



How to Create an Effective Study Plan?

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Introduction

One of the most common questions I am asked by students is, can you give me a study plan or study schedule that will help me get the grades I am looking for in my exam.

When it comes to study plans, there is no magic bullet. There is not one study plan out there that works for all students. We are all different, we all have different learning styles, so your plan needs to work for you.

Not only do you need to consider the amount of study that is required for the successful completion of your exams, but how your study will fit into your already busy life. What I mean by this is, you need to consider your extracurricular activities, relationships and other commitments when creating your study plan.

What is the first step in creating your study plan?

The first step in creating your plan is to set yourself a performance goal. That goal might be to pass your exams or get a particular grade in your exams. When you set this performance goal, you need to understand what is required to achieve it. What is expected of you?

Next, do a time budget looking at what you have to cover with the time available. Is it realistic? If not, how can you go about re-prioritising?

Try not to be too rigid with your study plan. In planning, you are looking for a bird's eye view of the road ahead, not a minute-by-minute plan for every day.

Once you have created your high-level plan, then break the study schedule down week by week.

Creating your weekly study plan

At the beginning of each week, set yourself weekly priorities. Ensure your study plan is realistic, otherwise it can feel over-whelming which might result in procrastination and feeling de-motivated.

Ask yourself the following questions as you plan for your week:

- What are my top priorities for the week?
- What are my learning goals for the week?
- What subjects do I need to spend most time on?
- What obstacles might I face this week?
- How can I overcome these obstacles?
- What extra-curricular activities have I planned for the coming week?
- How am I going to look after my well-being this week?

Creating your daily study plan

At the start of each daily study session, set yourself a learning goal. In other words, at the end of your study session, what would you like to have learned or achieved?

Always include retrieval practice in your plan. What this means is, scheduling time for testing or examining yourself on what you have learned. Schedule time for breaks. So often we can forget about scheduling our breaks. If we are doing focussed, deep study, it is important to schedule productive deep breaks. A deep break is not like your lunch break which may be 45/60 minutes long. While every student is different, I recommend taking a deep break of about 10 minutes after 60/90 minutes of study.

After your study session, it is always useful to spend time reflecting on your study. Here are some reflective questions you can ask yourself:

- What went well with my study today?
- What could have gone better?
- What do I need to learn or study more of for more learning mastery?
- What one thing can I do tomorrow to make it better than today?

While studying it can be so easy to lose focus. Having a good study plan will help you stay on track and will help you stay focused. A good plan and setting realistic learning goals is the key to success. Ensure your plan is flexible and be open to changing your plan if it is not working for you.

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