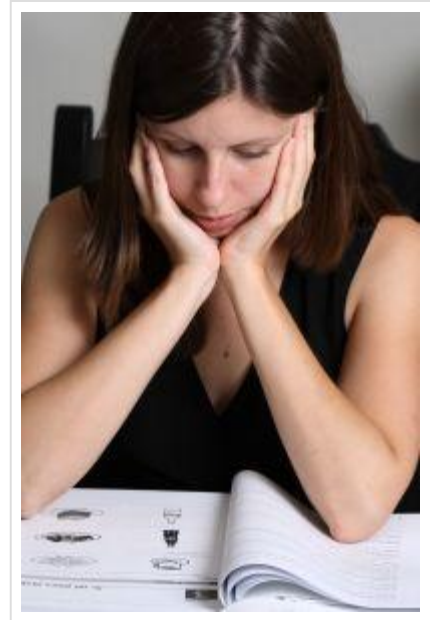


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## 10 Study Mistakes to Avoid

By Alexandra Mayzler



You've probably heard a lot about what you should do to prepare for exams. I'm the first to admit that mastering the study process is really important. With that in mind, I also believe that one of the best ways to learn is from one's mistakes. It is the errors that we make in the study process that often allow us to study better in the future. So without further ado, here are ten things *not to do* and ways to prevent inefficient studying while preparing for exams...

### 10. Study without a plan

Studying without a plan will ultimately be a waste of time and leave you unprepared for your test. Grab a calendar and mark off time when you plan on studying. Pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses and decide how much time you'll dedicate to each topic. The study process should include a list of specific actions that you will take to prepare for the exam.

### 9. Study the wrong thing

Showing up to an exam and realizing that you didn't cover an entire unit is an easy trap to fall into. Figure out what the test covers by gathering as much information about the test as possible - look through your notes, meet with your teacher, and review your syllabus. Make sure that you know exactly what is on the test before starting to study.

### 8. Use inadequate or inappropriate notes

Maybe you missed a few days of school, maybe you've misplaced your notes, or perhaps you spent a few too many classes daydreaming and therefore don't have any

notes. Preparing for an exam without all the necessary material is a surefire way to miss important information. Make sure that you have all your notes, review sheets, and old exams. If you are missing anything, then make copies from a friend.

### **7. Study by yourself**

Working alone will not adequately prepare you for an exam. Sometimes you think you understand a topic that you actually don't or you may not be judging the thoroughness of your comprehension without bias. Ask a parent or a friend to quiz you using flashcards or charts. If your tester notices that you're rusty on a topic, seek out your teacher to help you learn the material.

### **6. Just read your notes**

**Don't just flip through your notes and consider yourself thoroughly prepared.** Make flashcards, practice tests, tables, and charts. Active studying will allow you to grasp and remember the information for the long term. You should constantly be testing yourself to make sure that you understand what you've learned.

### **5. Spend entire days "studying" aka pseudo-working**

Sitting in your room from the moment that you wake up until the minute you fall into bed is not studying. Nor will staring at your textbook until your eyes are bloodshot help you absorb information. Using your study plan, break up the study process into limited time increments with review goals. Once you've gotten through a section, take a break. And don't just sit in the library all day because that's what you feel studying requires.

### **4. Wait until the last week to prepare**

Don't convince yourself that you don't (or barely) need to study even if you are a whiz at the subject. Regardless of how easily the subject matter comes to you reviewing and practicing is necessary. Just as importantly, study ahead of time so that you can file away the information in your long term memory.

### **3. Give yourself a month or two to prepare, working only on the weekends**

**Most** exams are a combination of regurgitating what you've memorized and the ability to apply your knowledge. In **order** for your brain to be able to use and apply information you will need to study in small increments over a longer period of time. Weekends-only cram sessions will only work for the short term. Don't try to jam in information in one sitting, instead break things up and spend enough time to get yourself comfortable with the material.

### **2. Always study in the comfort of your room**

Chances are the stark and gray classroom where you'll take your test will be less inviting than your kitchen, bedroom, or living room. When you're studying set yourself up somewhere outside your comfort zone and when you're doing practice

tests sit at the library or in a crowded bookstore to get used to distractions.

### 1. Focus on reviewing only your trouble-spots

Of course it's important to review the concepts that you initially had trouble understanding. However, if you want to be fully prepared for your exam then you must review all of your areas of strength and weakness. Make sure that you've dedicated time and are clear even on the "easy" stuff.

*Alexandra Mayzler is the Founder of Thinking Caps Tutoring, which has helped hundreds of middle and high school students maximize their academic potential. She is also a curriculum consultant for independent and public schools and the author of a soon-to-be published study skills book.*

*Image courtesy hvaldez1*

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