

Tips for Studying Psychology

Understand and Apply Concepts. Although it is important to become familiar with and recall important terms and concepts, it is even more important that you are able to understand and apply those concepts.

Actively Read the Chapter. Use your own system to comprehend and remember the information in your textbook chapters. Highlighting important concepts or finding other ways to emphasize important points is helpful. Additionally, taking notes or writing the information in your own words in the margins can help you understand the information.

Concentrate on Understanding the Lecture. If you don't understand information when you hear it, frantically writing it down probably won't help. Write down the most important points and any related examples. One way to do this is to divide your notepaper in half; write down the content of the lecture on the left side and any corresponding examples on the right. If you don't understand the material, ask questions.

Study Regularly. Read the assigned chapters prior to class because this will help you understand lectures. Review your notes very soon after the lecture. This helps you remember material and it gives you the opportunity to ask the instructor or classmates about things you missed or didn't understand. Continually review the information, even when you only have small amounts of time. Consistently studying note cards when you have free time can be very helpful. Cross-reference the information from your textbook with material discussed in class.

Create Study Guides. A comprehensive study guide will be detailed enough that you are able to truly understand the important concepts, but not too detailed that you are unable to filter out the less pertinent information. Don't directly copy textbook sentences into your study guide. Using your own words assists in comprehension. The study guide should incorporate information from both the chapter and class lectures.

First, Study Alone. When studying alone, carefully review your notes and the textbook, create study guides or index review cards, and see how well you understand and can apply important concepts.

Next, Study with Classmates. Once you feel confident with the material by studying alone, study with one or more classmates. By studying with others, you are able to discuss important concepts and see how well you can explain or demonstrate what you know. You can work together on comparing and contrasting similar concepts (e.g. sensation vs. perception; classical conditioning vs. operant conditioning). Studying with a classmate helps to expose gaps in your knowledge, as well as identify what knowledge you have already retained. Write sample test questions for each other, especially those where you must apply concepts in examples of situations. You'll learn both by writing the questions and by answering your friend's questions.