

LIFEHACK

Expand your toolbox of life skills and strengthen your mental wellbeing



Main Module


Study smarter, not harder





Contents

How to use this workbook	P. 1
Introduction	P. 2
Your own patterns	P. 3
Understanding The Study Cycle	P. 4
Study hacks	P. 10
Hack wrap-up	P. 16



How to Use this Workbook

LifeHack is a self-help programme in which you learn various life skills for all sorts of situations you might encounter in life. This program is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and consists of reading material and interactive exercises. Four domains are covered: your emotional well-being, your studies, your social life and your self-esteem.

Each domain consists of one main module and two related optional modules. The best way to do the programme is to complete one domain per week by doing the main module and any of the optional modules that seem relevant to you. Therefore, the whole programme will take approximately 4 to 6 weeks.

You can find a list of resources in the community [here](#) when you need support. Counselling and Psychological services are available at HKU for current students. It is free-of-charge, professional and confidential. Don't hesitate to seek help if needed.

Enquiries and Feedback
CEDARS – Counselling and Person Enrichment Section (CoPE)
Tel: 3917-8388 | Email: cedars-cope@hku.hk



Main Module

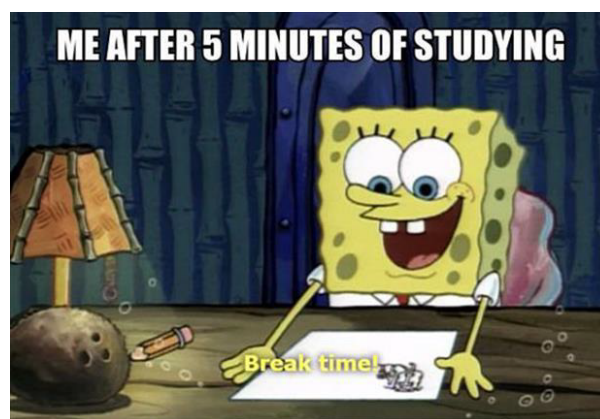
Study smarter, not harder

Introduction

Nobody ever said that studying was going to be easy. And let's face it, we've all wanted to throw in the towel at one point. But we're going to hopefully change that by providing you with the best study hacks!

So after today you will...

- Understand how the study cycle works, and how to implement it
- Know how to learn in a way that you'll remember better
- Plan your study time more efficiently
- Learn how to stop multitasking



Before we get into it: describe your personal goal(s) with regards to studying. What would you like to achieve after doing this module? (answer A)

Let's go!

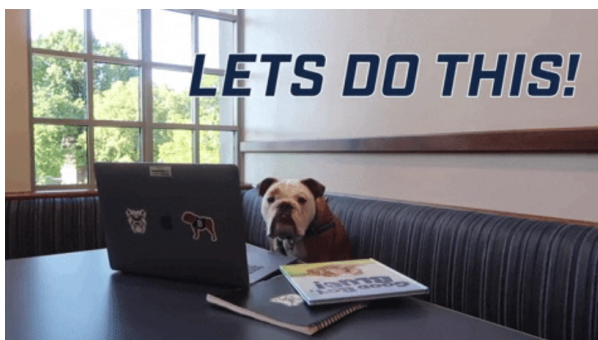
Your own patterns

Before we get into the theory of effective studying, let's take a look at your current study style. Think of:

- Are there certain times you tend to study? In certain places?
- Do you study in long chunks, or short bursts?
- Is your style more 'last-minute', or do you work ahead?
- Any other specifics about the way you study?

What is your current study style? Take the factors above into consideration. (answer B)

To what extent does your current study style work out for you? What do you like, and what would you like to see differently? (answer C)



Finding effective study techniques that work for you takes time. There are lots of techniques, and not all of them work for everyone. Still, there are some best practices that tend to work for almost everyone. So we're going to start with a 'generally effective' (and scientifically backed) model of learning called The Study Cycle.

Understanding The Study Cycle

The Study Cycle is an approach to help students learn in the most effective way. Watch this video that explains the cycle ([The video transcript is available on p.17](#)).



You guessed it, now let's go over each step in the cycle and see how you can implement it.

1. Preview



Before you go to class, take a look at what you'll be covering during the lecture or workgroup. Skim the material that will be covered, maybe take some notes for yourself and write down any questions you have.

To what extent do you preview already?

Why previewing is a good idea:

- You'll need to spend less time studying later on, because you already have a basic understanding of the material.
- It helps you to get a sense of the bigger picture and anticipate how concepts fit together (less confusion during the class!).
- You'll absorb more from the lecture/workgroup if you already have some context for what you're about to learn.

Let's apply!

If you already preview, you can skip the following question and move on to the next page.

If not, **choose one class** you'll be attending the coming 2 weeks, for which you don't preview (yet).



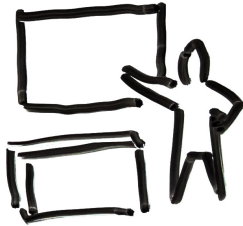
What could you do exactly to preview for this class in the coming 2 weeks?

When would be the best time preview? Ideally the day before, but earlier the same day is also ok :)

NEXT LEVEL HACK

Make sure to schedule this time to preview (even if it's just 15 minutes), so go grab that calendar!

2. Attend



This one is pretty self-explanatory. You just go to class!

Confession time: on a scale of 1 to 10, how often do you attend optional classes or lectures?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Basically never

I'm always there

Why attending class is a good idea:

- By attending class and writing down your own notes, you understand and remember the material much better, which saves lots of time later on.
- Your professor will probably highlight the important concepts, giving you a better idea of what is important and what you should focus on. They also often use questions or class discussion to make you think about (and remember) the material even better.
- There's a strong correlation between the number of absences a student has and their final course grade. It can even be related to increased stress and anxiety, and even dropping out.

Let's apply!

If you don't often skip - awesome! Keep it up!

But if you are a skipper, it's time to make a vow with yourself that you're going to attend each and every class.

Write your vow to yourself: "I solemnly swear that I ...

(Then it's a pinky promise, and there's no turning back!)

NEXT LEVEL HACK

Take notes during class and write them by hand instead of on a laptop. Students who take lecture notes by hand have been found to generally perform better in tests than students who type their notes on a computer.

3. Review



Reviewing is any process in which you take another look at the material and your notes after a class.

Why reviewing is a good idea:

- It allows you to transfer new knowledge and skills from short-term to long-term memory, and in addition keep it there. Especially if you do short reviews more often.
- It lets you fill in the gaps in your knowledge and become aware of what you still need to understand better.
- It will improve your future learning, by building on a well-remembered foundation.

Let's apply! 5 tips to review effectively

Review your information directly after attending the class

Spend a few minutes reviewing new information as soon as you've learned it. Look through the material again and add to any notes that you've already made.

Schedule reviews for in the near future

It's easy to forget reviewing. You're much more likely to review if you put it into your calendar.

Test yourself

Every time you review something, include an element of testing. This will uncover any gaps in your knowledge, highlight key areas that you need to focus on, and reinforce your learning. For example you can use flashcards or make a quiz.

Rewrite your notes

Rewriting your notes (using different words, not copying!) is a great way to keep information fresh and clear. You can do this quickly with keywords and bullet points, or by making a mind map.

Teach someone else

One of the most powerful ways to embed learning is to teach it to someone else. Find a willing co-student/friend, and explain to him or her what you've been learning.

Which of these 5 tips can you implement in the coming week? Make it concrete: what you will do, for which class, and when.

NEXT LEVEL HACK

When you're reading back through your notes, make sure you're actively engaging with the material. Passively looking over the material won't help much. Instead, explain the material to yourself, ask questions and summarize the key points.

4. Study



Now that you've previewed, attended and reviewed your learning material it's time to study! So sit that ass down (or stand at a standing desk) and get cracking!

As we probably don't have to explain why studying is a good idea, instead we'll give you some tips in the chapter "Study hacks". So sit tight for just a little longer!

5. Check



The final phase of the Study Cycle is about checking whether your study methods are working. After all, you want to study smarter, not harder. So it's important to figure out which techniques work for you, and which don't.

If you were paying attention you might have noticed that we started this module out with a quick check. This is what you said about your current study style: (refer to answer C on p.3)

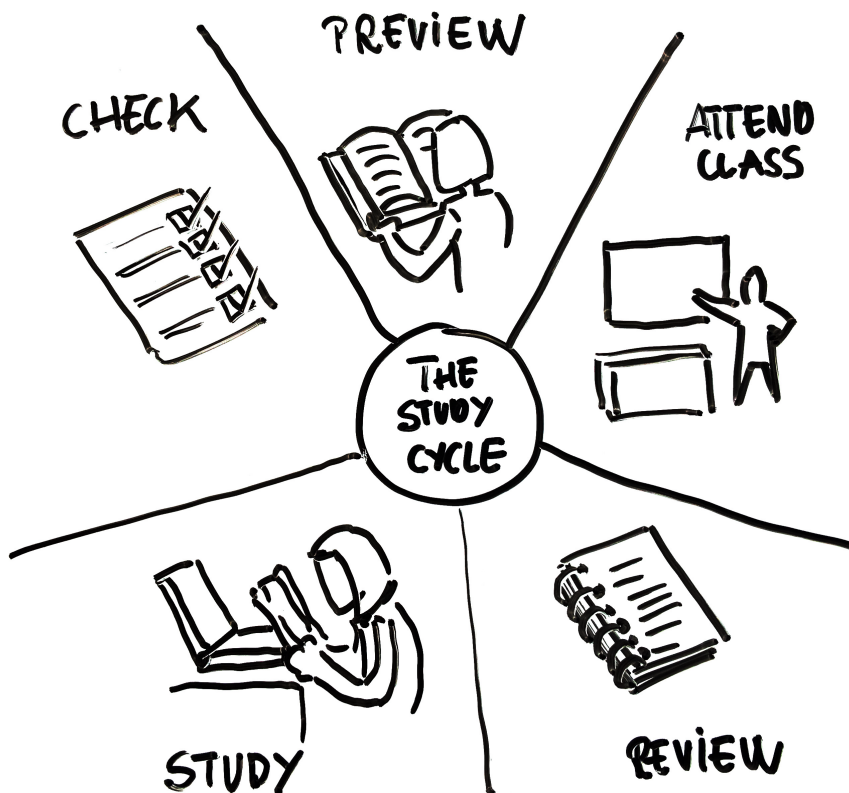
Rather than evaluating again right now, we want to challenge you to implement the tips from this module for the coming 2 weeks. When the time is up, think about how effective it was.

Here's a few questions you can ask yourself:

- Did I implement all the parts of the study cycle (preview, attend, review, study)?
- What worked well and should I continue doing?
- What didn't work well? Why do I think that is, and what other things can I do to reach the goal?
- Are there any new techniques or tips I could try next?

Oh and before you forget, set a reminder from 2 weeks from now to take another look at these questions ;)

And with that you've completed the whole Study Cycle!



Study hacks

Now that you know all the ins and outs about the Study Cycle we can crack on with the actual study techniques. Today we'll cover 3 of them, give them a try and see what works for you!

1. Be an active learner

Let's kick off this technique by debunking a huge myth which has to do with the number one strategy employed by students: reading and rereading (and rereading and rereading...)

Why rereading is inefficient



Most students study by rereading their textbooks and notes. But did you know that research shows that rereading is one of the most inefficient ways to learn? By only re-reading stuff you are more likely to forget. That's because you're not actively engaging in the material. Reading is (unfortunately) not the same as learning. To learn and remember something, you'll have to actively engage with the material and make your own connections. This is called active learning.

To what extent do you study by rereading?

How to study more actively:

- Connect new information to something you already know.
- See if it's possible to relate the information to a personal experience.
- Make notes of the main points in your own words (don't copy the literal text).
- Make a summary of what you've read or learned e.g. during a lecture.
- Complete all your course activities and make sure to implement each mode of the Study Cycle.
- Pretend you're a quizmaster, by asking yourself a lot of questions.
- We love good old flashcards.

Which of these tips seem helpful and how exactly can you implement them in the coming week(s)? Make it as concrete as you can.

2. Study spaced


Space out your studying we mean. Uni can be a lot, and while it can be tempting to put off studying until you absolutely have to, cramming for tests actually leads to lowered comprehension, more stress and poorer performance. And nobody wants that. So from now on, we dare you to stop cramming and start planning!

Confession time: on a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a crammer are you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

I never cram last-minute

I always cram last-minute



If you're indeed 'a crammer', what could you gain by changing that habit and spreading your study work out more?

How do you study spaced?

By getting on a space ship?! Well, no, the most effective practice is to schedule to work a short time (± 20 minutes) on each class every day. The total amount of time spent studying will be the same (or less) compared to cramming, but you'll feel less stressed, and remember better because of the repetition — which won't hurt your grades ;)

Let's get cracking on a schedule! Think about the coming week: which uni classes/projects do you have?

If you calculate (at least) 20 minutes per class/project per day, how much time do you need? Now add a 10 to 15 minute break for each hour of studying. Keep in mind that you can spend more time on a course if needed, we're just trying to kickstart the habit of spacing things out!

An example

Let's say you have four courses, which is 80 minutes (4×20). You add a 10-minute break and so decide to study at least 1,5 hours Monday through Friday, from 16:00 to 17:30.

How many minutes/hours will you study per day in the coming week?

For 5 or 6 days the coming week, set a time and place to study. Also define which day(s) you're taking off!

NEXT LEVEL HACK

Know when and where you study best. It may be that your focus at 10:00 PM is not as sharp as at 10:00 AM. Perhaps you are more productive at a coffee shop with background noise, or in the study lounge in your residence hall. Keep track of the times and places that work best for you, and use that knowledge when planning study time.

3. The myth of multitasking

Doing more things does not drive faster or better results. Doing better things drives better results. Even more accurately, doing one thing at a time as best you can drives the best results.

Still, most of us will multitask during studying. We'll take notes while reading a textbook and listening to a podcast and answering messages on our phone while also checking Insta, all at the same time...



To what extent do you multitask while studying or working on a task? What things do you tend to do when you multitask?

In order to study smarter (not harder) you'll need to stop doing several things at the same time, and start focusing on one thing at the time. Research is clear that multi-tasking increases the amount of time needed to learn material and decreases the quality of the learning.

Multitasking	Concentrating on a single task
Decreases productivity by 60%	Increases productivity
Makes it harder to remember things	Increases our power of retention
Makes us more likely to make mistakes	Makes us less likely to make mistakes
Makes us feel stressed by the sensation that we're losing control, that our tasks are controlling us	Helps us calm and control of the task at hand
Reduces creativity	Increases creativity

Tips on how to stop multitasking:

Minimize distractions

- Leave your phone in another room, on airplane mode or silent.
- Close all unnecessary programmes or tabs on your computer.
- Make sure your working space is clear (time to clean that desk!).
- Use noise-canceling headphones and listen to focus-boosting music.

Try time-blocking

- Work in blocks of 25 minutes followed by 5 minutes of rest. Repeat 4 times (2 hours tota), then take a longer break.
- Dedicate each 25-minute to working on one single task.
- I know you have a timer on your phone, but get yourself a kitchen timer instead to be sure you don't get distracted by other stuff on your phone.

Make daily priority lists

- When you begin studying, make a to-do list for what you want to work on that day.
- Then organize the list in order of priority, starting with the most important or urgent task.
- Start at the top and set a goal for that task, this can be time-related (work on it for 30 minutes straight) or an achievement (read the first 2 chapters).
- Once you've reached the goal, move on to the next task in the priority list and repeat step 3. And repeat!

Which of these tips seem helpful and how exactly can you implement them in the coming week(s)? Make it as concrete as you can.

NEXT LEVEL HACK

If you're in need of more useful tips on how to boost your concentration make sure to follow the optional module 'Boost concentration and productivity'.

**And don't forget to reward yourself
after a productive study session!**



Hack wrap-up



Round of applause for making it to the end!

Now let's take a look back at what you said at the beginning of this module.

This is what you wanted to achieve with regards to studying: (refer to answer A on p.2)

How will you move forward with this goal, using the tips from this module?

This module in bullets:

- You now know what the Study Cycle is and how all its parts (preview, attend, review, study and check) can help you to study smarter, not harder
- To learn and remember something, you'll have to actively engage with the material and make your own connections
- Cramming doesn't work, so space out your studying (at least ± 20 minutes per course per day)
- Minimize multitasking: study in a distraction free zone and make sure to work on only one single task at a time

Optional mood-related modules unlocked!



We recommend continuing with the ones that are relevant for you straight away and keep the momentum going!

Beat procrastination - learn to break the cycle of procrastination and get started on any task

Boost your focus & productivity - a 5-step focus-boosting ritual to maximize your productivity

What did you think of this module? Please let us know your views [here](#).



Supplementary information



Video transcript of “The Study Cycle”

The Study Cycle, developed by Frank Christ, is a 5-step approach to learning. The cycle was designed in a way that works best for our learning brains, and can therefore help you become a more effective learner. Let’s look at the different steps!

First we have Previewing. This is skimming the material before a class or lecture and noting down questions you would like answers to.

Then we attend the class itself. Here it’s also your chance to be interactive and ask those questions you wanted answers to.

Afterwards we do some reviewing, which means going over the material again within days after the class. You can fill in the gaps to your notes and check whether you understand all the material.

The fourth step is studying, which is the good old sitting down and repeating the material.

And lastly we have checking, which is about evaluating the effectiveness of your study habits. Is this study method working for me?

Although each step may seem obvious at a glance, all too often students try to take shortcuts and miss opportunities for good learning. For example, you may skip reading the material before class because the professor covers the same material during the lecture. Yeah it saves time, but you also miss a key opportunity to learn in a different way than by just listening and the benefit from the repetition that you’ll get from both reading ahead and attending class.

Therefore, understanding the importance of all stages of this cycle will help make sure you don’t miss opportunities to learn effectively.