

Study habits of the pros

- ▶ When exams are looming, it's important to be organized about studying for them
- ▶ Here are some tips to help you maximize your time and avoid procrastination



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Start early

"Starting to study early is critical to your success for so many reasons — it allows you to strategically map out your time," says Margot Bell, associate director of student development at the University of British Columbia. Procrastination leads to panic and sloppy work.

Full-time marketing student Sara Cecchetto agrees. She recommends you start everything as early as possible. But, "last

minute cramming is completely necessary."

Manage your time

You can set milestones to stay focused. Create a scoring system for completing tasks on time. Keep your calendar up-to-date on the computer.

Get help.

If you're struggling with something, ask another student.

Bell reminds us that a head start "gives you opportunity to work with other students to understand those concepts that are more difficult, and will

allow you the space to speak to your professor or teaching assistant if you have any questions about the material."

Take frequent breaks.

"Don't study three hours straight. Take breaks in between, so that you're giving your brain some rest," says Sithravadivel. Staring at the computer for long periods can cause eye strain and headaches.

"I always do 45 minutes studying and then a 15-minute break away from the computer so that you can get your mind off of it," says Cecchetto.

Tackle the tough stuff first.

Give yourself points for time spent on your least favourite subjects to avoid procrastination.

Establish a routine.

Your study time should be part of your daily routine, like eating and sleeping. Be consistent and try to study at the same time each day.

Don't take on too much at once.

Quality is better than quantity and you will actually achieve more by breaking down the work into manageable units.

Create a Zen space to help you study.

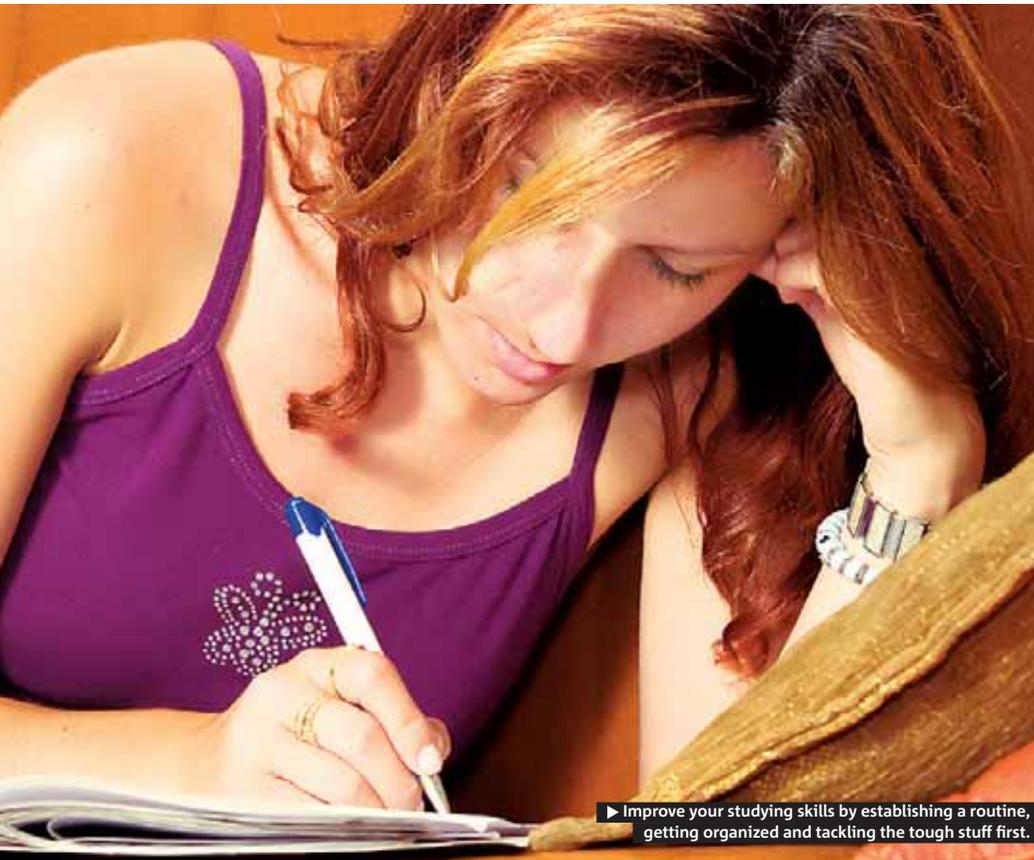
"Obviously be in an environment that is quiet and that you feel comfortable working in," advises Sithravadivel.

"When I'm reading, I like to be in a quiet environment that I'm not getting distracted from, so it certainly does help.

Get organized.

Set clear goals to manage your workload and prioritize your daily tasks. Review your notes and organize them on the computer to see how much you've accomplished.





► Improve your studying skills by establishing a routine, getting organized and tackling the tough stuff first.

Balancing act



Cramming for exams is an intense time, so it's crucial to take care of yourself while you're at it. "Managing your time will help ensure balance during this busy time — keep your body and your brain healthy," says Margot Bell. "Remember the very important basics: eat well, exercise and sleep." Here are some tips.

- **Organize.** Work with your calendar and make a list of all the events in your life. Being organized will help you deal with the intensity of your studies.
- **Breathe... and avoid becoming overwhelmed.** Cheryl Washburn, director of counseling services at

UBC says that "eating well, getting enough sleep and exercise and staying connected to friends and family, all help increase resilience and avoid burn out."

- **Move your body.** Try to tie your study regimen to healthy recreational activities. "Try to work out three times a week, because it does energize you," says business management student Dharsika Sithravadiel. "I've done that and it does really help you out."
- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Rank your tasks in terms of importance. Are there some things that can wait until the end of semester?
- **Sleep.** While it might be tough to get to bed at a reasonable hour, do the best you can. Sara Cecchetto doesn't have time to work out, balancing school with work. "Sleep works best for me," she says.
- **Take time out to pursue your own interests.** There are only so many hours in the day, but it is possible to maintain a balanced lifestyle that blends your study time with social, cultural and religious activities.