

How to Be a Successful Student of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Many students find chemistry courses challenging. The key to succeeding in the face of such challenges is to figure out how to change the methods being used to study for the class.

Make enough time for learning! Block out enough time during every day, every week for studying. Focus on studying – no multitasking! In general, each unit of credit will require at least two to three hours per week of work outside of class for reading and homework in addition to the time that you spend in the lecture and laboratory. To help you keep track of study time, as well as to help you plan and organize your time, you might want to use a weekly planner/schedule.

Learn what Neuroscience says about how to study! There are a lot of misconceptions about studying, but these videos will teach you what the evidence says are good study habits: <http://www.samford.edu/departments/academic-success-center/how-to-study> Students who change how they study after an early quiz or exam in class have been able to improve their grades dramatically!

Practice Solving Problems! One of the best ways to learn chemistry is to practice solving problems - alone and in study groups. It is extremely important to work out as many problems as possible -- writing them down, repeating if necessary. (And while you may have been given the solutions to some problems, or have a solutions manual, you should work out the problem *before* you look at the answer!). Embrace challenging work and “getting it wrong” as part of the path to mastery.

Use the textbook! This is a resource for you. As you read the textbook, do the embedded sample problems to reinforce what you are reading about.

Don't Memorize! Although some memorization is necessary to learn chemistry, you will not master any topic by rote memorization. You must learn the basic principles involved, and then be able to apply them to *new* situations and problems.

Go find help! There are lots of people that can help you learn chemistry. You can form a study group with some classmates. You can go to the professor during office hours – that is what office hours are for! Think of them as “drop-in” or “walk-in” hours. You can also get tutoring from tutors (for free!) at the University Tutorial Center <http://www.calstatela.edu/tutorialcenter> or from Chemistry and Biochemistry Club members.