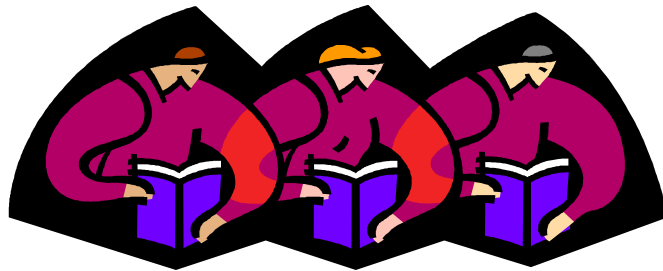
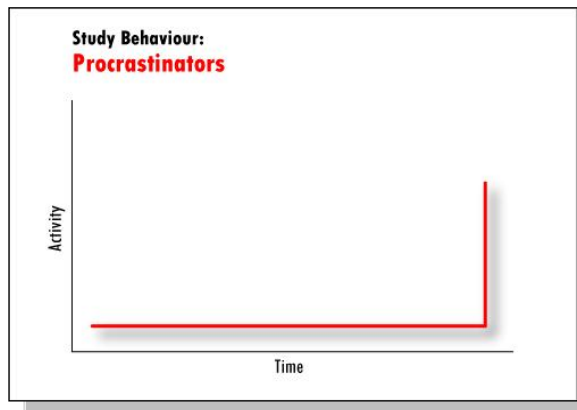


Study Strategies

A Student Academic Learning Services Workshop

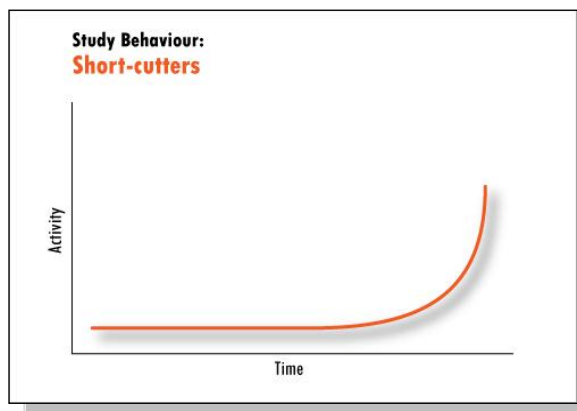


Study Behaviours



Procrastinators

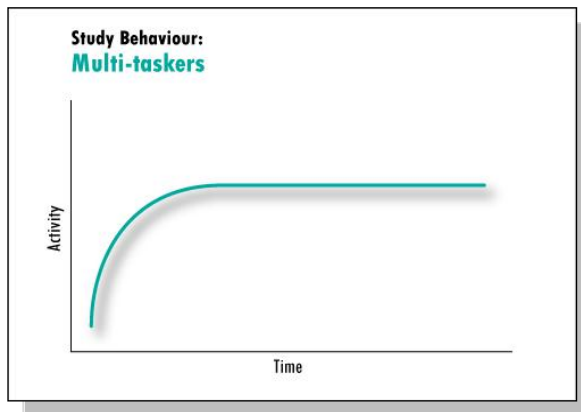
- All work and study is left to the last possible moment.
- It is common for procrastinators to give up.
- Procrastinators benefit from identifying the sources of their procrastination and confronting them.
- They also benefit from structuring their approach to study (time-management and organization).



Short-Cutters

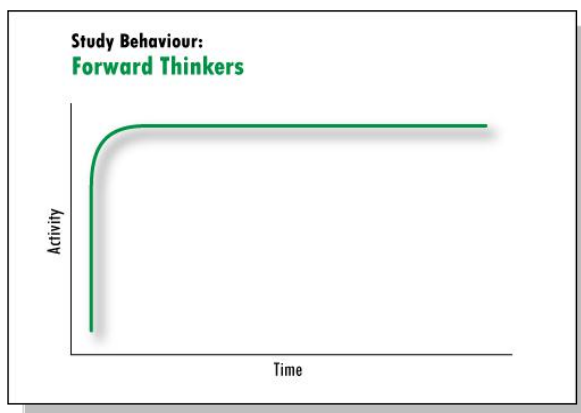
- A short-cutter may read only the chapter summary and not the chapter itself.
- They complete an assignment with the bare minimum amount of effort required.
- More work is done than procrastinators but the depth of understanding and retention is very low.
- Short-cutters benefit from dedicating more time to studying, organizing their time, setting priorities, and avoiding procrastination.

Study Behaviours (continued)



Multi-taskers

- A multi-tasker will typically be working on several assignments and studying simultaneously.
- They manage to get much of their work done, but because they are doing so many tasks at one time their depth of understanding and retention of knowledge is impaired.
- Multi-taskers benefit from a more structured approach to studying and from focusing on one activity at a time.



Forward-Thinkers

- Forward thinkers plan *how* to learn AND *what* to learn.
- They practice effective time-management strategies. They know when they have opportunities to work, and what to work on.
- They make their academics a priority, but still plan time for family and friends.
- Forward thinkers use study strategies that increase their understanding of content, they *don't* rely on memorization.

Common Problem: Distraction (failure to concentrate)

One significant obstacle to efficient use of your study time is the failure to concentrate. This can become a habit and create a false sense of diligence; because you have spent three hours “studying”, you must be working hard. Remember:

- It is not humanly possible to eliminate all distractions and concentrate 100% of the time.
- You must distinguish between distractions that can be controlled and which cannot.
- You may find it is not simply matter of being interrupted, but of wanting to be interrupted.



External Distractions

External distractions are often controllable. Repeated distraction may result from the failure to discover a suitable place to study. Your aim should be to find a regular spot that offers a minimum of distractions. You may never find an ideal study place, but keep the following in mind:

- **The Right Place to Study** – Build an association between studying and your study place so that it becomes a way of prompting work, not avoiding it. Have a back-up location to ease boredom.
- **Remove Distracting Objects** – The material on your desk should be related to studying. Eliminate other objects from your line of sight.
- **Check Your Surroundings** – Ensure that your study area has proper lighting, a moderately comfortable chair, and a desk or table large enough to spread out all your work and items necessary for work (paper, pens, pencils, calculator, and so on).
- **Music** – If you are listening to music to help you relax while working, be sure to keep the volume low, and listen to music that is calm (classical or ambient) and does not contain lyrics.
- **Learn to Say No** – Academics should be your priority. Cultivate the art of the occasional “no” when asked to socialize. If you’re a little short of willpower, try a “do not disturb” sign on your door.

Distraction (continued)



Internal Distractions

It is bad enough that external distractions occur, but it's even worse to create them yourself. Here are some suggestions for reducing time spent daydreaming or worrying:

- **Do the Hard Work First** – Difficult or unpleasant tasks take additional time and energy and are a root cause of procrastination. Start these tasks when you are fresh.
- **Know When You Work Best** – Schedule study sessions for the times of day when you are most alert
- **Make Your Subject Important** – Occasionally your course content may be dry or tedious. When you find yourself describing the content as “boring” you must change your thinking and create a sense of importance for the material. Ask yourself why so many people are studying this subject, determine why your faculty thinks this course is absolutely necessary, or find out what skills or knowledge you are likely to gain.
- **Keep to Your Usual Routine** – Don't change your sleeping, eating or exercise habits. The ability to concentrate depends on the regularity of your sleeping and eating patterns.
- **Put Worries Aside** – Try writing down your worries, and what you might do about them. Not all worries can be treated so casually, however. At some point you may find it best to talk out your problem with friends, parents, or counsellors.

Common Problem: Procrastination



Knowing *how* you procrastinate is an important step in breaking the habit. What types of activities do you find yourself doing when the pressure at school starts to build? Chances are, some of them are your preferred methods of procrastination. Common behaviours include:

- Watching T.V.
- Socializing with friends (phone, text, email, Facebook, etc.)
- Snacking
- Cleaning

I procrastinate by:

Reasons

Knowing *why* you procrastinate will help you choose the best strategy to stop the behaviour now, and help avoid it in the future.

- **Feelings of Inertia** – You do not feel like doing anything new. It takes less energy to do nothing than it does to find the energy to begin something new.
- **Feelings of Being Overwhelmed** – You have many things to do (all claiming equal priority) and so there's difficulty deciding where to begin.
- **Low Appeal** – Other activities seem more interesting.
- **Feelings of Guilt** – You feel that you are neglecting other things that require your time or thoughts (e.g., relationships, family).
- **Fear of Failure** – You may be challenged with unrealistic goals or confusing expectations.
- **Fear of Success** – What will happen if you succeed? Will expectations be raised? Will support still be in place then?

Still Procrastinating?



Strategies to Conquer Procrastination

- **Set Priorities** – You must decide what is more important, and do that task first. Postponing it because something else could be done more easily or more conveniently will only catch you in the procrastinating cycle. You are making the best use of your time only when working on your most important task.
- **Plan the Next Step** – Many people get stalled in the middle of a task because they aren't sure what to do next. You can avoid this pitfall by constantly reviewing what you've accomplished and planning a few steps beyond where you are.
- **Break it Down** – A task that gets put off is often difficult, unpleasant or intimidating. You can work with this by starting with short, fast, easy tasks. List several activities that will lead you to the big assignment, but take ten minutes or less. Once you've eased yourself into the task in this manner, you may find that it's not as dull or difficult as you thought.
- **Be an Optimist** – Research has shown that we will attempt a task we feel we can do, even if it is impossible. Conversely, we won't try anything we believe we cannot do. So, don't give up until you try. Assume you will be successful.
- **Wedging** – Make a deal with yourself to do 10 minutes of the dreaded task, and spend the next 10 minutes actually doing the task, not sharpening your pencil or getting ready to do it. After 10 minutes if you want to take a break, that's okay, but time the break by setting a timer. When the alarm goes off, come back and again do another 10 minute study wedge. Will power is needed most for the beginning and the end of the wedge. You determine how long your breaks are and how long your study periods are.
- **Plan Rest and Rewards** – Controlling procrastination goes hand in hand with maintaining motivation. Use leisure activities as rewards for achieving goals to help keep motivation high. In extreme situations, make deals with yourself, e.g., if you get your chapter finished you can watch TV. Under normal circumstances, decide to work for a specific length of time (no longer than an hour) and then take a short break before continuing.

Yep... still Procrastinating



Strategies to Conquer Procrastination

- **Acknowledge the Decision** – The decision to procrastinate is usually made very quickly and with little appreciation for the consequences. In a matter of seconds, the book is closed and put away. Try to cultivate an awareness of the moment of decision. Slow the whole process down – describe what you’re doing and why. You’ll probably still close the book, but if you do it a little more slowly and hesitantly, you’re making progress. You should try to figure out why you’re putting off a particular task. If you think about it, you may realize you need help understanding the task, and you can take steps toward getting that help and moving forward with completing the task.
- **Do Nothing** – Sit in a chair and do absolutely nothing. Shut down your computer, turn off the TV or music and close the book. Eventually your sense of priorities will lead you back to the task at hand.

Sources – Distraction & Procrastination

Modified and adapted from: Studying: Increasing Concentration by Decreasing Distractions, Learning Services @ Laurier, Wilfrid Laurier University as found at <http://www.wlu.ca/learningservices>

Study Strategies: The Do's and Don'ts for Studying



The Do's (the things you should do to improve your studying)

- Review your notes and cue cards daily.
- Study / review your notes in an environment that most closely resembles the test environment (sitting at a desk in a quiet place).
- Try to do most of your studying during the time of day when you work best.
- Control the flow of information.
 - Break your time into chunks (10 min for memorization and 45 min for intensive review, 5-10 min for reflection, repeat).
 - When reflecting, think of what you just studied. Give your brain time to process the information.
- Review content with a small group of two or three people.
- Recite information aloud.
- Always create a picture in your mind (or on paper) about what you are studying.
- Review 'key terms' and special vocabulary *before* reading the text.
- Use effective memory strategies.



The Don'ts (the things you must not do when you are studying)

Do NOT...

- Study on your bed, at the kitchen table or in front of the TV.
- Study in large groups (more than three or four people).
- Leave all your studying until the night before the test.
- Stay up all night studying.
- Discuss the test with classmates just before the test.

Example Study Schedule

How do you decide to break up your study time? Below are just two examples of how you could break up a two-hour block of time for study. Keep in mind that you have to decide what works best for you considering the difficulty and your personal interest in the subject being studied.

Option 1: You find a subject difficult/boring

12:00 – 12:20	Read assigned chapter material from textbook.
12:20 – 12:25	Reflect on the content you just read. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are you going to be tested on what you’ve just read? ● How are you going to use the new concepts and ideas? ● Make notes, summarize, and record the content.
12:25 – 12:45	Solve practice problems and exercises.
12:45 – 01:00	Take a break from studying. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get something to eat and/or drink. ● Stand up and move around to help stay alert and burn off excess energy

For the second hour repeat this cycle *with a different subject*.

Option 2: You find a subject easy/interesting

12:00 – 12:20	Read assigned chapter material from textbook.
12:20 – 12:25	Reflect on the content you just read. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are you going to be tested on what you’ve just read? ● How are you going to use the new concepts and ideas? ● Make notes, summarize, and record the content.
12:25 – 12:45	Read.
12:45 – 12:50	Reflect.
12:50 – 01:10	Read.
01:10 – 01:20	Reflect, stand up and stretch, get some water, use the bathroom, etc.
01:20 – 01:40	Read.
01:40 – 02:00	Solve practice problems and exercises.

Study Tools

Graphic organizers

Graphic organizers are tables, charts, or diagrams that organize and show a lot of information in a concise way.

Why use them?

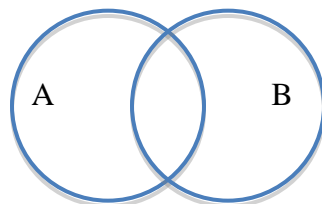
- Information is organized and displayed visually.
- Large amounts of information are summarized quickly.
- More studying can be done with less time invested.
- Easier to see the relationships between main ideas and to grasp the “big picture”.

How to use them?

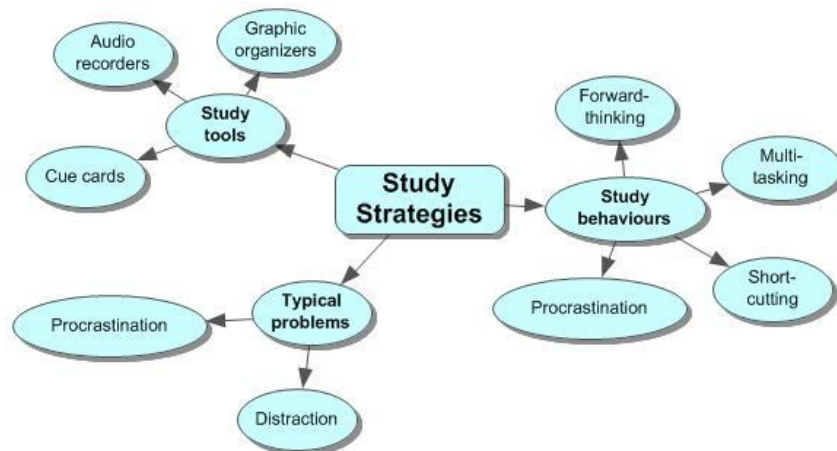
- Simple comparison chart:

	Multi-tasker	Forward thinker
SAME	Reasonably productive	
DIFFERENT	Focus on multiple tasks <i>at the same time</i> . Poor performance, understanding, and retention	Focus on tasks <i>one at a time</i> . High performance, understanding, and retention.

- Venn diagram:



- Mind map:



Digital or Tape recorder

Digital and tape recorders are electronic devices used to capture sound. They are an excellent way to capture the spoken content of a lecture and to check your comprehension while studying.

Why use them?

- Recording a lecture helps you to focus on the speakers, improving the quality of your listening. You are not distracted by trying to write everything down.
- Auditory learners learn best by listening. Having a device that records the spoken lecture allows them to review the content in auditory form.
- Digital and tape recorders capture the lecture completely, allowing you to review the recording and fill in any gaps you may have missed when taking notes.

How to use them?

- For note taking...
 - Be sure to ensure the instructor is comfortable with recording. Asking if the instructor is comfortable with being recorded demonstrates respect for him/her and builds a positive relationship between you. This is always to your advantage.
 - Place the recorder at the front of the room. You may want to do a test track to ensure the settings are set properly.
 - Listen to the recordings at end of day and transcribe them to written note form. This process helps you to understand and memorize the content. You may also transfer a digital file to computer for future listening.
- For studying...
 - After reading a paragraph, record yourself summarizing the content.
 - Listen to the recording and ask yourself if your explanation was logical, clear, and accurate.
 - When you can explain something clearly and concisely it is a strong indicator you understand the concept.
 - Transcribe your summary to written form.

Cue cards

Cue (or Note) cards are typically 3" by 4" paper cards, often with lines on one side. They can be purchased inexpensively at most "dollar stores". They are a very good tool for learning and memorizing information such as definitions, equations, or lists of items.

Why use them?

- Cue cards are small and portable. You can have them with you in a pocket or book bag and use them when opportunities to study occur, but you don't have a suitable surface to work on (e.g., a desk).
- You may also find them helpful when you find yourself with only fifteen or twenty minutes to work.
- It's not always convenient to set up your text and notebooks.

How to use them?

- Cue cards are a great way to memorize terms and definitions.
- Write a term on one side of the card and the definition on the other.
- Quiz yourself by reading the term on a card and trying to recall the definition.
- Keep track of how many terms you can define when reviewing a stack of cards (be sure to review the definition on the back if you don't know it). Also keep track of which terms you missed.
- Repeat the self-quiz and see if you can remember more definitions.
- Note which terms you are repeatedly missing. Re-evaluate the wording of the definition and summarize it in simpler terms.
- Work with stacks of cards that are related to the same topic (fifteen to twenty cards in a stack).
- When learning new information, remove cards that you consistently get correct (don't waste time studying content you already know).
- You may choose to colour code the content as well. For example, if studying biology put all the part of an animal cell on red cards, and all parts of a plant cell on green cards.
- You may also lay out the cards on a table and group them for meaning. For example, if studying Accounting, group all Asset accounts together, group all Liability accounts together, and all Equity accounts together.