

The four stages of studying

Use these four stages of studying to guide your learning

1 Preparation

- Gather and assess your resources, like course lectures, notes, readings, and study space.
- Use your course outline to identify learning outcomes, assignments, and deadlines to help you break down your tasks.
- Make sure to attend class – it’s part of your preparation for studying!

2 Goal setting & planning

- Set SMART study goals and create a plan to achieve them.

SMART goals are **S**pecific,
Measurable, **A**ccountable,
Realistic, **T**imely



Turn a regular goal:
I will get an A in my course.



Into a SMART goal:
I will use flashcards and self-testing to study for my course 4 days a week for 90 minutes each day for the month leading up to the final exam so that I can get above an 85%.

- Create a plan with a goal for each day of studying to turn your goals into reality.

3 Study

- Study according to your plan!
- Use active learning study strategies, like teaching others, quizzing yourself, or creating concept maps.
- Divide materials into workable chunks and include breaks!

4 Reflect & adapt

- Based on your overall experience of studying, make changes to improve for future learning.
- Check in with yourself regularly. This could be each week, after a midterm, and/or at the end of each semester to evaluate and re-evaluate what worked for your learning.

Ask yourself:

- What went well?
- Did you get distracted?
- Did you get stuck at certain parts?
- What could you have done better?
- What will you do again?
- What new things will you try?

Looking for resources on how to stay motivated and focused? Check out tips from McGill students in [How I Learn Best.](#)



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