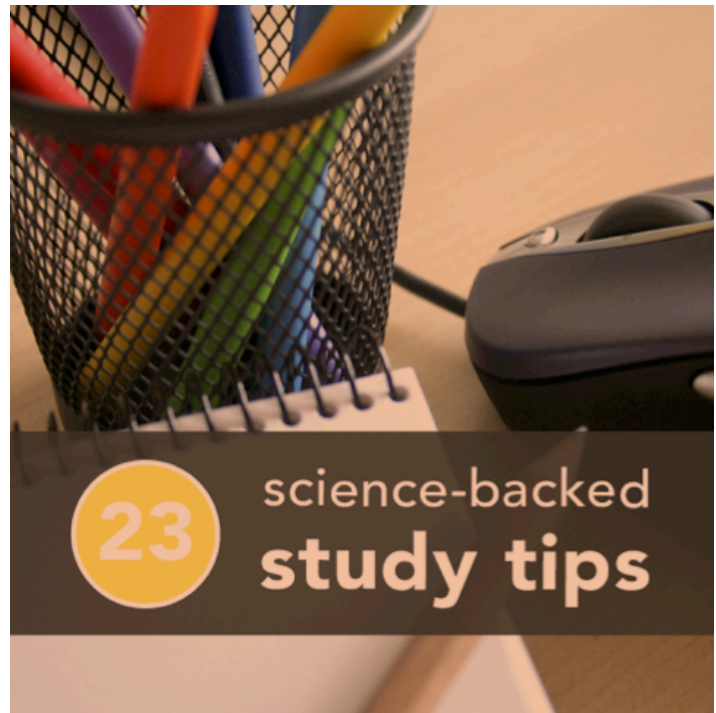


23 SCIENCE-BACKED STUDY TIPS TO ACE A TEST

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'Tis the season to start studying. All over the country, students in high school, college, and grad school are going into panic mode, wondering how they'll manage to remember an entire semester's worth of information before the big final. Luckily, we've got some advice to make those freak-outs a thing of the past. From talking out loud to taking gym breaks, here are 23 ways to (gasp) get psyched about studying and ace those exams.



Remember Your Stuff

1. Study when sleepy.

Bedtime stories are for wimps. Instead of reading *The Berenstain Bears*, try studying for a few minutes right before hitting the hay. During sleep, the brain [strengthens new memories](#), so there's a good chance we'll [remember whatever we review](#) right before dozing off. (Just try not to [bring work into the actual bed](#), since it can make it harder to get a good night's sleep.) And though bedtime is primo study time, it might also help to crack open the books after cracking open those eyes in the A.M.—in the morning, the brain still has [lots of room](#) to absorb new information.

2. Space it out. A relatively new learning technique called "[spaced repetition](#)" involves breaking up information into small chunks and reviewing them consistently over a long period of time. So don't try to memorize the entire periodic table in one sitting—instead, learn a few rows every day and review each lesson before starting anything new.

3. Tell a tale. Turning the details you need to remember [into a crazy story](#) helps make the information more meaningful. For example, remember the order of mathematic operations [PEMDAS](#) this way: Philip (P) wanted to eat (E) his friend Mary (M) but he died (D) from arsenic (AS) poisoning.

4. Move your butt. Research suggests studying the same stuff in a different place every day makes us [less likely to forget](#) that information. That's because, every time we move around (from the library to the coffee shop, or the coffee shop to the toilet seat), we force the brain to form new associations with the same material so it becomes a stronger memory.

5. Switch it up. Don't stick to one topic; instead, study a bunch of [different material](#) in one sitting. This technique helps prepare us to use the right strategy for finding the solution to a problem. For example, doing a bunch of division problems in a row means every time we approach a problem, we know it'll require some division. But doing a series of problems that require multiplication, division, or addition means we have to stop and think about which strategy is best.

6. Put yourself to the test. Quizzing ourselves may be one of the best ways to [prepare for the real deal](#). And don't worry about breaking a sweat while trying to remember the name of the 37th U.S. president (fyi, it's Nixon): The harder it is to remember a piece of information in practice mode, the more likely we are to remember it in the future.

7. Write it out. Put those third-grade penmanship lessons to good use. [Research suggests](#) we store information more securely when we write it out by hand than when we type it. Start by recopying the most important notes from the semester onto a new sheet of paper.

8. Make me wanna shout. Reading information out loud means mentally storing it in two ways: seeing it and hearing it. We just can't guarantee you won't get thrown out of the library.

Stay Focused

9. Come together (right now). Group work doesn't fly with everyone, but for those who benefit from a little team effort, a [study group's](#) the way to go. Pick a few studious pals and get together every few days to review the material. Put one person in charge of delegating tasks (snack duty, music selection) and keeping the group on target with its goals.

10. Treat yo' self! A [healthy holiday cookie](#), a walk around the block, five minutes of tweet-time: whatever floats your boat. Knowing there's a little reward waiting for us at the end of just a few pages makes it easier to [beat procrastination](#) while slogging through a semester's worth of notes.

11. Drink up. Sorry, not *that* kind of drink. Instead, hit the local coffee shop for something caffeine-filled; there's lots of research suggesting coffee (and tea) keeps us alert, especially when nothing seems more exciting than the shiny gum wrapper on the library floor.

12. Take a time out. Taking time to plan is one of the most important skills a student can have. Don't just start the week with the vague goal of studying for a history exam—instead, break up that goal into [smaller tasks](#). Pencil it in on the calendar like a regular class: For example, allot every day from 1 to 3 p.m. to review 50 years' worth of info.

13. Gimme a break. The KitKat guys said it, and so does science: Taking regular breaks can boost productivity and improve our ability to focus on a single task. For a real

productivity boost, step away from the screen and break a sweat during a [midday gym sesh](#).

14. Work it out. Get stronger and brainier at the same time. Research has found just half an hour of aerobic exercise can [improve our brain-processing speed](#) and other important cognitive abilities. Jog a few laps around the block and see if you don't come back with a few more IQ points.

15. Daaaance to the music. As anyone who's ever relied on Rihanna to make it through an all-night study session knows, [music can help beat stress](#). And while everyone's got a different tune preference, classical music in particular has been shown to reduce anxiety and tension. So give those biology notes a soundtrack and feel at least some of the stress slide away.

16. Nix the 'net. We've all been there, facing the siren call of a friend's Facebook wall on the eve of a giant exam. If a computer's necessary for studying, try an app (such as [this one](#)) that blocks the Internet for a short period of time and see how much more you get done.

17. Say om. Just before staring at a piece of paper for three hours, stare at a wall for three minutes. Research suggests meditation can [reduce anxiety](#) and boost attention span. While those studies focus mostly on regular meditation, there's no harm in trying it out for a few minutes to calm pre-test jitters.

18. Doze off. When there's a textbook full of equations to memorize, it can be tempting to stay up all night committing them to memory (or trying to). But all-nighters rarely lead to an automatic A—in fact, they've been linked to impaired cognitive performance and [greater sensitivity to stress](#). In the days leading up to a big exam, aim to get those seven to nine hours a night so sleep deprivation doesn't undo all the hard work you've put in.

19. Own the Omegas. [Omega-3 fatty acids](#), found in certain fish, nuts, and olive oil, are known for their brain-boosting potential. One study found that eating a combination of Omega-3-and Omega-6 fatty acids before an exam actually reduced test anxiety.

20. Feel free to inhale. Dusty old library again... or spa day? Research has found that catching a whiff of essential oils (like rosemary or lavender) can help calm students down before a big exam. Skip the frantic last-minute review and try a few minutes of [aromatherapy](#) instead.

21. Practice your brain pose. Hardcore yogis tend to have better cognitive abilities—especially attention span—than folks less familiar with Down Dog . A few daily sun salutations may be all it takes to keep centered during finals period.

22. Learn what works. Some people are early birds; some are night owls; some prefer to study with a pal; others need complete and total silence. Experiment to find what's most effective for you, and then stick with it!