Good Study Practices (GSPs)
Six Ways to Succeed in Graduate School

While you know that earning a graduate degree will advance your career, how will you juggle the demands of graduate school with a full-time career and family commitments? Here are some Good Study Practices (GSPs) to help you succeed in graduate school.

1. Solicit support from family and friends.
   - There's more to graduate school than taking classes. A rule of thumb is that each hour in the classroom requires about three hours of outside preparation.
   - Before you start a graduate program, make sure your family knows about the important time commitment you are about to make and how critical their cooperation is in your success.
   - Your extended family and friends may have to sacrifice time to help you meet your academic goal, whether it's helping with household chores or foregoing leisure activities, so you can spend time attending classes and working on assignments.
   - Make a point of asking for their cooperation and assistance.

2. Make a habit of studying.
   - Make sure you set aside several hours of uninterrupted time each week to study. Even if you don't have a formal assignment, reviewing class notes and doing Internet reading means you're better prepared for class, which also boosts your participation grade.
   - Think of studying as exercise for the mind. The more you study, the easier - and faster - it becomes.
   - Set aside time to do graduate work. If possible, select the time of day when you feel most alert (early morning, before work; midday, over lunch; late at night, when the household is quiet). By getting in the habit of studying when your mind is most receptive to receiving new information, you'll find it easier to retain the material.
Everyone learns differently. Figure out the form of studying that works best for you. Some study for three hours at a time. Others prefer daily 1/2 hour segments, spending 5 minutes to review material and the next 25 learning new concepts. Shorter bursts of intensive studying on a daily basis can be highly effective, since you're consistently reinforcing vital concepts each day.

3. Record important syllabus dates on your personal calendar.

- During the first class meeting, you'll receive the instructor's syllabus that lists the dates you are expected to complete all graded assignments.

- By recording those dates on your personal calendar, you'll remember to study for exams and to turn in assignments on time. You can also block off time around class deadlines, so you don't commit to other activities on those important academic dates.

4. Review notes 24 hours after each class.

- What's the easiest way to keep on top of your graduate course? Review your class notes within 24 hours. Immediate reinforcement of knowledge is the optimal way to learn.

- Take a half hour to condense pages of class notes to one sheet of key topics. Record those topics on your cell phone, tablet, or notebook, referring to them whenever you have "wait" time (in the grocery line, at the airport, in an idling car to pick up a family member, etc.)

- Frequent reinforcement of those concepts will impress them on your memory, which will make studying for an exam that much easier.

- You can even use this trick during a class break: take a few moments to scan the notes you just took, then pose a question about that material when class resumes. This will not only boost your participation grade, but also help you to remember lecture topics well after the class has ended.

5) Be actively involved in each class.

- The more fully engaged you are during class, the more you'll remember and learn.

- When you train yourself to being 100% committed in class, the easier and faster you'll learn. Conversely, the more you allow yourself to be side-tracked with texting and multi-tasking, the less you'll learn during class, making it harder as the semester progresses. You may even have to spend extra time reviewing class recordings.

- While you're in class, stay focused. It's not enough to take notes: engage your mind as you think of how the class concepts apply to your own experiences. Look for ways to talk about what you learn in class with your family and colleagues. Ask
them to debate issues with you, since discussion is the best way to learn. If you can't defend or explain a point, you can do more reading to make sure you understand the material well enough to explain it clearly to others.

6) **Learn to read critically.**

- In graduate school, it's not enough just to "do the reading." Higher education encourages critical reading, which means always asking "why?"

- Here are a series of questions you should pose each time you read something for your course:

  - Why did the instructor ask you to read that particular assignment and was there a slant or bias?
  - Why is the author considered an authority?
  - What were the main themes, and can you summarize them in two or three sentences?
  - Who are the author's main critics, and how do their viewpoints differ?
  - Were the arguments well made, in a logical order, well-researched, and convincing?
  - Where did the author fail to convince you?
  - Were there points that you would refute, especially based on other readings in the course?

- The more you train yourself to question the reading and research you're asked to do, the more you develop critical thinking skills.

Ultimately, a reputable graduate program should teach you to assess the validity of arguments, interpret the accuracy and sources of data, and ascertain the depth and quality of research. These critical thinking skills will stay with you the rest of your life.

*For more on how a graduate degree advances industry careers, see [http://www.temple.edu/pharmacy_qara/Graduate-Degrees-Advance-Careers.html](http://www.temple.edu/pharmacy_qara/Graduate-Degrees-Advance-Careers.html)*

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