

Tips for Studying Physics

- **Get involved** in the subject by learning something about it, relating it to your other courses and interests, and talking it over with fellow students.
- **Keep up with your work.** Set aside time to study physics every day. It's much easier to learn the material throughout the semester than it is to learn it all at once right before the exam. Have a physics study session as soon after class as possible. Also, study physics when your mind is fresh, before you work on subjects requiring less concentration.
- **Prior to lectures, read the chapter,** or at least become familiar with the paragraph headings and key concepts of the chapter. You comprehend a lecture better if you have some understanding ahead of time as to its subject matter.
- **The purpose of studying is to *understand* the material.** Think of applications of the material as you read it and of problems to which the formulas apply. Relate the material with your prior knowledge and with other courses. Can you put the main ideas in your own words? You may have to do on an exam.
- **Use your book; don't just read it.** Underline important points and put your own comments in the margin. Answer both the numerical problems and discussion questions.
- **Pay special attention to definitions.** Be sure you understand the technical meaning of common words. In common vernacular, terms such as force, energy, work, and power often are used interchangeably, but all of them have different meanings in physics.
- **Understanding of mathematics can be important to the study of physics.** Memorize important formulas, but also understand the fundamental principles behind the formulas.
- **Work practice problems.** You only truly understand the subject when you are able to tackle problems with ease and work directly to the correct solution.
- **Plan what questions you would ask if you were making up the test.**
- **Study with a classmate.** Study a week's material together and then test each other on the information. Trying to explain something to a friend will show if you really know it. When you understand the material well enough, you are able to explain it easily.
- **While studying, make a list of topics you don't understand.** Ask the instructor, the T.A., or your tutor about them. Try to state specifically what you don't understand.
- **Many general study tips also apply to the study of physics.** These include: attendance and participation in class, good note taking and textbook reading skills, being motivated, finding an adequate study environment, and practicing good time management.