

Effective Study Plans Share Common Principles

- **Determine the most important study material.** Don't waste time reviewing material you already know well.
- **Study the oldest material first.** Continue to study older material each day before the exam, decreasing the amount of time spent, while increasing study time for the more recent material.
- **Divide and conquer.** Divide material into manageable chunks. Your brain prefers meaningful chunks of information organized in a logical way. "Chunking" also lessens the likelihood of procrastination.
- **Study over time.** The brain needs time to create new connections and strengthen pathways to information, which optimizes retrieval or "remembering" during a stressful situation, such as a test.
- **Use active rehearsal and review methods.** Just re-reading the text and your notes is passive. Your brain fails to encode and store the information in long-term memory. Conversely, active rehearsal and review signals the brain, "This is important! Encode and store in long-term memory."
- **Self-test.** This is the only way to really know if you are ready for a test. A self-test, especially in a timed environment, can help you become mentally and physiologically ready for the real thing. It stimulates the actual test and over time your mind and body will acclimate to the intellectual demands and stress of test-taking, allowing you to retrieve needed information more easily.
- **Block out adequate study times on a calendar.** This simple tool is one of the best ways to decrease stress and procrastination.
- **Plan for ten minute breaks at the end of every hour of study** to maintain mental focus and to encourage deep learning.