

Don't try this at home! 5 time consuming pitfalls when studying

Do you feel as if you can study for hours, without making any progress? Do you feel as if your productivity is lacking? Perhaps you are studying the wrong way. Many students use study methods that they believe to be very helpful and promising, when in reality, these study methods are quite time consuming. These are 5 common pitfalls to avoid when studying:

1. *Skip the highlights*

Does your study text have a completely new color due to excessive highlighting? Or did you underline every sentence? According to research, highlighting or underlining important texts is not really effective, as it does not improve memorization of that information. Furthermore, there is a possibility that it actually makes it more difficult to notice the connections between the different parts of the text. Especially if you choose to focus only on the highlighted parts.

2. *Do not reread a study text*

Re-reading a study text is also a very common study strategy. It is very time consuming, with little to no results. Research shows that students do not remember the subject matter better when they have read the text a second time, and no better than those who have only read the text once.

What does work, however, is to create a mind map of the text, after the very first reading. Just google the name Tony Buzan, the founder of the mind map. When doing this, more elaborate information and tips on how to make such mind maps will appear. As a result of mind mapping, you actively engage with the subject matter, instead of a second passive re-read. Active studying always works a lot better than passive studying.

3. *Do not transcribe the study text verbatim*

It is important that you do not literally copy sentences from your study text when making a summary or mind map. When doing this, hardly anything that you have read will be remembered. By writing it in your own words, the chance of you remembering the subject matter increases. As soon as you start thinking about how to best express this in your own words, you start to actively process the study material. This does not only improve your understanding, you will also immediately notice that you can remember the material better.

4. *Repeat the material less often*

Huh?! But repetition ought to be good, right? Of course! What matters, however, is how you repeat the material. Go for quantity and not quality. It is always better to repeat three times for ten minutes, than to repeat once for half an hour. This way, the material reaches your brain more frequently and thus makes it easier for you to remember it.

5. *Endlessly memorizing subject material is for dummies*

So much more is known today about the memory itself and which memory strategies work and which do not. It would be a shame not to take any of them into consideration. Simply memorizing is boring and time consuming. Use a memory strategy! A memory strategy stimulates your long-term memory in a nice way, which immediately makes learning more fun. You can find plenty on the internet, if you google memory strategies. You could also consider to take a course.

Via www.vu.nl/trainingen you will find many courses that help you study. Such as Efficient study techniques, Improve your concentration or How to feel more confident during presentations. The courses are accessible to all VU students, for those who want to take their study to another level, or for those who just simply want to know more.

Good luck with your study!