**5 Types of Studying**

Studying to **Gather Information**



The purpose is to ***formulate a complete and accurate set of textbook and lecture notes***. This requires determining if your notes are complete and accurate by:

* Identifying the information to be learned by determining the main ideas discussed in lecture, text and outlined in the syllabus
* Organizing, condensing and recording information using flashcards, the Cornell method or study notes
* Going over your notes with a classmate or a T.A. to ensure that they are complete and accurate

Studying to **Learn the Material**



The purpose is to ***move what you’ve learned from short-term to long-term memory***. This requires elaborating on the material and repeating/ reciting, by:

* Creating study notes that restructure the information hierarchically around key themes, comparisons etc.
* Tying what you’re learning to real-world examples and applying the ideas
* Using your time to read, repeat and recite your study notes or flashcards
* Looking for main ideas or connecting themes that link the smaller details
* Trying to teach the information to someone else (or to a stuffed animal) is one of the best ways to learn. Look back at the details to check for accuracy and completeness of your recall. If you missed something or were incorrect read through your notes and then try it again. Separate your notes into “things I know” and “things I’m working on/don’t know”, and keep repeating the process until the notes you don’t know can be filed under “things I know”.

The amount of time it takes to learn the information varies from learner to learner and is not correlated with intelligence.

Studying to **Check for Learning**



The purpose is to ***identify what has and has not been learned through self-testing***. To check that you actually know the information you think you know you can:

* Look only at the main point of your notes (e.g. the title of a lecture, the name of a theory or equation) and see if you can recite the details aloud or in writing without looking a the details (look once you’re done to check for accuracy and completeness).
* Have a friend or classmate quiz you using key terms or work in a study group.

Studying to **Refresh**



The purpose is to ***prevent forgetting and fading of previously learned information*.** This requires regular review of the material you have already learned. Ways to do this include:

* Schedule regular times during the week to review the material you’ve already learned. Reviewing the week’s lectures, text notes, and/or problem sets once a week (perhaps Sunday nights) works well to reinforce the past week’s learning and prepare to build on that information in the upcoming week.
* Meet with a study group to discuss the material from the previous lecture prior to the beginning of the next class.

Studying to **Improve Learning Skills**



This is the most neglected and overlooked type of learning. The purpose is to ***identify learning skills that worked (so you can repeat/continue them) and identify learning skills that didn’t work for you (so they can be modified or replaced)****.* This requires you to analyze returned assignments and tests. Unless this analysis is done ‘grade-raising’ study skills may remain a mystery and ‘grade limiting’ habits will likely be repeated. Ways to improve learning skills include:

* Use each assignment and test as feedback on the learning strategies you used to prepare for it – quantitative feedback in the form of grades does not always reflect all the factors involved in your preparation for the test/assignment but it will give you an idea of how well the particular study skills worked for you.
* Talk to other successful students in your classes to see what learning skills they use.
* Sign up for a workshop on a specific study skill you would like to develop or improve. Or schedule a one-on-one learning skills consultation at Counselling & Disability Services with a Learning Skills Counsellor.
* Talk to your professor and T.A.s about your performance in the class and see if they have any recommendation on how you can improve.

A Caution about **Cramming**



Cramming is something that you will likely do at some point in your academic career. However, learning achieved through cramming rarely attains desired grades and nearly guarantees a performance below your potential. The problem with cramming is that it doesn’t afford you enough time to understand the information. Consequently, facts and ideas can be stored only in short-term memory and retained for a limited time period. The even bigger drawback is that because you have not spent enough time to understand the information your ability to apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate ideas (high levels of thinking) is impaired. As this is the type of learning that you are expected to demonstrate on tests, assignment and exams, cramming rarely yields desired results and nearly guarantees that you will perform below your potential.