

# Study Tips

Proverb: *Education is like water falling on stone. Drop by drop the water will wear away the stone, but a year's supply poured on at once will have no effect.*

An important bit of information to know is that algebra is a massive and boundless topic, of which you are only expected to learn a small portion this semester. Do not let algebra overwhelm you. **Take it one topic, one day, one concept at a time.** As you continue, the pieces will come together like a giant puzzle. Study a small section at a time and work on algebra **every day**. Several sections per day can become overwhelming and too much to handle. Pace yourself for success.

Day 1: When you begin any course at any school, there are a few things that you must do. First, read your **syllabus**. The syllabus is the contract between you and the instructor. This document spells out the expectations of the course, the amount of work involved, and other valuable information. For instance, the grading policy, attendance policy, and the test schedule will be vital information for success in the class. Secondly, you should know the **instructor's name, office location, and office hours**. You will need to know your instructor's name in order to take tests. Lastly, set goals for yourself. These goals deal with a course, a semester, your college education, or life ambitions. Some goals may remain unchanged for long periods of time, while others will change daily. Goals could be short term, like "study math tonight." Goals could be long term, like "graduate in three semesters." Setting goals is the first step towards higher levels of achievement. Without a plan you will not know where you are going or how to get there.

Sleep: **Sleep is critical** in getting the most out of your education. Make sure that you get a good night's sleep before taking tests. Get at least six to eight hours of sleep each night before school. If you stay up late trying to learn three week's worth of material in eight hours, you are guaranteed to be confused and do poorly. Spread out your studying so that you only have to briefly review key concepts and problems the night before exams.

### Notes and Book:

The **notes** that you take in class are your primary resource for information between class meetings. Do not make the mistake of not reading your notes until the night before an exam. It is difficult to try to decipher what happened weeks earlier. Instead, **review your notes** before the next class, filling in any missing information and explaining any abbreviations that you might have created. Another available resource, outside of the instructor, is the **textbook**. Try to read the book nightly. Read about the topics that were covered in class and the topics that will be covered in class. Coming to class with a sense of where you are going and where you have been is very important. Sometimes, reading and understanding the book many seem difficult. This is natural, but keep on truckin'. Do not let the book beat you. If there is anything that you do not understand, **ask your instructor**. Something that can be used for any course is a **summary sheet**. A summary sheet refers to a collection of key terms, concepts, problems, and examples that you encountered in a section, chapter, or class meeting. This should be in your own words, for maximum results. These sheets should be saved and used to study for tests and the Final Exam. It's always a good idea to study a few sheets of paper, rather than a book or fifty pages of notes before a test.

Homework: Before you begin your homework, review examples from your notes and textbook. These examples should guide you through the homework problems. Doing all the assigned homework problems is a good way to insure that you know the material. Always **write down each problem** and anything that might help with finding a solution. Don't get discouraged if you have difficulty doing some of the problems. If you can not finish a problem, leave enough space to fill in the work at a later time. It is crucial that you continue on with the assignment. So, don't give up. The answers to the odd problems are in the back of the book. You should always check your answers.

Study groups: One of the best ways to learn is to study with someone else. Get to know one or more students in the class or course, and try to form a **study group** or **study team**. **Review concepts** discussed in class, in the book, and in the homework assignments. Test each other on specific knowledge and vocabulary. Go over sample tests (if available) and chapter review tests. **Sharing** ideas and methods will help **reinforce** your understanding of the material.

Where to study: Once you know how and when to study, you must know where to study. Your **environment of study** can have as much to do with you understanding the material as the material itself. Choose a location free of distractions, visual and auditory. The cafeteria, major walkways on campus, in front of the TV, or in bed are not ideal environments for studying. There is too much going on in the cafeteria, outside, and on TV to stay completely focused on what you are doing. The bedroom may look like a great place to study, but it is really easy to fall asleep and wake up at four in the morning, with nothing accomplished.

Tutoring: One common misconception about tutoring is that only "dummies" get tutors. On the contrary, students concerned about their success get tutors. If you want to succeed and you are unfamiliar with some aspects of the course, **get a tutor**. The tutoring center in Building 1 room 254 has tutors available to Valencia students **free of charge**. The center will match YOUR schedule with a tutor for your convenience. If you wish to hire a private tutor, by all means. Private tutors range from \$10-\$20 per hour. Also, math professors are available for free walk-in tutoring in building 4 on the first floor in the IMC. Also, remember your classroom and lab instructors. They have **office hours** available to answer any of your questions. You should have specific questions and problems prepared. Saying that you "don't understand anything" means that you need to be taught everything starting before Kindergarten. If you know where you are having difficulty, then you will receive the best possible help.

Note Taking: Taking **USEFUL NOTES** is an important study skill. Useful notes are correct, accurate, and meaningful. They will help you study for the course. The use of highlighters and underlining can help you focus on key ideas. Be selective and mark only small, significant segments. Remember, these are **your** notes and **you** will have to study from them. Try to leave space in the margins for a quick summary of what is on the particular page of notes. The act of writing helps you remember and process the information better. Instead of writing your notes in paragraph form, you might try other forms like outline form. If your notes do not make sense or are incomplete, try using a tape recorder. Tape the class, with the teacher's approval, and replay it later to fill in the gaps. Also, use flash cards to keep track of key concepts, definitions, theorems, and formulas. Flash cards worked in elementary school, they can work here. Remember to make a summary sheet.

Class Time: When you come to class, **be prepared**. Be ready to take notes, answer questions, ask questions, take a quiz, or a test. Always bring a pencil (**NOT PEN**), paper, your notes, book, and your calculator to class each and every day. Have these items out on top of your desk so that you can get to them when

needed. Most instructors have a routine that is followed like clockwork. Learn the routine.

Procrastination: Procrastination is one of the greatest illnesses that can inflict a student. It is very important that you plan a schedule of your life for the whole semester. Your **daily planner or appointment book** will be used mainly to keep track of tests, assignments, classes, work, and other activities. These items when matched with family and friends, eating, driving, and studying can leave very little time for sleep, if not planned wisely. The plan can be done weekly or even daily. Make sure that you reserve at least **two hours per day to study each course** that you are taking. Some days you will need more, some less, but never cut yourself short. It is important to be constantly aware of upcoming events. Surprises are fun only if cake is involved. Proper time management will make better use of your valuable time and save your academic life. Do not put off anything until tomorrow that could be done today. Every semester, something unexpected happens that throws off your plans like: car trouble, the flu, accidents, or oversleeping. Of course, some of us get lucky.