

Study Space

Academic success isn't a happy accident – it takes planning and hard work for it to be accomplished. Good study habits are essential for academic achievement; innate intelligence alone can't take the place of careful and diligent study. How you go about studying can mean the difference between an “A” and a “C” on an English assignment or between acing or failing Introduction to Microcomputers. It is not good enough to know good study strategies – you have to make them habits that you implement. A poor study environment can undermine even the best study strategies. It is worth the effort to carefully plan not only how but also where you study.

Choose a location

The importance of finding a private, quiet study space where you can work undisturbed can't be overstated. Tell your family and friends you need an hour or two without disturbance to study free from distraction. Isolate yourself, if possible; turn off the telephone ringer, let the answering machine pick up phone calls, and lock the door. The television and radio should be turned off; however, if you find it better to work with background music, tune in the radio station that has few if any commercials. You may want to create a CD or tape just for studying.

When selecting a location for studying, be sure to pick a spot that doesn't signal you to do something besides study. Your bed may be a comfortable place to read, but not an effective study spot if you find yourself drifting off to sleep because your mind has signaled your body that because you are on the bed you should be resting. Likewise, if you use the kitchen table as your study space, you may find yourself spending more time looking through the refrigerator than looking through your books.

You may want to choose a study location away from your home. There are many study places available on campus in the Student Services Building, the Library and other remote places you may need to look for and make your own. You want to choose a location without high traffic and away from people who may distract you – friends or students in your program of study.

Prepare your study space

No matter where you choose to be your study spot, take the time to make the environment as conducive to studying as possible. Before you begin studying inspect and prepare your space. Is there something distracting that needs to be removed? Do you have everything you need to begin studying? Ritualizing your study preparation encourages you to clear your mind and begin to focus on studying.

Your surrounding should be comfortable. Make sure the noise level and temperature are within acceptable limits. Sit in a comfortable chair and use good lighting. Remove any potential distractions that have the potential to take your mind off of work.

Clear your desk or table so only work is in front of you. Organize the space so that you can find things quickly. Each time you prepare for a study session, think about the materials you will need. It is important to have everything you need before you start to work. You do not want to be forced to stop your studying progress to try and locate a highlighter; this searching will only prolong your study session and give you an easy excuse to procrastinate.

Here is a short checklist of items you will find useful to have on hand while studying:

- Calculator
- Sharpened pencils
- Erasers
- Pencil sharpener
- Pens (various colors)
- Colored Pencils
- Highlighters
- Notebook or notepad
- Post-it notes
- Dictionary
- 3"x 5" file cards

(adapted from the Academic Development, [Carnegie Mellon University website](#))