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# Seven Ways To Sharpen Your Brain For School

By [CollegeBound Network](#)

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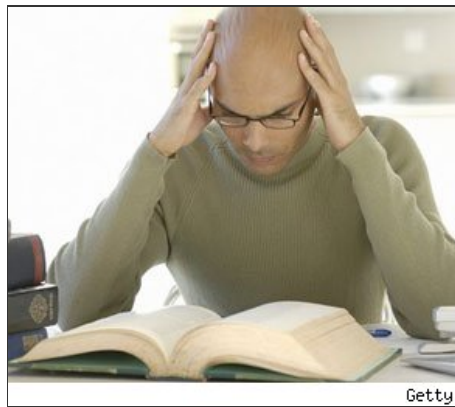
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By **Lori Johnston**

You've been out of the classroom for a while, so your study skills may no longer make the grade. But before you get down on yourself, remember: It's not necessarily a reflection of your intelligence... even the smartest students struggle as they work their way back into the school groove.



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If you're an adult student preparing to go back to college, consider these seven tips to make

sure your study skills are up to snuff.

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the week to studying, advises Lynne Sarikas, executive director of the MBA Career Center at Northeastern University in Boston.

## 2. Break it up.

Dividing your study time into smaller sessions over a prolonged period of time will improve your odds of retaining the material when tested, says Larry Chiagouris, professor of marketing at Pace University in New York.

## 1. Take a "sooner rather than later" mentality.

Juggling a career, family, and other activities since the last time you were in school may have made you a pro at time management. So put those skills to use when studying, which can help you avoid pulling the dreaded all-nighter. Designate specific blocks of time throughout

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Vincent Miskell, area chair for humanities at University of Phoenix, South Florida, suggests this strategy: If you have an assignment due on Thursday, begin working on it, bit by bit, a week ahead of time. "Normally, adults cannot pull all-nighters to finish a paper or assignment, so they need to spread their efforts out during the week," he says. Start with thinking about your topic the Friday before, even when you're doing non-school tasks such as washing the dishes. Over the weekend, start researching and writing notes, with enough ideas to write a first draft by Sunday night. On Monday, you can revise the draft and add new research for a new version on Tuesday. You will be ready to finalize the paper on Wednesday and turn it in the next day.

### 3. Carry it around.

Put your new backpack or tote bag to use. Take your textbooks, notes, or an e-reader or iPad with reading and assignments wherever you go. If there is downtime, turn that into study time, Miskell says. In those 15-30 minutes you're waiting to pick up your kids from school, or for soccer practice to end, or for dinner to cook, slip in some required reading or work on an assignment.

### 4. Take an active role in studying.

We're not talking about hopping on the treadmill with your textbook in hand. Instead, don't just passively read or listen to a lecture online. Develop a set of questions (or read those at the end of the chapter) so you know what to look for when absorbing the assignment. To get even more out of your study session, write out the questions and answers, says Amy Copeland, owner of A Quantum Leap Educational Services, based in Jacksonville, Fla. She adds that if you learn visually, draw a model, create a chart, or use an illustration to grasp complex topics, which will give you a visual aid for test time. Anticipating test questions while reading can make your study time more purposeful and directed, adds Pam Rose, director of the Learning Center at The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio.

### 5. Jot it down.

After finishing your assigned reading for the day or week, open a document on your computer or phone and make a file of notes or quotes that you have just read. Leah Hanes, a Ph.D. student at Antioch University, Los Angeles, says it's a great way to get a head start on studying for future assignments. "By the time I begin my 30-page paper, I often have 10 pages of notes on my topic," she says.

### 6. Get with a group.

Joining a group of students who study together, or pairing up with one more person can help you stay on track and comprehend difficult concepts. Share email, IM, Twitter, and Facebook connections with classmates so you can ask each other questions, Sarikas says.

### 7. Give yourself a break.

After an hour of intense studying, take a two-minute break. Stand up and walk around, which can clear your head, says Chiagouris, author of *The Secret to Getting a Job After College*. Or let your body give you the cue: If you find yourself turning the pages and not remembering anything you've read, it's time for a break, Rose says. Recharge your brain batteries by blocking out some time for yourself or with family and friends, Sarikas says. "When the homework for the week is done, celebrate and do something you enjoy," she says.

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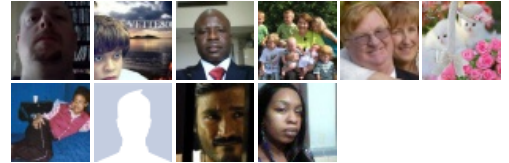
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