

STUDYING TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Each person learns best in his or her own unique way. Some of us have been fortunate and found what works for us while the rest of us are still learning. It's a process that takes time but here are some tips that you can use to be successful not just in this class but in all of your classes!

NOTE TAKING

- Take notes in class and date them to make them easier to organize and follow.
- Be sure to put your notes in your own words so that you can understand them later. This may mean that you may have to rewrite your notes each day. This will not only give you a chance to add anything that may make the material easier to understand for you but can also help you learn and recall the information since it forces you to review it each day.
- Leave blank space on each page of notes to give yourself room to make additions and clarifications or examples.
- Organize your notes into information "chunks." The brain learns better when it focuses on small bits of information. When you study, study one note "chunk" before going on to the next one.
- Listen for key principals the teacher may emphasize with their voice (usually through volume) but may not write down on the board for you to copy.

READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Read actively and do not just look at the words. Nothing is worse than spending an hour reading something only to have no idea what you just read. Concentrate and try these following methods.
- Preview a chapter quickly before you begin so that you know ahead of time what you are going to be reading about.
- Review the material frequently. Pause at the end of each paragraph or section and summarize what you just read back to yourself in your own words.
- Try to avoid reading for long periods of time at once. Your chapters are divided into several major sections with bold headings. Try to limit your reading to one or two of these sections at a time. Then take a break and come back to the next section (chunking your reading).
- Do not ignore the pictures, diagrams, table and sidebars in your textbook. Those are there for a reason and often help you understand the major principles better. Plus, they are usually more interesting than just reading the text!
- Take notes or make an outline of each chapter as you read. If you can condense a 30-page chapter to a few pages of good notes, it is going to be much easier to review and remember. Also, keep a list of key terms and vocabulary as well as any questions you may encounter as you read.
- You may want to make a set of vocabulary flash cards for each chapter as you read and review them periodically. These are a great way to review for the test as well!

EFFECTIVE STUDYING

- Always study and quiz yourself over previous days' notes before moving on to new material. Try to do this nightly for 10-15 minutes. For instance, if I have 3 sections/topics of notes to learn, I would first study section 1. When I'm comfortable with that material, I would go on to section 2. Before moving on to section 3, I would quiz myself over sections 1 and 2, spending extra time on the areas I struggled remembering. Continue this pattern, always going back to the beginning (section 1) before moving on to the next section you are trying to learn. If you get into this habit, you will have reviewed material 6-7 times before test day! It is way more effective than a three hour study session the night before and you'll find that each
- Think Like a Teacher – When reading over your notes or assignments for class, ask the question, "How would Mr. Portenga ask this on a test?" It rarely will come in the word for word form of your notes or textbook. Whenever possible, the test questions ask the test taker to apply the term to a situation or example so think of situations and examples for each term or concept you study.
- Study with a Buddy – I have found that students often are the best tutors for each other because they can often put things into a perspective that their peers will understand. You and a partner are always welcome to come study in my room before or after school or during lunch. I also encourage you to share mnemonic memory devices you've created with each other and to share your study methods to help each other out. Our class Facebook Page: Mr. Portenga's AP Psychology Class is a great place for students to share ideas on how to remember material or get questions answered by their peers. This site is monitored by me so I always help out if I see a common question people are struggling with understanding.