them for you. How could it be improved?

19. Build up your writing speed (without sacrificing readability: you only get marks for what your marker can read!). Try ‘timed essays’: reading a question, planning and writing an answer in the same time you would have in the exam.

20. Always have some work with you e.g. key cards / index cards, notes on phone, recordings to listen to or video to watch.

21. Use scraps of time e.g. on the bus, train, walking into university or the shops, waiting for friends or making a cup of tea.

22. Short of time?
   • Try tips 20 and 21.
   • Try creating a list of key areas and brainstorm what you already know about them, then start building up from there, filling in the gaps e.g. re-reading a text, watching a lecture.
   • If you have not been able to look at a topic, get an overview of a text or lecture and build up from this, adding in a new fact, a reference or a main idea about a theory.

23. Before you fall asleep, ask your mind to reflect on a particular topic or theme during your sleep, or review key points and ask your mind to remember them. Then ‘sleep on it’.

24. Have a good study/sleep pattern that fits with the times of your lectures, tutorials, labs, tests and exams. Working regularly until 2.00 am, for example, will affect your body clock and probably lead you to not concentrate well or performing to your best at your 9.00 am tutorials or exams!

25. Switch off from social media and use it or e.g. gaming, watching TV or another distraction as a reward

26. Try revising with others (avoid group gloom, negative thoughts and wasting time chatting though!). Short structured sessions for 30-60 minutes are a good way to start.
27. Ask for help: talk to your Course/Programme Co-ordinators, lecturers /tutors about the type of answers they expect and what earns higher marks. Ask if they will review an outline answer.

28. Stay positive: this way your brain will be more receptive to study.

29. Look after yourself: good quality sleep, eating healthily, relaxing, exercise and taking breaks are all important. There is increasing evidence that exercise increases brain function and new research indicates that doing exercise within 2 hours of study aids memory.

30. Panicking about a test or exam? Use stress creatively:
   - Look on difficulties as challenges and try to devise new strategies to overcome them.
   - Organise your materials.
   - Get some exercise.
   - Try relaxation techniques. A classic relaxation technique: breath in for 2 counts – hold for 2 counts – out for 4 counts. Check you are breathing deeply, down into your tummy. This helps us stay calm – and helps get oxygen to our brain. There are lots of others, so do a search online and find one that works for you.
   - Talk to others (who have a positive outlook).
   - Arrange a study advice session with the Student Learning Service.
   - The Counselling Service has produced a series of useful self-help guides such as one on exam anxiety.
   - Don’t lose a sense of perspective – it’s only an exam!