

# Making the GRADE

While you're studying to learn, make sure you learn to study.  
Here are some do's and don'ts.

By **ASHISH RANGNEKAR**  
FOR THE REGISTER

No matter what a student's age or academic level, effective studying strategies can make all the difference between acing a class, barely passing or failing miserably. Unfortunately, many of today's most common study methods can lead to disappointment, despite best efforts and intentions. Recent research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that many popular study habits are not beneficial and, in some cases, are detrimental. This year, ditch the shoddy study habits and use proven technology-based strategies as building blocks to get ahead.

Here are six habits students should change immediately:

## STUDYING AT HOME

Studying at home is convenient and easy, but many distractions lurk. Maybe it's a talkative sibling, the TV, texts and the lure of Facebook. Any of these can break concentration and make studying less effective. Consider a trip to the library with a quiet room or desk away from diversions.

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## LISTENING TO MUSIC

The benefits of listening to music while studying have been argued time after time. Although classical music was once believed to increase spatial abilities and improve learning, subsequent research was not able to support this theory. Recent studies show music might impair cognitive abilities and hinder memorization because of the changing words and notes in songs. Studying in silence or amid a little white noise will not distract from thinking.

## PROCRASTINATING

Every student is guilty of procrastination at one time

or another. Being common doesn't make it acceptable, though. Procrastination can lead to doing things halfway and not retaining as much information as necessary to ace that exam. If a student is pulling frequent all-nighters or rushing in fire-drill mode to finish every essay or project, then it is time to work on time-management skills and earlier study sessions.

## NOT MAKING AN OUTLINE

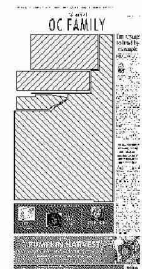
If a student is not making outlines while studying or writing a paper, then the results most likely will not be optimum. Outlines help keep track of large amounts of information, organize ideas and present the material in a

logical way. Instead of trying to reread a textbook or write an essay from scratch, make an outline to organize thoughts and study more effectively.

## HIGHLIGHTING THE TEXTBOOK

Some study advice books recommend reading a textbook and marking the pages with a neon highlighter. But this is one of the least effective ways for students to remember content. Instead, a student can quiz themselves on the material they just read. This will help to retain more information and score higher on exams.

## ALL-NIGHTERS



Staying up all night cramming for an exam has been shown to do little good for test preparation or performance. Not only does sleep deprivation turn students into zombies, it also takes a serious toll on happiness and overall well-being. The best way to avoid all-nighters is to study ahead of time. Dedicate a few days a week to study and review the material to avoid trying to cram everything into that brain in one night.

So what can a student do to make their studying endeavors more effective?

### VARY STUDY TOPICS

Psychologists say alternating study topics, rather than cramming on a specific one in a single session, leaves a deeper impression on the brain. So don't grind on the same subject. Change it up, take breaks and revisit the material in intervals – even spacing over a period of days.

### MAKE INFORMATION MEANINGFUL

Whether it's creating rhymes or patterns, or even relating material to something else, such tactics can make information more meaningful and thus easier to recall. The University of Maryland reports that

memory tricks are particularly useful for remembering factual information like names, dates and formulas.

### TAP ONLINE RESOURCES

Don't get stuck on a problem or resigned to an ill-fated grade in a difficult class. For example, companies like Academic Earth offer a comprehensive online collection of free video tutorials for college courses – all accessible at no cost. Other companies, like OpenStudy, enable Internet users to connect with other students learning the same subjects.

### ENGAGE IN SOCIAL LEARNING

Research has found there is a benefit to studying with friends. In one study from the Jacobs School of Engineering at UC San Diego, it was revealed that “the higher the volume of interaction, the more likely the students were willing to exchange information in more complex ways and with greater frequency, forming ‘information cascades,’ a mechanism that spreads information from a single source to one or multiple sources.”

### HAVE A GREAT STUDY ATTITUDE

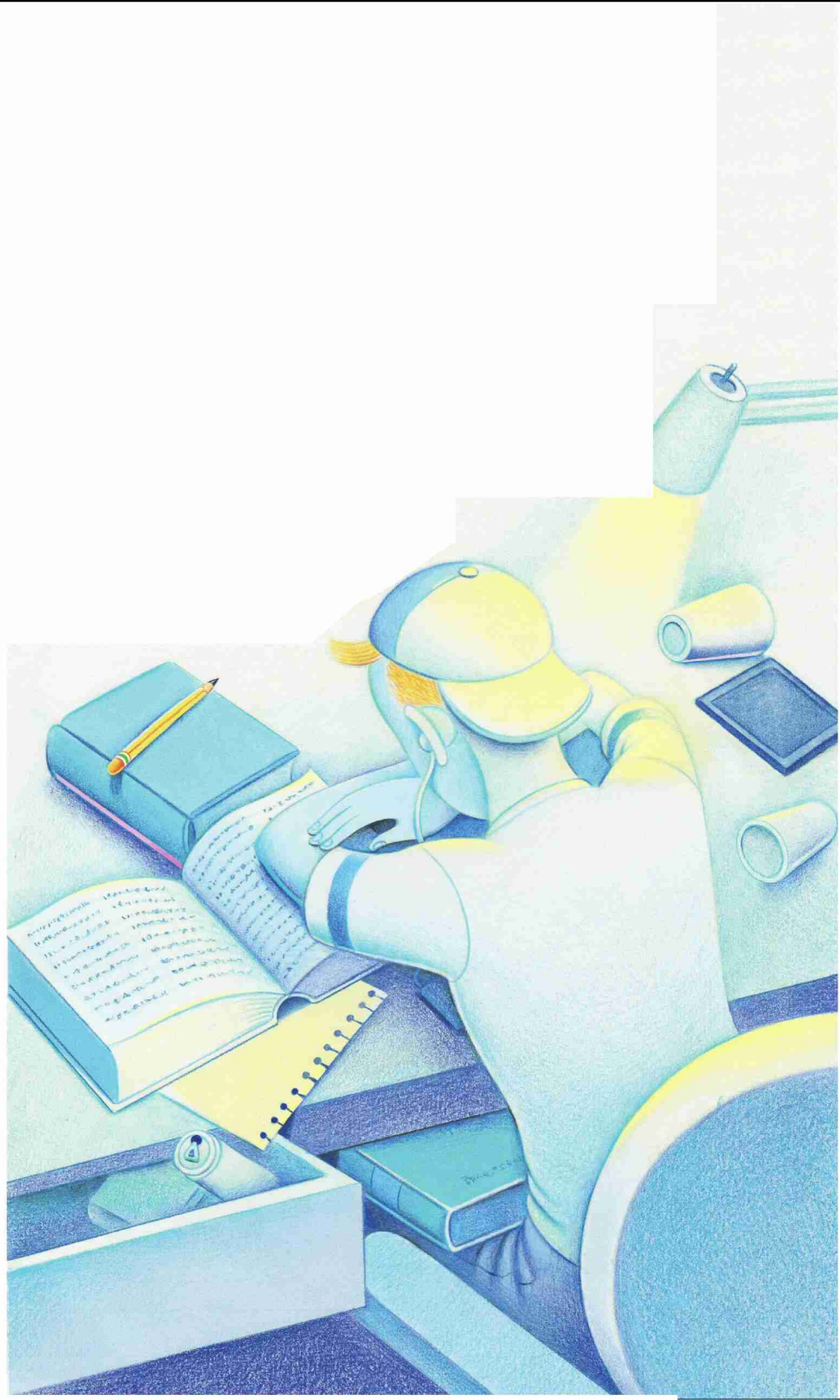
Think positive and focus on skills. Rather than dread-

ing the experience, thinking positive will make the time to study easier to approach and mental energy won't be wasted on feeling resentful. In fact, “study attitudes” were identified in research as one of four pillars that “play a critical and central role in determining students' academic performance.” In short, study time is a friend. Regard it that way and, soon enough, any student can look forward to a productive, self-fulfilled academic experience.

Ultimately, students should identify their own study preferences and act accordingly. Some students study better in the morning or can better focus in smaller chunks of time rather than a marathon session. Knowing exactly what does and does not work on a personal level, even tracking study patterns and correlating them with related grades, and then creating a study plan and schedule around the proven effective methods, is the most powerful study tool of all.

Ashish Rangnekar is CEO of BenchPrep, which creates test prep and other interactive courses for computers, iPhones, Androids and iPads.





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