



***Enhanced Learning  
Educational Services***  
*“the study skills specialist”*

# HOW TO STUDY FOR TESTS AND EXAMS



Knowing how to study effectively for tests and examinations is a skill that is essential not just for school but for life-long learning.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.



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## **Enhanced Learning Educational Services Profile**

### Our Organisation:

Enhanced Learning Educational Services (ELES) is the leading provider of study skills resources in Australia. Since 2001 over 500,000 students across Australia have benefited from our study skills worksheets and workbooks. An Australian business based in Sydney, our clients extend throughout Australia and to international schools overseas. We are committed to helping all students improve their ability to learn and study by providing study skills seminars and resources on the topics students need.

### Our Mission:

To provide a worthwhile and effective service to teachers, students and parents, enhancing students' learning skills and abilities through dynamic programs, resources and strategies to unlock the power of the mind and enable greater success at school and in life.

### Our Commitment:

As part of ELES' commitment to education, 5% of all gross income is donated to charities that help and assist children.

## **For further information about ELES or our products or contact details:**

[info@enhanced-learning.net](mailto:info@enhanced-learning.net)  
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# 1. OVERALL APPROACH TO STUDYING

Study actually takes place long before you start to officially 'study' for a test or exam. The amount of work that you will need to do to prepare for a test or examination will depend on a number of factors.

- How well you paid attention in class when the concepts were being taught.
- How well you have completed homework and other tasks along the way.
- How well you have kept your notes for that topic/subject organised.
- Whether you have made any study notes or summaries for that topic already.

In a test or examination, you have to be able to do 3 things:

1. UNDERSTAND the topic.
2. REMEMBER the content of the topic.
3. APPLY the skills and techniques of the topic to different types of questions.



There are three aspects to doing this:

1. Make STUDY NOTES or summaries.
2. LEARN the information.
3. PRACTISE the skills of the subject.

	Helps you see if you UNDERSTAND the info	Helps you to REMEMBER the info	Helps you to APPLY the skills of the subject
MAKING STUDY NOTES	YES	YES	NOT REALLY
'LEARNING' the info	YES	YES	YES
'PRACTISING' the skills	YES	YES	YES



*a. Does this match with your understanding of the correct way to approach studying for a test or examination? Do you do anything differently?*

## 2. STEPS TO STUDYING

- **STEP 1: MAKING STUDY NOTES**

Making study notes or summaries is a great way for you to discover if you understand the topic. If you just copy slabs out of your textbook or classnotes and call these study notes then you won't have learnt anything! But if you really think about the information and try to organise it and write down what you need to remember in point form in your own words, this is when you will first start to discover if you understand the information. The process of making study notes also starts to move the information into your long-term memory. It also makes it much easier to learn and remember the information as you can go over a structured, organised, condensed set of notes rather than having to look back through all of the work you have done (which would be much more time-consuming).

- **STEP 2. LEARNING THE INFORMATION**

But making the study notes is not enough! You then need to 'LEARN' the information by studying it in an active way (so you can remember and retain the info).

This is really all about transferring the information from your study notes into your memory and testing whether you can remember it! This can also help you find areas you don't understand as it is really difficult to try and memorise or learn information that you don't understand! Part of the process of learning the information is asking questions about things you don't understand or are not sure of.



- **STEP 3. PRACTISING THE SKILLS**

The final part is to PRACTISE the skills of the subject. This is where you do lots and lots and lots and lots of questions in order to see what you remember and what you can do and whether you really do understand the information enough to apply it to different types of questions. This is where even though you thought you understood it all, you find out if you really do know it or not! And if you don't understand it then you work through what you got wrong in order to fill in all the holes in your knowledge. It also aids in moving the information more firmly into long-term memory. If you memorised information that you did not understand, this is when it will all come unstuck and you will realise that you have to go back to that section again and review it. You can see from the table above how essential this part of the process is!

NOTE: Ideally you should have the study notes completed first, but if not then treat making study notes as part of the 'learning' cycle. You should then keep alternating between learning and practising, learning some content, doing some questions to re-inforce your work, then spending more time learning the areas you found difficult then back to practice to see if you have worked out your problems - and this cycle just keeps going over and over until the test or exam. With some subjects you might spend more time on the learning side of things and with other subjects you might spend more time on the practice side of things.



*b. What sorts of things do you do in each of these 3 steps? What are your notes like? What techniques do you use for learning? And for practising?*

### 3. TECHNIQUES FOR LEARNING

*LEARNING = UNDERSTANDING + REMEMBERING*

- The biggest mistake that most students make in learning is that students just look through, or read through the information and think that will be enough for them to remember it.
- They might even read it through a number of times and think that will work. IT IS NOT ENOUGH! Just reading over the information might be the easiest way to study but it is also the slowest, most ineffective way of getting information into long-term memory. You have to do more than just read!
- If you are just reading it becomes very boring and you quickly lose interest in what you are doing. You start to become sleepy and your concentration drops off. Before long you can't remember what you read a few seconds ago and you are not absorbing any of the information.

**Your study needs to be ACTIVE!**

**You need to interact with the information.**

**It also helps if you can engage your senses as well.**



This means that you need to do MORE than just read. It is difficult to make the information stay in your long-term memory after only reading over it. Often students who use this method only to prepare for exams find that they think they know the information, but when they actually get into the examination the information seems to have dropped out of their head.

Not all of the techniques outlined below will be for you. We all study and learn in different ways and what works for one person might not be as effective for another.



**So this means you need to do two things:**

1. Try lots of different techniques to see which ones work best for you.
2. Ensure you use a wide range of techniques, ie don't just get hung up on one or two ways of studying. The more different techniques you use the better!

**TICK WHICH OF THESE YOU HAVE TRIED:**

- Read through information and highlight key points.
- Make study notes: it is a form of studying and will then be easier to study from.
- Read your notes then see what you can write down without looking and check what you knew or didn't know.
- Read your notes out loud to yourself then see what you can recite or repeat out loud without looking and check and see what you knew and what you still need to review.
- After you have read a section see if you can sum up the three most important points in that section.
- Make flashcards of rules, formulas or things you need to learn with questions on the front and answers on the back and test yourself on them.
- Explain what you just studied to someone else - this is a great way to see if you really understand it.

