

# Active Studying Strategies

Simply reading (and re-reading) course material and listening to lectures are examples of passive studying strategies. Active studying strategies involve engaging with the ideas in the material on a deeper level such as putting information into your own words, finding relationships between ideas, and populating concepts with examples. Passive studying may be tempting because it feels easier than active studying. Furthermore, passive studying strategies can provide an inaccurate sense of confidence about understanding the material. Active studying, on the other hand, can provide insight into information you haven't yet mastered and will help you understand, retain, and retrieve information.

## Choose effective study strategies for a specific class

Identify the information and skills necessary for success in the class. Look for main topics and concepts from texts, lectures, and assigned work.

Choose and incorporate active study strategies below into your studying routine.

You may want to target strategies that will give you practice in the format of upcoming tests and assignments.

## Active studying strategies

### Transform your notes

- Rewrite and organize notes. Add graphs, pictures, and clarifying language.
- Watch recorded lectures multiple times to fill in gaps in notes.
- Fill out existing study guides or create your own study guide for review.

### Engage with the material

Gather topics (concepts, vocabulary, and ideas) from notes and texts, then:

- Ask yourself *how*, *why*, and *what if* questions about the topics, and then produce answers to those questions.
- Create a concept map of the topics, and develop connections between topics.
- Relate the topics to things you already know.
- Explain a concept to an audience (friend, classmate) or imagined audience.
- Create your own study guide.

### Self-test

- Write or draw out everything you can remember on a topic.
- Test yourself with practice problems or practice tests. Mimic test-like conditions.
- Create and use flashcards for key concepts, names, formulas, dates, etc.
- Make up test questions from readings, lectures, and notes. Consider what the instructor may ask.

### Engage with peers and resources

- Create a study group or find a study partner to collaborate with.
- Visit office hours with questions. Clarify any points from the lecture/text.
- Post question you need answered in the discussion board on Canvas.
- Use TAEC resources -- get tutoring or join Class Encore to enhance your learning.

## References and further reading

- Weinstein, Y., Sumeracki, M., & Caviglioli, O. (2019). *Understanding How We Learn*. Routledge.
- McGuire, S. Y., and McGuire, S., (2015). *Teach Students How to Learn*. First ed. Stylus.
- Adapted from [SPU Active Study Strategies handout](#).

