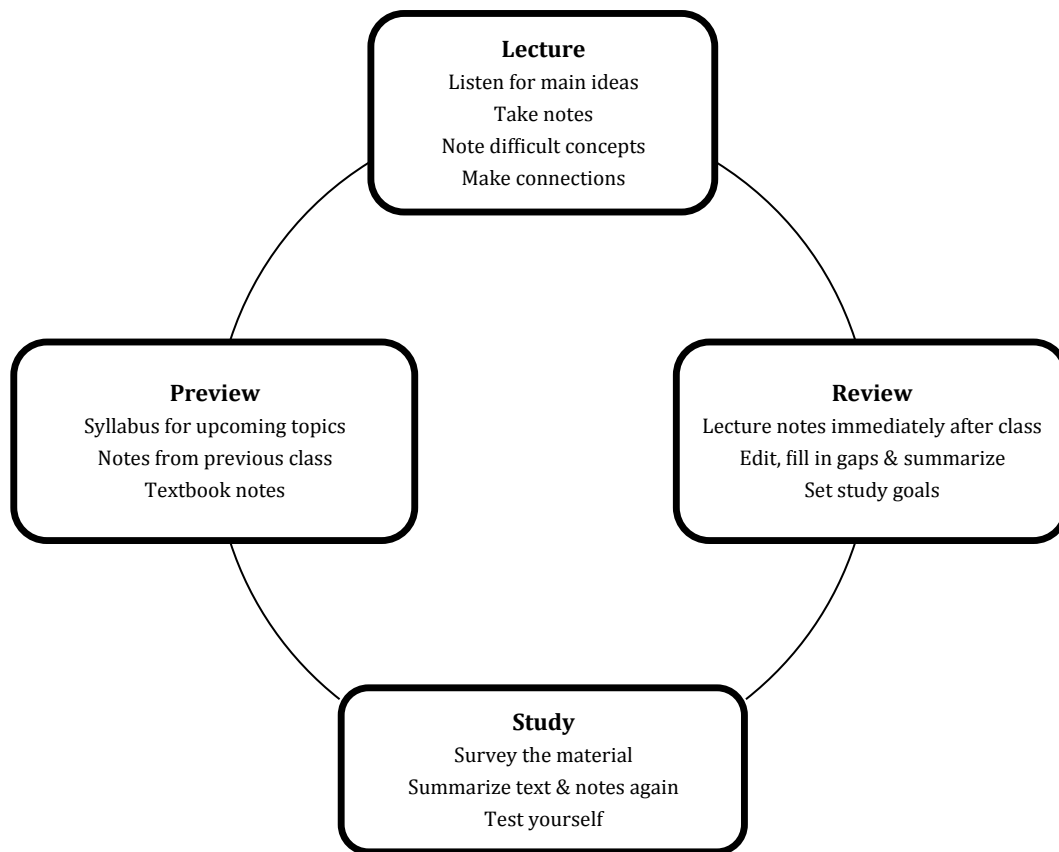


The Learning Cycle

The Learning Cycle study method is a way to make use of the time just before and after class to study and review class material throughout the term. It is expected that by following this cycle you will be able to decrease the amount of time that is spent on last minute study sessions.



© Christ, F. (1996). Seven Steps to Better Management of Your Study Time. Clearwater, FL: H & H Publishing.

Preview

Previewing your most recent lecture notes just before class activates your brain and prepares it to receive new information. Most course outlines also contain details about weekly lecture topics and required readings. Make regular use of your course outline in order to anticipate upcoming topics. If course notes are available online, print them off ahead of time and familiarize yourself with any new vocabulary that will be discussed. Whenever possible, try to generate a couple of key questions that you have about the content (ex: How is climate change going to affect our forests?). When the instructor starts lecturing, you will be able to listen for the answers to your questions, or you will be ready to ask them in class.

Lecture

During the lecture, focus your attention on main ideas, and try to take abbreviated point form notes that will help you understand the concepts. If concepts seem confusing or unclear, annotate your notes with a question mark or a personal reminder that follow up steps need to be taken (ex: “talk to the TA”, “talk to the professor”, or “reread section on *adipose tissue*”). Whenever possible, keep asking yourself questions about the material that you are recording in your notes so that you can dialogue with the instructor during class or immediately after class. Make connections between incoming information and information from your previous lecture notes, and elaborate by adding some of your own examples. This will help you to connect new information to your existing understanding of ideas and concepts, which is an important part of learning and remembering. For more details on how to take notes, please refer to our note-taking handouts.

Review

The best time to review your notes is immediately after class. Plan to spend 15-20 minutes after class editing and annotating your notes. Complete diagrams or tables that you were unable to finish during class. Create a list of key concepts or possible test questions for further study, and write a short summary of the lecture content in your own words. Establish priorities for later regarding areas that require more intensive study. These review sessions are ideally conducted right after every class, but they can also be done on a broader scale once a week.

Study

It is typically recommended that for most university courses you should allot approximately 2-3 hours of study time for every hour that you are in class. As a result, it is important to schedule some study sessions throughout the week so that you can focus and concentrate on mastering course materials independently. For these sessions, you can begin by reviewing your list of priorities from the last class and by surveying upcoming information for the next class. Any textbook readings should be completed at this time. When reading, highlight, take notes, or write down possible lecture questions so that they can be remembered during class time. At this time, you might also reorganize your lecture notes using concept maps, or you might turn your notes into flash cards. During study sessions, it is important to ensure that you periodically summarize information from memory or use practice questions to test your understanding. This will help you to identify knowledge gaps that require further review.