Top Study Skills

Take Breaks
The average adult attention span is only 20 minutes. If you are studying for an hour or more at a time, make sure to take a 5 minute break every 20 minutes to maintain up your concentration, focus, energy, and information retention. Set a timer so a 5 minute break does not become a 10 minute break!

Distribute Learning
Students who have short, frequent study sessions typically have higher GPA’s than those who have fewer, longer study sessions. Try to plan your studying throughout the week for shorter time periods, rather than once or twice a week for several hours.

Re-Write Notes
One of the best ways to study is to re-write your notes from class. You can automatically review material, make notes more organized, add personal examples, and summarize material to maximize retention and ease of review.

Join a Study Group
Study groups are shown to have many advantages, such as providing the opportunity to explain concepts to others, which is one of the best ways to learn. You can also review and identify any gaps in knowledge.

Make Personal Connections
Whenever possible, try to think of personal examples of, or connections to the material you are learning. Can you think of someone you know or something that happened that is a good example of what you’re learning? If so, you are likely to remember that better than the book’s example.

Know Your Learning Style
Do you find that you tend do speak out loud when reading a chapter? Or maybe you remember information best when it’s presented in a diagram? These are clues to your learning style, and if you take time to discover yours, you can find study tips and tools that will make your study time more efficient and effective. Visit our website aae.boisestate.edu/know-your-learning-style/ for some assessments.

Mental State
Our brains interpret, code, and recall information differently when we’re in different mental states. Caffeine, nicotine, food, music, and even TV can alter our mental states. If you want to perform your best on a test, make sure to study in the same mental state you will be in during the exam. For example, if you drink 1 coffee when you study, don’t drink 6 Red Bulls when you take a test.

The Memory Curve
Most students study in chronological order, but it’s actually better for you to study based on how well you know the information. What you study at the beginning and end you remember the best, and what you study in the middle you remember least. When studying for a test, put what you know the least at the beginning or end of your study time or study guide, and what you know the most in the middle.