**Study Tips**

Below are some of the things I think students can do to improve their study habits and, hopefully, their understanding of the material and exams grades. Many of you might not have time to do them all but hopefully you can find a few that help you achieve greater success in the class.

1. Read through your notes every day. Don’t sit and study or obsess over them, just read them like you would read a magazine. You should make note of the terms and things that don’t make sense and look those up as you go along. Then the next day read the same things over again. Hopefully, you won’t have to look up the same terms you did the previous day. You will be surprised how much sticks just by reading them over and over. If you have time read them multiple times a day or if you have a 10-minute break between classes just read as much as you can.

2. As you take notes in class, ask questions of things that don’t make sense. If you don’t want to ask during class, then make a note of your questions and ask me after in class. In person or via email doesn’t matter but don’t be afraid to ask. One of the biggest complaint I hear from my colleagues is about students is that they never ask questions anymore. I don’t know that you need help if you don’t ask for it (at least not until after you fail an exam and then it’s too late).

3. Always have a goal when you study. How else will you know when you are done studying? But remember that time isn’t a goal it’s a limitation. So your goal shouldn’t be to study for 1 hour. If you have an hour to study then you can use that to determine your goal. Use sections of the notes as a goal. For example, “My goal is to learn the steps of mitosis”. If that takes 15 minutes, then move on to a new goal for the rest of your time. If it takes an hour, that’s fine too. Try to find natural breaks in the material that you could use as “sections” to study. Today I’m going to study section 1 or section 2, etc. Don’t sit down with 35 pages of notes and think you can study all of it in an hour or even 3 hours. Focus on 1 section at a time during the time you have and when you think you have it, go on to the next one.

4. Use the internet to help you. Find pictures, diagrams, other websites, etc… to help you understand a topic. See if you can diagram out things yourself when necessary. For example, draw out the steps of mitosis from memory and then go and look in the book/notes/web and see if you are right. If you make a mistake, see why and then try again. Keep doing it until you get it right.

5. Try to quiz yourself. Put yourself into a teaching mindset and try to come up with questions that you would want your students to know if you were in my position. Remember to no only focus on over-arching themes but the fine details as well.

6. Know the difference between note cards and flash cards. They each have their purpose. Note cards contain more information; usually all over 1 topic. Flash cards usually have one term or phrase on one side and the corresponding information on the other. For example you might have 1 note card with all the steps and all the information concerning mitosis on it. You might have 5-6 flash cards over mitosis. They might say “Mitosis step 1” on one side and “prophase” on the other. The next card may have “events of prophase” on one side and “chromosomes appear, spindles form, envelope disappears” on the other. Flash cards make quizzing yourself fast and easy. Work through your cards in small number then add to it. I used to do 5 to start and would work on those 5 until I got them all right 3 times in a row. Then I would add 5 more to the stack and work through those 10 until I got them all right 3 times in a row. Then I would add 5 more and so on. I would also shuffle the cards so my brain didn’t just get used to the order. If possible I would sometimes flip the cards over and go through them. So in my previous example I might be reading “Mitosis step 1” first and be trying to come up with “prophase”. After a while I would flip the card and try reading “Prophase” to get “Mitosis step 1”. Keep mixing it up and keep your brain “on it’s toes”. The more different way you can look at and study something, the more likely you are to remember it.

7. Try filling out the outlines in advance of class. Open up the powerpoint and have the outline in front of you. Click through the slide show reading all the information and fill in the outline as you go. This way you have already read through the notes before I cover them and you can focus on listening, writing down extra information/explanations I give, and asking questions during lecture.

8. Try to organize a study group. If you can get a few people together it is likely that 1 of you will understand something the others don’t. If you are really organized, assign each person a section that they will be responsible for leading the group in. So one person may be in charge of mitosis and another meiosis and another organelles. That person will then have to be able to ask the others questions and answer questions themselves. No one will be perfect but it is a way to make sure every one is involved. Post a study group request on the Facebook page. You might get people from my other sections to join you. It works out best for all. The more the merrier as long as everyone is equally invested in the goals at hand. Don’t be afraid to exclude people who are constantly distracting or coming completely unprepared.

9. Remember to repeat whichever study technique you follow 24 hours later on the same material. If you still remember it, then it is in long-term memory. If you have forgotten it in 24 hours, it was only in short-term memory and you need to go over it again until you can remember it 24 hours later.

**Just remember that repetition is the key. You have to find the time to do these things over and over and over and over!!**