

Self-talk that Interferes with Studying

When confronted with the decision to study or not to study, students often engage in a little self-talk that is not always helpful.

In the list below you will find some of the statements students often make to convince yourself not to study. These statements lead to the conclusion "I will not study now."

However, these statements are not always true, rational or realistic ways to describe your situation. By learning to identify your self-defeating self-talk you may be able to talk to yourself in more helpful ways, thus leading to more self-motivation, less procrastination, and better study attitudes.

Some of the more common negative self-talk is listed below. When you hear yourself talking or thinking these thoughts, recognize that you are giving yourself permission not to study. Although you may enjoy not studying at the moment, the long-range outcome is often one that you do not enjoy (for example, poor grades, cramming, or feeling guilty).

Check this list every day to see how many negative self-statements you are using. Try to eliminate as many as you can.

1. I don't feel like studying...
 - I'm hungry...
 - I'm sleepy...
 - I'm bored...
 - I'm not in the mood to study...
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2. This material is too difficult..
 - This is too hard
 - I don't have the background for this...
 - It's hopeless...
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3. I'll never need to know this...
 - This is stupid stuff to spend time on...
 - This probably won't be on the test

4. I don't need to study now...
 I studied this yesterday (in the past)...
 I can do it later...
 I have plenty of time to do this...
 If I study this now, I'll forget it by test time...
5. This is too much material to cover...
 I won't have time to finish anyway...
 The teacher just expects too much...
6. It doesn't make any difference whether I study or not...
 It's really no use to study...
 Studying doesn't help in this course...
7. I don't like the teacher...
 The teacher doesn't care anyway...
8. I can't concentrate...
 My mind wanders too much...
 People distract me...
 I can't study here, (or any other place)...
9. I can't study now; I'll miss...
 I'll miss things I want to do if I study now...
 I can't study and do things I want to...
 I have other things I need to do now...

Things are happening that I'll miss if I study now...

Nobody else is studying...

Study Skill Checklist

Read each statement and consider how it applies to you. If it does apply to you, check Y. If it does not apply to you, check N. The purpose of this inventory is to find out about your own study habits and attitudes.

1. Y__ N__ I spend too much time studying for what I am learning.
2. Y__ N__ I usually end up cramming the night before a big test/exam.
3. Y__ N__ It seems that I often have to choose between social activities or studying – I don't seem to have time for both most of the time.
4. Y__ N__ I usually try to study with the radio/TV on.
5. Y__ N__ I can't sit and study for long periods of time without becoming tired or distracted.
6. Y__ N__ I go to class, but I usually doodle, daydream, or fall asleep.
7. Y__ N__ My class notes are sometimes difficult to understand later.
8. Y__ N__ I usually seem to focus on the wrong material when I take/study my class notes.
9. Y__ N__ I don't review my class notes/handouts throughout the term in preparation for tests.
10. Y__ N__ When I get to the end of a chapter, I can't remember what I've just read.
11. Y__ N__ I don't know how to pick out what is important in the text.
12. Y__ N__ I can't keep up with my reading assignments, and then I have to cram the night before a test.
13. Y__ N__ I lose a lot of points on essay tests even when I know the material well.
14. Y__ N__ I study enough for my test, but when I get there my mind goes blank.
15. Y__ N__ I often study in a haphazard, disorganized way & only when I have an upcoming test.
16. Y__ N__ I often find myself getting lost in the details of reading and have trouble identifying the main ideas.
17. Y__ N__ I rarely change my reading speed in response to the difficulty level of the selection, or my familiarity with the content.

18. Y__ N__ I often wish that I could read faster.

19. Y__ N__ When my teachers assign writing tasks I feel so overwhelmed that I can't get started.

20. Y__ N__ I usually write my papers the night before they are due.

21. Y__ N__ I can't seem to organize my thoughts into a paper that makes sense.

If you have answered "yes" to two or more questions in any category, look for additional information & strategies for those categories. If you have one "yes" or less in a category, you are probably proficient enough in these areas that you don't need Self-Help Information.

- o Time Management - 1, 2, and 3.
- o Concentration - 4, 5, and 6.
- o Listening & Note taking - 7, 8, and 9.
- o Reading - 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, & 18.
- o Tests/Exams - 13, 14, and 15.
- o Writing Skills -19, 20, and 21.

Avoiding Studying Traps



1. "I Don't Know Where To Begin"

Take Control. Make a list of all the things you have to do. Break your workload down into manageable chunks. Prioritize! Schedule your time realistically. Don't skip classes near an exam -- you may miss a review session.

2. "I've Got So Much To Study . . . And So Little Time"

Preview. Survey your outline, reading material, and notes. Identify the most important topics emphasized, and areas still not understood. Previewing saves time, especially with non-fiction reading, by helping you organize and focus in on the main topics. Adapt this method to your own style and study material, but remember, previewing is not an effective substitute for reading.

3. "This Stuff Is So Dry, I Can't Even Stay Awake Reading It"

Deal with it – not everything is exciting! Attack! Get actively involved with the text as you read. Ask yourself, "What is important to remember about this section?" Take notes or underline key concepts. Discuss the material with others in your class. Study together. Stay on the offensive,

especially with material that you don't find interesting, rather than reading passively and missing important points.

4. "I Read It. I Understand It. But I Just Can't Get It To Sink In"

Elaborate. We remember best the things that are most meaningful to us. As you are reading, try to elaborate upon new information with your own examples. Try to integrate what you're studying with what you already know. You will be able to remember new material better if you can link it to something that's already meaningful to you. Some techniques include:

- **Chunking:** An effective way to simplify and make information more meaningful. For example, suppose you wanted to remember the colors in the visible spectrum (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet); you would have to memorize seven "chunks" of information in order. But if you take the first letter of each color, you can spell the name "Roy G. Biv", (or something else meaningful to you) and reduce the information to three "chunks".
- **Mnemonics:** Any memory-assisting technique that helps us to associate new information with something familiar. For example, to remember a formula or equation, we may use letters of the alphabet to represent certain numbers. Then we can change an abstract formula into a more meaningful word or phrase, so we'll be able to remember it better. Sound-alike associations can be very effective, too, especially while trying to learn a new language. The key is to create your own links, then you won't forget them.

5. "I Guess I Understand It"

Test yourself. Make up questions about key sections in notes or reading. Keep in mind what the teacher has stressed in class. Often, simply by changing section headings you can generate many effective questions. For example, a section entitled "Bystander Apathy" might be changed into questions such as: "What is bystander apathy?", "What are the causes of bystander apathy?", and "What are some examples of bystander apathy?"

6. "There's Too Much To Remember"

Organize. Information is recalled better if it is represented in an organized framework that will make retrieval more systematic. There are many techniques that can help you organize new information, including:

- Write chapter outlines or summaries; emphasize relationships between sections.

- Group information into categories or hierarchies, where possible.
- Information Mapping. Draw up a matrix to organize and interrelate material. For example, if you were trying to understand the causes of World War I, you could make a chart listing all the major countries involved across the top, and then list the important issues and events down the side. Next, in the boxes in between, you could describe the impact each issue had on each country to help you understand these complex historical developments.

7. "I Knew It A Minute Ago"

Review. After reading a section, try to recall the information contained in it. Try answering the questions you made up for that section. If you cannot recall enough, re-read portions you had trouble remembering. The more time you spend studying, the more you tend to recall. Even after the point where information can be perfectly recalled, further study makes the material less likely to be forgotten entirely. In other words, you can't overstudy. However, how you organize and integrate new information is still more important than how much time you spend studying.

8. "But I Like To Study In Bed"

Context. Recall is better when study context (physical location, as well as mental, emotional, and physical state) are similar to the test context. The greater the similarity between the study setting and the test setting, the greater the likelihood that material studied will be recalled during the test.

9. "Cramming Before A Test Helps Keep It Fresh In My Mind"

Spacing: Start studying now. Keep studying as you go along. Begin with shorter periods of time, then increase study time as the exam approaches. Recall increases as study time gets spread out over time.

10. "I'm Gonna Stay Up All Night 'til I Get This"

Avoid Mental Exhaustion. Take short breaks often when studying. Before a test, have a rested mind. When you take a study break, and just before you go to sleep at night, don't think about academics. Relax and unwind, mentally and physically. Otherwise, your break won't refresh you and you'll find yourself lying awake at night. It's more important than ever to take care of yourself before an exam! Eat well, sleep, and get enough exercise.

Apps

Below you will find suggestions for a variety of apps geared toward self-growth, stress management, mood management, etc. All of the apps are free, all have reviews of 4 stars or higher. They are all focused on relaxation/mindfulness/wellness apps, divided by android and i-phone.

Free Relaxation Apps

Android

Music/Sounds

- [White Noise Lite](#)
- [Relax Completely](#)
- [Relaxing Sounds](#)
- [Music Therapy for Refreshment](#)
- [Calming Music to Tranquilize](#)
- [Relax & Sleep](#)
- [Relax Melodies](#)

Meditation

- [Qi Gong Meditation Relaxation](#)
- [Buddhist Meditation Trainer](#)

Yoga

- [Yoga Workout Planner](#)

Just for Fun

- [iQuarium Virtual Fish](#)

Other

- [Stress Tracker](#)
- [Worry Box](#)
- [Stop Panic and Anxiety Self-help](#)

iPhone

Music/Sounds

- [Relaxing Sounds of Nature Lite](#)
- [Relax Melodies](#)
- [SleepStream2](#)
- [Sound Massage](#)
- [Sleep Sounds Ambient Effects for Free](#)
- [Sleep Sounds Recorder Lite](#)

Meditation/Breathing

- [Breathe2Relax](#)
- [Sleep Easily Meditation by Shazzie](#)

Yoga

- [Daily Yoga FREE](#)
- [SHINE Mind/Body Workout with Yoga & Intervals](#)

Just for Fun

- [Fluid Monkey](#)
- [Relaxation Portal](#)

Nature

- [Affirmations Inspired by Nature](#)
- [Wellsapes](#)

Other

- [Stress Stopper](#)
- [Transform Your Life: a Year of Awareness Practice by Cheri Huber](#)
- [Bloom*](#)