

## Study Skills Tip Sheet

**Attend lecture – in person. Strong study habits start with class lectures** Medical school is extremely time-consuming, but if you are strategic about how you manage and use your time, you will rarely feel like there is not enough time. Being prepared is key to being successful in medical school. You will see this in classes, with exams, and eventually, when you are preparing for board exams. Preparation and learning start with your lectures. Following a plan of what to do before, during and after attending classes can help you more strategically study and learn material, as well as help you identify your weaknesses in material.

### **Plan before lectures, work while there, and organize after**

#### ***Before Lecture - Pre-Work:***

- Spend 15-20 mins (set a timer!) – look at lecture learning objectives, terms you do not know, review material for the day of lecture; are there some things you do know? Make a note of it.
- Write a paragraph/summary based on what you think lecture will be about – think “big picture”
- This is like a preview of what is to come so you will not be caught off guard

#### ***During Lecture:***

- **Attend class in real time** if possible – recorded lectures are great to have as a “back-up” plan, but being there in real time is much more useful
  - It is easy to put off watching a lecture when it is at your disposal
  - Often, when we skip lecture in real-time, we are bound to miss something when we go back to watch it
  - You have the option to speed up a lecture when you watch it, which again could make you miss something important
  - There is a higher chance of being distracted if watching a lecture that is not in real-time
- Take notes during lecture rather than relying on PPT/lecture slides (even though you can always go back to them if you think you missed something); do not rewrite something that is already on a slide
- Use symbols for important info, underline/highlight things that are repeated in lecture, label info you may have to go back to for a better understanding
- During lecture, actively think to yourself:
  - What am I questioning?
  - What sounds familiar from my pre-work?
  - What connections can I make to other information I have learned/heard?
  - What do I not know? What have I never heard before?

#### ***After Lecture – Post-Work:***

- After lecture, on the same day – dump your brain
- Spend 5 minutes taking all information from your pre-work/pre-class paragraph/summary and notes during lecture and look at learning objectives for the class again
- What learning objectives can you now answer based on what you got out of lecture & pre-work?
- What information from PPT matches or is missing or that needs to be added to what you already have?
- Think about putting details to the whole and the whole to the details
- Make your questions during lecture or in pre-work match the objectives for the class – and if they do not, figure out why and find that information

### **Productive studying starts with time management. Plan your study sessions**

- Set up a daily study time schedule and identify where you will study
  - You should try to study the same time each day – it is about consistency
  - If you do not have a designated study space at home, stay on campus or go to a coffee shop or your local library to study if you are able
  - If you study on campus, make sure you select a quiet space – maybe a study room or the library

- Know when you are being tested – exams, quizzes...
- **Actively** review your notes, lecture slides, and any other class resources on a daily basis
- Begin intensive/active test preparation
- Study and review each day as if you have a test the next day
- If something isn't working after you've tried it for 2 weeks, try something different that may work better
- Study sessions should be segmented – 30-60 minutes, break, 30-60 minutes, break and so on
  - Each study session should have a set of goals & objectives (By the end of the hour studying anatomy, I will be able to identify (or apply, or recite...) \_\_\_\_\_)
- Study sessions should end with (maybe the last 15 minutes of your session) practice questions
  - The goal is not necessarily to get them correct, but rather get exposed to the material in a question format
- Take advantage of small chunks of time to study and review material in your head
  - Look at flash cards (great for factoids, terminology, vocabulary) while prepping for dinner
  - Review a section of notes while waiting for laundry to dry
  - Record yourself reading important notes and listen to it in your car, while you are working out, running or walking

### Studying should be an active process

Active studying includes:

- **Identifying** important information – Ask yourself “what’s most important here?”
- **Organizing** the information – create a framework that assists with memorization
- **Memorizing** the information – frequently review (daily if possible) the information so that the brain can absorb it (Remember, you have a lot of information in front of you in medical school; you are not going to be able to memorize all of it – you should know it enough to apply it)
- **Applying** the information to more complex settings – practice questions, clinical applications, connections to former knowledge
- **Using multiple ways of learning information** – visuals and pictures, tables, charts, concept maps
- **Studying in groups** where you can test each other, ask questions, draw out information together
- **Power Hour tutor review sessions** are a great way to get active with the material and check your knowledge and understanding of it

### Always remind yourself of the “big picture” when reading and reviewing material

Being able to read for key ideas in content and take notes out of your textbook or from lecture slides will allow for better understanding of big ideas and the vocabulary of whatever you are studying.

- Get the “big picture” first - glance through the material in the textbook or lecture slides (chapter headings, subheadings, course objectives, slides, videos, or any other resources provided for lecture)
- Try to find 4-5 major topics
- Organize the material to make connections - create lists, diagrams, charts, concept maps, or other visuals; watch videos on Osmosis or search for videos on specific content
- Read the summary slides at the end of each section of PPTs or summary paragraphs at the end of chapters to get the general idea
- **Use the SQ3R system for textbook reading** (this system is best used over a period of a few days):
  - **Skim:** Skim the chapter before reading it. Be sure to pay attention to all pictures, charts, and diagrams
  - **Question:** After skimming the chapter, write down two or three questions about the chapter or section
  - **Read:** Read the chapter carefully while taking outline notes of what you are reading
  - **Review:** Review your notes and use them to answer the questions you developed after you skimmed the chapter (“b” above)
  - **Recite:** Quiz yourself on the main concepts of the chapter

## Notetaking Tips

Good notetaking habits can improve your ability to learn and shorten your time when preparing for a test.

- Listen carefully to your professor
- Always write down things the professor...
  - Writes on the board or whiteboard
  - Says are important to remember
  - Repeats verbally or in lecture notes/slides
  - Adds to lecture slides while lecturing
- Do not rewrite things that are already in your lecture slides
- Take your notes, clearly, in your own way – maybe it’s an outline, notes in the margin of PPTs, a list of terms/concepts to go back to...whatever makes it easy for you to go back and understand
- Always add examples, visual cues or reminders next to your notes
- Leave room on your paper to expand or add to your notes after class

Remember that you have to develop your own strategy that will work best for you and your learning. Do not attempt to mimic what others are doing – do your own thing. What worked for you in previous education experiences may not work in medical school, so you must be open to switching things up when necessary. Utilize your Peer Tutors.

## Schedule an appointment with a tutor:

Individual Anatomy Tutoring Form

[Anatomy Individual Tutor Request Form \(office.com\)](#)

Individual Biochemistry Tutoring Form

[Individual Tutor Form - Biochemistry \(office.com\)](#)

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## Adapted from:

Apperson, A. How to Drink from a Fire-Hose Without Drowning: Successful study strategies in med and pharmacy school.

Hunimed. (2016). Study Hints and tips for medical students.

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